

The historical tragedy entitled Risk: a Battle for Redemption is based on very famous Jewish legend Maaseh Norah shel Rabbi Yosef de la Reina (The terrible case of Rabbi Yosef dela Reyna [of the Queen]) which is known at least in three Hebrew versions since the beginning of the 16 century. This story was translated early into Ladino and Yiddish. One of the editions of the early Yiddish popular version was published by Shneur Zalman Rubashov (Zalman Shazar), the third president of Israel. Gershon Scholem, a renowned scholar of Cabbala, published an article About one of the older Hebrew versions, that of R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi. Some of the former students of the latter included the topic of this legend in their research works. The said legend was very popular in the Jewish milieu; it was printed and reprinted many times and in many languages. The Terrible Case of R. Joseph de la Reina also attracted the attention of some Hebrew and Yiddish poets, including Shmuel Yosef Agnon, receiver of Nobel prize for literature, and writers who based their poems, stories, and dramas on the legend usually closely following the original the folkloric story slavishly. He tries to intertwine it into the frame of the Jewish history of Christian Spain in the second part of the 15th century, just before the final expulsion of the Jews. Some historical events are featured here, several major historical figures are characters in the play (Christian kings, Ferdinand and Isabella, Thomas de Torquemada, Don Abraham Senior, Don Meir Melamed, Don Isaac Abarbanel, etc., others are just mentioned, and so are literary works of Spanish Jews and Christians). The play also uses some opinions of the famous cabbalists of Safed (Tsfat) about the causes which brought the Christian kings to the decision to expel the Jews. They blamed Rabbi Joseph de la Reina , the protagonist of the present tragedy, and stated that his preoccupation with magic was the main cause of the final expulsion of the Jews from Spanish lands in 1492.

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