MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.
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Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy, 1180-1240, galleys, 1964.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RESURRECTION DEBATE

In 1232 when tension was at its highest, Nachmanides (1194–1270) from Barcelona circulated the religious leaders of Castille and Aragon, among others Meir b. Todros Abulafia of Toledo, to join hands in supporting the cause of Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier. Nachmanides had reason to assume Meir's sympathetic cooperation. Four decades before, this well known Castilian Talmudist had been among the first to challenge Maimonides' works. Nachmanides, however, received more sympathy than cooperation. Meir was battle-scarred and utterly disillusioned. In begging off Meir rationalized his disinvolvement with an *apologia pro sua vita*.[1] Long ago, he had confronted similar communal pressures to those Nachmanides now was experiencing. He had to go it alone—against those who were rebellious against God. He had tried to reach and preach, but to no avail—indeed, not even the wasting of war attendant to an Almohade incursion had traumatized a return. The misguided had failed to see those travails as the corrective punishment of a displeased God.

Meir recalled that even before the *Moreh* had reached Spain, he had recognized the latent danger (latent because it fed the fires of disbelief long since burning in certain quarters) implicit in Maimonides' doctrine of resurrection as formulated in the *Mishneh Torah*. To counter any advantage the enemies of true faith might make of Maimonides' teachings, Meir had written a careful but forthright criticism, a *Sefer Kenaot*, setting the matter aright—but unfortunately few had shared his concern.

Note the candid admission that his criticism had been motivated more by the social consequences of Maimonides' word than by any intrinsic or substantive position taken in it.

> I became exercised to protect Israel and its sanctities, to establish the right and its fundaments when I saw that belief in bodily resurrection was being lost in this land among many of its dispersed peoples...[2]

[1] *KTR*, III, 6a–7a—especially 6b.
[2] *KTR*, III, 7a.

Yesteryear and before—even before the book which perplexes the guides (the *Guide for the Perplexed*) had reached here, part of the nation had rebellious ideas about faith in the Creator. [1]

Thirty years before, upon reading the *Mishneh Torah*, Meir had precipitated a flurry of correspondence which he subsequently collated under the title *Kitab al Rasail* (English, *Writings of Controversy*). Knowing this early text and the brouhah it momentarily touched off, historians have described Meir's attacks as "characterized by great persistence as well as intolerance" and have painted Meir as the archetype of a fanatic pietist, single purposed and single minded in his attitudes. [2]

Scant attention has been paid to an elegy Meir wrote shortly after Maimonides' death in 1204 which must be seen 1) as a plea that an end might be made to the controversy he had started, 2) as evidence of Meir's thorough acquaintance with the *Moreh* and his not unfriendly attitude towards philosophy, and 3) as indication of a not unkindly estimate by Meir of Maimonides the man, and even of the *Moreh*.

Tears have ceased falling into the [tear] vase for the burning coals within have been kindled.

Why do you ask for yourselves waters from the bottom of my heart when its thoughts have been consumed as with the fires of Hell.

There is just enough [water] for my heart—just enough to extinguish the flames within them. How can they pour [additional] water upon the fires that extinguish my tears.

What happened to the hearts that they despaired of finding a remedy and why has their spirit been broken.

Please ask, if the evil accidents of the times have accosted them and if they groan from the afflictions of the hour.

Or does the raging fire burn because Moses has died—to whom now can they turn (lit., cry out)?

Who will extinguish the fires of sorrow? Who will free the prisoners whose chains have been tightened?

Who will lead us on dry land through seas of knowledge deeper than the depths of the sea?

[1] *KTR*, III, 6b.

[2] J. Saracheck, *Faith and Reason* (Williamsport, 1935), p. 47; cf. H. Graetz, *A History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1894), III, 524, "His hostile attitude toward science and his tendency towards an ossified Judaism, isolated him even in his own circle."

Who will break out of the rock streams of wisdom? Who will sweeten the bitter waters?

Cease, you who are hungry for instruction—for those about (lit., the people of the day) have broken down her vines.

Weep for the prince of moral instruction who has been taken away. Can you now suckle the poison of asps [as he did]?

He was like a hero in battle. He rejoiced for the day when the chariots of instruction jostled one another in the street.

He was the fruit of life in his group. With his sword he struck through the hearts of his enemies.

He was as the life giving principle and we were as the body. Who of them could live if these would be separated?

Write this upon the walls of the heart and inscribe the wondrous secret on the foreheads of the times.

How the luminaries go down to the grave and how the rocks of instruction were uprooted from their places.

Concerning the much praised one who was buried, it is as if the light left the rocks and preferred to descent to the grave in his place.

Arise, O mighty one, who despised the sweetness of the earth, since today the earth is sweet to his throat (ed. he has been buried).

Arise, see the people gathered around your grave who kiss its stone and its dust.

Arise, see the scholars of the day—as one—knock on the doors of your understanding as petitioners.

They will ponder your *Mishneh Torah*, daily they will harvest valuable knowledge fashioned as if of pure gold.

They will see in the *Moreh* intellectual steel which flashes as lightning in the darkness.

There they will see the swords of confusion polished clean and honed smooth with the oil of reason.

Words, much desired, as if fashioned like apples of the gold of wisdom in baskets of fit understanding.

Through them the confused came to know truly and through them the weak were strengthened in the fear of their Creator.

Arise [Maimonides], see the sheep who had strayed from secure pens, now following you.

They built with you a sanctuary of instruction; yet today perforce they throw ashes upon their heads (i.e. they mourn).

To whom will they now run for help and, since you are gone, upon whom can they depend?

They will never remove from themselves the yoke of your mourning until the cursed day will remove the yoke of your death (i.e. never).

Alas, the princes tell good news to the ~~counsellors~~ counselors of Pharaoh and the seers of that land ~~will gnash their teeth (not be pleased)~~.

Let not such be heard in the city of Sihon and let not such a piercing groan [be heard] in Heshbon.

It is not a day of good tiding. Be silent lest strangers hear and clap their hands over you.

Would that I might be like a bird, I would fly to his grave. My eyes would summon tears.

I would wet with my tears his dust just as the springs of his knowledge nourished my soul.

I will erode with them (i.e. the tears) the rocks of the time (i.e. the mighty) just as the waters of his suffering wear down great men.

What else can the cursed days say? What more can they complain about? How can they justify themselves?

Is there still any answer in their mouthing to the complaints? Will they fault us that they may be justified?

Are the sins of the waters of Meribah (i.e. of controversy) still remembered today? Do they still pursue us?

Or is the hand of evil days waxing strong—days that spread hurt in their anger.

Tearing prey until its lair is filled with corpses. One crowds out another in his grave.

Children will be buried in the very grave of their fathers; for if not how will there be sufficient space for his victims.

This is the ancient law (i.e. destruction). These have learnt from them—he consecrated these disciples.

Where are the dead of yesteryear? Only a short time has passed. Where have they disappeared?

Did the host of night kidnap them? Were they not exiled from the populous city? How did we not cry?

Rather they [these days] despised us—therefore they forced us from pleasant dwellings unto parched wilderness.

If on a day their children are vexed they are not troubled: if they (the children] become weak it is passed off.

If they will call them no one answers. When they speak bitterly it is as the braying of an ass.

Will you call in their ears when no one listens? Will you groan or be silent?

Today they groan for their wandering...[1]

You are like them (the former evil times) except that they hastened and you are slow to pass over.

Search out the world, ask even of the gates of Hell—for there her great ones are shackled.

See the grave of Moses. It is a sign to all created beings that death is unavoidable.

He (Maimonides) has disappeared but not his greatness. Though he is gone his deeds are here.

Peace to you, O faithful messenger, peace. As with the groaning over the slain they groan for you.

Peace, you whose righteousness was like a river, the living feel bitterly deprived by your death.

Peace, they cling to you today with a love like my love or the love of the angels of righteousness.

In measure as your soul desired righteousness, so the angels of righteousness desired you.

May peace hover over you just as justice and peace were joined always in you.[2]

Meir can not be figured as unreservedly anti-philosophic. He had disapproved of certain arguments, but not of the whole. One senses that youthful brashness had carried him farther than he had wished—and that he now sensed that it was not Maimonides he had been arguing against, but a widespread contagion of religious indifference and skepticism for which the lion of the Law, the pious Maimonides could hardly be blamed. In any case external threat, "cursed days," required that those who would wield the rod of correction now moderate their efforts.[3]

Israel stumbled into a Maimonidean controversy. It was not

[1] The author can not adequately render this verse.

[2] H. Brody, "Poems and Letters of Meir Hallevi Abulafia" (Heb.), *Yedeot ha-Mahon Le-Feker sa-Shira ha-Ivrit*, II (Berlin, 1936), 32-35, No. 12. The author's translation.

[3] These "cursed days" probably referred to the early 13th century Almohade incursion in Andalusia which threatened Meir's home in Toledo—but they might also refer to the brewing Albigensian Crusade which as early as 1209 had decimated the Jewish community of Béziers.

fear of philosophy nor ignorance of philosophy which precipitated it but a breakdown of faith among certain elements within the Western communities, among anonymous persons who when pressed claimed the *Moreh* and the *Mada* as support of their fancies.[1] Doubters and sophisticates seized on certain quotations—often out of context—in Maimonides or from philosophic material generally and arrogated these as proof texts of their denials. To blame the *Moreh Zedek*, Maimonides for this sputtering of the candle of disbelief was on the face of it implausible. Nor was philosophy to blame. There is no indication that individual anti-Maimonids studied the *Moreh*, or Bahya, or Saadya, or ha-Levi any less assiduously or appreciatively than the Maimonids. Judah Alfakhar, to cite a classic anti-Maimonid example, was knowledgeable and competent in philosophic disciplines.[2]

In this first stage of the controversy—before the *Moreh* was known—the less than pious believed that they found some support in the *Mishneh Torah* for their denial of the traditional assumption of resurrection. To defend against this challenge, those who vigorously opposed such aberrations perforce attacked the delineation Maimonides had given to this doctrine.

Resurrection had been affirmed rather than defined by the rabbinic tradition. Typically, the early 13th century scholar Zerahyah ha-Yevani:

> It is well known that one ought to believe that when man dies full of good deeds and having lived a pious life God will love him and in the nature of this love is the reward beggaring description..... We ought not to search out how this reward actually will take place.[3]

When Maimonides in his *Commentary to the Mishnah, Sanhedrin X* argued man's inability "to comprehend the delight of the soul" in the future life on the basis that such delights were outside the limits of sense experience and hence beyond the capacity of human reason, he was simply handling methodically doctrinal reservations many had long observed. Touching the doctrine of physical resurrection many had observed poetic license as long as the tenet itself was supported.

[1] I. Baer, *A History of the Jews of Spain* (Philadelphia, 1961), I, 96.
[2] *KTR*, III, 7a.
[3] Zerahyah ha-Yevani, *Sefer ha-Yashar* (Vienna, 1811), V. This work was at the date of publication erroneously ascribed to Jacob b. Meir, Rabbenu Tam.

In brief, rabbinic doctrine insisted on some future reward but was open-ended on the specifics of that reward. The 15th century philosopher Joseph Albo explained this deliberately uncertain certainty.

> But it [Resurrection] is not itself either a fundamental or a derivative principle of divine law in general or of the Law of Moses in particular, for they can be conceived without it. As long as one believes in reward and punishment generally, whether corporeal, in this world, or spiritual, in the world to come, he does not deny a principle of the Law of Moses if he disbelieves in resurrection. Nevertheless it is a dogma accepted by our nation, and everyone professing the Law of Moses is obliged to believe it... Belief in the Messiah and in the resurrection of the dead are principles peculiar to Christianity which cannot be conceived without them. But resurrection and the Messiah [in Judaism] are like branches issuing from the principles of Reward and Punishment and are not root principles in themselves. [1]

Resurrection was the most "unenlightened" rabbinic dogma—that is, it was the religious dogma which most violated the *tendenz* of Greek philosophy which throughout assumed the dualism of body and soul. An ancient veneration and a long lingering issue, it had been hotly debated as early as the first certury. [2] Circumscribed by the authority of traditional belief but convinced of the accuracy of Platonic psychology, medieval speculatives therefore resorted to equivocation. Resurrection seemed to these a crude, even superstitious doctrine—quite out of step with any proper understanding of the soul and its faculties and the body and its foibles. If both pious and philosophic, these men could cite precedent for their seeming heterodoxy. The traditional treatment of resurrection was anything but consistent. Raba had insisted that Job 7:9 ("As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the pit shall come up no more") indicated a Biblical denial of the entire doctrine. [3] Ecclesiastes presented a skeptical view of the whole

[1] Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-Ikkarim*, I. Husik (ed., trans.)(Philadelphia, 1929), i. 15.134-5.

[2] H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, 1947), I, 396 ff. Compare the Talmudic treatment of Deut. 32 : 39. "I kill and I make alive," as a proof text of resurrection (*T. B. Sanhedrin* 91b) and Philo's use of Gen. 15 : 15, "But thou shalt go to thy fathers nourished with peace, in a goodly old age" as a proof text of the immortality of the soul. (Philo, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim* 3 : 11, quoted in Wolfson, I, 398.)

[3] *T. B. Baba Batra* 16a.

issue, as did *Ben Sira*.[1] If the liturgy praised a God "who raises the dead," Biblical literature raised no such definite promise.[2]

Resurrection did not remain the controversial theme for many reasons: 1) Maimonides affirmed even as he squirmed. Men recalled that Maimonides had established in his introductory commentary to Mishnah *Sanhedrin* the belief in physical resurrection as a cardinal tenet of the faith and few had the interest or the patience to square subsequent discursive elaboration with this simple declaration. 2) With the Hebrew translation of the *Moreh* a veritable Pandora's box of theologic topics was provided. 3) Physical resurrection was the weak point of rabbinic apologetics. Even the most traditional disciples often had quite esoteric views and whatever their public professions entertained personal reservations. One does not attack another for struggling with one's private doubts.

Meir, however, was horror-stricken at Maimonides' seeming denial in the *Mishneh Torah* of bodily resurrection.[3] This promise was part of God's covenant with Israel.[4] He could not support Maimonides in deducing that there will be neither form nor body in the *Olam ha-Ba* from the single text "that in the *Olam ha-Ba* there is neither eating nor drinking."[5] The reprise in Meir's apoplexy was his argument that Maimonides' view destroyed the substance of God's promise, so essential to faith. "If bodies will not be resurrected how can the promise of a redeemed Israel be fulfilled."[6] "If God does not resurrect where is the hope for those who at great personal sacrifice obey His law."[7] As for the metaphysical problem involved, is such an act too much for God?

Reduced to simple terms—and Meir's first missive has the virtue of simplicity and is, therefore, revealing—Meir argued that faith is not a selfless commitment. Israel's faith is based on a covenant—a two-way relationship—man obeys and God abides. The obligations of this covenant for the party of the second part (God) require the arrival of the Messiah and a proper occasion for the resurrection of the faithful. One can sympathize—for without hope the spirit

[1] Eccl. 3 : 19 ff.; *Ben Sira* 41 : 3 ff.

[2] Dan. 12 : 1-4 was often cited as Scriptural authority for this tenet. Cf. Isa. 26 : 19, Jcb. 14 : 13-15. But the promise was nowhere insisted upon in the Torah law.

[3] *M. T. Teshubah* 8 : 2.

[4] Meir Abulafia, *Kitab al Rasail*, V. Brill (ed.) (Paris, 1871), p. 14.

[5] *T. B. Berechot* 17a.

[6] Meir Abulafia, p. 14.

[7] *Ibid.*

shrivels—and what hope had Israel, what justification for continuing its intransigent confrontation of Diaspora and despair, except this promise?

Meir's outpouring was submitted to Jonathan ha-Kohen—for what specific purpose it is hard to tell. Jonathan was a respected senior—a man of known *halachic* competence, piety, and prestige. Perhaps Jonathan's correspondence with Maimonides and his sponsorship of the translation of the *Morch* made him the logical addressee. Meir certainly felt that Lunel had shown an exaggerated admiration for their intellectual mentor—but he made no request explicit or implicit that the work be banned.[1]

Meir appended to the resurrection missive a longish set of *halachic* glosses to the *Mishneh Torah*. Perhaps he hoped by this display of erudition to establish his credentials. Their provenance is difficult to assess. Six of the points touched were to issues raised by Jonathan in his correspondence with Maimonides;[2] three of the others touched points raised by Rabad[3] (Moses ha-Kohen had notes also on these); one was entirely original—the first,[4] as were elements of the notes to *M. T. Abodah Zarah* 2:7 and 4:2. Meir's method throughout was juridic. The points at issue were largely theoretical: whether a month may be intercalated during a Sabbatical year or a year of famine under certain extenuating circumstances (in Meir's day the calendar was already fixed); whether children are to suffer the death penalty if they live in a condemned apostate city (such a city could exist only in an independent Israel); whether an elder who renders a verdict in spirit contrary to a decision of the Sanhedrin is liable to the death penalty if the matter involved a violation not specifically described by a Biblical negative commandment, i.e. in ritual matters of Phylacteries, Lulav, Sabbath (there was, of course, no longer a Sanhedrin). The only issues having contemporary relevance were cited from the circulating Jonathan-Maimonides correspondence: whether a mezuzah required a specifically prepared parchment; whether one may carry a found object on the Sabbath, etc.

Meir's approach was not heavily negative. He conceded the

[1] Meir Abulafia, p. 15.

[2] *M. T. Berachot* 1 : 11, *Sabbath* 20 : 7 and 2 : 11, *Milot* 3 : 6, *Tefillim* 1 : 11, and *Issure Bi'ah* 15 : 2.

[3] *M. T. Abodah Zarah* 2 : 7, 4 : 2-4, *Mumar* 4 : 3.

[4] *M. T. Kiddush ha-Hodesh* 4 : 16.

Mishneh Torah's worth.[1] Interestingly, he made no challenge to Maimonides' code method except such as was implicit by any opening up of seemingly settled issues. He contented himself with suggesting that "there is no wheat without chaff" and that this represents but a small anthology of the "leaves which he [Meir] had plucked."[2]

Meir's answer, for some unrecoverable reason, came not from Jonathan ha-Kohen but from Aaron b. Meshullam (d. 1210), son of the venerable founder patron of the Lunel school. In tone Aaron's epistle was a "dressing down"—as if Meir had been called on the carpet by a college dean. "Know, my brother, that humility is the adornment of wisdom and its sweetness, while arrogance is her flux and disease."[3] "Your legal issues having nothing new in them and reading between the lines of your letter it is apparent that you did not want to set a matter straight in your own thought but to preen your intellect."[4] Meir was accused of rashness, arrogance, brashness, ignorance, and subjected to condescension. "I know you did not consult your wise and venerable father."[5] To Aaron, Meir was the prodigal who brashly challenged the experience, understanding, and knowledge of a master without having mastered even fundamentals. "Take to heart, my son, the rabbinic admonition 'that one who argues with his teacher is as one who argues with the *Shekinah*.'"[6]

Presumptuousness was Meir's cardinal sin. He ought to have inquired, not pontificated.[7] He has asked Lunel how they could praise Maimonides. "Know that such praise does not begin to exhaust Maimonides' accomplishments."[8] His teachings are "clean, healthy, and worthy."[9] His knowledge is catholic of all sources and traditions.[10] Indeed, God sent Moses to the people at an opportune time when "the hand of the judges had grown lax" and the control of Israel had become progressively more difficult.[11] In this time of confusion Maimonides "stretched out the staff of his strength over the sea of the Talmud until it was possible for his children to enter the sea in safety."[12] "Behold it is written before me and I will not deny it that from the days of Rabbina and R. Ashi none

[1] Meir Abulafia, p. 16.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

arose in Israel equal to Maimonides to multiply counsel and increase redemption.'" [1] Not only is Maimonides' genius and knowledge unparalleled but there is none in Israel whose family tree is so redolent of rabbis and learned ancestors. [2]

Aaron's defense of Maimonides' views on resurrection was made simply. How can Meir have been so naive as to presume that the single statement of *M. T. Teshubah* 8:2 exhausted Maimonides' treatment of the subject. Had Meir noticed the many places in the *Mishneh Torah* where anyone who denied the belief in resurrection was labeled a *Kofer* or an *Epicoros* or *Min*? [3] "Now we will set you straight as to that which you said concerning the servant of God that he denies the Covenant and destroys the hope of those who dwell in this life." [4]

Basic to Aaron's view was the argument that one ought not accept the exoteric meaning of the *aggadah*. Aaron transformed Maimonides into a disciple of Saadya who got around conflicting *aggadic* texts by positing two resurrections—one during the Messianic Age followed by a second death and a second period of resurrection in the *Olam ha-Ba*—a totally new world where the properties of space and time and bodies—all the worldly categories—no longer apply. [5] Maimonides' statement denying bodily attributes referred only to the *Olam ha-Ba*. Meir was accused of not being conversant with such Saadyanic subtleties, [6] indeed, "you ought not to have approached this whole area steeped in mystery until you had spent much time exploring the whole matter with some learned master—for in your epistle you show that you do not have the faintest acquaintance with such mysteries." [7]

This attempt to impose a Saadyanic superstructure on Maimonides is interesting a) in showing that only a limited knowledge of Maimonides' views was then available to his protagonists (the *Maamar Teliyyat ha-Metim* was not translated by Judah al Harizi until 1198 and the text of Part III of the *Moreh* did not reach the Languedoc until 1200), b) as illustrating the quick pro-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. cf. Saadya Gaon, *The Book of Belief and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt (New Haven, 1948), pp. 264-289, and the variant text pp. 409-435.
[6] Meir Abulafia, p. 37.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

liferation of ideas through translation. Judah ibn Tibbon had completed his Hebrew translation, the first, of the *Emunot ve De'ot* as late as 1186. It obviously had helped to organize many loosely held verbal traditions popular in the Jewish schools.

Aaron returned two letters. The second was a point by point rebuttal of Meir's *halachic* glosses in which Aaron set each point out fully in all its tradition, logic, judgment, ramification, etc. [1] Aaron extended himself most on the challenge raised to *M. T. Issure Bi'ah* 15:3 where Maimonides had ruled that an Israelite who had relations with a *mamzer* (a child of an illegally constituted marriage) without a proper marriage was not to be stripped since the Talmud prescribed such punishment (in the area of illicit marriages) only in the single case of a High Priest who married a widow or divorcee. Maimonides here had ruled against a traditional consensus. Indeed, he had admitted to Jonathan that he once had thought otherwise. [2] Any ruling depended on the interpretation of an involved Talmudic debate. [3] The uniformity of dissent of Rabad, Moses ha-Kohen, the sages of Lunel, and Meir underscored its novelty and Aaron was forced to some lengths to establish Maimonides' view. His method here, as in all his responsa, was to review the Talmud discussions and to show how Maimonides' opinion was plausible.

Aaron argued not the absolute correctness of Maimonides' decisions, but their plausibility. [4] "This is the opinion of Maimonides as I understand it, but if you wish to have another opinion—go ahead—the Torah has seventy faces—what is unacceptable is your presumption of Maimonides' light handed treatment of the material and your claim that he was unaware of conflicting traditions." [5] This last paragraph is crucial for any understanding of the *Mishneh Torah's* reception in the West. In the East, in Yemen for instance, it became a constitution—*the* law—among its greatest ad-

[1] *Ibid.*, p 45 ff

[2] *TR*, 52.

[3] *T. B. Fetubot* 29a.

[4] In cases where Maimonides decided between two well defended decisions, as in the case of *M. T. Abodah Zarah* 2 : 7 (concerning the special name of God which if uttered constituted blasphemy) Aaron simply took the offensive: "How can you think that he erred, behold our master recognized both opinions, since he specifically quoted the variant . . . It is evident that he went to the heart of the matter and chose the one which he found fit and proper. He weighed the issue in his understanding and in the scale of his knowledge." (Meir Abulafia, p. 47).

[5] Meir Abulafia, p. 67.

mirers in France and Spain it remained but another, albeit brilliant, contribution to *halachic* literature. Not one of the better scholar defenders swore unquestioning fealty. Nor can any glossater *ipso facto* be presumed to have disparaged the entire work.

Meir did not let matters ride. "Oh staff of Aaron is not your nature to freshen the waters—why do you now roil them."[1] Meir took understandable umbrage at Aaron's high-handed questioning of his competence. "Keep your own view and I'll keep mine."[2] His anger extended to a petty grammatical criticism of certain forms and meters Aaron had employed in his opening poetry.[3] Meir had turned to Lunel knowing their scholarly reputation and believing they accepted "the rule among the wise in such matters that when a proper argument is developed all acknowledge it."[4] Apparently this was not to be. "Now you listen... and if you are really open minded, I know that you will find that I am right."[5]

For Meir the proofs of resurrection were clear. They appeared in the Torah (Gen. 13:16, 26:3, 28:13; Deut. 1:8, 11:9, 11:21, 32:27), in the Prophets (1 Sam. 2:6; Isa. 26:11, 42:11; Ezek. 27:10; Hos. 6:2), in the Writings (Ps. 72:16, 104:30, 50:4-5; Dan. 12:2, 12:13; Job 7:9; Eccl. 9:4-6), in the Talmud (*T. B. Sanhedrin* 90-91a; *T. B. Berachot* 17a, etc.). Especially clear to Meir were the texts dealing with bodily reward and punishment in the *Olam ha-Ba* (*M. Abot* 4:5; *T. B. Sanhedrin* 90b-92a, 99a; *T. B. Abodah Zarah* 26a, etc.).

These texts were not to be handled casually or interpreted cavalierly. True, they contained allegorical depths but in no case was their establishment of bodily resurrection in the *Olam ha-Ba* to be reasoned away.[6] Meir quoted Saadya to his own purpose; had not the Gaon held that in only four types of Biblical texts could there be any question of a wholly non literal treatment—none of these cases being applicable here.[7]

Meir showed insight into the burden of Aaron's position. His

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[7] Saadya, pp. 414-417. Saadya had ruled that the literal version of a Biblical text may be questioned only when 1) it obviously conflicts with common sense experience, 2) it posits anthropomorphic attributes of God, 3) on the face of it there is an obvious error, or 4) authoritative interpretation had modified the apparent meaning.

was an attempt to establish the philosophically popular concept of the immortality of the soul—yet retaining the traditional emphasis on resurrection largely because being hoary it could not be discarded.[1] *T. B. Berachot* 17a must be the controlling text. In this text where R. Gamaliel had stated that there is no eating and drinking in the world to come he establishes not the concept of the immortality of the soul but that of physical resurrection;[2] for why should he preclude the existence of specific bodily attributes if there was no possibility that bodies might exist in the *Olam ha-Ba* to which one might be tempted to make such an attribution.[3]

Meir could not imagine how reward and punishment can operate in the *Olam ha-Ba* if bodies were not there to receive their due "according to their corruption or quality"[4] "for have not our sages said that the souls do not receive their reward or punishment in the *Olam ha-Ba* except conjoined to their bodies."[5]

The argument had shifted imperceptibly but inevitably to an issue which would be aired throughout the 13th century—the permissible limits of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. We shall hear of some philosophers who denied the reality of all Biblical stories, considering them to be mere allusions to philosophic doctrines. Some Kabbalists will come close to this view in their insistence that had the Bible simply told the stories of Esau and Hagar, Laban and Jacob, Balaam's ass, and the like—and not impregnated these stories with esoteric meaning far greater books could have been written.[6] Meir possessed an acute sense of religious preservation and sought to limit such exegesis. Otherwise, he averred, the law must follow the narrative out the window and the entire foundation of the commandments which establish Jewish life would be undermined.[7]

Meir's architecture of the future bliss is clear. There are some who are wholly righteous who will live on from this life to the Messianic Age.[8] In the Messianic Age many of the saintly of Israel will be

[1] Meir Abulafia, p. 52.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[6] *Zohar*, ii. 152a, "The jar is not the wine, so stories do not make up the Torah."
[7] Meir Abulafia p. 56.
[8] *Ibid.*

resurrected [1] and they will live on until the more inclusive resurrection scheduled for the *Olam ha-Ba* takes place. "The Talmud is full on every side of clear proof concerning the *Olam ha-Ba* that it is the end of the rewards for the righteous and of the punishments of the wicked and involves both body and substance. God forbid, that any who fear God should deny this." [2]

Meir wrote his first and second letters to Lunel some time before Maimonides' death. As might be anticipated, he was not satisfied with Aaron's reply and either in 1202 or shortly before he addressed himself to certain rabbis of Sarfat, seven by name: Solomon of Meroz, Isaac b. Abraham of Dampierre, Simson b. Abraham of Sens, Simson of Corbeil, David of Chateaux Thierry, Abraham of Toul, and Eliezer b. Aaron of Bourgogne. Meir asked these worthies to judge the merits of his correspondence and to submit to Aaron a position paper on resurrection and on the other Talmudic issues which Meir had raised

> All you who dwell on earth, all you who inhabit the land,
> You men, our kinsmen, who are sturdy of faith; be zealous
> for the Rod (God) who created in His might all creation which
> swarms over the land and the seas.
> Judge! Take no account of rank! Let rich and poor come as
> one to justice.
> That those who permit judgment may see and know clearly
> That there are in the land judges who judge honestly. [3]

In this letter Meir touched rhetorically his motivation in entering the fray and answered quite simply that he wished all doctrine to be carefully regulated. Meir was concerned with the promise of the faith. If resurrection is but a mirage which dissipates itself upon scrutiny, what is the hope for "all the oppressed lost in the lands of their captivity." [4] The certainty which encourages Israel is the belief in "a day when God will repay all according to his righteousness or innocence." "How can wound be repaid for wound and sorrow for sorrow, if God does not cause all creatures to be reestablished in form and body?" [5] "What profit is there that men should obey His commandments and go about sadly because of the Lord God. If bodies are not resurrected where then is their hope and who will regulate this hope?" [6]

A historian must add that religionists become concerned with

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*

the promise of faith when this promise is not self evident. Meir's energy reflected a dissipation of that loyalty and a fear of the social consequences of this loss of confidence.

To his now familiar arguments Meir appended his equally familiar glosses in a clear, precise form obviously reworked for the occasion. [1]

Of or for the French rabbis Simson b. Abraham of Sens (c. 1155—1225) replied. His letter is to be dated shortly after Maimonides' death. [2]

Simson was and remained a Talmudist working in a Talmudically oriented community. The issue of resurrection did not excite him. The whole issue was, after all, cut and dried. The famous text *T. B. Berachot* 17a indicated only that there would be no eating or drinking or sex in a worldly sense. The resurrected will draw their nourishment and drink from the divine radiance. As proof he offered *T. B. Sanhedrin* 90a, 92b, 108a. [3] Body and soul will be resurrected together as they will be saved and judged together. [4] The rabbinic holoistic view of man is confidently reasserted. Simson's understanding of the textual problems insisted that what difficulties arise occur because interpreters did not differentiate the Messianic Age from the *Olam ha-Ba* (not unlike Maimonides' own reconciliation in his *Maamar Tehiyyat ha-Metim*). There are truly righteous who do not die. [5] Some souls are given to bodies eternally. For others there is death and rebirth in the *Olam ha-Ba*. The Messianic Age is [illegible] a period of resurrection [illegible] in which God releases Israel from captivity. The *Olam ha-Ba* is a

[1] The list was abbreviated. *M. T. Kiddush ha-Hodesh* 4 : 16 and *Abodah Zarah* 2 : 4, among other issues of the Aaron correspondence, were missing.

[2] "I do not care to argue with the great master after his death." (Meir Abulafia, p. 131.)

Gross developed what is known of Simson's life. His dates are uncertain. He was a younger contemporary of R. Isaac b. Samuel and R. Tam. He wrote commentaries to the Mishnah and the Sifre and was quoted in many responsa and in the Tosaphistic literature. He knew no Arabic. Of his pilgrimage to Palestine, more later. (H. Gross, "Etude sur Simson b. Abraham de Sens," *REJ*, VI [1883], 167-186; VII [1884], 40-47.)

[3] Meir Abulafia, p. 107.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[5] Simson based this on Num. 18 : 28, "Ye shall give the *Terumah* of God to Aaron the priest." The *Terumah* was given only in the Holy Land. The Bible can only mean that Aaron lives on, since he never entered Palestine. (Meir Abulafia, pp 108-109.) cf. *T. B. Sanhedrin* 90b. cf. also Isa. 4 : 13, "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion shall be called holy even any one that is written unto life in Jerusalem." Holy things never die.

FOR A FAVORED FEW, BUT PRINCIPALLY THE TIME WHEN

newly created world without the properties of this worldly existence. But unlike Maimonides' view, the body's identity is not wholly lost—God grafts the wings of an eagle to these resurrected bodies and they hover—not unlike the angelic beings—over the face of the deep. [1]

In a second letter to Meir, Simson confronted the problem of allegoric interpretation. He quoted *T. B. Hullin* 90b, that in only three cases was the *aggadah* to be taken in other than its literal meaning. Of philosophic flights of fancy based on the *aggadah*—a mistake for which he fingered Aaron, Simson also had serious reservations. Such sophistries are not unlike "passing the proverbial elephant through the eye of a needle." [2] Presumably in all other cases an exoteric interpretation was required. In a postscript to this second letter he quoted in further confirmation Saadya's four categories of permissible allegorical interpretation. The *Emunot ve De'ot* had just arrived and had been read out for the first time by one who possessed the necessary linguistic skills.

Halacha concerned Simson primarily. It is doubtful he knew or sensed the social ramifications of the resurrection debate. Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel, who was with Simson at this time and subsequently traveled to Castile, chronicled on his arrival in Toledo that only now (in Toledo) had he met any who said that Maimonides had denied resurrection and had taught only the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. [3] In France [illegible] had been expressed only in the [illegible] terms of Maimonidean formulations.

As *halachist* Simson dealt not only with Meir's questions, but with Lunel's twenty-four, and showed his thorough acquaintance with the *Mishneh Torah* and Maimonides' correspondence. His first discussion [illegible] the six questions revived by Meir which had been covered also in the Jonathan-Maimonides correspondence. [4] He handled these in the familiar form of legal debate: citation, source, argument. His purpose "is not to establish law but to let the erudite hear and then let anyone who wishes to answer him do so." [5] Even when he agreed with Maimonides' ruling, as in the case Simson acknowledged the extraordinary needs of the time which

[1] Meir Abulafia, p. 135.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 131.
[3] M. Higger, "Abraham ben Nathan Ha-Yarhi," *JQR*, XXXIV (1943), 342.
[4] Cf. p. [illegible], note 2, above.
[5] Meir Abulafia, p. 132.

belongs AFTER LINE 3 PAGE 126

of the special requirements for parchment in a mezuzah scroll, Simson was eager to make clear certain sophisticated differences in their reasoning. [1]

had precipitated Maimonides to write the *Mishneh Torah*, but faulted him severely for his lack of citations. This is not the way of *halacha*. Let those who want to know study the original texts which permit various lines of reasoning and development. [2] Finally in a second letter he added an extensive gloss of his own to *M. T. Parah Adumah* 11:2 in which he challenged Maimonides' view that one who has been contaminated by corpse uncleanness and has undertaken the first cleansing may, if a delay is unavoidable, undergo the second required sprinkling at any time. The argument was based on a correlation of two variant texts, *T. B. Haggigah* 22b and *T. B. Kiddushin* 62a.

Simson's further role as a Maimonidean critic is uncertain. He wrote one more brief response to Meir's longish reprise, pleading with Meir that he had *no time to prolong* such a point by point *halachic* correspondence. [3] Meir's questions were purposeless—matters ought not to be raised unless they have been brought into serious question. Enough had been said.

Simson throughout respected Maimonides as *halachist* although he questioned his method. It is, therefore, difficult to know what to make of Abraham Maimonides' report that later in Simson's life he became active in opposing Maimonides. The facts are these. Simson was among some three hundred French and English sages who pilgrimaged to the Holy Land circa 1211 or 1212, probably motivated by messianic expectation. Abraham Maimonides, in his *Milhamot Adonai* reported and made much of the fact that Simson did not stop in Alexandria to pay his respects—the implication is that the oversight was deliberate—and that once settled in Acre and still later in Jerusalem Simson continued to argue against various teachings of his father. Saracheck [4] among others makes much of this—but Abraham's own words make us feel that the issues raised were purely halachic.

> And, I heard concerning R. Simson the master of Tosaphot who was in Acre, whom we did not meet because he did not pass by here—we heard about him after his death and about

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 126.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[4] Saracheck, p. 60.

> one of his pupils that they disputed the teaching of my Father and Teacher in some few matters. The particular issues were not set right by us because we did not examine them. We said to ourselves, if these words contain truth let them eat the fruit of their labor and if not they will be publicly denied. [1]

The only reason to believe that "resurrection" continued to be an issue is the succeeding sentence in Abraham Maimonides' text which mentions without specification certain men who propagated "the profession of a faith false in basic principle" in the various communities of the Near East. The precise relation, if any, of this charge to Simson is uncertain. To all this only two other historical rumors can be added: according to Abraham Zacuto (15 c.), a R. Caleb, a disciple of Maimonides, otherwise unknown, disputed these issues with Simson [2] and a rumor reported by Abraham Maimonides himself that he had excommunicated Simson—a rumor which he flatly denied. [3]

Simson leads us to the interesting figure of the wandering Provençal scholar Abraham b. Nathan ha-Yarhi (c. 1155—1215), one of the leading anthologists of the variant religious customs of the day. The only published version of *Kitab al Rasail* included a cryptic heading after Meir's first letter to Simson, "Afterward there came from France a response to my letter from R. Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel and this is its text" [4]—but no text follows. Higger overlooked this heading, but he succeeded in establishing on other grounds that a known commentary to *Kallah Rabbati* was the work of this Abraham and he has published that portion of the commentary which dealt with the exchange of letters between Simson and Meir and is in point of fact a continuation of the resurrection debate. [5] We know from other sources that this Provençal scholar studied with the Tosaphist Isaac b. Samuel before he settled in Toledo—Meir's home—in 1204. He was bilingual (Arabic-Hebrew), [6] and it is not impossible that it was he who translated the Saadya passages in Simson's hearing.

Professing great admiration for Maimonides, whom he called Gaon, Abraham quoted the sources in the *Mishneh Torah* where

[1] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, pp. 53-54.
[2] Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yuhasin*, H. Filipowski (ed.) (London, 1857), p. 218.
[3] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 54.
[4] Meir Abulafia, p. 106.
[5] Higger, p. 330 ff.
[6] Abraham b. Nathan ha-Yarhi, *Sefer ha-Minhag* (Berlin, 1855), p. 95.

Maimonides had stated that those who deny resurrection have no place in the world to come. Like Simson, Abraham could not see why Meir had raised all this fuss. Maimonides' theories may have been in error, but he cannot be faulted for any denial of the fundament of resurrection. But certainly Meir had thought so and Abraham paraphrased Meir's arguments, cited Aaron's high handed reply, and quoted at length Simson's.[1] He omitted, however, in his recapitulation all reference to the accompanying *halachic* debate. Abraham concluded by adducing other proof for Simson's views.

Abraham was troubled by a seeming contradiction between Ps. 72:16 and *T. B. Berachot* 17a. The Psalm speaks of redemption in glowing terms, concluding "may he be as a rich cornfield in the land upon the tops of the mountains," which Abraham understood as an allusion to certain future gastronomic rewards. How then establish both this promise and the oft cited "There is no eating or drinking..."? Obviously, the one refers to eating in the Messianic Age and the other to non-eating in the *Olam ha-Ba*. "Bodily resurrection is not an attribute of the Messianic Age."[2] The Messianic Age will mark the end of Israel's captivity and dispersion. The *Olam ha-Ba* will mark the salvation of the righteous. Some may live on into the Messianic Age, but resurrection *per se* is of the *Olam ha-Ba*, where "God will give life to the body and soul together...and judge them according to the measure of justice."[3] Abraham's views and Simson's were, then, essentially one—as was their attitude toward Meir's tempest in a teapot.[4]

Crucial to an understanding of the world view of those who at this stage enthusiastically supported the Maimonidean position is the activity of the wealthy physicin-literati-sometime scholar Sheshet ha-Nasi b. Isaac of Saragossa (1131—1210), also known as Sheshet b. Isaac Benveniste.[5] Sheshet was *Alfaquim* (physician)

[1] Higger, pp. 342-346.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 348.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 348.

[4] Interestingly, despite his critical position Abraham became in some way dependent on Meir. Brody has published a letter from Meir to certain citizens of Narbonne pleading that that commune release Abraham from taxes. (Brody, II [1936], 23, No. 9.)

[5] Graetz was the first to insist on the identity of these two names. (H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den Altesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 3rd ed. [Leipzig, 1894], III, 328.) Marx denied the identity but without offering proof. (Marx, *JQR*, XXV [1934], 408.) Baer showed that Sheshet b. Isaac lived in both Saragossa and Barcelona and concluded that the two names referred to one and the same man. "Er (Sheshet b. Benveniste of

and bailiff to Alfonso II and Pedro II of Aragon and possibly the wealthiest and most powerful Jew of his time. That a Jew of this rank became enmeshed in the *Kitab al Rasail* debate offers effective testimony to its notoriety. Sheshet ha-Nasi b. Isaac of Saragossa entered the fray with a letter sent to Lunel in rebuttal to the first polemic addressed by Meir to Jonathan and before Meir had received Aaron's original answer. In this letter Sheshet dismissed out of hand the halachic arguments of the Meir-Aaron correspondence. He probably lacked the necessary tools for legal debate. Only one *halachic* issue was even alluded to—the question of the mezuzah, and then only to give an opportunity for Sheshet to inveigh *ad hominem* against a writer who, despite his inconsequence, showed such unbecoming disrespect for excellence. Meir was ticked off as a presumptuous pup. [1] Sheshet was but little interested in the involvements of rabbinic tradition. His letter does include a few remarks of a Midrashic nature, [2] but it is clear that Sheshet thought in and depended upon a philosophic rather than a Talmudic frame of reference. It is the philosophic plausibility of resurrection which alone concerned him. [3]

Barcelona) is also wohl identisch mit [illegible] (Baer, *Die Juden* I, 35. note.) Brody questioned this identification on the basis of the close ties evidenced in a letter and poem of condolence sent by Meir to Sheshet b. Isaac on the death of his son Samuel. (Brody, II, 61 and II, 88.) However, family ties sometimes only acerbate a particular issue. The manuscript identification remains. Notice also the curious phrasing of the opening of Brody No. 39 where Meir seems to be gently alluding to Sheshet's dependence on reason and on knowledge (*Mada*) as a source of strength which ought not now desert him. (*Ibid.*, II, 88.)

[1] Marx, *JQR*, XXV (1934), 416-417, vv. 75.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 417, vv. 97 ff.

[3] At the close of his letter Sheshet reported the anger of a Castilian judge towards the *Mishneh Torah*. (*Ibid.*, p. 365 ff.). Ostensibly this worthy's criticism was to Maimonides' method—his lack of citations etc.—but Sheshet saw this critique not as a matter of judicial judgment but as an expression of peeve. Until the *Mishneh Torah* trained *halachists* had had things pretty much their way. Only a very few controlled even a limited competency in Talmudic jurisprudence. No one could dispute or challenge a judge's edict. Now such powers could be circumscribed. Everyone and anyone could check a decision by simply referencing it in the *Mishneh Torah*. There was an element of anti-rabbinic feeling in this. The halachists commanded authority by virtue of what was to the average Jew esoteric knowledge—now that Maimonides had made the law an open book this preferential treatment was threatened. (*Ibid.*, p. 427.) Had this Hofjuden found his sway over Aragonese Jewry circumscribed by popular reverence for rabbinic authority and by rabbinic insistence on traditional norms?

Compare also the basis of Sheshet's structural attack on the office of the

Sheshet began by arguing the immutability of natural law.[1] Biblically, "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). Philosophically, God at creation gave to each created thing its natural form and these, consequently, obey God by abiding their essential nature.[2] Bodies, by definition, have appetites. To argue that God resurrects bodies without appetites is a contradiction in terms.[3]

What of the argument that the Creator of all, being omnipotent, can change at will the nature of His order and resurrect in bodily form without appetite? God could—but He has not. "We ought not say God can until we see that He has".[4] Furthermore, a change in the basic order of things would imply an imperfection in the original creation and in the Creator.

Does Sheshet deny all possibility of miracles? Here Sheshet's hardiness deserted him. He equivocated. He argued that God had interfered in the natural order but only occasionally to help out His people and His prophets.[5] For all practical purposes God has never touched the basic framework of the world.

> To change the seasons, to refashion the circuit of the planets, or to remake the nature of fire so that smoke would descend rather than rise or to reverse the order of water so that it would rise instead of settling or in the case of any other created thing which exists changeless by virtue of God's will—of such things we have no knowledge nor have our ancestors reported any occasions since Day One when God injected into such things a wholly new nature which became established permanently (rather than temporarily). So Solomon: "That which has been is that which shall be and that which has been done is that which shall be done and there is nothing new under the sun." (Eccl. 1:9.)[6]

To Sheshet resurrection presupposed such a basic change in

Rabbi-Judge to Meir's simple concern with judicial probity and competence.

> "Today, the faithful are forced down into Sheol while they
> (the times) hasten to exult the traitorous.
> When I ask, what and why is this that the ends of the earth
> should tremble from the rod of their wickedness
> They answer me, with whom do you quarrel. Ask the judges who
> pervert judgment.
> They rig the scales of justice and cast off truth.

(Brody, II, 22, No. 5.)

[1] Marx, *JQR*, XXV (1934), 420, vv. 164-165.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 422, v. 234.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 419, vv. 144 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 421, v. 198.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 420, v. 175.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 420-421, vv. 191-197.

the natural order.[1] What then is resurrection? "The pleasure of the intellect which cleaves to its Creator."[2] The philosophic immortality of the activated intellect freed of its prison body,[3] freed of all mortal attributes, and rejoicing in the effulgence of God.[4] Resurrection will not take place at any one time in the future but occurs daily.[5] It does not rupture the material order of things, but is the happy result of that potential which God placed within certain men at their birth.[6] The intellect, once activated, can live forever. If sages or tradition spoke otherwise, i.e. of an actual return of soul to body, it was only to "reassure the simple" who could not accept a more refined promise,[7] and, incidentally, could not achieve such salvation. Why does the Bible seem to allude to Heaven and physical resurrection? The Bible speaks allegorically[8] to strengthen the faith of the simple—to encourage by the promise of reward and to frighten into obedience by the threat of punishment.[9]

Comparing Meir's approach to Sheshet's, we note the widely disparate authority in which each grounded his case. Sheshet argued from sense experience, Meir from Scripture. Meir quoted the Talmud. His problem was exegetic—what did a text really mean. Sheshet brushed off these interpretive problems. His authorities were Epicurus, Plato, and Aristotle.[10] His problem was to interpret science accurately. Sheshet set little store with those who claimed unique authority for revelation. Man's innate reason had enabled many not aware of the truths of Sinaitic revelation to acknowledge God's unity.[11] Revelation had established the truths of theology, but Sheshet believed that these truths were not recondite but accessible to human reason. Meir was concerned with the possible undermining of Scriptural authority by the practice of unbridled allegorical interpretation. Sheshet bluntly stated, "All the words of the prophets are meant as allegories and have hidden

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 426, vv. 356-358.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 424, v. 292.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 418, v. 108.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 425, vv. 312 ff.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 426, v. 362.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 427, vv. 360 ff.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 425, vv. 325 ff.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 422, vv. 231 ff.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 425, vv. 331 ff.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 414, vv. 2-3, p. 423, 312, 323.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 422, vv. 236 ff.

meanings."[1] Sheshet's epistle was not so much a defense of Maimonides or of the *Mishneh Torah* (both praised but never cited) as a defense of the first principles of philosophic speculation. Sheshet remained as indifferent to the various resurrection formulas of *M. T. Teshubah* as he did to Meir's Midrashic exegesis. What Sheshet praised in Maimonides was not his *halachic* competence nor even his philosophy, but his interest in philosophy. Maimonides was "the man of God, the holy one, the Gaon, the philosopher who excelled all others, possessed of a full knowledge of his creator who served God with his mind and understanding."[2] Immediately he continued: "Thus did the ancient wise men say that one can serve his creator only if he knows his true nature and only if God has permitted his spirit to him or if he be a philosopher who by virtue of his ability approaches God."[3] At issue between Meir and Sheshet was the basis of faith. Was faith a preserve of the brilliant, its truths accessible to reason, its salvation limited to the mentally alert and philosophically disciplined, or was it "the inheritance of all Israel," its truths accessible only in Scripture, its salvation universal and not limited to the erudite?

One reviews Sheshet's passion for philosophic norms in two acerbic poems he indited against Meir.

> I will break, I will prick, the words of Meir and I will not leave any remnant to him.
>
> He closed the doors of understanding with his two hands, Lying lips are his portion.
>
> He contemns knowledge, he gathered his strength from the riffraff.
>
> The lightness of his head spoiled his judgment. He increased his lies, He enlarged his sin.
>
> He discharged his arrows against the *Moreh*; He is the son of a rebellious son; Have no regard for him.
>
> He enlarged with evil intent, like the son of Edom. He nests his trust on gossamer,
>
> Even against his master he became arrogant. He gnashed his teeth because of his great folly.
>
> If God is a form, and he believes according to the literal meaning, he denied his God.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 416, v. 341. He based himself, however, on a proof text, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." (Ps. 119 : 18.)

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 414, vv. 10 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 414, vv. 12 ff.

For if God is corporeal, having a hand or eye, any form, God would be mortal and have no permanent existence,

Therefore, he lied for he did not march out between the light of dawn and the pitch darkness of night.

His song is an anthology of nothing. As a magician he gets involved in a quarrel which is not his. [1]

And again:

My friends asked me, how can one be named Meir (i.e. one who gives light) when he is one who walks in darkness.

I answered them: The sages have already called the night, light. His name is among those similarly transposed. [2]

Again, besides any private bad blood between these two of which we are historically unaware, what is at issue is not the *Mishneh Torah* nor even resurrection, but Sheshet's passion for a God who is not only nonanthropomorphic but pure being. Sheshet dismissed Meir's theology as systematically crude and simplistic:

If God is form, and he believes according to the literal meaning, he denies God.

For if God is corporeal, having a head or eyes, any form, God would be mortal and have no permanent existence.

This attack is passing strange, a) in that in the *Kitab al Rasail* Meir does not define his God concept, b) Meir's own religious poetry breathes the pure air of monotheism unadulterated by any of the fanciful speculations associated with the *Shiur Komah* and the *Alef Bet de R. Akiba*. Compare these lines selected from one of Meir's hymns lauding God's power.

How will you ascribe form to that which has no body? How can He be like the bodies? Who can circumscribe and gather in His essence?

He is the beginning without end, How can there be end or boundary to the Creator and Fashioner of all?

He is strong and the source of strength and power, He is merciful and the source of His mercy and righteousness.

He lives, From him alone is the fountain of life for all living things, He is beyond the source of his holiness.

[1] H. Graetz, *Lekit Shoshanim* (Breslau, 1862), p. 149; M. Steinschneider, "Moreh Mekom ha-Moreh," No. 11. Note, however, I. Davidson, *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1924), I, 354, No. 7811, "It is difficult to decide who is the author." The [illegible] is the author's.

[2] H. Graetz, *Lekit Shoshanim*, p. 149; M. Steinschneider, "Moreh Mekom ha-Moreh," No. 64.

He exists but without place. How can place circumscribe him,
He created its [earth's] dust and dimension?
He was before the dimension of time, how can time relate to
Him since He created it seconds and minutes?... [1]

Wherein lay the parting of the ways?

Men like Sheshet began with the necessity of a pristine and philosophically acceptable God concept: that is one free of all attributes and relations. Men like Meir presumed God's oneness and otherness and began with the necessity of a God who could reveal and resurrect. Both insisted on *Yihud*, God's oneness. Each believed he insisted on God's otherness. But by *Yihud* men like Meir meant God's uniqueness and spirituality and men like Sheshet God's uniqueness and the logic of God's pure existence. *Yihud* to the Talmudically oriented rabbis meant a God of whom one ought not posit human attributes, yet a God who had the power of creation and of judgment and of resurrection. *Yihud* to the speculative meant the *ding an sich*—the unmoved mover—of whom it could only be said that He is. The world was created by God but ran according to natural law. Such a view allowed precious little leeway for such fundamentals of faith as prayer, revelation, and resurrection. To argue as Meir had the possibility of divine interference with natural law was *prima facie* evidence to the speculative of an imperfect God idea, presumably such a belief could be held only by ~~one [illegible] certain~~ positive attributes of God.

One can describe the prevailing rationalism as a backwash of the high tide of the Arabian cultural sea, but how account for those who held to it? One suspects that at base it was a matter of education and environment. Those educated in the *yeshibot* clung to the sanctities or transmuted their speculative energies into mystical and conforming channels. Those privately tutored were grounded in the Biblical aspects of faith but not its *halachic* reaches and probably knew as much of Greek science and logic as they did of Talmud—if not more. Furthermore, these men generally moved in the cosmopolitan circles of early 13th century Spain and Provence and rubbed shoulders with Christians, Mozarabs, and other Jews still deeply conditioned by the attitudes of the Islamic world. These, therefore, had every practical reason to set a high value on that culture which provided a common coin and a convertible currency.

[1] Brody, II, 80, No. 34, vv. 13-15. ~~The author's translation.~~

Personal idiosyncracy touches every controversy. Unfortunately, the tendency within Jewish life has been to avoid biography and to argue the logical rather than the emotional issue. The young, zealous Meir chose resurrection, but was it really Maimonides' views which troubled him? Given the traditional freedom of Jewish dogmatics, this must be considered doubtful. What was at stake was Meir's whole context of religious values. No one likes to hear that what he holds most sacred is only the inferior part of a greater whole. Conversely, what excited Sheshet's ire? Certainly not a few *halachic* criticisms of the *Mishneh Torah* by a young whippersnapper. There is no indication that Sheshet idealized Maimonides. But one can imagine this cultivated physician and gentleman, who fancied himself as something of a scholar, rubbing shoulders with his equals at Pedro II's court and implicitly agreeing that the metaphysical expression of God's unity was Judaism's cardinal truth and, yes, that it was quite like the metaphysical ideas expressed by the best minds of the Islamic and Christian world. Therefore, any attempt to explain the uniqueness of Judaism could be dismissed as interesting but superficial. The elemental form of Jewish thought was fortunately simple—the existence of the universally acknowledged philosopher's God. To challenge this simplicity was to challenge the rationalization which established Sheshet as an equal in his own eyes.

Sheshet could dismiss any attempt to insist on the uniqueness of Judaism as irrelevant. The elementary assertion insisted on in Jewish thought was the existence of the one God—the existence of the universally acknowledged philosopher's God. To doubt this identity was to doubt the rationalization which established Sheshet as an equal in his own eyes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE COMPASS POINTS OF JEWISH CULTURE

> As for those whose minds are confused and tainted with unsound ideas and fallacious methods of thought which they believe to be sound knowledge, considering themselves thinkers though they know nothing whatsoever that deserves the name of knowledge—those people will be schocked by many parts of this book. Our arguments will be all the more difficult for them to stomach, not only because they will not see any sense in them, but also because they demonstrate the falsehood of the trash they call their own, which is their stored-up knowledge for the hour of need. [1]

Within early 13th century European Jewry there were two co-existing and commingling but not always communicating cultures. As illustration we oppose two documents representing polar attitudes.

Shortly after March of 1199 Samuel ibn Tibbon sent a query to Maimonides touching the doctrine of providence as Maimonides had developed it in Chapter 51 of Part III of the *Moreh*. [2] It will serve to illustrate criticism within an acknowledged and mutually understood frame of discourse.

In Chapter 51 Maimonides had argued that those who advance to a true knowledge of God in effect lift themselves out of the circumstances of earthly life and are protected from accident as long as an immediacy with God is sustained.

> When man has achieved purity of thought, clear perception of God by the proper method, and beatitude through that which he perceives, it will never be possible for evil of any kind to befall this man, because he is with God and God is with him. However, when he averts himself from God, in which state he is hidden from God and God is hidden from him, he is a target for every evil thing that happens to come his way. The thing which induces Providence and saves man from the raging sea of chance happenings is just that intellectual emanation.... [3]

[1] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, C. Rabin, trans. (London, 1952), p. 45.

[2] Diesendruck, *HUCA*, XI (1936), 341-366.

[3] Maimonides, *The Guide* . . ., p. 154. Guttmann has pointed to a

The conceit of an achievable, albeit temporary, immortality was as bold as it was religiously revolutionary and as imaginative as it was philosophically radical. Samuel agreed with Maimonides that the activation of the intellect was the ultimate achievement of human ambition. He believed such intimacy engendered great benefit, but such benefit was of a spiritual rather than a physical nature.[1] Samuel preferred to believe that the activation of the intellect resulted in a new psychological perspective which permitted men to disengage themselves from the silken chains of desire and to adopt a stoic attitude towards unpredictable fortune. So it had been with Job "after he knew God with a true knowledge, he was no longer preoccupied with the affects of worldly fortune, i.e. health, wealth, and children."[2] The activated intellect enables men to rise above the pain of unhappy circumstance but not above the circumstance itself.

Of significance is the point d'appui of Samuel's argument. He was not disturbed by the radical break with traditional consensus implicit in this entire concept but by an absence of consistency within the *Moreh* itself, and by the general disagreement of the Greek-Arab philosophic tradition. Samuel insisted that Maimonides (in the *Moreh* Part III Chapters 19-22) had developed, correctly, the philosophic truth implicit in Job's experience, for Job's physical and worldly situation had not altered after he attained intellectual perfection.[3] Q.E.D. his benefit must have been psychological. That intellectual perfection "protects man from all types of evil, even the accidents of disease and of injury resulting from social dislocation,[4] appears implausible to me and close to a rejection of philosophy."[5] How so? Samuel argued that any assumption of the physical insulation of the enlightened necessitated a break in the operation of natural law—an interference which could be accounted for only

relationship between Maimonides' assertion and Avicenna's teaching "that the miracles of the prophets are due to their minds being so closely connected with the Active Intelligence that the powers of the latter communicate themselves to them: hence they are able to change the objects of the world about them in such a manner as exceeds the natural powers of man." (*Ibid.*, p. 224.)

[1] Diesendruck, *HUCA*, XI (1936), 353 : 76b.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Samuel here referred to the first two of three categories of evil Maimonides had specified in the *Moreh*, iii. 12.

[5] Diesendruck, *HUCA*, XI, 359.

by presuming a precreation cosmic stipulation to abandon natural law during each such occasion of intellectual perfection. [1] "This is a religious assumption not a philosophic one," [2] and an implausible one at that, considering the mathematics of the situation. To account for a few Biblical incidents in this way was excusable, but the possibility of an infinite number of "enlightenments" by an infinite number of individuals in effect made a mockery of the orderliness of natural law.

Samuel's entire argument was closely reasoned. He was careful to elucidate every possibility. He had researched previous philosophic authority [3] and was careful to insist on Maimonides' acknowledged skill as philosopher—even to the point of assuming that the whole contradiction may have been deliberately introduced. Had not Maimonides prefaced the *Moreh* with a list of apparent but deliberate inconsistencies? [4] In brief, though strong exception was taken, the premises of Samuel's criticism were entirely in sympathy with Maimonides'. This Provençal scholar had a technical difference of opinion but he and Maimonides spoke the same language.

The second text with which we would illustrate the antipodes of early 13th century European Jewish culture is the *Kitab Tamim* (English, *The Book of Completeness*) of Moses b. Hisdai.[5]

Although probably written in the late third or early fourth decade of the 13th century, the *Kitab Tamim* shows no awareness of the *Moreh*. [6] Briefly described, it is a broadside directed against

[1] Such a cosmic stipulation was the traditional explanation of miracles by philosophers who insisted on the elemental quality of natural law yet were constrained to account for Biblical miracles.

[2] Diesendruck, *HUCA*, XI, 358.

[3] Samuel quoted Aristotle directly. (*De Anima*, iii. 412.25 f. cf. Diesendruck, 359.)

[4] The seventh of these suggests itself: "The Seventh Cause is the difficulty experienced in discerning very profound matters some details of which must be kept hidden while others can be revealed. . . ." (Maimonides, *The Guide* . . . . p. 48.)

[5] On the various problems of chronology this document presents and the presumed identity of Moses b. Hisdai with Moses Taku, cf. J. N. Epstein, "Moise Taku b. Hisdai et Son Ketab Tamim," *REJ*, LXI (1911), 60-70; E. E. Urbach, "The *Arugat ha-Boshen* of R. Abraham b. Azriel" (Heb.), *Tarbiz*, X (Jerusalem, 1938), 47 ff. We have followed Urbach's conclusive argument which dates the *Kitab Tamim* before 1234 on the basis of a long quotation from it to be found in the text of the *Arugat ha-Boshen*.

[6] Moses b. Hisdai, *Kitab Tamim*, R. Kircheim (ed.), *Ozar Nechmad*, III (1860), 54-95.

any and all public exposition of cosmology. Saadya's *Emunot ve De'ot* was the chief culprit. Saadya had opened the door to all who took up the burden of speculation, i.e. Abraham ibn Ezra in his Biblical commentaries and his *Sefer ha-Hayyim* (English, *Book of Life*) and Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah*, especially in the *Mada*.[1] Saadya "separated many from the fear of God, because men no longer knew the fundaments of their faith. He strengthened the hands of the rebels who have deceit in their hearts against the Talmud which is an all inclusive encyclopedia (*Torah Shelaṭah*)."[2]

Moses b. Hisdai's world was bounded by the Talmud text and its "legitimate" interpretation. Until the Amoraim (circa 500 A.D.) edited their notes into the Talmud there had been a distinct Hebraic metaphysical tradition, but "after the Amoraim the formulas of *Maaseh Bereshit* were hidden."[3] Cosmology and eschatology were "deliberately hidden", or, rather, the techniques of such Biblical interpretation as unraveled the profound metaphysics buried in Biblical vocabulary and letters was secreted. It is unseemly and unwise to dilate on these matters. Moses repeated again and again the formula, "It is to the glory of God that such matters be hidden."[4]

Moses found Saadya's attempt to limit the attributes of God to be pernicious. He felt that Saadya's theory of attributes necessitated the assumption of a powerless God, prisoner of His own perfection, and inevitably precipitated unfortunate conclusions concerning the sacred doctrines of prophecy, providence, and prayer.[5] Moses knew God not as pure being but as the quintessence of light and power whose radiance was refracted in varying degrees through the universe. God created, through emanation, especially through an angelic *Kavod* or glory. His system is reminiscent of gnostic speculation—various agencies of creation creating intermediary beings and, by a process of concretization, finally precipitating the images of prophetic vision. A whole bevy of angelic emanations people his pages and are presumed to perform certain specific tasks.[6]

[1] The references to Abraham ibn Ezra are *ibid.*, pp. 67, 84, 96, 97; to Maimonides *ibid.*, pp. 66, 68, 75, 77.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 64. cf. *ibid.*, p. 68, "Until Saadya no one invented such matters concerning Torah, the Prophets, the Holy Writings, and the eternal truths of the sages."

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60, etc.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 65 f.

God remains hidden from man—too brilliant to be seen. The world is sheltered from God's brilliance by a protecting curtain [1]—we will find that David b. Saul's theosophy of a cosmic "veil" bore many similarities. [2] Though hidden and unviewed, attributes may be posited of God. In some miraculous way He judges men, cries over their peccadilloes and smiles on their heroics. [3] Moses b. Hisdai was no simple anthropomorphist. He attacked the fantasies of the *Alef Bet de R. Akiba* and the *Shiur Komah* which posited actual dimensions of God. [4] God is one, universal, eternal, spiritual yet somehow substantial and present. If philosophy denies these elements, the error is philosophy's.

Moses b. Hisdai's cosmological and theological views—including his insistence on a literal interpretation of Talmudic Midrash—were not authoritative. By his attack on Judah Hasid's *Sefer ha-Hasidim* for various de-anthropomorphising speculations, Moses revealed that his was an extreme position even among German Hasidim; but his manuscript illumined ideas which had currency and, as we shall see, ideas which were more or less refracted in many of the anti-Maimonids. [5]

What separated these men?

Interestingly, Samuel ibn Tibbon would not have argued against Moses b. Hisdai's theory of a hidden Jewish metaphysical tradition. In his cosmological commentary to Gen. 1:9, the *Ma'amar Yikkavu ha-Mayim* (English, *Text on "Let the Waters be Gathered Together"*), Samuel wrote of "'the truth which our prophets and sages long since secreted." [6] Where Samuel would and did take issue was on the need to maintain these ancient caveats. He himself had deliberately revealed much that had been heretofore locked away. Why had he chosen to publish what had for long lain concealed? "For I saw that these truths...are today public among the nations." [7] In brief, the Hebraic gnosis was now common knowledge. Christians and Muslims possessing intricate metaphysics mock us for our simplicities "saying we have no prophecy only superficialities." [8]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[2] Cf. Chapter IX.
[3] Moses b. Hisdai, III, 59.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 67, 74, 95.
[6] Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yikkavu ha-Mayim*, Bisselheim (ed.) (Pressburg, 1837), p. 173.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*

We should not be a shame to our neighbors nor an object of derision to those about. "When it is necessary to work for God, put aside tradition." [1]

Though both Samuel and Moses agreed on the myth of a hidden metaphysical tradition their assumptions as to its contents differed radically. To Moses metaphysics was a distillate of Talmudically enshrined Persian angelology, [2] the Midrashic doctrine of *Maaseh Bereshit*, [3] and that uniquely Hebraic mystique which insisted on the exotic power of the letters of God's name and of the letters and lines of the Biblical text. [4] God is creator, concealed and active. God operates through angelic intermediaries. God's will, not natural law, sustains life. The angels have personalities and wills of their own and are something altogether other from the philosophic constructs labeled "angels" by which metaphysicians explained the motion of the spheres and thereby the relations between an immovable God and a world in motion. The many Talmudic legends about angelic and demonic phenomena have a literal force. Samuel's "hidden" metaphysics can be deduced from Maimonides' and from Samuel's insistence that the basic framework of the universe was common knowledge. God is Creator and wholly other. He established motion which passed down the planetary spheres to man. On earth natural law is the order of the day. God's omnipotence is self limited.

It would be facile but not accurate to say that Samuel's metaphysics rested upon 13th century science and Moses' on 13th century superstition. Fundamentally, Samuel rested his case on reason, and Moses on revelation, but elementally their differences represent two traditional responses to the nature of God. The one required God only to be, the other required that God exhibit personality. Both attitudes had their superstitions and their rationales and their virtues. In the 13th century Samuel's drew on a broadly outlined tradition, but in its own way Moses' was neither unsophisticated nor unenlightened.

What separated these men? Samuel ibn Tibbon was bi-lingual. He came of an emigré family of translators. As a youth Samuel had been tutored by a "master of secular sciences." [5] His father

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 175.
[2] Moses b. Hisdai, III, 58-9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[5] Neubauer, I, 53.

had presented him with an extensive secular and ~~Hebraic~~ library many of whose philosophic texts Judah ibn Tibbon personally had copied for his son "so that he did not have to borrow a book from any man." [1] Samuel was early set "to learn Arabic writing" as well as Hebrew. [2] From swaddling Samuel was exposed to two cultures. "Wake up, my son, busy yourself with science and ethics. ~~Habituate yourself~~ to good moral habits...As the Arabic philosopher (Al Gazzali) has said, 'there are two branches of knowledge—religious and secular.' Be diligent (in both), my son." [3]

We have no similar *curriculum vita* for Moses b. Hisdai, but it is certain that his education was of a piece with that shared by most Tosaphists. His was the world of the *yeshibah*—a world illiterate in Arabic—a world in which no text of medieval Arabic-Jewish philosophy ever played a major role. [4]

L. Rabinovitz, in his exhaustive study of the culture of medieval French Jewry, concludes:

> To the Jew of Northern France and Germany the Talmud was his world, the sum total of all knowledge and education and doctrine and theology in the universe.... For the Jews of Northern France, there was no independent study of any subject outside the Talmud; secular knowledge was regarded only in so far as it might be an aid to the elucidation of the Talmud, and—what is even more striking—what general knowledge they had was more often than not derived from the Talmud and often led to strange results. [5]

This generalization can not be accepted without qualification. We have seen Simson of Sens becoming aware of a text of Saadya's, *Emunot ve-De'ot*; and let it not be held that Talmudic competence was a mean or unsophisticated accomplishment; Rashi, Rabbenu Tam, Simson of Sens, the Tosaphists generally were respected and revered by all Jewry. The Talmud was a profound book full of philosophic insight. The world view it refracted was unsystematic but out of it fine religious philosophies could be and were constructed and a view of life equal to the vicissitudes of the human situation could be and was forged. What it was not equal to was an appreciation of the rigid logical abstractions, "the way of the Greeks."

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[4] The necessary qualifications for this generalization will shortly be made.
[5] L. Rabinowitz, *The Social Life of the Jews of Northern France in the XII-XIV Centuries* (London, 1938), pp. 220 f.

Greek systematics were associated with the Talmudic legend of four Tannaitic scholars who had entered Pardes—the mythical garden of intellectual splendor—only to be permanently deranged or turned from the living wisdom of the faith. Greece and Israel had approached life from different directions.

A. Neuman, in his treatment of the life of Spanish Jewry, has reconstructed the Spanish *yeshibot* from late 13th century rabbinic sources. His conclusion is simply stated: "The exposition of the *Halakah*, in its broadest sense, was the aim and sole content of the studies pursued in the *Yeshibot*." [1]

Certification implied no more than competence in the intricacies of Jewish law, the traditional texts and the teachings of the faith. However, this purely traditional curricula did not exhaust the educational goals of many nor were all solely trained in this ~~curriculum~~. Beyond the *Yeshibah* was the private tutor—in Iberia, especially, his curriculum was "Greek," not Gemarrah. Judah b. Samuel ibn Abbas shortly after mid-century set down the broader educational theory. It included beyond the texts: grammar, ethics, medicine, arithmetic, music, logic, natural science, and culminated in metaphysics. [2] Israel Abraham summed up the tutorial available to Spanish Jews of the time in this way:

> Bible, Hebrew, Poetry (satirical, eulogy and love poems), Talmud, the relation of Philosophy and Revelation, the Logic of Aristotle, the elements of Euclid, Arithmetic, the mathematical works of Nichomachus, Theodosius, Menelaus, Archemides and others; Optics, Astronomy, Music, Mechanics, Medicine, Natural Science, and, finally, metaphysics. [3]

This was essentially the full breadth of the knowledge available within the Islamic-Jewish world. [4] The ideal persisted—but it

[1] Neuman, II, 78. The autobiographic reminiscences of Yedaya of Béziers (late 13th century), published by Neubauer, makes clear that Provençal yeshibot were equally Talmud centered and engaged in extraneous subject matter only at the occasional whim of a master. (A. Neubauer, "Yedaya de Béziers," *REJ* XXI [1890], 244 ff.).

[2] Judah b. Samuel ibn Abbas, *Yi'rei Netiv*, quoted in M. Guedemann, *Das Jüdische Unterrichtswesen* (Vienna, 1873), p. 147 ff.

[3] I Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1958), p. 365.

[4] The one hundred and three titles sold in 1170 by the Cairo physician [illegible] represent the broadest library known to have been owned by an Oriental Jew. The titles sold range from Aristotle and Galen to late and comparatively little known Neo-Platonism and Stoics and are all secular. (D. Baneth, "A Doctor's Library in Egypt at the Time of Maimonides," *Tarbiz*, XXX, No. 2 [1961], 171-185.)

depended now on private opportunity—and competent tutors were not always available; and on the availability of texts, and these, too, were increasingly rare; and on the financial resource to pay for this privileged training; and on the private interest of the student who could qualify for religious office without the whole part or little of this complex training.

As a result there was no uniformity of background or interest such as develops a broad sense of community, identity of purpose and at least an understanding of basic premise. Here was a situation much like that in our own day which C. P. Snow has described as two co-existing but unrelating cultures. It was not possible for all Jews to get a common core A. B. degree before they graduated to seminary study. Some seminarians were poor or came from areas where the texts or tutors were unavailable. Other young men had no interest in the seminary world. The nascent Spanish, French, and Italian universities, except in the most unusual circumstance, were closed to Jewish matriculation.[1] It is always dangerous for a people when a self-styled leader intelligentsia develops alongside an equally intelligent authoritative leadership who, because of differing presuppositions and training, hardly can communicate. The subtleties of the Talmud are as finely honed as the subtleties of Aristotle, but they begin with different premises, employ differing procedures, and result in widely separate *Weltanschauungs*.

The worlds of Samuel ibn Tibbon and Moses b. Hisdai went separate ways. Samuel prepared a glossary of philosophic terms employed in the *Moreh*, the *Bi'ur Meha Milot Zarot* (English, *An Interpretation of Strange Words*) and a philosophic commentary on the Bible of which only parts are known.[2] We have already detailed his output as translator.[3]

This world and its interest were unknown to Moses b. Hisdai. He lived out his life expounding the law[4] —preserving the integ-

[1] Hillel of Verona (1120-1195) studied medicine at the University of Montpellier. Joseph b. Makir ibn Tibbon may have been a professor on its medical faculty—but these are the exceptions that save the rule.

[2] Besides the *Ma'amar Yikhavu ha-Mayim* already referenced, Samuel wrote philosophic commentaries to Eccl. and Cant., and the *Ner ha-Hefes*—a listing of those parts of the Five Books of Moses which are to be taken allegorically. Samuel's insistence in these that many passages are Haggadot, i.e. guides to a better personal or social life rather than history, will, as we shall see (especially in the poetry of Meshullam b. Solomon), become a major irritant to the anti-Maimonidist.

[3] Cf. Chapter VI.

[4] Cf. *Teshubot R. Meir ha-Aruchot*, M. Bloch (ed.) (Budapest, 1895), No.

grity of the revealed faith as he knew it and insisting that men like ibn Ezra, who attacked this truth, met their deserved punishment. To prove the force of God's malediction, Moses repeated the legend that God saw to it that ibn Ezra was attacked by a pack of wild dogs, contracted rabies, and died a painful death. [1]

The *Moreh* was received by a world betwixt and between.

Samuel and Moses were at one at least in this—faith was to each a matter of importance. There were others who had no great passion for the faith. Nachmanides wrote of those so mired in the mud of Greek thought that they denied to God the attribute of power and any providential concern for mortal beings. [2] Joseph b. Todros told of sophisticates who insisted that all the texts of the Torah were allegories, that Biblical miracles were implausible fancies, and who dismissed sarcastically the "primitive" teachings of the scholars. [3] Not unexpectedly, we hear of a pervasive ritual indifference among the spiritually uprooted: "They absent themselves from public worship and from private prayer." [4]

This group remains anonymous. Indifference seldom sits down to work out its skepticism in reasoned form. They were certainly mainly Spanish and Provençal. Baer has suggested an identity between these and the courtier class; and he goes on to suggest that the Maimonides controversy may be viewed as a minor scene from the age old clash of haves and have-nots. [5] Men like Joseph b. Todros did criticize those who have more wealth than Torah and who find presumed support in the *Moreh* for their religious indifference. [6]

601; *Teshubot R. Meir*, N. Rabinowitz (ed.) (Lemberg, 1860), Nos 110-111 and 114.

[1] Moses b. Hisdai, III, 97.

[2] *GN*, IV 19.

[3] *GN*, III, 151.

[4] *Ibid.*, 165.

[5] Baer, *A History* . . . , I, 102 ff.

[6] *GN*, III, 172-173. The classic example of this identity of wealth and wordliness would be Sheshet b. Isaac Benveniste. Rich, high handed, and, as we have seen, passionately committed to philosophy, [illegible] once became so angered over synagogue regulations that he spoke irreverently of Rashi and the tradition. However, Baer's larger thesis is hard to establish; Alfakhar, Nachmanides, Jonah Gerundi, and many of the Provençal anti-Maimonists were well born. Meir b. Todros was well born and well connected but not rich. On his important and close family connections to the Ibn Shushans and Alconstantinis, cf. Brody, II (1936), 4-8. On Meir's being a poor relation or at least having suffered major reversals, note this verse:

Certainly only the well-to-do could provide tutors for their sons. Furthermore, it was only among the courtier and merchant class that there was any degree of social and professional mingling, and therefore any reason to believe that the coin of Greek philosophy could be exchanged on the open market. "Men in the royal service have been permitted to study Greek science, to learn the art of healing and the science of measurement, and all the other sciences and their application, so that they may earn their livelihood in the courts and palace." [1] The indifferent first heard of the *Moreh* from pious scholars who were excited by its intellectual horizons. Probably few among them bothered to read it. We suspect that the *Moreh's* role at this time was not unlike Einstein's general theory of relativity in our own, much discussed by the average man but known only through popularization and at the once removed. They heard that Maimonides had allegorized many Scriptural passages and jumped happily to the conclusion that he would have shared their sweeping claim that "the whole Torah from Creation to Sinai is an allegory." [2] They heard that Maimonides had offered a catalogue of rational explanations for the Biblical Law, and assumed that he would have agreed that if a law did not satisfy their categories of reason it might be discarded. [3] They heard that Maimonides had given a novel interpretation to the tenet of resurrection, and assumed that he did not mean what he said when he insisted that resurrection remained a doctrine of the faith.

> "Behold, I am adrift in the sea of this hard time—
> a net has been spread for me
> Command to pacify her according to your generosity
> that I may come safely to dry land."
> (Brody, II, 36, No. 13.)

There is no indication that Sheshet's wealthy and powerful Castillian counterpart, Joseph ibn Shoshan, shared his attitudes. A panegyric and a eulogy by Meir b. Todros in honor of ibn Shoshan has been published. (*Ibid.*, 11-12; 25-31, Nos. 1 and 10.) Ibn Shoshan was *almoxarife* of Alfonso VIII of Castille, and counterpart in power in Castille of Sheshet in Aragon. (Baer, *Die Juden* . . . . , II, 39, Nos. 19-21.) Did Meir counterpose political powers? Do we have here a reflex of some ancient Aragonese-Castillian feud? What, at least, is true is that it was a cultivated and sophisticated and religiously indifferent group *among* the wealthier class who took up the *Moreh* as justification for their disinterest. Lacking diaries and personal memoirs (a medium in which Jewish history is poor) we can do little more in the area of reconstructing socio-economic biography.

[1] *KTR*, III 8b.
[2] *KTR*, II, 1b.
[3] *GN*, III, 65.

These restless and rootless anonymous men, however few they may have been, precipitated the Maimonidean controversy. They presented a serious threat to the security and safety of the Jewish community.

"Alas the sword of apostasy is active among us." In this new confrontation by the Church militant and missionary the apostate was a jugular threat. [1] How to head off his defection and defamation was the issue between the men of faith who fought the Maimonidean controversy.

[1] *KTR*, III, 8b-9a.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ACTUAL CONTROVERSY

What have the burners burned? They have cindered a book of most pleasant things, more precious than gold.
Fire has consumed them. Yet how can fire consume them?
Remember this, you who burn and are vainglorious,
All is not as it appears, they went up like Elijah to God, and as an angel in the flame. [1]

Early in the 13th century Judah al Harizi prefaced a copy of his Hebrew paraphrase of the *Moreh* with an encomium which concluded with the quatrain:

If you desire to rejoice in the garden of wisdom
Here is a garden bed full of bloom
If you would offer your heart to God as a sacrifice
Here is the fire and the kindling. [2]

Early in the fourth decade of the 13th century, possibly in December of 1232, [3] probably at Montpellier, [4] the *Moreh*, literally, became

[1] Steinschneider, *Kobetz al-Yad*, I, 15. The poem is generally ascribed to Abraham Maimonides.

[2] Judah al Harizi, p. 402.

[3] The date of the burning is a matter of conjecture. We know that Abraham Maimonides was supplied with information on the event in January of 1235 by a Montpellier traveler then in Acre, and presumed it then to be three years after the burning. (Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 54.) The only other clearly dated document is the Saragossa counterban of July-August 1232, which by internal evidence must be dated before the burning and hence provides us a *terminus ad quo*. (*KTR*, III, 5b.) The entire David Kimhi–Judah b. Joseph Alfakhar correspondence took place at a distance and with several hiatuses after the promulgation of the Saragossa ban. (*KTR*, III, 1a.) This correspondence concludes with Kimhi's third and jubilant letter recording the full extent of Solomon b. Abraham's perfidy—which means that the burning can be placed no earlier than, say, December of 1232 or early 1233, since the beginning of this correspondence took place at about the time of the Saragossa ban.

[4] The contemporary but not first-hand account of David Kimhi placed the denunciation of the *Moreh* in Montpellier (*KTR*, III, 4b), and there is no reason to doubt this detail. Hillel of Verona, whose testimony is dated sixty years after the fact, placed a denunciation and burning in Paris, but this is to be doubted, and resulted, probably, from a confusion of the Talmud burning of 1240 at Paris and the *Moreh* affair eight or so years before. (*KTR*, III, 14a.)

fire and kindling. The details of this cindering will now occupy us.

The usual historical account of the Montpellier incident lists three chief anti-Maimonidean actors [1] and paints them in black

[1] The quarrel was one of individuals. Even when communities pronounced the ban, this was the action of its religious and/or political leadership, not of the people. Much of the Jewish community undoubtedly was unaware and unaffected by these disputes except for their consequence. Literacy was far more broadly spread among Jews than among their neighbors, but not universal. When around 1290 the council of the Toledo Aljaman was empowered by Alfonso X to appoint "elders" in the surrounding communities "there wasn't anyone in these places able to read a single letter." (Baer, *A History* . . ., I, 214.) The goldsmiths and craftsmen and pawnbrokers probably had little but a gossip type of interest in the programs of the quarrel—if they heard of it at all. It was a matter of special note when such correspondence was read aloud in the synagogue. Samuel b. Abraham is the only respondent to mention consulting his community. (*GN*, IV, 14.)

There was no mass polity. Baer suggests that in all of Castille in 1290 there were no more than 3600 tax paying families. (Baer, *A History* . . ., I, 190.) The largest Aljaman, the princely and much praised Toledo, had no more than 350 families. Other representative estimates suggested by Baer: for Seville 200 families, for Jarez de la Frontera perhaps 100, for Burgos 120 to 150. There were certainly no more six decades earlier. He intimated a similar number "for all of the lands under the Aragonese crown by the end of James the Conqueror's reign." (*Ibid.*, I, 195.) Saragossa, the largest Jewry, had perhaps 200 families. Huesca and Catalayud were somewhat smaller. Barcelona, the largest in Catalonia, 200; Lerida, 100. Emery, in his excellent study of Perpignan's Jewry, estimates, on the basis of rather complete notarial records, that at the end of the 13th century there was here a total Jewish population of around 100 families, in all, 300 to 400 souls. (R. Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century* [New York, 1959], p. 11.) Perpignan circa 1300 was at the zenith of a century-long growth from relative obscurity and it would seem fair to equate this end-of-century statistic with those of the flourishing centers of Lunel, Beziers, Narbonne, Montpellier a hundred years earlier. The one fairly accurate statistic places 140 adult males in Narbonne in 1305. (A. Blanc, "Les Livres de Compte de Jayme Olivier" [Narbonne, 1885-1901], pp. 545-546, quoted by J. Régné, "Etude sur la Condition des Juifs de Narbonne," *REJ*, LXII [1911], 257.) Of the French Jewries at the time, Rabinowitz states on the basis of a study of Tosaphist sources: "We may assume with some certainty that a community of one hundred householders was regarded as a really large community, and probably Paris alone could number so many. The larger cities had from fifty to one hundred Jews, the smaller ones from ten to fifty, while in many places there were but individuals." (Rabinowitz, p. 32.) The figures are for early in the century; but difficult times and the *herem ha-yishub* quota restrictions certainly kept numbers within such limits.

The techniques of 20th century political analysis tend statistically to discount individual idiosyncrasy, knowing that mass numbers will compensate. 13th century Jewish life prohibits us this luxury. Class consciousness and cultural norms are convenient and helpful historical explanations but in the 13th century personal vanities, family ~~trees~~, and personality quirks can not be discounted and are, unfortunately, largely unknown to us. Nachmanides' role in the quarrel was heavily influenced by his blood ties

colors: as senior, Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier together with two disciples, David b. Saul and Jonah b. Abraham Gerundi; and holds them directly responsible for the burning.[1] It is our contention that none of these three was the actual informer. *Malshinut*, informing, was a capital crime. Anathema would have greeted any such act.[2] No further support could have been given such a criminal. No authority would have cited the opinions of such a person in *halachic* matters. Yet each "conspirator" was subsequently defended and cited and, at least in the case of Jonah Gerundi, was given high communal position.

Before we elaborate on this, the facts need briefly to be reconstructed. Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier and his disciples some time before 1232, possibly as early as two decades before, became concerned that some speculative minded Jews minimized

with Jonah Gerundi—especially when the latter's legitimacy was questioned. The assent of the Aljamans of Aragon to the counterban against the banners of the *Moreh* reflected as much the power of Bahya and Moses Alconstantini—physicians attendant and diplomatic interpreters to James I of Aragon—and Bahya's personal interest in the matter and the sway of these court Jews, as they reveal the inner feelings of these communities. Similarly, one can not separate Nachmanides' position from his decade-long opposition to the authority of the Alconstantinis over the chief *rab* and *dayyan* of the Aljamans of Aragon and Valencia. (Y. Baer, "Books and New Research in the History of the Jews of Spain" (Heb.), *Devir*, II [Berlin, 1924], 316 ff.)

[1] Typically, "These three propounded the ban . . ." (Graetz, *A History* . . ., III, 529.) Graetz pictured both Solomon and his disciples as "bigoted," as sustaining a theology "both gross and anthropomorphic," and as borrowing from the Church militant the idea of enforced conformity: "The effective instrument of excommunication to destroy ideas apparently pernicious." (*Ibid.*; cf. Neuman, II, 119 ff.: "A redoutable opponent in the person of the revered Talmudist, Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier, arose to engage the adherents of philosophy in vigorous combat, and he was blindly followed by two fanatical disciples, David b. Saul and Rabbi Jonah Gerundi. . . . Standing almost alone, except for the support of two of his disciples, Solomon anathematized the philosophic writings of Maimonides, interdicted the sciences, and pronounced the sentence of excommunication against those who engaged in the study of profane literature or who treated and dealt too freely with the aggadic portion of the Talmud. . . . Solomon finally resorted to the execrable measure of denouncing the philosophic works of Maimonides to the Inquisition as heretical and dangerous." cf. Saracheck, p. 77 ff.: "Thus occurred the shameful public burning of the *Guide* and the *Book of Knowledge*. It was done at the instigation of the strict traditionalists, with the approval of the Cardinal Romanus, the Judge of the heresy court." Cf. I. Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Yisrael*, I (Tel Aviv, 1959), 277 f.

[2] For specific citations of anathemas pronounced and of the execution of such culprits, see D. Kaufmann, "Jewish Informers in the Middle Ages," *JQR*, VIII (1898), 217-238.

own purpose, and justified all such activity on the authority of Maimonides. Samuel b. Abraham defined his social concern this way: traditional teaching, openly violated certain religious requirements, interpreted Biblical and Talmudic statements allegorically to their

> It grew out of our zeal for the Torah of our Creator, for we heard of a minority of both young and old, publicly insisting on non-traditional teachings, following a path which was not good after their thoughts, to tear down the tradition, and to spin allegories out of the narrative of the Written and Oral Law which reduced to pedagogic example and flight of literary fancy the description of Creation and the chronicle of Cain and Abel and other similar narratives. [1]

Apparently, Solomon *et al* came to the conclusion that these "unorthodox" groups could be silenced if they were denied the cover of "official" sanction, i.e. if Maimonides' philosophic material, the *Moreh* and the *Mada*, were banned to public instruction. Solomon did not accuse Maimonides or these works of being heretic. Translators had abused the text. The very act of translation was an abuse. Maimonides had intended the *Moreh* to be a "reserved" doctrine taught individually to thoroughly qualified graduate students. [2] The translators had popularized and publicized and many who were intellectually and spiritually unprepared had sampled its ideas to their confusion and to the weakening of their faith.

Apparently Solomon *et al* debated these people often and publicly and circulated pamphlets against them through the Provence. They were met for their pains with denunciation and contumely. Wanting to buttress their position, Jonah b. Abraham Gerundi was sent north to gain support for a proposed ban against the *public* study of philosophic works generally and of Maimonides' works particularly. The Sarfatim did in fact publish such a ban whose only immediate effect was to bring forth a Provençal counterban against any who interfered in such study. [3]

Those who opposed Solomon then sent the aged and respected translator-grammarian-Talmudist David Kimhi south into Aragon and Castille to state their case, while the anti-Maimonists [illegible] Nachmanides of Gerona and others whom they had reason to believe sympathetic. In Aragon most of the leading Aljamans (Saragossa,

[1] *GN*, IV, 11.
[2] *GN*, IV, 12.
[3] *KTR*, III, 2b. We are in the dark as to the individual and/or communal signators though it is clear that it included leaders of the communities of Lunel, Beziers, and Narbonne.

Huesca, Monzon, Catalayud, and Lerida) joined in the counterban under the influence of the powerful Alconstantini family and especially its leader, the physician-politician Bahya b. Moses. In Castille, however, the counterban met with little approval, the unsympathetic position taken by the well born and influential physician Judah ibn Alfakhar largely being responsible.

This literature and politics will be examined in detail. The entire brouhaha was aborted within a matter of months by the unexpected burning of the *Moreh* in Montpellier.[1] The issue became moot and Israel fell to the elemental business of healing the breach.

[1] No satisfactory explanation has been offered which would explain Montpellier's central role in the controversy—indeed, none to our knowledge has been attempted. Montpellier "was a center of orthodoxy in Albigensian country." (R. G. Little, *Medieval France* [Cambridge, 1922], p. 244.) The preaching fathers had early in the century established a house there and the Dominicans had a *Studium Generale*. A council there in 1215 reaffirmed the mandate of the Episcopal inquisition established already in 1184. It was to Montpellier that Raymond VII came in 1224 to make his submission. Montpellier was a steadfast Catholic island in a seething Catharist sea. Perhaps this militant orthodoxy put the Jewish community under some duress to control its own speculatives. There is no proof either of such conversation or coercion. The ban was not a decision of the *Kahal*. Abraham Maimonides insisted on this. (Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 55.) In further corroboration the names of the rabbinic authorities of Montpellier are known from their signatures on a legal brief in an entirely unrelated matter and excepting Solomon none figure in this connection. (Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, p. 329.) Solomon acted on his own. The possibility is not ruled out that he felt that the Church would not disapprove, but as far as is known no bargain was struck. It is far more plausible that living in a Provençal commune which from the first felt Catholic power and sensed the direction and success of Church energies, Solomon had a better idea than contemporaries who still lived within religiously freer walls that the Church militant was challenging on an entirely new basis the integrity of Jewish life. Technically under the crown of Aragon, lieged to the Count of Toulouse who controlled the citadel, seat of the Bishop of Maguelone who shared the market with the commune—the Jewish community's relations with each of these various authorities is beyond reconstruction. The lords of Montpellier "owned" the Jews and licensed the Jewish physicians. The Bishop wielded ecclesiastic control of the university, which then included faculties in law and medicine and perhaps already one in the arts.

Any attempt to explain the issue in terms of a town-gown controversy is unpromising. The gown in this case was rigidly orthodox. Jews were rarely admitted, indeed, of all the protagonists only Jonah Gerundi was associated as a student of the medical faculty and he was, of course, on the side of the traditionalists. All in all, Montpellier was not an easy city in which to keep one's balance and it most certainly was a city in which Jews were constantly subject to sophisticated church arguments and bald church attacks. This can be substantiated by the contemporaneous but anonymous Pentateuchal commentary *Leket Katzer*, which contrived into the familiar exegesis numer-

Of the burning itself there is little that is certain except that it occurred. David Kimhi, who was sick in Avila at the time, accused Solomon b. Abraham of being the informer and claimed that Solomon had peddled his baggage of lies first to the Franciscans, then to the Dominicans (who, surprisingly, did nothing about it), finally to "The Cardinal" who ordered an investigation and finally confiscation.[1] The Cardinal referred to was probably the Papal legate Romanus, whom we know to have been in Montpellier circa 1233 directing an inquisitional attack on Catharist heresiarchs.[2] Kimhi's information has served as the basis for most reconstructions.[3]

The Toledoans, Judah Alfakhar[4] and Joseph b. Todros ha-Levi,[5] presumed Solomon's guilt even as they argued in mitigation on the basis of extreme provocation—but they had only Kimhi's information to go on.

On the other hand, the brothers Judah and Abraham ibn Hisdai of Barcelona (in a circular letter to the Spanish Aljamans) did not nominate the guilty and spoke only of "people wayward and perverse who had banded together. . . ." They added a detail—the tongues of the informers had been cut out[6]—a fate we are certain did not befall Jonah Gerundi, who lived out his days a a public preacher, and one which probably did not befall the others.

The Hisdai post eventum account is probably the more exact. There is no doubt that Solomon, David, and Jonah were active in opposing speculative energies within the community and were identified publicly as leaders of this cause. There is, however, every reason to doubt their being the actual agents of denunciation.

Despite Jonah Gerundi's active partisanship, the Montpellier physician Isaac b. Shem Tob, who in 1235 reported the incident to Abraham Maimonides, made no mention of Jonah in his report

rous apologetic passages seeking to answer various Christian attacks. (*Ibid.*, p. 327, No. 8.)

Montpellier's Hebrew name, *Har Ga'ash*, the mountain of trembling, was consciously appropriate to Jewish life there. Solomon's controversy was his program for stability.

[1] *KTR*, III, 4b.

[2] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition*, I (New York, 1955), 316.

[3] *KTR*, III, 4a ff.

[4] *KTR*, III, 4b.

[5] *GN*, III, 172 f.: "They sinned and rebelled, but he (Solomon) also is not forgiven."

[6] *GN*, III, 176 ff.

none at least Abraham Maimonides thought worthy of repetition. [1] Shortly after the affair, circa 1240, Jonah became preacher and moral revivalist to the large and proud Toledo community where he lived out his days with honor (d. 1263). [2] No Jewish community would have tolerated the sermonic strictures of a known informer. [3]

[1] Abraham Maimonides' account can be reduced to these terms. There were in the Provence two parties on questions of religion: one a party of intelligentsia who had a true concept of faith, the other, Talmudists who followed a confused doctrine which they had received of their fathers. (Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 54.) Two men, Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier and David b. Saul, made themselves the zealous heads of this second party. Since the men of "true faith" were self proclaimed disciples of Moses Maimonides, these two aforementioned began to attack Maimonides' teaching and to speak slander about his authority and orthodoxy and, incidentally, about Abraham Maimonides' authority. Solomon prepared a brief listing errors in the first two parts of the *Moreh* touching, especially, the question of resurrection and Maimonides' rational explanation of the commandments. (*Ibid.*, p. 58 and p. 68). Solomon passed out the word that Abraham Maimonides had high-handedly excommunicated two scholars who had differed with his father: i.e., David b. Saadya and Simson of Sens. (*Ibid.*, p. 53.) The news, especially that dealing with the fate of the venerated Tosaphist leader Simson of Sens, excited the French and they, sharing Solomon's mistrust of "Greek studies," issued a ban against reading the *Moreh* or the *Mada*. Abraham Maimonides was also in receipt of a counter-ban, which he attributed to his father's old friends in Lunel "against the little foxes who despoil the vineyard" and of the saddening information that the *Moreh* had been burnt by the authorities after it had been denounced to them by Solomon b. Abraham and David b. Saul "through the agency of the nobility who helped them because they (the Jews) quarreled with their own faith and revealed its shame." (*Ibid.*, p. 55.)

It is apparent that no specifics of the denunciation of the *Moreh* to Christian authorities were known to Abraham Maimonides. Solomon and David are implicated but the when and why are not explained. None of our sources, as we shall see, was clear on this point—the only explanation really attempted was Joseph b. Todros ha-Levi's that such personal pressure was put on Solomon because of his zealous concern for the orthodoxy of the faith that he had no alternative. (*GN*, III, 172.) Neither in this account nor in any other is it clear to whom the book was denounced. Abraham Maimonides speaks of the "princes" [redacted]; others of the royal court; still others of the Franciscans and Dominicans either separately or conjointly.

[2] Gerundi left two fine ethical statements as monument of this stay: *Sefer Sha'arei Teshubah* (English, *The Book of the Gates of Repentence*) and *Sefer ha-Yirah* (English, *The Book of Piety*).

[3] Shrock, Jonah's most recent biographer, follows A. Loewenthal, *R. Jona Gerundi und Seiner Ethischen Kommentar zu den Proverbian* (Berlin, 1910), pp. 6-10; insisting on a minor role for Jonah in this controversy. (A. T. Shrock, *Rabbi Jonah ben Abraham of Gerona* [London, 1948], p. 54 f.) In proof Shrock cites the references to Maimonides in Jonah's works. (*Ibid.*, p. 57 f.) However, the references are minor and the argument carefully designed to put Jonah in a favorable light. Jonah was a busy controversialist, but by no stretch of the imagination an informer. On Gerundi in Toledo see

Of no "informer" would the poets have sung, as did Meshullam b. Solomon of Jonah:

> O perfect one in moral quality, put the honey comb in your mouth and let incense sweeten your heart
> Let your expansive spirit spread out lest your censors cease to give off scent...
> O Jonah, respected rabbi, may his footstool be a sanctuary and his seat a place of offering.
> Honor will sing of you, churlishness will be silent—pay no attention to it
> May the *Shekinah* rest on your house and may God's spirit protect your holiness and testify of you.... [1]

A similar case can be made for David b. Saul. Israel Levi has published a legal brief edited by David against the views of an anonymous *halachist* who had legislated rather permissively in certain matters touching the fitness of wine which had passed in transit through non-Jewish hands. [2] The document postdates the 1230's, since it cited Moses of Coucy's *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, which was not compiled until the 1250's. [3] No scholar who had been smeared with the taint of having denounced a Hebrew work to the Church would have dared write a responsum with the fervor and condemnatory abandor David showed here. Any such writing would not only not have been tolerated, it certainly would not have been cited by subsequent authorities as effective precedent. [4]

Even the master "conspirator," Solomon b. Abraham, continued to be reverenced as scholar and rabbi. At the close of the century we find Menahem Meiri, the revered scholar of Perpignan, citing

the excellent account in Baer, *A History* . . ., I, 250-257.

[1] H. Brody, "Poems of Meshullam b. Solomon Da Pierra" (Heb.), *Yedeot ha-Mahon le-Hekes ha-Sfira ha-Ivrit*, IV (1938), 45-46, No. 8, vv. 52-54.

[2] I. Levi, "Un Recueil de Consultations Inédites de Rabbins de La France Merideonale," *REJ*, XXXIX (1899), 231-241. David wrote of having wondered as a boy at certain practices of Spanish wine merchants who put a bit of honey into their kegs to free these from any charge of unfitness for Jewish consumption if they were handled by non-Jews. His teacher, who had taught him this legal nicety, followed consciously the *Mishneh Torah*, although no other Provençal or Narbonnese sage agreed. (*Ibid.*, p. 237.) Interestingly, Maimonides is treated throughout as an authority necessarily to be considered, though in this case Maimonides' view was dismissed. The quotations are all from *M. T. Maachelot Assurot* 11 : 11, 9 : 10. (*Ibid.*, p. 236.)

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[4] Cf. the affirmatory references to this brief in a later responsum by Samuel Sulami written circa 1300. (*Ibid.*, p. 231 ff.)

him in his responsa.[1] We also possess some legal correspondence between Solomon and Nachmanides, though this is undated.[2]

Someone, possibly some converted Jew aware of the roiling controversy, denounced the *Moreh* and *Mada* to a papal mission, or perhaps a mission clergy simply heard of the boiling argument and thought to make the most of it. That the informer was any of the three scholar protagonists of the anti-Maimonidean ban is doubtful. Solomon and his disciples inadvertently prepared a witch's brew; but to the crime itself they were but tragic bystanders.

What manner of men were these?

Nachmanides,[3] Judah Alfakhar,[4] Meshullam b. Solomon,[5] and Joseph b. Todros ha-Levi[6] spoke warmly of Solomon, considered him a fine scholar, and acted on the presumption of his Talmudic soundness. Abraham Maimonides referred to Solomon and David as masters of *halacha*—as familiars of the intricate byways of Talmudic logic.[7] It is clear from his *Milhamot Adonai* that neither Solomon nor David were considered simple men or queer duck fanatics. Abraham faulted them only for being philosophically naive.[8] He meant by this that they were unaware of the presuppositions of his own and his father's heavily Aristotelian cosmology. From Abraham's account we can reconstruct tentatively some of Solomon's premises. Reason must be subservient to revelation as the law (Torah) predated Creation,[9] hence study of the Torah rather than the activation of the intellect (i.e. philosophy) is the prime concern of religious devotion. Solomon took to heart the Talmudic injunction against drinking from the wells of the Greeks believing, probably from actual observation, that philosophic study

[1] Menahem b. Solomon Meiri, *Magen Abot*, Isaac Last (ed.) (London, 1909), Chapter 6.

[2] Baer's conclusion is inescapable, "the memory of R. Solomon of Montpellier and his scholarship were held in reverence during the next generation." (Baer, *A History* . . . , I, 402, note 60.)

[3] *KTR*, III, 5a.

[4] *KTR*, III, 2a, "The brilliant rabbi . . ."

[5] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 104, No. 44, vv. 79–81, "Had it not been for Solomon, the exceptional man, who insisted on the covenant . . ."

[6] *KTR*, III, 6b, "A faithful branch, a fountain of wisdom and understanding, mighty in his efforts to restore the beaten paths and to repair the breach."

[7] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 59.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

often led to a denial of faith or to a sense of superiority towards its regulations.[1]

We control only one relevant document from Solomon's pen—an undated support seeking letter to a Castillian friend of his school days, Samuel b. Isaac.[2]

There is a determined group who are publicizing ideas of faith which are unique and novel. They destroy the force of tradition by opposing to it the conclusions of their reason.[3] Their *modus operandi* is to spin allegorics out of the text of the Torah—contradictory, unrelated, and vague.[4] For their purpose they use the epic of creation, the history of Cain and Abel and all manner of other stories found in the Torah.[5] They validate this allegorical dispensation by quoting the assertion of the *Moreh's* translators that Maimonides had taught that all the stories of the Torah are allegories and all the *Mitzvot* (commandments) are only customary practices.[6]

The traditional fabric of faith had, in Solomon's mind, been ruptured. He had heard scoffing against the teaching of the rabbis.[7]

Solomon saw this new attitude towards the Biblical text as posing a threat to the viability of faith. When he heard such scoffing he flushed and became fearful.[8] His concern was not of recent origin. Solomon recognized that he had made himself broadly

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[2] *GN*, IV, 10 ff. By internal evidence this letter can be dated after the French ban, i.e. circa 1231-32. It is in essence an appeal for support from an embittered and beleaguered man to a friend of his youth in his hour of need. The support requested is to limit the effectiveness of an emissary from the opposition, David Kimhi, who had been dispatched to Aragon, Castille, and Navarre, to line up signatures for the counterban. Cf Samuel b. Isaac ha-Sardi few biographical details are known. He came to the Provence and studied with Nathan b. Meir of Trinquitaille and returned to Spain. As halachist he was the author of *Sefer ha-Terufot* (on the Civil Laws of Talmud) and *Sefer ha-Zikronot* (on the arrangement of chapters of the Mishnah).

[3] *GN*, IV, 13.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 12. The "superiority complex" of those possessed of the new learning must not be discounted as a precipitating factor. Solomon tells that "He was in their eyes as a fool." (*Ibid.*) One thinks of the unspoken contempt and counterbalancing angry if silent frustration existing between modern and country revivalists. Solomon for all his erudition, must have seemed old hat and a bit incongruous to those who knew "new" learning, and they in turn, dangerous and immoral to him.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

disliked, but the quarrel had become exacerbated only when some men of the Béziers community became involved. These went so far as to accuse Solomon of failing to abide communal restrictions and of shaming publicly the memory of Maimonides. [1]

Solomon's attack on the translators and his generally respectful treatment of Maimonides are interesting in themselves. Maimonides' piety and *halachic* competence generally precluded any frontal *ad hominem* attack. Hence the convenient subterfuge of blaming the translators—a charge which, by the by, had some basis in the excesses of Judah al Harizi's free wheeling paraphrase. To defend himself and to win support, perforce, had turned to the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 12. Béziers played a crucial role in the denouement of l'affaire Solomon—but precise details cannot be documented. Solomon's narrative presumed this chronology:

1) Solomon's concern for the intellectual novelties prevalent;

2) his being informed that a translator of the *Moreh* insisted that Maimonides had held all Biblical stories allegorical and all Biblical commandments supportable by human reason.

3) A protracted debate between Solomon and spinners of novelties which seems to have followed a fairly familiar course until . . .

4) the men of Béziers entered the picture. They are accused of bringing personalities and vindictiveness into the debate and of charging Solomon with slandering Maimonides. The men of Béziers pursued this policy for some time, finally precipitating the denouement we have chronicled.

5) The appeal by Solomon to the rabbis of France for support.

Béziers' involvement thus must be placed fairly early. It was this same Béziers community which later charged Jonah Gerundi with being of impure descent. (N. Brüll, "Die Polemik Für un Gegen Maimuni in Dreizenten Jahrhundert," *Jahrbücher Für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur*, IV [1879], 23; *GN*, IV 9-10.) It was this charge which precipitated Jonah's cousin Nachmanides from his role as peacemaker into the fray (*GN*, IV, 15-36) and which moved Meshullam b. Solomon to this evocation of God's wrath: "On Beziers pour out Thine anger. Yet grant safety to a few." (Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 34, No. 12, v. 25.)

Who were these irascible men of Béziers? We do not know. That no official Kahal program was involved is clear from the text cited above and from the friendly letter from Nachmanides to the venerable jurist and scholar Meshullam b. Moses of Béziers seeking his help in silencing those of that city who had libeled Jonah's legitimacy.

The original Jewish settlement was wiped out in the massacre of 1209 when Béziers fell to the forces of Simon de Montfort. Of those who resettled we are biographically unaware except for the name of Meshullam b. Moses and of another Talmudist, Solomon b. Asher. (Gross, *Gallica Judaica*, p. 101.) We do know that circa 1240 Solomon b. Joseph ibn Ayyub, a Granada scholar emigré, settled here and found a welcome and eager support for his translation of Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* and Averroes' paraphrase of *De Caelo*. Surely, those who rated Solomon b. Abraham and Jonah Gerundi were of the circle that patronized Solomon b. Joseph ibn Ayyub—but of their biographies and motivations we are ignorant.

rabbis of France. These worthies responded with the assurances he requested, nay with more: a representation to gather information on the specific nature of the quarrel and an immediate reproof to those who busy themselves with vain speculation. Solomon apparently had forwarded a translation of the *Moreh* and on the basis of this text and of the report of their observer the final ban was pronounced "because the teaching was in their eyes a blasphemy of tradition and of God." The text of this ban is not known.

David Kimhi's mission was characterized by Solomon as deliberately provocative. It was certainly designed to enlist the Spanish Aljamans against Solomon and the French ban. Solomon accused Kimhi of distorting facts and of displaying doctored copies of Solomon's letters to France in which it was inferred that Solomon, on his own, had excommunicated anyone who followed Maimonides' philosophic regimen. [2]

For his pains Samuel received from his friend a mildly encouraging reply full of admonitions to avoid bitterness and to patch up the quarrel. [3] Samuel b. Isaac touched a theme almost universal in the literature: "The Torah must not be split." [4] There must be one tradition, not two. Bitter memories of the centuries-old Karaite schism still disturbed. [5] Nor could the Aljamans survive if communal authority was challenged. The playing off of one side's grievances against the other before Christian authorities was a frightening prospect. Nachmanides' subsequent peacemaker's letter to the French was based entirely on this same urgency. [6] The Jewish community could permit theological argument only to the

[1] *GN*, IV, 12. One of the impenetrable sidelights of this history is that neither the text ban nor the personalities of the French rabbis emerges. That the text itself was lost is understandable. Nachmanides tells us that it was peremptory and made no mention of specifics. (*KTR*, III, 8a.) That none of the discussants stipulated any name or signature is hard to explain. There were famous Tosaphist leaders aplenty at the time—Yehiel of Paris, Moses of Coucy, Judah b. David, Samuel b. Solomon, etc. If Solomon's chronicle is to be taken at face value it calls into question the fact and authority of Jonah Gerundi's trip north.

[2] *GN*, III, 13. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 14. [4] *GN*, IV, 14-15.

[5] The Karaite schism was not entirely a distant historical memory. Joseph b. Alfakhar, the controversialist Judah b. Alfakhar's father, had been instrumental as late as 1200 in assuring the denial of an appeal to Alphonso VIII by the small Karaite community of Castile. (I. Loeb, "Polémistes Chrétiens et Juifs," *REJ*, XVIII [1889], 60-63; I. Loeb, "Notes sur l'Histoire des Juifs," *REJ*, XIX [1889], 206-207.) There is a possibility Joseph Abulafia's father, Todros, was involved in a similar affair. (*GN*, III, 169.)

[6] *KTR*, III, 8a ff.

point where it did not crystallize into factionalism. Life, not logic, insisted that quarreling could go no farther.

The figure of Solomon which begins to emerge is that of a competent *halachist* and sturdy moralist who was rendered heartsick by the novelties and speculation of those who preferred to argue faith than to abide it. Had he provocation? Undoubtedly, although we can name no names. Was there reason for his urgency? Undoubtedly, his was not a quiet age in a quiet province. His was the Provence of the Albigensian Crusade. His Jewish community was under the Church militant. Such a community needed sturdy faith if it was to survive. Basically we have here the opposition of two *Weltanschauungs* rather than a dialectic between obscurantism and enlightenment. Even Abraham Maimonides sensed as much:

> But the fundamentals of our faith which are the unity of God and His holiness and the holiness of His great and awesome name, most of the dispersed do not concern themselves with, since the mass do not burden themselves except under the pressure of routine circumstance and routine vanities. They depend on obedience to the Law following the teaching of the sages of the Torah. The schools do not bestir themselves except in the sophistications of Abaye and Raba and of Talmudic debate, elucidation, and sophistry. Those who concern themselves in the fundamentals of the Torah and her establishment to know the truth, and to understand it, and to teach it to intellectuals who wish to know the faith of their Creator, these are great sages and they are but few. [1]

Compare also the charge implicit in an unsigned letter to the rabbis of France and Spain:

> If the books have not reached you how did the vagrant thought occur to you to speak angrily and to shame a sage whose universal reverence you must recognize... Behold your control is great in matters of permission and prohibition (halacha—Talmud)—that prohibit in an area with which you are not familiar... [2]

Abraham Maimonides permits us to glimpse David b. Saul's God idea. David denied all anthropomorphic attributes. [3] What he had

[1] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 48.
[2] *GN*, IV, 42.
[3] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 69. David b. Saul appears to have been Provençal, probably of Narbonne. (Levi, *REJ*, XXXIX [1899], 241.) This responsum reveals him to have been mightily concerned with the "fences" which must surround the law and protect its integrity.

LINE MISSING → IS YOUR PURITY; IT IS CONSECRATED WORK -- BUT HOW CAN YOU

not known was the "full light",[1] that is the philosophical truth that God can not be conceived even as a radiance or effulgence without positing of Him some quality of form. David apparently based his theosophy on the mystical doctrine *Aharei ha-Pargud*[2] currently popular among German Hasidim. Briefly put, this doctrine held that God exists as a divine effulgence behind a veil of darkness which masks God's brilliance from men. Into this curtain are woven the archetypes or ideals of the forms of worldly existence. The curtain conceit was an ancient doctrine already alluded to in the Talmud and in 3 Enoch.[3] It was designed to solve the problem of God's otherness—His perfection—and still admit the religious necessity of presuming certain ties between heaven and man. The veil on which are written the ideal forms and hence the fate of the universe permits those—i.e. the prophets—who can penetrate to it to understand and see (that is, foresee) the truths of the Messianic and Resurrection promise. The world runs according to divinely predetermined law. That law is woven into the veil. The Messianic hope also was woven into this veil as part of the preordained order of things.[4] Abraham Maimonides made great fun of this belief. Since the earth is round, the veil must be round and God formed like a doughnut with a hole through the middle. More seriously, he argued that for God to be even a radiance was to posit form; to ascribe form was to ascribe place. Form and place are qualities of matter, hence David was a corporealist and hence a *min* according to his father's formula in *Mishneh Torah* 5:7.

It may not be inappropriate to ask why Abraham Maimonides and the Maimonides generally made so much of God's otherness and pure essence. In part the answer, of course, is systematic. The goal of piety was the fully activated intellect. Man's intellect comes alive in measure as it knows truth. Blemished ideas prevent its activation. Hence quite pragmatically the God idea must be pristine. Biblical anthropomorphisms are misleading hence the uncompromising insistence that they be understood allegorically. We suggest that another part of the answer lies in the field of interreligious relations. In his *Milhamot Adonai*, Abraham Maimonides developed this interesting argument:

[1] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, p. 69.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[3] *T.B. Hagigah* 15a; 3 Enoch 45.
[4] G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 1941), pp. 72-74.

> On all this (the discussion of *Yihud*) no one has doubts from the farthest East to West in all Arab lands for the Ishmaelites got their faith from the Jew and they based the fundamentals of their faith on it (*Yihud*), and turned from the folly of their fathers and idolatry and began conceiving of the unity of His name and greatness and because their worship is to a Unity, (*Yihud*) Scripture likens them to the ritual of sacrifice which is in his name. [1]

Elementally, i.e. systematically Islam and Judaism become one devotion. Those "across the sea who make the mistake of following the simplicities of Bible, Midrash, and *Aggadah*" are fortunately across the sea. Had they been held in Islam such mistaken beliefs would have posed a threat to the *dhimmi* status of the Jew for these, the misguided, worship not God but God's *baboh*—His reflected image—and are not true unitarians.

David's views were anything but simplistic. They represent not the absence of philosophy but another philosophic tradition largely Neo-Platonic received through Talmudic allusions. Certainly he felt himself anything but a corporealist. Indeed, David might well have rejoined, the Bible presumes God's otherness, not the negation of all attributes implicit in the philosophic category of Pure Existence. Furthermore, God is beyond the categories of logic, and that philosophers insist on God's unrelatedness does not preclude [redacted]'s being intimate to man.

A picture of Jonah b. Abraham Gerundi, of whom much more is known, reveals the same breadth and subtlety of mind. Rummaging in his writings we can find "obscurantist" statements. "Let one beware lest he busy himself with far fetched and misleading metaphysics. Let him not join himself to the teachers of these lest they cause him to stumble." [2] On the other hand, Shrock's comprehensive analysis of Jonah's works found in them reference to Saadya Gaon's *Emunot ve-De'ot*, Bahaya ibn Paquda's *Hobot ha-Lebabot*, Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Mibhar ha-Peninim* and *Tikkun Middot ha-Nefesh*, Judah ha-Levi's *Divan*, Maimonides' (see *Commentary on Mishnah Abot*, and Judah Hasid's *Sefer Hassidim*. [3] Jonah's theology had definite ties to the burgeoning Kabbalist

[1] Abraham Maimonides, *Milhamot Adonai*, pp. 71-72. The Scriptural reference is probably Jer. 16 : 19-21.

[2] Jonah Gerundi, *Perush al Mishle* (Berlin, 1910), Prov. 1 : 7.

[3] Shrock, pp. 115-119. Let it be insisted upon that such philosophical references were limited and sketchy. That such material did not intrigue Jonah is obvious—yet equally he was not unaware of it.

thinking centered in his natal city of Gerona, and what was early Kabbalah but a sophisticated philosophic mysticism in Hebraic dress? Meshullam b. Solomon mentioned him along with Ezra, Azriel, and Nachmanides as belonging to this group.[1] In a responsum on concubinage Nachmanides addressed Jonah as "the man of God, the Holy One, the *Hasid*."[2] Nachmanides, in an elegy written on the occasion of Jonah's death, dwelt at length on his learning and ascetic piety:

> . . . Rabbi Jonah, paragon of character, Without peer in purity
> Woe to saintliness, Woe to humility, Woe to ascetism and continence,
> Woe to Talmud and Tosafot, Woe to Legal Refinements and Legal Opinions.[3]

Finally, on Jonah's tombstone there is an inscription which includes these lines:

> In this grave is buried the Father of Moral example Beloved of Israel and Judah
> The rabbi who spoke the secret parts of wisdom and published its Regulations, and enlightened every aspect of its organization
> The source of wisdom and understanding
> The burning light from which both the rays of wisdom and understanding went out
> The great saintly Rabbi Jonah, may his memory be for blessing.[4]

The famed preacher of the intellectually alert Aljaman of Toledo was certainly far more than a fundamentalist pietist.

So much for the three central anti-Maimonidean protagonists. What emerges is an impression of piety and traditional learning, metaphysical involvement in some forms of either German Hasidim (Solomon-David) or the nascent Spanish Kabbalism (Jonah), passion for communal religious integrity, some awareness of philosophic vocabularies but blindness to its possible benefit. Maimonides was respected even while his philosophy was attacked—not directly but because of what translators and traducers imputed to the *Moreh* and claimed to derive from it. ~~Practically what~~ Solomon

[1] Brody, *Yeẓeot* . . . , IV, 22-24, No. 8.
[2] Nachmanides, *Ṭerat ha-Adam* (Warsaw, 1841), Responsa II, 284.
[3] Nachmanides, "Haylelu," *Lehet Z'vi*," S. Baer (ed.) (Rodelheim, 1861), p. 68, vv. 5-8.
[4] Amon, "Epitaph," *Rapport sur les Inscriptions Hebreiques de l'Espagne*, M. Schwab (Paris, 1907), p. 73, vv. 7-13.

and his disciples sought was to return Israel to the traditional content of *Yeshibah* training (i.e. the four ells of the Talmudic sea), and to abort the "study groups" in philosophy which were about and busy raising all manner of embarrassing questions and successfully seducing the uncertain. That they actually denounced the *Moreh* to the secular authorities or the church is doubtful. That they wished to evict its influence and persuasiveness is beyond question.

The controversy developed in terms of spiritual rather than systematic norms. Both the Talmudic and the Hellenic outlook encouraged a form of speculative mysticism. The philosophically oriented refined and translated into Jewish vocabularies various Greek formulas concerning the activation of the intellect. Traditional mysticism, on the other hand, centered on the piety of Torah. Both were validated by illumination and by certain assurances of salvation, but each spoke within a self contained frame. The forms of the psychological organization of mystical experience are elemental to human nature and independent of culture, but there is a world of difference in interpretation and priority between immersing one's intellect in metaphysics—the higher knowledge of truth and being—and immersing one's intellect in the profundities of Scripture. Philosophic mysticism reduced the Torah—its study and practice, and especially its hidden truths—to second rank. It was not the ultimate commitment but a means of preparation. Torah mysticism centered entirely on the virtues of practice. Study was directed toward uncovering the implicit profundities of the text. There was no higher gnosis. 'Every letter of the Torah has a soul." [1] "Every letter of the Torah contains the entire *Sephirot*" [2] (i.e. all supernal creation).

Later in the century the philosophic moralist and Maimonidean defender, Shem Tob b. Joseph Palaquera, epitomized in verse the level beyond Torah which preoccupied philosophic mysticism.

> Night and day work to be wise according to your capacity, be not a fool
> For there is no blemish worse than that of a man deficient in understanding who might have been complete. [3]

[1] Isaac the Blind, *Perush Sefer ha-Yezirah*, iii. 48. Quoted in I. Tishbi, "The Kabbalistic R. Ezra and R. Azriel" (Heb.), *Zion*, IX, No. 4 (1944), 181. Isaac the Blind was the senior and seminal figure of the Geronese school.

[2] Isaac the Blind, iii. 42; *ibid.*, p. 182.

[3] Shem Tob b. Joseph Palaquera, *Iggeret ha-Musar*, A. Habermann (ed.),

And again:

> Perfection lies in studying the power of God through His deeds and in investigating the wonders of His actions, in comprehending them through true demonstration and in distilling them with the fire and furnace of the intellect. [1]

Compare this to the thumbnail biography by Benjamin of Tudela of an early Provençal ascetic and Kabbalist, the son of Meshullam b. Kolonymos of Lunel, "He is a *perush* who has separated himself from worldly interests and stands before the book day and night and fasts and is vegetarian and a fine scholar in Talmud." [2] Kabbalists aside, compare this to the traditional norms of the *Yeshibah* where men were tempted to fish for truth in the broad sea of the tradition, and taught the traditional rubrics that "perfection is not of man" and that "not study but practice is primary."

In August of 1232 the leading Aljaman of Aragon, Saragossa, promulgated a ban against Solomon and his disciples, an action quickly supported by the lesser Aragonese Aljamans of Huesca, Monzon, Catalayud, and Lerida. [3] Each ban was signed by several names, but it is clear from the communications of the smaller communities that Saragossa took the lead and that Bahya Alconstantini of that city called the tune. [4] This in itself is not surprising. Bahya, at the moment, was the single most powerful Jew in Aragon. He was a large landowner and a prominent courtier as physician attendant to James I and his diplomatic interpreter during the conquest of Majorca of 1229. [5] His king subsequently appointed him chief *rab* (court appointed representative) of the Jewries of Aragon and Valencia. Bahya's word may be considered powerful if not definitive. The only indication we have of Bahya's motives comes from a covering letter he added to the Saragossa ban when it was circulated for concurrence. Bahya obviously venerated Maimonides. [6] Could it have been that the *Mishneh Torah* made it possible for him to establish his authority above that of halachic

Kobetz al-Yad, I (Jerusalem, 1936), 57.

[1] Shem Tob b. Joseph Palaquera, *Sefer ha-Mebakkesh* (Josefow, 1881), p. 15.

[2] Benjamin of Tudela, p. 65.

[3] *KTR*, III, 5a-6a. It is well to remember that Saragossa had been the home bailiwick of Isaac b. Sheshet Benveniste.

[4] Cf. especially the Lerida letter *KTR*, III, 6a.

[5] Baer, *A History* . . . , I, 404, note 2.

[6] *KTR*, III, 6a.

scholars in the various communities? Recall that these Aljamans knew the tension of a struggle between religious and secular leadership. [1] Moreover, Bahya held secular studies in high regard. Those who opposed Maimonides and such studies he described as "influences of destruction." [2] As a member of James' entourage Bahya might be expected to set great store by the terms of philosophic exchange then popular and to see any attempt to withdraw Jews from such interests as adding to their separateness and contributing to their inability to get along in a world difficult enough when one had mastered all vocabularies and skills.

The Saragossa ban was couched in rather specifically religious terms—but to the same point. Maimonides brought enlightenment, and strengthened many in their faith. God has no desire to be worshipped without wisdom or understanding; indeed, philosophy helps to confirm the truth of God's unity and ~~arm~~ the faithful against the barbs of the skeptic. For having washed their dirty linen in public and for having sinned and caused others to sin, Solomon and his two disciples, David and Jonah, were banned until they repented. [3]

Catalonia was another matter. Neither Barcelona nor Gerona confirmed Saragossa's action. In large measure this must have been due to the personality of Nachmanides, the high born scholar, brilliant Talmudist, and pious Kabbalist who already in his youth had crossed swords with Bahya Alconstantini. [4] What was needed now was patience, not rash involvement. Nachmanides broadcast throughout Spain a letter evidencing his deep reverence for French opinion, "From their learning we drink," [5] and asking the various communities to suspend judgment until both sides shall have submitted their case to judgment—an eventuality he fondly hoped might come speedily. In this letter Nachmanides rejected the assertion that Solomon could summarily be found guilty of creating opposing camps within Israel. Solomon was serving in the cause of God and had submitted his case to the French for decision. Indeed, Nachmanides suggests that if he were to make the decision,

[1] Baer, *A History* . . . , pp. 186 ff.
[2] *KTR*, III, 6a.
[3] *KTR*, III, 5a-5b.
[4] Baer, *Devir*, II (1924), 316 f. The incident cannot be dated. The issue touched the claims of the Alconstantini to secular-religious authority, i.e. the title of *Nasi*.
[5] *KTR*, III, 5a.

Solomon would be awarded the verdict, for Nachmanides senses that though the Maimonideans profess piety this virtue was at least in part a calculated pose.[1]

Nachmanides was of an entirely other breed than Bahya. Though well born, his mental life was the halacha and rabbinics. Though broadly educated, his terms of reference were traditional. He was master of all that Maimonides had written and of the sources on which he had drawn. Tradition weighed heavily with him. As halachist he penned, somewhat later, an extensive gloss to the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*;[2] and debated many of the *Moreh's*

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Nachmanides, *Hassagot ha-Ramban le-Sefer ha-Mitzvot*. References are to the Zuckerman, Jerusalem, 1926, edition of Maimonides' text. This excursus in marginalia dealt largely with legal theory. The work is a self styled defense of the older *Halachot Gedolot* tradition. The *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* is praised "as filled with many fine things, a sweet smelling work as if perfumed with incense"; but it is a novelty. (*Ibid.*, Introduction.)

Nachmanides began by questioning the legal necessity and justification of the arbitrary enumeration of 613 laws. The Talmudic basis of the tradition *T. B. Makkot* 23b is an individual opinion of R. Simla, not a fixed immutable tradition (Root I, p. 7b-8a). Nachmanides followed but tempered the earlier opinion of Abraham ibn Ezra in the *Yesod Mora* "that there is no end to the number of commandments . . . and that the root principles are not enumerated." (Abraham ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, [Prague, 1833]. Gate 2.) Many of the views taken are similar to those we have seen in Daniel b. Saadya ha-Babli though Nachmanides is more complete and his excursus on ten of the thirteen theoretical principles of selection far more extensive.

Nachmanides, however, was not an at-all-costs defender of the past. In the discussion of the first Positive Command "to believe that there is a Supreme Cause," Nachmanides sided with Maimonides against the *Halachot Gedolot*. Maimonides had regulated based on Ex. 20 : 2 even though it was declarative statement rather than a commandment, involving the creation of a polity. Nachmanides quoted the *Halachot* at length and sympathetically but in his note to Negative Commandment 5 finally announced his acceptance of Maimonides' argument that this root belief is sui generis.

Of Maimonides' fourteen root principles Nachmanides glossed ten (Roots I, II, III, IV, V, VI VIII, IX, XII, XIV). The similarity between his reasoning and Daniel b. Saadya's is striking—though dependence can not be shown. Thus Deut. 1 : 18 is a principle of excision: that seven specific ritual laws which the Talmud had stated to have been established by the sages are not to be included. The basis for Maimonides' decision was *T. B. Makkot* 23b: "The 613 commands *spoken* to Moses on Sinai." Here, then, is definite information as to their later promulgation. David's argument had been that the text reads *spoken* to Moses, not *written* (that is, made public) by Moses. These seven were part of the Oral tradition descending from Moses and, therefore, to be considered Pentateuchal. (Daniel b. Saadya, *Maaseh Nissim*, p. 2.) Nachmanides' logic was almost identical, although Nachmanides went on at length to point up the inner contradictions in the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* and between it and the *Mishneh Torah*. (Nachmanides, *Hassagot* . . . ,

positions in his *Perush ha-Torah* (English *Commentary on the Torah*). Unlike others of the controversialists, he had read and understood the *Moreh*.[1] As a rabbi, well trained in all facets of Spanish Jewish culture, he sought to claim philosophy and allegory for the tradition through the intricate sophistries of mystical theology and Kabbalah.[2]

Root I, pp. 16a-18b.)

Root II that no law derived by the Tannaitic 13 hermeneutic rules was to be considered Pentateuchal also touched the piety of the revealed Oral tradition and became a well known cause against Maimonides. It had little practical import though it had led Maimonides to stipulate in the *Mishneh Torah* that though marriage by intercourse (*usus capio*) or contract was of Pentateuchal origin, marriage by the exchange of money (*Kesef*) was only rabbinic. Pinhas the Dayyan had already raised the specific issue. (*TR*, 165.) Maimonides had responded with the generalization that no logically derived law is so classed unless the sages specifically accord it Biblical rank (*ibid.*)—but Abraham Maimonides revealed that his father later corrected a *Mishneh Torah* manuscript to establish all three forms of marriage equally. (Abraham Maimonides, *Birkat Abraham*, p. 42.) Nachmanides' critique was a defense of the integrity of the hermeneutic system—"if a hermeneutic interpretation is correct all is known by tradition from God." (Nachmanides, *Hassagot* . . . . , Root I, p. 22b.) "Any ruling which is hermeneutically expounded in the Talmud by one of the 13 *Middot* is considered Pentateuchal unless it is specifically stated that the Biblical text is only a mnemotechnical aide." (*Ibid.*, Root II, p. 23b.)

Of historical interest is the discussion of Positive Commandment 198 where on the basis of Deut. 28 : 21 Maimonides established the law that "in granting a loan to an idolator, one is to demand interest." Nachmanides followed the Western tradition, already signalled by Rabad, that the Deuteronomy text is but the premise of the Negative Commandment "not to take interest of a co-religionist." It is difficult to know Maimonides' basis for his ruling. The Oriental tradition would seem to agree with Western. Daniel b. Saadya "found it difficult to accept that the taking of interest is mandatory." (Daniel b. Saadya, p. 91.) On a theoretical level we have here one of the most vexing problems of halachic treatment—is a positive statement in the Bible a direct command or a broad generalization of common practice given to establish the permissive rather than the legal quality of such statements?

Sufficient has been adduced to indicate the quality of this gloss. The *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* with Nachmanides' glosses became a staple of the schools and a favorite debating ground of halachic theoreticians. The responsa of Aaron ha-Levi, Menahem Meiri, Jacob b. Asher, and Solomon ibn Adret reveal their intimate control of the work and its prevailing influences. Maimonides' enumeration even was used in the *Ashamot* of the Shabuot service.

[1] Nachmanides' commentary on the Torah included *inter alia* a summary critique of the *Moreh*—especially of Part III. Cf. L. Kravitz, *The Commentary of Nachmanides to the Torah*, Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew Union College, 1958.

[2] Nachmanides was irritated by the presumption of certain philosophers that they were the "enlightened" and all others necessarily benighted. *Vide* his attack on those "who argue teachings dependent on interminable soph-

The Torah was the repository of all truth. "All that we know and understand is traceable directly or indirectly, to the Torah... where it was written either explicitly or by intimation." [1] The numerical equivalence of letters, the juxtaposition of words, case endings, even diacritical and scribal marks afford interpretive keys to the ingrained truth. In essence Nachmanides' position—and it was the position of all the early Kabbalists—mythologized the implicit assumption of all Yeshibah training. "Turn it [the Torah] over, Turn it over again for everything is in it." [2]

Philosophy was not the precipitate of clear categories of speculative thought, but what emerged from a careful and inspired research of the Scriptural text.

> We have a true tradition that the whole Torah consists of the names of God...everything dealing with *Maaseh Merkabah* (metaphysics) and *Maaseh Bereshit* (cosmology) and that which is deduced from these by the sages: the future history of a people, the four powers of the sublunar world (i.e. mineral, vegetative, animal, and rational)...all of these were spoken to Moses including their creation, their potencies, their essences, their deeds and their passing out of being. Everything is written in the Torah either explicitly or by hint. [3]

In such a scheme Biblical narrative may be symbolic but never purely allegoric. Biblical law may have an apparent identity with man organized law but it is essentially mythologic and concerned with cosmic rather than mundane purpose. In such a system God is Creator but no category of logic can be permitted to retire God from His becoming manifest through miracles and revelation. God's will is a continuing and manifest power

Nachmanides' concern was to validate the Will of God and His power against any philosophy which restricted that power. Why was it not sufficient to limit the first commandment to the simple declarative "I am the Lord your God"? The conclusion ("who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage") established God's presence in time and history. [4] Israel's God is no *Deus Absconditius*. Nachmanides' argument against the Aristote-

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...sophistries and fanciful phrasings accompanied by the loud denunciation of all who differ as fools and dense." (Nachmanides, *Torah ha-Shem Teminah*, p. 24.)

[1] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . ., Introduction.
[2] *Mishnah, Pirke Abot* 5 : 20.
[3] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . ., Introduction.
[4] *Ibid.*, to Ex. 20 : 2.

lians was quite explicit: "To him who believes in the eternity of matter God is powerless even if He should want to shorten the wing of a fly, or to extend the foot of an ant." [1] No person has a share in the Law of Moses until he firmly believes that all the events which happen to us are determined by the foreseeing care and guardianship of God. A blind and mechanical universe is foreign to the Torah concept of a living God working His way on the sons of men. [2] Nachmanides' theory of emanations—the separating out of elements within God and the attenuation of these elements through successive levels of *Sephirot* or spheres—is too well known to require repetition.

Revelation is actual and direct [3] and prophecy is fact, albeit that its message is not of uniform quality; [4] both evidence God's determination to give man a rule to redeem his earthly life. Miracles are of various qualities. There is no reason to presume God cannot or does not "interfere." [5] The very continuation of life—what we call cause and effect—is an ongoing and continuous miracle, not a requirement of natural law. The promise of Retribution and the World to Come is certain. All is treated with sophistication, within a frame of Neo-Platonic terms, and highly qualified; but the unmistakable impression left is that true Biblical interpretation and obedience to Biblical law gives man miraculous assurances and almost miraculous powers.

At about the same time that he addressed himself to Spain, where he had no authority save that of a revered rabbi of good family, Nachmanides wrote a longish letter to the sages of France asking that they reconsider their ban. [6] His concern was for the unity of Israel. He could not escape unhappiness over the rising tide of choler. The French cannot be aware of Spanish conditions. There is no current of doubt and philosophic sophistication in France as here. [7] Maimonides has brought back many "who had filled their pockets with the vanities of Greece" and has been rightly praised for it. [8] Moreover, his *Mishneh Torah* is universally respect-

[1] Nachmanides, *Torah ha-Shem Temimah*, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[3] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Ex. 3 : 13.
[4] *Ibid.* to Num. 24 : 1; Deut. 34:11.
[5] *Ibid.* to Gen. 27 : 1; Ex. 6 : 21; Deut. 8 : 18, 9 : 4, 12 : 13, 13 : 2.
[6] *KTR*, IV, 8a-10b.
[7] *KTR*, III, 8a.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 8b.

ed. Any ban on this work, any mark on Maimonides' piety, only confuses and angers and drives many away. Let the French, therefore, remember the Talmudic admonition that one does not impose burdens on the congregation they cannot abide.[1] Further, by what authority have you extended the ban to us? There are boundaries to your authority as there are to ours. Still further, why did you not particularize your charges[2] that one might know the specific points being challenged?

Nachmanides spoke of his respect for Solomon and sadly of the bitterness this debate had evoked. He does not know the particulars of the Montpellier quarrel, but suggests peace and a withdrawing of the ban as the sole remedy, if not the withdrawal of the whole ban, at least of that part which subjects the *Mishneh Torah*. Let us reduce the voltage of this debate from its present dangerous pitch to a scholars' quarrel such as occupied the schools of Hillel and Shammai and has long been familiar in Israel.[3]

In passing Nachmanides noted his own views on certain items of the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Moreh* which may be the cause of concern and suggested (following Hai Gaon) that metaphysics and tradition can be helpful to each other when philosophy is pursued by one already a master of halacha.[4] The subjects which Nachmanides desired to dilate on are classics of Maimonidean debate: Resurrection,[5] the nature of God's incorporeality (i.e. that He has neither shape nor form), and the public study of the *Moreh* and inferentially of all philosophy.

There must have been another shaft in his critical bow though Nachmanides does not reveal it in the correspondence immediately relevant to the controversy. Two of Nachmanides' later works contain *inter alia* rigorous criticism of Maimonides' historical and pedagogic rationalizations of the Biblical commandments.[6] Nach-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 9a.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8a.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1a.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 9b.
[5] Of interest in connection with his discussion of Resurrection is the longish quote Nachmanides included from the German Hasid Eliezer b. Judah's *ha-Roke'ach*. (*Ibid.*, pp. 9a-9b.) Nachmanides had chosen it deliberately because he felt the French might not be aware of philosophy based on late Gaonic sources, but would be familar with this.
[6] The *Perush ha-Torah* and his *Hassagot* to *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*. Maimonides never denied the necessity of obedience to a law whose exoteric purpose was not evident. "A law which a man cannot explain and to which one can not

manides' position was basically this: "All the words of God are pure"—therefore no Torah law is whimsical or arbitrary.[1] All the laws have purpose and reason. God simply did not choose to reveal each and every reason lest people assume that obedience to the law is not automatic but a function of reason and hence of discriminating choice.[2] Nachmanides fulminated against those "who make themselves wise in natural science and who follow the views of the Greek (Aristotle), who denied everything which could not be understood through reason and who developed the principle... that whatever could not be understood through reason is not true."[3] The *Mishpatim* (judgmental) laws are of obvious social benefit. The *Hukkim* (apodictic) laws have a secret cosmic benefit not revealed to all. The sacrificial cult was not, as Maimonides had argued, a psychologically necessary stop gap between primitive means of worship and advanced forms. "Such explanations make the altar vile. [The function of the altar] is not limited to the destruction of evil impulses;"[4] rather the sacrificial law permitted atonement for the sin of the nation.[5] It was theurgic and operative. Equally all the other *Hukkim*. They are each and every one part of the cosmic mechanics which permits God to draw close to man and makes Israel's role central and cosmically crucial.

Another letter to the French rabbis urging the revocation of the ban on the grounds of its tendency to factionalism came from the pen of Samuel b. Abraham Saporta.[6] This material was of two parts, a brief, euphuistic introduction and a hard-headed legal brief defending seriatim arguments raised against the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Moreh*. One sees here a Maimonides reinterpreted almost into

impute a proper cause should not therefore appear to be of little concern." (*M. T. Neilah* 8 : 8.) Nachmanides faulted Maimonides on his method of explanation, not on any tendency to ritual eclecticism—though such eclecticism was not unknown among the Maimonids. Cf. Jonah b. Abraham Gerundi, *Sha'arai Teshubah* 1 : 18 (Jerusalem, 1959), p. 16.

[1] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Lev. 19 : 19.

[2] Nachmanides to *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* Negative Commandment 365 near end. Here Nachmanides' divergence from Maimonides becomes clear. Compare *Moreh*, iii. 26, "If it appears unexplainable to you, it is owing to the deficiency in your own comprehension." Maimonides presumed that such explanations became clear as the intellect became perfected, Nachmanides that such explanations had been revealed to initiates who passed the esoteric knowledge down the generations.

[3] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Lev. 16 : 9.

[4] *Ibid.* to Lev. 1 : 1.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *GN*, IV, 47-67.

conformity with tradition. Maimonides' view of resurrection becomes a defense of after-death divine judgment. He is made to tolerate shades and spirits, and the various historical interpretations of the sacrificial commandments are made to imply traditional truths.[3]

Samuel's main worry, like most other responderts, is "lest the Torah be split in two."[4] He seeks adjudication and wonders why the French exacerbated an issue which was really not in their province[5] and whose social and philosophical details they could not have known because of geographic distance and their policy of keeping philosophy and philosophic works from their boundaries.[6]

Nachmanides was not quit of the whole issue, whether because of his earlier generally favorable position toward Solomon or because of the activities of Jonah Gerundi, the aggressive Beziers Jewry resurrected an old charge bearing on Jonah's legitimacy.[7] He was descended of a concubine taken by his great-grandfather, who had divorced his first wife for childlessness. Béziers challenged the legitimacy of the second marriage. Nachmanides was Jonah's cousin. The charge, therefore, affected him personally. The charge was apparently an old one. Nachmanides had long since convened a judicial proceeding to prove his legitimacy.[8] This resort to slander angered Nachmanides. He circulated the Provençal communities with a bitter letter[9] declaring war against those who sling mud and against the quarrelsome who do not have God always before them, who praise Maimonides without seeing his mistakes, broadcast slander, and deny that God knows particulars or affects the lives of individuals.[10] He is bitter at those who attacked Jonah like a pack of wild dogs and he insists that they be tried before a rabbinic court. Nachmanides, who began as peacemaker, ended an enraged partisan, though at no time did he speak other than highly of Maimonides nor did he in his extended criticism show towards Maimonides any vestige of his controversialist's emotion.[11] Maimonides was the *context of* the quarrel, not its *content*.

Nachmanides was a son of Spain, fully aware of Arabic-Jewish philosophic traditions and a thoughtful critic of its heritage, yet

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-55.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-43.
[7] *GN*, IV, 15-17. On the details of the charge and the entire genealogical question, cf. Shrock, p. 19 ff., especially note 34.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-24.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[11] *KTR*, III, 8b

temperamentally disposed to the anti-Maimonidean cause even if in the first stages of the quarrel "his own horses neither neighed nor stamped." [1]

Nachmanides did not, however, speak the united will even of Catalonia. Two brothers, Abraham and Judah b. Hisdai, apparently of rank in Barcelona, spoke up after the burning [2] to silence all trace of lingering animus. [3] In a letter addressed to the Aljamans of Aragon and Castille they defended the Provençal position against the French ban, and provides us incidentally with the information that the ban had been rescinded. [4] This epistle must be dated after Nachmanides' similar letter to the Spanish communities and to the French rabbis and can not be cited as evidence of some communal split. It seems to be essentially an attempt to write *finis* to the whole dirty business. The scoundrels are discredited by their actions, it is time for those who have been quiet to speak out and defend the faith, that unity may be reestablished. [5] Again there is the theme that Israel must not be divided into two camps. Finally, and as symbol of the end of all argument, they ordered that a chapter or two of the *Moreh* be read in the synagogue each Sabbath. [6]

The chronicle of events as the Hisdai brothers knew it was as follows. After the original ban, the Provençal centers rallied to the *Moreh* and the *Mada's* defense and finally persuaded the French to withdraw their restrictions. [7] When the "sinner rebels" saw that their support had vanished they revealed their real character by appealing for aid to the Episcopal authority and to the Friars—Franciscan, Episcopal, and Dominican. Their approach to the Church was on the basis of mutual interest: "You propose to drive out your heretics and to pursue those who deny your rule, thus burning out evil from your midst. We too have such books, woven of heterodoxy and heresy." [8] An inquisition apparently met over the

[1] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 104, No. 44, v. 85.
[2] *GN*, III, 178-179.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 176 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 177.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 182. The Hisdai brothers cannot be numbered summarily among the eager Maimonists. (cf. Saracheck, pp. 89-90.) Meshullam b. Solomon addressed a long, laudatory poem to Abraham Hisdai in which we learn incidentally that two of Abraham's family belonged to the Gerona circle of Kabbalists (Jucal [*sic*] and Solomon) (vv. 51-58), and that Meshullam considered Abraham quite another type from the unclean and foolish of the generation (vv. 50-51). (Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , *IV*, 105-108, No. 45.)
[6] *GN*, III, 183.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 179. [8] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

books, which were duly condemned and handed over to the civil magistrates for the *auto da fé*.[1]

The Hisdais more than any other protagonist sensed the long term dangers implicit in the burning:

> In the eyes of the enemy we were self effacing vessels and till now we were not publicly shunned. Now that we have begun to fall and to be profaned before them who will be able to live with them or bear the burden of their judgments and decisions.[2]

Finally, they closed with a most interesting bit of fact. The informers had had their tongues cut out, and then the evil ones (unspecified) repented of their ways, but after a hiatus (apparently due to the trauma of the burning) they returned to their evil and voided many communal regulations. Even after the burning there were a few who lent them support. The Hisdais have spoken now once and for all to silence these few unconscionable men who disturb the faith.[3]

We turn to David Kimhi's visit to Aragon, which, as we have noted, was not without success. In Catalonia he could not win over Nachmanides; however, after the burning sympathy, if not support, developed in Barcelona. In Castile matters were different and very little support was forthcoming.

During his trip Kimhi, already advanced in years, fell sick in Avila and [illegible] to seek [illegible] by letter. Toledo was preeminent in Castile. Its support was obviously Kimhi's ambition. He chose as correspondent the physician Judah b. Joseph Alfakhar, one of the leaders of that community and scion of an old and respected family. The correspondence can be dated as beginning after the rescinding of the French ban mentioned in Kimhi's first letter[4] and as closing with the burning mentioned in his third.[5]

Kimhi shows himself a bitter man [illegible] perhaps this, however, is only a sign of growing age and feebleness, a theme to which he reverted continually. In any case, he adds little to our knowledge of the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 18c.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 17c.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 18a.
[4] *KTR*. III, 1a.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 4b.

case. He linked Narbonne (his home) with Béziers as Provençal centers zealous for God and Maimonides and as organizers of the ban against Solomon, David, and Jonah.[1] Kimhi wrote of his earlier successes in Catalonia and Aragon. What he ~~wants~~ of Judah is the assent of Toleco to a ban similar to the Provençal ban.

Why Judah? The question is a difficult one. The Alfakhar family was among the great lineages which from Toledo set much of the policy of Castile. A letter of Abraham b. Hisdai to Alfakhar gives us a clue. It is written after Alfakhar's ~~negative reception~~ of Kimhi ~~was~~ known, ~~and speaks of such a friendship as permitted~~ Abraham ~~to know~~ Judah ~~as wise and honorable and~~ "as one who took delight in all his (Maimonides') books." "I have heard you speak approvingly of them."[2] Was it Abraham b. Hisdai who suggested Judah to Kimhi as ~~his most hopeful~~ contact?

Judah's answer reveals that Kimhi, or Hisdai, had misjudged the disposition of the man but not his capacity. ~~Judah's basic position was that~~ Kimhi was to be censured for fanning the flame of quarrel and ~~that~~ the *Morch* was to be censured, even banned, for revealing matters which ought not to have been made public,[3] and for offering some justification to almost every kind of deviation.[4] We know from correspondence that Judah was a trained philosopher—Meshullam b. Kalonymos,[5] Abraham b. Hisdai,[6] and David Kimhi,[7] himself, all testify to this—as well as halachist, so Judah ~~was not~~ must be the confusion such books cause among the unprepared and untrained. Of all the discussants Judah spoke the frankest criticism of Maimonides: "Out of Zion shall come forth the Law"—not out of Greece. Maimonides had great and deserved fame as a *halachist*, but in setting down the *Morch* he made a bad mistake. Even the best sometimes lose their balance and ~~propriety~~, but then everyone knows that such Biblical greats as Aaron and David also for a time strayed and did wrong.[8]

Judah proceeded to state trenchantly the intellectual case of the anti-Maimonics. Allegory is a subtle tool whose use ~~leads easily~~ to abuse. If it is handled carelessly traditional limits are easily exceeded, especially in respect to such themes as miracles and creation. Miracles can be defended without denying belief in natural law

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1a.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2b.
[3] *GN*, IV, 3.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 4a.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 7a.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 2a.
[7] *KTR*, III, 7a.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 2b.

or resorting to allegory by the conceit of their being preordained at the dawn of time. The reality of Creation is Judah's main concern. Reading Aristotle into the Creation epic one necessarily allegorizes the Creation myth. To do so is not just to make an interpretive blunder but to sap the foundation of faith. Such a law as the cardinal obligation of the Sabbath rests on the fact of Creation. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for in six days the Lord created heaven and earth and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath and sanctified it." (Ex. 20:8 and 11.) If the Sabbath is denied the authority of divine will, how can the harsh punishments which surround its restrictions be justified? If the Creation is an allegory, how can the law which stipulates the sentence of stoning merely for the picking up of sticks on the Sabbath seem reasonable to anyone? [1]

The issue was not creation—all agreed on creation and on *creatio ex nihilo*. Judah's argument was to the validity of a Godly creation and a divinely established seventh day of rest. The *Moreh's* interpretive method established the Sabbath: 1) to confirm the true theory of a Creation; 2) to encourage the wellbeing of the body. The Sabbath to Maimonides had both a pedagogic and a philosophic purpose. [2] Judah insisted that whatever its educative value, the worth of the passage lay in its truth. [3] Such Maimonidean rationalizations and explanations led to a humanism in which man is the measure and arbiter of truth. Further such explanations lead to a questioning of practice without contributing to any firming of faith. If Genesis I is myth, what imperatives does the law command? If Genesis I has only an allegorical truth, why should the Sabbath law impose obedience on those to whom it does not seem reasonable?

The Kimhi-Alfakhar correspondence sputtered on with two more missives on both sides—these often crossed each other en route and tell us little. On both sides the pen was not particularly controlled. Judah did not ask to get involved in the first place. He had no intention of speaking for a ban against the "innocent man" Solomon. Indeed, the burden rests in his eyes with Kimhi to patch up the quarrel, to leave off discounting the practice of Talmudic study, and to abjure cosmology and theosophy. [3] Judah saw the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1b.

[2] *Moreh*, ii 31. Deut. 5 : 15 connected the Sabbath to the Exodus and Maimonides connected the Exodus with the psychological need for rest.

[3] *KTR*, III, 4a.

Moreh as a ladder by which Kimhi was trying to climb to an understanding of that which is beyond full understanding, the mysteries of God (the *Merkabah*). [1] One is reminded of Nachmanides' caution:

> Seek not that which is beyond you, investigate not that which is too powerful for you, research not that which is too mysterious for you, intrude not in that which is deliberately hidden from you. Concern yourself only in that which you have received in the tradition for you have no concern with the secret things. [2]

Judah's final summation of the *Moreh* was that it contained some rich, ripe fruit but also much that was spoilt. All in all it would have been better had it not been written.

In passing we learn that Kimhi, in addition to this correspondence, had sent Judah a detailed brief of his position [3] and that at the base of his argument lay the familiar issues of a spiritualized Resurrection and the nature of God's incorporeality. [4] Kimhi's second letter affords us an insight into the self-justification of a rabbinically competent Maimonidean. *Ad hominem*: "We are the religious loyalists." [5] Philosophy has only helped to confirm my faith. Philosophy has never led me to leave off my halachic interests. We number in our party scholars, pious men, and philanthropists from our communities. Shall such as we be called sinners? Not at all—no rabbi is more scrupulous with the tradition than I—where we differ is in our recognition of the need to weld successfully faith and philosophy following the old adage, "It is good that you should seize hold of this and at the same time not loosen your hold elsewhere." [6] In short, it is not *we* but *they* who pay little heed to the integrity of Israel.

Furthermore, for any in Israel to continue affirming a God of shape and form (one thinks of the "radiance" behind a curtain of brilliance presumed by David b. Saul) is to violate the cardinal principle of our faith (*Yihud*). "That which the heavens cannot contain they have shut up in an inner room." Is this the true teaching of our Torah? In this regard "we are the real traditionalists." [7]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 4b.
[2] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . , Introduction.
[3] *KTR*, III, 3a.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 3b.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 3a.

Judah closed off this exchange by insisting in a way now familiar to us that the dispute must be patched up lest Israel be divided into two camps. Israel's Torah may not be divided—such division is shameful." [1]

Kimhi's last letter rejoiced to tell Judah of the real nature of the "innocent man" he had been defending. Kimhi specifically accused Solomon of being the informer,[2] but we must remember that whatever information Kimhi had was second-hand. The letter tells us that he had at the time moved from his sick bed in Avila to Burgos. The denunciation story was repeated—first to the Franciscans, then to the Dominicans—priests revelling in its condemnation, and of grave danger to the Jews of Montpellier and the surrounding towns,[3] a danger which is quite believable.

Alfakhar's attack was probably all the more bitter to Kimhi because it was unexpected. After receiving the first astringent reply, Kimhi apparently requested his fellow townsman Meshullam b. Kolonymos b. Todros to come to his defense. This *Nasi* of Narbonne and bearer of a famous name might be expected to carry some weight. Meshullam's first letter, written with the gravity of an elder statesman, was a moderate letter of recommendation for Kimhi [4] and a moderate defense of the *Moreh*. It surely does not deserve broadcast damning. There are many who incline toward the *Moreh* yet still fear God and stand fast to His law. [5]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 4a. Judah did not limit his involvement to the Kimhi correspondence. Steinschneider has published a bitter poetic attack by Judah against Maimonides:

> "Forgive, O son of Amram (the Biblical Moses), pardon
> That the name of a sinner (Moses Maimonides) is identical to your own
> [Forgive] on the basis that in the Torah the prophet of God and the prophet of Baal are both called prophets."
>
> (Steinschneider, *Kobetz al Yad*, I [1885], 12, No. 36.)

Geiger has published an anonymous rejoinder:

> "Since every man is called after his parents
> He is called *Nasi* and leader
> I name my donkey (*Pardi*) *Nasi*, for *Hamor* (donkey) his father
> was the *Nasi* of the land."
>
> (A. Geiger, *Zizim u-Perachim* [Leipzig, 1856], p. 24.)

The play is to Gen. 34 : 2. Judah must have borne the title "*Nasi*." The erudition cloaked the simple statement, "You, sir, are an ass."

[2] *KTR*, III, 4b.
[3] *GN*, IV, 4
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*

From Judah's answer it is clear he did not believe Meshullam to be involved actively in the controversy. Judah showed deference. There is in the letter an element of self justification. I entered the fray only because I was challenged to. I tried earnestly to give balanced views and give each man his credit.[1] One is tempted to suppose that Kimhi's report of the burning, linking Solomon to the act, had reached Judah and shocked and dismayed him.

We have seen Kimhi travel from Avila to Burgos in search of support and there receive news of the burning of the *Moreh*. It would seem that Kimhi received there a mixed reception. He apparently succeeded in getting from someone a letter or letters of approval, but Joseph b. Todros ha-Levi Abulafia, the brother of Meir, challenged the authority of these letters. "They have not been approved by the *Kahal* nor written or signed with the knowledge of the rabbis."[2] He also tells us that with the aid of his father-in-law, R. Nathan, the *Kahal*'s "illegal" action had been reversed. It is not improbable that some rich and influential Jew, possibly one holding a royal appointment, impressed with the Alconstantini name, wrote such a letter without thought of consulting rabbinic authority. This was often the case for the *Kahal's* power structure was but loosely defined in areas other than taxation and defense. In any case, it appears that Joseph was able to win out in the end, with politics and pressures at which we can only guess, for he was able to expel Kimhi from that city.[3]

Joseph's letter was addressed to the scholars of Provence. Coming after the burning, it is in its strong condemnation of philosophic preoccupation, strong testimony that the burning settled nothing—except to slacken the zeal for publicity with which the issue was joined. Further, his defense of Solomon, or rather his plea in mitigation,[4] points to Solomon's innocence of the act of "informing."

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

[2] *GN*, III, 173.

[3] Baer raised the possibility that Joseph's activities lay in Toledo, not Burgos. (Baer, *A History* . . . , p. 400, note 59.) Joseph's euphemistic style, indeed, makes the identification difficult (*GN*, III, 168) but the silence of Judah Alfakhar and Meir b. Todros on any such visit and subsequent expulsion militates against this interpretation. If Judah and Joseph were partners in a similar cause how shall we explain the rather bitter letter Judah addressed to Joseph? (*GN*, IV, 6-10.) It would seem that Baer strained matters here to fit his thesis of class unrest in Toledo at the end of the century.

[4] *GN*, III, 167.

Note the bracketing of "The quarrel flared up, until matters reached the point where the book was burnt by the priests" with "They sinned and rebelled but he (Solomon) is also not to be forgiven." [1] Perhaps since no plea of innocence is entered, Joseph's burden was that the Maimonideans see only Solomon's guilt and not the necessary relationship between Solomon's zeal and their own oppressive tactics.

Joseph's eye was on the social implications of philosophic study. He admitted that he had read philosophy though he gave primacy always to tradition. [2] But like Meir he mistrusted speculation, recalling the personal misfortunes of the rabbis who had entered the *Pardes*. [3] Philosophic speculation tends to downgrade the received tradition (*Kabbalah*). The danger here was in the technique of untrammeled allegory "which makes dark, light and light dark" [4] and saps aggadic texts of their meaning. Joseph came close to accusing the Maimonids of Biblicism even though they acknowledged, verbally, the tradition.

> Have you not heard. Do you not know that their heresy is worse than that of the Karaites; they to uproot all have come. These know and still deny, the others deny without knowing. [5]

The faith rests on *Kabbalah* (tradition), not *Savarah* (logical deduction). Until these allegorists "went out against Eden, the Garden of God, for which all Israel longs, it was a beautiful sight to behold ...after them it was a desolation." [6] Joseph praised Maimonides rather fulsomely—even to the point of blaming the translators for the more apparent errors—but he cited the *Moreh's* baleful social effect

> Most of these who seize on these books...offer a strange fruit in their platters...Among these are the hypocrites who falsify the law and secretly transgress it ..who bow their heads like a reed and put on righteousness, but it does not clothe. Another group is the rich, entangled in the pursuit of

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 170. Like Nachmanides, Joseph attacked Maimonides' justification of the commandments not on the grounds that Maimonides' attempt to explain the commandments was novel, but on the grounds that Maimonides gave "blemished reasons." The *Hukkim* contain "locked secrets," i.e. they reveal cosmic forces to which man must accommodate—forces only those who know the secrets are aware of. (*Ibid.*, p. 165.)
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

pleasure... They are sinners and seducers, who chatter and prattle, who grow fat and arrogant, who force the poor off the highway and forsake the paths of righteousness and in the wealth deny the Torah. [1]

Here we have delineated the two groups who preoccupied the thoughts of the anti-Maimonideans. On the one hand a group who espouse the new philosophy and, though they abide the Law, are suspect because of their non-conformist ideology. On the other a group ritually lax and indifferent—sophisticated and worldly—who feel themselves superior and who latch on to the *Moreh* as a justification for their indifference.

Joseph also felt the need to bury the hatchet. "What has been, has been. In a storm-tossed age, we need a strong, unified faith. You are wise men, certainly you in the Provence are equal to breaking the rod of controversy." [2]

Our knowledge of the Spanish anti-Maimonidean position can now be filled out by an analysis of the polemic poetry of Meshullam b. Solomon. [3] His *Divan*, transcribed from manuscript by H. Brody, reveals a passionate emotional involvement on the part of this Geronese Kabbalist mystic. His poetry, though contributing not at all to an historical reconstruction, affords us our broadest

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

[3] Meshullam's biography has been variously reconstructed. Carmoly placed his birth at Fére in Burgoyne, presumed a Tosaphist education under the tutelage of R. Isaac b. Samuel of Dampierre, and a peripatetic adult life a la minnesinger-troubador, with the seat of his operations at Beziers. (R. Carmoly, *Litteraturablatt*, VII, 47 f.). The Béziers ascription depends on a manuscript superscription which adds *En Bézier* to his title. Neubauer, *per contra*, posited a Catalan birth at Piera, a Spanish-Provençal education, and the life of a wandering poet. (A. Neubauer and E. Ranan, *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, XXVII [1877], 715.) Patai made no definite statement on Meshullam's place of birth but definitely credited Isaac b. Zacharyah ha-Levi of Lunel with a major role in his education and brought creditable evidence of his protracted stay at Gerona in Aragon. (J. Patai, "From the Oxford Manuscripts," (Heb.), *Ha-Zofeh*, V [1921], 56-57.) Brody denies entirely the vocation of wandering poet and established Meshullam as a permanent citizen of Gerona who was even at one time elected a leading *Kahal* official. (Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 4.) This position seems to the author largely creditable. It explains a) the manuscript references to En Vidas de Gerona (MSS Firenze No. 44), b) the poem *Hu ha-Zeman* in which Meshullam reflected happily at being elected to office, c) his unmistakable involvement in the local Kabbalist school. Whether he was a permanent citizen of Gerona or not—Meshullam was certainly Spanish—all manuscript references to Provence or France are as to a foreign area.

window into the heart and mind of certain of the anti-Maimonideans. [1]

Meshullam's poetry suffers from preciosity and that suffocating pedantry all too familiar in medieval Jewish verse. It proceeds by allusion rather than logical progression. It reflects an unresolved tension within the poet between his instinctive attraction towards philosophy and his recognition of its religious consequences. Nonetheless, it must be studied as a prime source in any reconstruction.

We know that the Spanish communities were early brought into the Solomon b. Abraham-Béziers quarrel. The poet Meshullam, in one of his verses, pleaded with the French to stand up and take a position. "Wake up my people, my disturbed people, Wake up France, put on armor." [2] We do not know when his interest began. We do know that most of this material postdates the French ban and was precipitated by the attempt by Maimonist and anti-Maimonist to enlist support south of the Pyrenees. Meshullam b. Solomon reflected accurately the values and faith of at least one section of Spanish Jewry, those who had been touched by the nascent Kabbalah and who centered on Gerona in a circle which included Ezra, Azriel, Isaac b. Y'verechya, Isaac b. Samuel, Meshullam b. Solomon, and, for a time, both Nachmanides and Jonah b. Abraham Gerundi. [3]

This school grew in the shadow of the pious mystic, R. Isaac the Blind. According to Sholem, Tishbi, and others who have begun researching this school, it was characterized by a Bible centered mysticism which mined secrets from the Biblical text and language and which was not unmindful or unaware of philosophic traditions

[1] Who was [illegible] polemic verse we do not know. They were not kept private, is made certain by a mimicking rejoinder to Brody, *Yedeot* . . . . IV, 39, No. 15:

> *Moreh Nebuchim* bear with the upright of the people
> Make whole all those who are knowledgeable in faith
> Silence the mouth of stupidity
> If one recognizes in his lines an enemy, beat him with the text
> Rebellious one, go out and don't come near."
>
> (Steinschneider, *Kobetz al Yad*, I [1885], 17.)

[2] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 34, No. 12, v. 24.

[3] *Ibid.*, 35, No. 13, v. 21; 43, No. 17, vv. 19-21; 69, No. 29, v. 62; 91-92, No. 40, vv. 32 and 37; 104, No. 44, vv. 85-86; 106, No. 45, v. 18; on the Gerona circle see I. Tishbi, *Zion*, IX, No. 4 (1944), 175 ff., especially 183-184.

coming from the Greco-Arab world. Meshullam, as we shall see, fits this pattern. He was both attracted and repelled by metaphysical speculation. In his more controlled moments he was prepared to praise Maimonides' piety and legal competence as well as some of his philosophic ideas and to place the blame on exaggerated and inaccurate translators and on the willfulness and lack of preparation of many among Maimonides' readers. "He did bring light to the eye, first and foremost on God's preeminence. He spoke sweetly to enlighten the blind eye." [1] "Those who misrepresent the *Moreh* did not get to its real meaning. They were estopped from its inner sense. With their mental capacity they were able to understand only a little—and with difficulty. The subtleties of his thought they could not approach. Hammer and sword went out from their mouths —crippled thoughts not at all complete." [2] But what is clearest in Meshullam's teaching is the refrain that speculative philosophy ultimately misleads because it drains faith of its miraculous power and intimate quality.

"About me, Meshullam b. Solomon, they will say: 'Questionable doctrine exists in you.'" Meshullam was no obscurantist. He had been attracted by and had wrestled with the subtleties of metaphysics. "Hasten to my help, O ye few of certain faith, while such spirits seek to pervert my thoughts." [4] "My thoughts race on endlessly, for I would search out mysteries beyond solution." [5] Meshullam's verse reveals his participation in speculative mysticism. "I know the chain (of *the Sephirot*) which establish the world's structure according to the quality of each and (I know) the foundation of God's rule and the secret of seals. It is written in the core structure of the universe and in the Torah, as if with diamonds. The secret of the *Sephirot* is found in all precious books. Traces can be discerned in available proof." [6] "Ezra and Azriel and the rest of my friends have given me opinion and not lied, They are my priests. They will bring fire upon my altar. They are the inextinguishable light and that never is darkened. They knew, [illegible] בספר, וספר, therefore they were attracted to the precious tradition." [7]

[1] Brody, *Yedeot . . .*, IV, 56, No. 24, vv. 63-64.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 117, No. 49, vv. 31-33.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 17, No. 3, v. 32.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 113, No. 48, v. 11.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 99, No. 44, v. 1. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 56, No. 24, vv. 55-57.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 104, No. 44, vv. 86-88. The quote is the first line of the *Sefer Yezirah*.

Central to this Kabbalist tradition was what Scholem has called "an ideology of halacha," i.e. a conceit that the religious commandments were not allegories of more or less profound idea or pedagogic measures, but rather commands to perform secret rites or mysteries of cosmic significance.[1] As we shall see, it was especially on the count of reducing the Toraic law to natural law that Meshullam faulted Maimonides. Central also was a doctrine of angelic intermediaries, and again we shall see that Meshullam faulted Maimonides for denying angelic and divine beings. Azriel as well as R. Isaac wrote significant commentaries to the *Sefer Yezirah*. We have seen Meshullam refer to the *Sephirot* and their seats and to the powers granted to various emanations by God by which these in turn rule mundane life.

In the course of the controversy Meshullam sided with Solomon b. Abraham and his disciples. "Had it not been for Solomon, the fine man who insisted on the Covenant, the forgetful would have completely broken the Covenant...A beloved remained faithful to our God and his disciples were crowned through him with the crown of faith"[2] He chafed under the restraint and lack of passion of his intimates. "The men of our circle boast themselves against the *Moreh* and sneer privately. Let me not be enticed by the men of controversy, let them not take hold of me nor press me."[3] Despite his reverence for Nachmanides he wished "his warhorses might have neighed and stamped,"[4] for Meshullam could not bridle his passion: "*Moreh Nebuchim*, be silent, shut up! We have never heard such things until now. Let him who says that the text is an allegory and the prophet merely a man of dreams, bear his own sin."[5] "I will stretch out a strong right hand, I am eager to rip apart the self wise intellectual and the seers of Egypt. Let every writing be blotted out which attacks faith and seems to jest about the teachings of the wise. I will not leave a single survivor to a people which separates itself from God by studying logic and sealed

[1] Scholem, p. 30.
[2] Brody, *Yesoot* . . . . IV, 104, No. 44, vv. 79 and 81.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 104, No. 44, vv. 82-82.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 104, No. 44, v. 85.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 33, No. 15. With the quixotic nature of a poet, Meshullam was capable of a complete *volte face*. "I will cry greatly. It is my intention to cry. My feet speed to seek pardon. Who will give me of the dust of his grave that my face may roll in it and be covered . . . In abject apology I humble myself with a humility which both confesses and acknowledges." (*Ibid.*, p. 116, No. 49, vv. 5-6, 9.)

books." [1] "I will read the *Moreh*, my mind is made up. To what purpose do those who know (my circle) seek to patch up my cuts. Would that I were not inclined to be a defender and to forgive, but they are not forgiven." [2] Meshullam went so far as to say, "He [Maimonides] became hypocrite and heretic and violated the Covenant. May his sins be inscribed upon a book." [3]

Meshullam was passionate and when committed, committed. He could not escape a need to go beyond the passive negativeness of his circle. Yet after his most damning polemic, he felt compelled to add this postscript:

> Concerning our rabbi (Maimonides) rise in proof of his reverence. His saintliness and his testimony to God's unity and his witness is well known. God forbid that I should libel with my parable since his fear is upon me and his respect is on my heart. He did bring light to the eye, first and foremost on God's firstness. He spoke sweetly to enlighten the blind eye. But weak minds found in him a stumbling block—though he only innovated to awaken the sleepers. [4]

Like so many before him, Meshullam often exonerated Maimonides by prosecuting the translators of the *Moreh*. "This was not the intention of the teacher, God forbid, but the translators turned aside from his ways. It was written in Arabic. They confused the text of our master. They did not explain. Search out his manuscript and see if prophecy actually was rationalized into a dream." [5] "I will spew out my venom on Harizi, let him be mocked and scorned. He, the translator, translated badly, he wrote his book with evil intent." [6] But one can not escape the conviction that Meshullam basically faulted the original equally with the translator. "The *Moreh* dilates on every folly. It is a plant which gives no shade. The rebellious draw on the *Moreh*. Cease from metaphysics." [7] Meshullam blinded himself to his own passion even as he pleaded balanced judgment. "Listen to the words of one who wishes well of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 101, No. 44, vv. 31-33.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 103, No. 44, vv. 70-71.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, v. 22. Contrast, however, his alter ego, "Our generation was silent. Many bridled their tongues until our master [Maimonides] came and the times became fragrant and scented with the spice of his incense. He wrote like the writings of God. They are alike even to the letter. Truth and righteousness are met there." (*Ibid.*, p. 116, No. 49, vv. 12-14.)
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 56, No. 24, vv. 62-65.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 100, No. 44, vv. 14-16.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 33, No. 12, vv. 11-12.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 33, No. 12, vv. 11-16.

the *Moreh*. Even if in his eyes there are many deficiencies. Who wishes for the cords which are strong in it, even though in certain places the cords are torn." [1]

What did Meshullam find fault in the *Moreh*?

A) Maimonides' historical and empirical treatment of the Biblical Commandments. "He erred in other things by weighing the commandments and reducing them to light and welcome burdens. The man who desires the absence of restraint takes such [teachings] to heart. Now there is a book which speaks to him in welcome trivial terms." [2] Meshullam scoffs at Maimonides' claim that each law has a reasonable base. "I ask you, O Rabbi, I draw near to hear [your answer], explain the reason proper for the *Yibum*. Do not forsake your kind spirit and reveal the secret of the hyssop and the secret of the woman who has a flux, and [of the regulation concerning] the sight of stain. Let the light of your knowledge praise (explain) the uncleanness of the Tent. Let your spirit not be alarmed because of the need of a valid opinion and explanation. Let thought dwell on the prohibitions of the hyssop, and the spreading of a leprous spot, and the quarantine for leprosy. Here is your pay, give the reason concerning the requirement of incense and the measurement of spices. I will give you a portion and all kinds of rewards and trinkets for [an explanation] of the burnt offerings. I will give you all manner of treasure, even the coffers of Egypt, for [an explanation] of *Kilayim*." [3]

What is Meshullam's position? "Their secret was never revealed. God, the Creator of man and the Foundation of the world, established them for his own glory." [4] Why this concern? There must have been a current of ritual eclecticism about. "The one who denies a single command falls under a curse. They are men of destructive purpose even though they appear respectable." [5]

The laws have a "secret," a mythological purpose, known only to the initiate. "You dwell on the incense. Know that the true reason escaped you: How can you believe that they offered incense because of the fat and the blood and to remove the stench. Let your heart concern itself with the secret of *Kilayim*. Have you been told why these were prohibited? . . . The commandments are truth.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 90, No. 40, vv. 12-13.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, vv. 17-18.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 55, No. 24, vv. 35-41.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 55, No. 24, v. 42.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 55, No. 24, v. 43.

A king promulgated them. They are meaningful to those who understand." [1] Meshullam's chart of these secrets is unknown, but it is doubtful that they differed unduly from Nachmanides'. To cite only one example, Maimonides argued that the rule of *Kilayim* was conceived to eliminate certain pagan ritual. [2] Nachmanides, on the other hand, argued that it was a warning that man was not to contradict the will and wisdom of God. [3] To do so was to doubt God's wisdom and to disturb the harmony of creation with unpredictable, but surely dire, consequences. To Meshullam, then, Maimonides' explanation of the commandments not only led to an attenuation of practice, but denied an essential element of the revealed tradition—as to which, however, only the Kabbalistic initiate was privy—knowledge which gave the initiate cosmic power. [4]

B) Maimonides brought into question the reality of future reward and the fact of a divine judgment and punishment.

"What of those who keep the law, who have forgotten the attractions of the world, who have been exiled from the house of pleasures and who await the deferred hope; Can the heart live if it is deprived of hope?" [5]

M. T. Teshubah 8:5 troubled and revolted Meshullam. "Is there no punishment for the sinner except that they die and are not remembered. If there is no judgment nor punishment in the world to come, how then did they tell me that burning fires will be kindled." [6] Meshullam's concern was at once practical—the absence of restraining fear would induce many to break the bonds—and theological: the faith of retribution. "If there is no retribution or punishment for human beings and the guilty simply no longer exist after death, then the light of the Torah is extinguished, falling away is multiplied, and hatred increased even to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, vv. 49-51, 54.

[2] *Morah*, iii. 35.

[3] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Lev. 19 : 19.

[4] In these early Kabbalistic days the Shabu'oth ritual (*Tikkun L'eyl Shabu'oth*) was a developing practice. On Shabu'oth the Torah had been given. On its eve the mystics panted for the renewal of this gift. The mystics not only assumed the supernatural authority of the commandments but considered carefully the correct posture and attitude in which each should be observed. In the face of such practice and attitude Maimonides' "scientific" analysis was an impossible pill to swallow.

[5] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 113, No. 48, vv. 5-6.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, vv. 25-26.

the point of bloodshed..." [1] It is not as Maimonides thought, "that the human soul is identical with the animals and has no attribute of immortality." [2] The technique of reducing allegory to fancy was at fault. "Perhaps these are only parables—without basis. Their purpose only to build fences around men's actions. Perhaps they are only parables to strengthen those who are struggling against their desires. Father, cease entirely your speech..." [3] "Those who shame by allegorizing the truth, though they make their tongues sweet to us; The end of those who forget [God] will be fire and brimstone, and their bones will be ground in Hell." [4] Meshullam rejected entirely the argument that retribution is simply a worldly corrective to frighten men into obedience.

To Meshullam the promise of faith was certain and cosmic. "I believe in resurrection when the body and soul will arise and the bones will come to life again. That day awaits only God who will blow the Shophar at which time the earth that was clod will begin to stir." [5] Meshullam reversed the argument of natural law by assuming an immutable cosmic law—at one stroke validating causation and retribution. "Are you bedazzled because of the house of bitterness [this world] where some have perverted their way and not been punished. Or perhaps your heart wonders at the wounds of those who seek God early and who are concerned with His holy name. Know that there is a retribution in time, but that its operation at every instant is not revealed. The wheel of life revolves. Such are its revolutions and they are never diverted. They follow the lines of His decision. No unexpected circumstances arise or bring change. The world has its own routine. Good awaits those who are patient—even if these wonders are delayed. This is the inheritance of the servants of our God. Over the sinners the bars of Hell will roar." [6] Meshullam validated his position simply—by assuming the authority of Talmudic Midrash. "How can they say of the geese of Rabba that it is a parable when according to my opinion they [the geese] were specially created for that purpose. [7]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, vv. 9-10.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, v. 8. This was, of course, not Maimonides' position.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 101, No. 44, vv. 28-30.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 91, No. 40, vv. 26-27.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 56, No. 24, vv. 58-59.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 114, No. 48, vv. 23-29.
[7] *T. B. Baba Batra* 73b, i.e. to establish the principle of reward and punishment.

Father, are you not astonished at the cakes [1] (the reference is to an aggadah establishing the Messianic promise)." [2] If the validation was simple, the Kabbalistic description of these events was not. Meshullam did not illustrate his view of it all. His motivation here was not to elaborate but to establish. "[About the one] who persisted in speculating; is there deliverance from Sheol? Is there a redeemer to save one full of sins? In the day when judgment is rendered will there be time to laugh?" [3]

C) That Maimonides denied God relevance by denying His attributes.

"Those who deny the proper attributes of God speak out until faith has been drained of man." [4] Meshullam believed, of course, in God's unity but not in God's absolute otherness. "I am determined to know the God of my fathers and my thoughts are continuously of Him. I would know the awesome God, omnipotent, who created all glory outside the category of time. He is exalted as God in this perishable world. He hung and founded the world upon the seas. He smote the primal matter and cut the sea and brought harm to the Egyptians with powerful wonders. He chose the fathers and their descendants from among all peoples and from that time He has supported them in His mercy against other nations. My eyes saw Him at Sinai when He revealed Himself to my host with noise and thunder." [5] Meshullam's God must be not only Creator but in history.

Meshullam blamed Greek modes of speculation for this attenuation of the Hebrew God concept. "Oh, men, cease from drawing waters from a well the fathers neither bore nor dug. What have you to do with Plato or with the philosophers who gave birth to evil and wickedness?" [6] There was a point beyond which logical categories resulted only in error. "Who will write sophistications which are too refined for understanding—Such a one will be trapped in arguments and fall because of their weight." [7]

Meshullam's concern was part theologic, part practical. He rebelled against our old friend the text of *Mishneh Torah* 3:9,

[1] *T. B. Sabbath* 30b.
[2] Brody, *Yedeot* . . , IV, 102, No. 44, vv. 40-41.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, vv. 16-17.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 113, No. 48, v. 9.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56, No. 24, vv. 49-54.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, vv. 37-39.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, vv. 11-12.

which presumed anyone who posited attributes of God to be a *min*. "Do not be angry at those who posit corporeality or if they liken God to the form of a man, those who speak of 'glory' and who think of 'shape.' These are variant opinions but not heresy. How many sages spoke of *Komah* [divine dimension] yet they worshipped their Creator and did not rebel against His law." [1] Nor was he so unsophisticated that he did not recognize that the ideas of his circle of Kabbalists approached a similar position. "They (Ezra and Azriel) know *Shiur*, but they keep private the teaching out of fear of causing heresy." [2]

What particularly exercised Meshullam was the inevitable negation of miracles resulting from a God who is Pure Existence and can be defined only in terms of negative attributes. "Father, are you not astonished at the cakes? [3] Do you not remember the things of the past? Has there been a miracle greater than the crossing of the Red Sea when the depths were cut in twain? Pay heed to the stop at Sinai when the mountains quaked and shook. Remember the holiest of miracles, the manna, which our fathers ate without ever lacking. God's strength is not foreshortened nor are God's plans beyond fulfillment." [4]

"There is a quarrel between the naturalists and miracles. Who will judge these contradictions and reconcile them?" [5] What was Meshullam's side of the quarrel? That there is historical evidence for the miracles: "For every miracle our lips can establish clear proof without error." [6] One is reminded that to a man like Nachmanides miracles were the ultimate proof texts of the existence and power of God. Meshullam, for instance, insists, "To us the ass [of Balaam] is a factual text, though the book labels it a vision." [7] Nachmanides' *Commentary to the Torah* fills out the "us." The miracle occurred 'to show Balaam who it is that establishes speech and silence. It is God who invests man with the power of speech." All this "to convince Balaam that he should not practice sorcery or curse Israel." [8] According to Nachmanides, and certainly Me-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, vv. 46-48.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 104, No. 44, v. 79.
[3] *T.B. Shabbat* 30b.
[4] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 102, No. 44, vv. 41-45.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 103, No. 44, v. 69.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 90, No. 40, v. 17.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, v. 39.
[8] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Num. 22 : 23.

Shullam would have agreed, "There is nothing in the world which is causally controlled or operates only according to natural law, rather everything is under the power of hidden miracles." [1]

In his discussion of miracles Meshullam revealed clearly his own earlier attraction to Greek norms. "These are counsels to me about the subject of miracles because these seemed alien to me. For my mind rejected the concept of miracles and insisted on some material explanation. I would not accept any proof until it became unmistakably clear to me. My heart would not believe until my answers were convincing and strong: Now I come with impeccable witnesses concerning miracles. Written documents support me." [2] What were these texts? Probably the *Sefer Yezirah* as expounded by his circle.

D) That Maimonides reduced prophecy to a vision seen but dimly and a mere psychological potentiality.

"O *Moreh Nebuchim* there is contention about the issue of prophecy in you." [3] What is the contention? The contention was that Maimonides denied both the charismatic powers of the prophet and the fact of prophecy as an act of divine will. "Concerning the dead whom the prophets revived—they said it was only a temporary stoppage of the pulse—that they were not actually dead." [4] "Heretics say censorially that the Torah is only a vision—that the text does not denote what it says—that the copy contains allegories." [5] Meshullam's argument was that prophecy was not only denotatively accurate but revealed truths of cosmic significance. "The heart of the seer saw in the vision of prophecy a fearful wonder and deep secrets. Every visionary saw delineated in his vision the form of our God who is above all that are exalted." [6] Prophecy established God far more than logic. Moreover, it was not only Moses who saw truly but many and it is their visions that the tradition unfolds. "Some obtained vision as might a man entranced; Some prophets saw while in complete possession of their critical faculties. Of these came the received [tradition] and to these were the revelations concerning God who dwells in praise and precedes all. How prodigious the curse which will overtake those who offered a purely

[1] *Ibid.*, to Ex. 13 : 15.
[2] Brody, *Yedsot* . . . , IV, 100, No. 44, vv. 3-7.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 100, No. 44, v. 9.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 102, No. 44, v. 75.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33, No. 12, vv. 1-2.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 53, No. 24, vv. 1-2.

natural explaration to a people upright and pure who cling to the Torah and those who taught that faith and law were received of a distant nature, who laugh at the commandments and [insist] that the commandments are dreams." [1]

To claim prophecy was the truth darkly seen was to undermine the foundation of faith. One thinks immediately of Nachmanides' insistence that prophecy depends not on human capacity—all heard the revelation at Sinai—but on divine will, and his further insistence that the clear and open quality of prophecy establishes its validity and precludes anyone casting doubt on the truth of the content of the revelation. [2]

E) That Maimonides denied the plenary power of angelic beings and spirits.

"Shamelessly, he spoke deprecatingly of the angel of conception." [3] Meshullam believed in both angels and spirits. "Busy yourself to find substance in the matter of angels and you will be remembered kindly even by the guilty. The angel of birth [belongs] to God the most High and the messenger angels fulfill His will. We have witnesses in the matter of evil spirits. The class of destroying angels actually brought into being certain laws. [4] Torah and Tradition confirm me in the matter of demons. The teachings of the Aggadah restores my conviction." [5]

Meshullam did not fault Maimonides for denying angels. In the face of the *Moreh* text: "As for the existence of angels, there is no necessity to cite any proof from Scriptures, where the fact is frequently mentioned," [6] he had no need to. His objection to Maimonides' circumscribing the angels to the spheres and his insistence that the forms in which the Biblical narrative portrays angels do not correspond to reality but are simply descriptive of prophetic

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54, No. 24, vv. 3-6.

[2] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Deut. 4 : 9.

[3] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 33. No. 12, v. 9.

[4] Cf. *Mishnah Gittin* 7 : 1; *T. B. Gittin* 67a. Maimonides had explained these texts in purely rational terms. (Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Gittin* 7 : 1; cf. H. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors* [London, 1952], p. 111.) Aristotelian astronomy had no place for negative intelligences. How far Meshullam actually went in a belief in evil spirits is uncertain. One recalls Nachmanides' stricture, "I am greatly astonished at the habit of [pious] people in Germany who occupy themselves with demons, conjuring them and using them for various purposes." Solomon ibn Adret, *Teshubot ha-Rashba ha-Hayohasot le-ha-Ramban* [Zolkiev, 1795], I, 283.)

[5] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 54, No. 24, vv. 44-47.

[6] *Moreh* ii. 6.

dreams.[1] To Maimonides angels were forms without substance, [illegible]. [2] Hence any verse about angels must be taken allegorically. [3] "Father, does your heart not know that angels move about in the world." [4] "Slow up, O great one of the generation, for the lines of your book are not clear."[5] To Meshullam angels were a fact of life and he sensed, correctly, that to Maimonides angels were largely a fact of astronomy—that man's apperception of angels was intuitive, in dreams rather than [illegible]. Compare Meshullam, "Even while awake men are conjoined to them and attach themselves."[6]

Meshullam attempted Biblical proof. "See in *Va-yerah* (Gen. 18) concerning the angels who appeared to Abraham." [7] According to the Kabbalists the three who appeared to Abraham to announce Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction were angelic beings—divine emanations—and hence divine forms of creation. "God-like"—even Godly. Angels solved all problems of Biblical "messengers" and in sophisticated analysis explained divine-mortal communication. But the proof lay not so much in the Bible as in the traditional angelology of the Talmud and in the rarified Neo-Platonic angelology of early Kabbalism—his world. Recall Nachmanides' insistence that every nature has its star of destiny and every star its controlling angel. [8] There was, of course, an angelic equivalent to of the *Sephirot* of which the Ezra-Azriel school made so much—philosophically, we might say these were the personalities of each sphere, and a far more active personality than Maimonides permitted. Meshullam longed for the Resurrection. "When Michael will serve as priest offering sacrifice before God in the sanctuary of God's mourt." [9]

Let us put Meshullam's world together—for it is typical in many ways of the mind that was at the very least sorely troubled by Maimonides' approach.

"Faith is the root and principle of every philosophy. The tra-

[1] Cf. *Morea*, ii. 12; *M.T. Yesode ha-Torah* 2 : 4.
[2] *Moreh*, ii. 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, ii. 4.
[4] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 101, No. 44, v. 19.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 101, No. 44, v. 24.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 101, No. 44, v. 23.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 100, No. 44, v. 18.
[8] Nachmanides, *Perush* . . . to Lev. 18 : 25.
[9] Brody, *Yedeot* . . . , IV, 56, No. 24, v. 60.

dition is to be followed in all essentials." [1] Faith need not conform to logic, logic is in error when it is at variance with the inescapable principles of faith. "Draw near, my brother, to that which is experienced [of God]. See the company of the ones who take delight. What can you grasp of intellectual things? Stretch out your understanding to the heavens." [2] The revelation of Sinai and of the prophets precedes reason in order of truth "What did those of confused faith see in wicked thoughts and unclear logic to lead them astray." [3] "If you rely only on what is possible [according to sense experience] what, if anything, is possible. The people will be caught in error and come to trust in monstrous things." [4]

There was a deliberate attempt on Meshullam's part at an innocency of faith. "According to his *innocence*, Meshullam b. Solomon will explain reasons for commandments and laws." [5] "Be still, O wise one lest you be pierced with the sword wielded by the recesses of your mind. Discipline your spirit and let your understanding withstand the ideas that enter your head. Frustrate the counsel of your heart and return before the day turns and the pillar of your cloud evaporates (death). Put aside speculation. How many [before you] have drawn out the fundamental mysteries [to no avail]. The knowing ones have erred in their speculations. Knowledge entangled them and they blundered." [6] Meshullam's simplicity of faith was a deliberate posture—his own thoughts about faith were anything but untroubled and had to be disciplined systematically. "And I, Meshullam b. Solomon, I also will keep the teachings private. My hand will be restrained from writing. Still I will research the matter (faith). My deeds will speak for me though my ideas are not exhausted." [7]

God is one, omnipotent, creator. Each of these concepts was refined for Meshullam by the cosmology and metaphysics of early Kabbalism. He knew the *Sephirot* and their seals—i.e. a theory of creation through successive emanation. He knew the speculation in this regard of the *Sefer Yezirah*. "I stood in the secret of the *Sefer Yezirah* and I learnt the fundamentals of the seven divisible

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 91. No. 40, v. 20.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 91. No. 40, vv. 21-22.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54. No. 24, v. 14.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 54. No. 24, vv. 13-14.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 91. No. 40, v. 24.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 115, No. 48, vv. 15-20.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 104, No. 44, vv. 90-91.

parts." [1] He was also privy to some secret teaching concerning God's nature. "They (Ezra and Azriel) knew concerning God's *Shiur*, but they kept private the teaching out of fear of causing heresy." [2] Of the nature of this gnosis one can only guess, but one recalls Nachmanides' intricate letter play on the text "I will be that which I will be" (Ex. 3:14) which established Omnipotence and Omnipresence. One does not need to speculate on the specifics of Meshullam's cosmology. It presumed a constant process of emanation—God revealing Himself to man—that very revelation, in effect, returning as a messenger to God. Its touchstone was that God keeps in touch with life, miracle, revelation, prophecy were the significant elements in that "keeping in touch" as far as man was concerned.

The theory of *Sephirot*—besides establishing contact, established cosmic order—an order which could easily circumscribe miracles as orderly phenomena. Apply the order of the universe to the terrestrial world and one can be certain not only of the fact of Sinai and the accuracy of prophecy, but of the fact of Judgment and the act of Retribution. "It is certain to me that those of the dust will arise and the scattered bones will blossom." [3] "The day awaits only God who will sound the Shophar at which time the earth that was clod will begin to stir." [4]

A general feeling that Maimonides, for all his brilliance, had withdrawn God and divine intimacy from human life rather than any careful analysis of the *Morch* motivated Meshullam's opposition. "My voice is to you who are in pain. . . A place is prepared for the dead who sanctified themselves by serving God. . . Speak to those sunk in tears of the peace of death." [5]

"Shall there be no penalty for the overly speculative?" [6] Meshullam faulted the "intelligentsia" of his day for sowing confusion by their sophistications and for causing the fabric of faith and goodness to unravel. "Many without knowledge grasped the *Mada* and glorified and preened themselves in her name." [7] "Since of old, that land (Provence) was susceptible to skepticism and there here-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 43, No. 17, v. 37.
[2] *Ibid.*, p 104, No. 44, v. 89.
[3] *Ibid.*, p 31, No. 10, v. 50.
[4] *Ibid.*, p 56, No. 24, v. 59.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115, No. 48, vv. 36-39.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 54, No. 24, v. 20.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 103, No. 44, v. 55.

tics gathered. They, though few in numbers, with a cruel heart bedeviled the wise of the day... They found cause against prayer. They did not pray or supplicate God." [1] "He placed a snare for a trapped generation against which even innocency could not triumph." [2] "In their land (Provence) there are groups whose faith is lacking—like the faith of the fallen angels. Their faith is certain only of what can be seen; they acknowledge miracles only under duress... Take, my brother, my greetings to my mother's house, though they be among the leaders of the opposition. Though the fathers are still set in their hearts and a mirority are steadfast in their vanities. May the impression of the merit of Meshullam return the children and the babes to the truth. Arnounce to every roof and dwelling that mine is the obligation to bring good tidings to the groaning." [3]

Meshullam's vacillation between interest in philosophy and anger at its religious consequences brings us full cycle. Maimonides, in building a logical superstructure for Jewish theology, had not violated any dogmatic prohibition. He had had notable and pious predecessors. He would have notable and pious successors. The Maimonidean controversy did not erupt because of the definitions in the *Moreh* and the *Mada*. These were, as we have seen, new but not novelties.

Had western European Jewish life been culturally of one piece, there would have been no controversy. But in Aragon, Castille, and the Provence there were men who were better trained in Greek logic than in Talmudic lore and whose hearts were committed to the Academy rather than to the Yeshibah. Maimonides wrote the *Moreh* to encourage the faith of pupils troubled by the congruity of their religious and secular training. Some, at least, in western Europe read the *Moreh* not as an apologetic for Judaism but as an apologetic for secular preoccupations and as an apology for their spiritual indifference and their religious disinterest.

Again there would have been no controversy had the faith of these few un-rooted ones not been of moment to the larger community. Traditionally Judaism was tolerant of doubt and sophistication. But at this moment in time the missionary and militant Church was casting its net with new found skill for the faith-loose Jew.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 204, No. 44, vv. 73-74, 78.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33, No. 12, v. 13.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92, No. 40, vv. 35-36, 40-43.

Once converted, he could be pressured into the service of the missionary societies and censorship boards who were preparing various lists of Talmudic blasphemies and errors. He could be made to say almost anything.

One can appreciate the concern of the anti-Maimonists. But censorship worked no better in the 13th century than it does today. The ban multiplied bitterness, increased differences, and resulted in a scandal which rocked all Jewry.

After the burning ~~resulted in a sophistication of~~ the aims of the pious became more Maimonides might be read, but secular philosophy was not to be studied except by the adult and the pious. This program of survival, too, was doomed to failure. But its promulgation occurred a half century later and with another set of principals and under pressures somewhat different from those we have described.

The best of the anti-Maimonists were good, decent, able, and pious men. The best of the Maimonists were good, decent, able, and pious men. That pressures of survival should separate these men is the tragedy of this history.