Philosophy and Rabbinic Culture

Philosophy and Rabbinic Culture is a study of the great, and curiously underappreciated, engagement of a medieval European Jewish community with the philosophic tradition. This lucid description of the Languedocian Jewish community's multigenerational cultivation of, and acculturation to, scientific and philosophic teachings into Judaism fulfills a major desideratum in Jewish cultural history.

In the first detailed account of this long-forgotten Jewish community and its cultural ideal, the author gives an expansive reappraisal of the role of the philosophic interpretation in rabbinic culture and medieval Judaism. Looking at how the cultural ideal of Languedocian Jewry continued to develop and flourish throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with particular reference to the literary style and religious teaching of the great Talmudist, Menahem ha-Meiri, Stern explores issues such as Meiri's theory of "civilized religions," including Christianity and Islam, the controversy over philosophy and philosophic allegory in Languedoc and Catalonia, and the cultural significance of the medical use of astrological images.

This book will be of great interest to scholars and students of religion, of Judaism in particular, and of philosophy, history and medieval Europe, as well as those interested in Jewish–Christian relations.

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Jewish interpretation and controversy in medieval Languedoc
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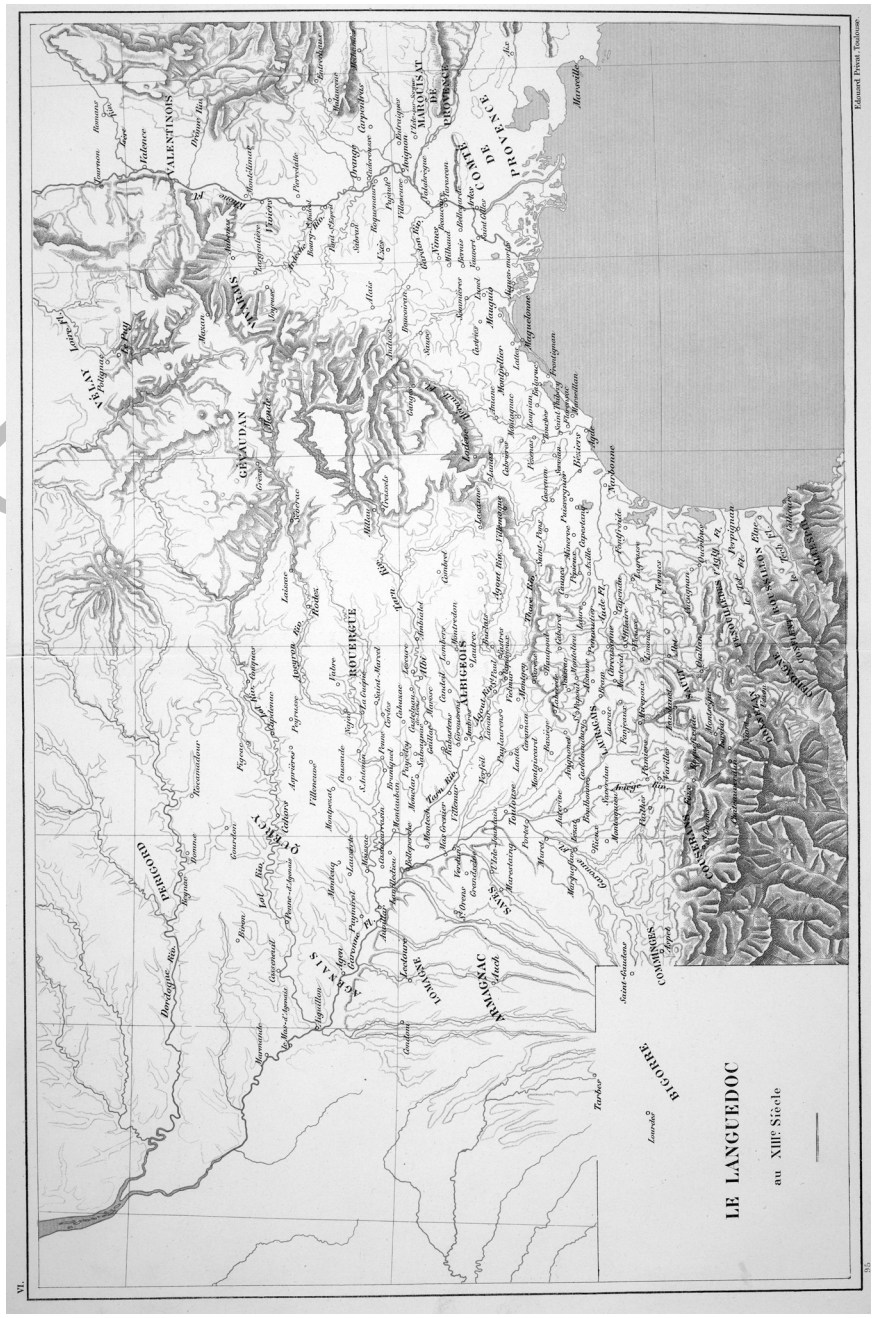

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Philosophy and Rabbinic Culture

Jewish interpretation and controversy in medieval Languedoc

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I first learned of the Jews of Languedoc and their writings in the graduate seminar of Isadore (Yitzhaq) Twersky, of blessed memory. In his intimate seminar, held around a wooden table in a narrow book-lined room on the top floor of Widener Library – the grand central library of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts – I was initiated into medieval Jewish studies. I hasten to add, as it was critical to my educational experience, that Professor Twersky, beyond his important contributions to the study of Maimonides and Jewish intellectual history, was a religious figure in his own right. An austere and charismatic scholar, with a square-cut rabbinical beard and a large black skullcap, the Boston-born Twersky conducted himself with a gravitas most easily associated with a nineteenth-century Eastern European *tzaddiq*. Indeed, Twersky had inherited the leadership of the Talner *shtebl*, a small private synagogue, from his own father, whose family roots were in the Hasidic dynasty of Chernobyl, Ukraine, and, to boot, had married the daughter of a preeminent Lithuanian Talmudist. As long-time director of Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies, he had a prominent role within the University and beyond, especially in the intellectually powerful Israeli academy. With the coming of the Sabbath, however, Twersky would doff the tweed sport coat, which he wore so comfortably during week, and don a long black Hasidic caftan. Having come to Harvard myself very much a religious seeker, I watched Professor Twersky closely, fascinated at his seemingly effortless negotiation of the demands of these diverse cultural contexts.

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times, only a bit reluctant to step out from behind his office desk. I regret that, until now, I have been unable to thank him adequately for all of his substantial help. From my time at Harvard, the good humor, generosity, learning and eloquence of several others on the faculty, including Jan Ziolkowski, James Hankins, John Murdoch, James Kugel, and Jay Harris also deserve my thanks.

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have crossed paths with Gad Freudenthal. The afternoon that we spent in conversation at the University of Montreal Library is surely reflected in this book.

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enabled me to make as well as the errors and deficiencies from which they saved me. Needless to day, the remaining deficiencies are my own.

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Cambridge, Massachusetts
July, 2008

Note on geographic terms

The Jewish communities and scholars discussed in this study lived in Languedoc (Occitania)—in cities such as Narbonne, Lunel, Montpellier, and Béziers—and also in Roussillon, northern Catalonia, where they had migrated at the invitation of local authorities.

East of the Rhône, Avignon, Orange, and Comtat Venaissin also held important Jewish communities that, in the perception of medieval Jewish contemporaries, belonged to the same larger region, as did, to a lesser extent, a few communities in the county of Provence.

This entire territory, from Roussillon in the west to Provence in the east, was only loosely organized, and full of the political divisions, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Hence, not surprisingly, it had no single name in any language. Even at the dawn of the fourteenth century, one prominent Jewish scholar (see p. 151) refers to his home—for lack of a name—as "the land of ten-day's walk from Perpignan (Roussillon) to Marseilles (Provence)."

Royal France held no portion of this region in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century, only Languedoc came under French domination, and even then, only reluctantly and partially. Hence, reference to this region as "southern France," "the South of France," or "the Midi," constitutes an anachronistic distortion in our context.

Needless to say, reference to our region as "Provence," as has been quite common, is simply a misidentification.

Introduction

This book explores the history of Judaism in Languedoc at a time when rabbinic culture took most seriously the Maimonidean idea that the Torah had philosophic goals. It focuses on the decades immediately before and after 1300, based on phenomenological, historical, and documentary considerations.

In the history of Judaism, Moses ben Maimon of Cordova (Maimonides), an Andalusian Jew living in exile in Egypt, produced the decisive medieval synthesis of philosophy and Jewish tradition in the second half of the twelfth century.[1] Maimonides identified the God of Israel with the God of philosophic investigation, and the goals of Judaism with the goals of the philosophers. Applying insights already found in Islamic interpretation, Maimonides argued that scriptural and, to a lesser extent, rabbinic narratives contained an "internal" as well as "external" meaning, which he compared to an "apple of gold encased in silver filigree."[2] The text's external, literal meaning was no doubt as precious as silver, but its internal, allegorical meaning, which frequently could only be glimpsed through the external filigree and not examined directly, was as valuable as gold.[3]

Interpreting Jewish tradition in this light, Maimonides was able to claim that Judaism's internal meaning reflects the understandings of the philosophers. Maimonides maintained that Judaism's laws are intended for the establishment of a well-functioning civil society made up of persons of good character who are led by its injunctions to pursue the most exalted of human goals, connection to God, by achieving the deepest possible understanding of Aristotelian metaphysics. Maimonides taught that a continuously maintained philosophic comprehension of God is His true worship and results in a close connection to Him in this life and beyond.[4] If read as a coherent whole, Maimonides' legacy as a jurist and philosopher was to formulate Judaism as a philosophic religion in which the Jews are guided to the best possible moral and social circumstances as a community, as well as to the greatest possible advancement of the individual in the philosophic curriculum.

This formulation of Judaism as a philosophic religion, as inspired by Maimonides, was generally not well accepted by medieval Jews. After an initial period of severe critique that began during his lifetime and extended

into the first half of the thirteenth century, however, Maimonides' teachings were almost always highly regarded and frequently accorded even extraordinary respect. In fact, some have gone so far as to delineate a "heroic" image of Maimonides in thirteenth-century Jewish thought.[5] However this may be described, Maimonides' influence upon the history of Jewish law and philosophy would be difficult to overstate. Despite this extraordinary legacy, only in Languedoc did Jewish scholars—and even entire Jewish communities—rigorously seek to regard the sources of Judaism as Maimonides had suggested.

Samuel ibn Tibbon of Marseilles corresponded with Maimonides and translated his *Guide of the Perplexed* from the Arabic to Hebrew in 1204. In his subsequent works, Samuel took up important aspects of a Maimonidean program, as did his son-in-law, Jacob Anatoli. These works included Samuel's *Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim* (on critical aspects of the Creation story) and his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (on King Solomon's investigation of the human soul), as well as his translation of Aristotle's *Meteorology* (on cosmogony). Anatoli published his own weekly philosophic synagogue sermons, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, and also translated several of Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle.

Not only were the works of Samuel ibn Tibbon and Jacob Anatoli the beginning of a stream of translations of Arabic philosophic works and of philosophic commentaries on the books of Scripture that emerged from Languedoc over the next several generations of Jewish scholars, but they also signaled a turn toward increased philosophic sophistication and a desire, among a growing audience of Languedocian Jews, to see Judaism within the philosophic mode.[6]

In the first few decades of the thirteenth century, Languedocian halakhists objected even to the writings of Maimonides; and no less a Bible commentator and grammarian than David Kimḥi of Narbonne exhibited a lack of sophistication in philosophic matters. Some have speculated that contact between Samuel ibn Tibbon and the group surrounding Solomon of Montpellier, a Languedocian Talmudist entirely unsympathetic to rationalism, may have sparked Solomon's attacks on Maimonides' writings in the 1230s.[7] However this may be, the Catalonian kabbalist Jacob ben Sheshet had by that time already published *Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, a lengthy kabbalistic critique of Samuel's philosophical interpretation of Scripture.[8] As the thirteenth century progressed, however, Languedocian Jews grew in their philosophic sophistication and in their allegiance to a philosophic understanding of Jewish tradition. In mid-century, Talmudists like Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili and Reuven ben Ḥayyim clearly belonged to those who saw philosophic allegory in Jewish texts, and who believed that Jewish worship and practice was a means to achieving philosophic goals. In fact, ha-Me'ili—along with his father-in-law, the great Talmudist Meshullam ben Moses of Bèziers—were responsible for the absolute condemnation and, apparently, the complete expulsion of kabbalah from its birthplace, Languedoc. They did this on the grounds that kabbalah's great secret, the ten *sefirot* (symbols of

dynamically emanated divine potencies), did unprecedented violence to the Jewish philosophic notion of God's absolute simplicity and unity.

By the dawn of the fourteenth century, the relationship of Languedocian Jewry to the philosophic tradition had grown intense and deep, with a complex mixture of delight and concern regarding the distinct cultural legacy that was its inheritance. The path-breaking philosophic translations and commentaries of Samuel ibn Tibbon and Jacob Anatoli, of the first half of the thirteenth century, were now recognized as the foundation upon which a distinct regional Jewish culture had come into full bloom. Menaḥem ha-Meiri of Perpignan had just completed his massive, philosophically inspired Talmud commentary, and David ben Samuel of Étoile would soon write a major legal code infused with philosophic spirituality. Yet to sprout from Languedocian soil were the sophisticated scientific treatises of Yedayah ha-Penini of Bèziers, the translations of Averroes's commentaries on Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* by Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, and the inspired philosophic insights and syntheses of Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides) of Orange, among other achievements—all in the third, fourth, and fifth decades of the fourteenth century.

In 1305, one of the great Catalonian Talmudists, Solomon ibn Adret of Barcelona (Rashba), prohibited philosophic study to Jews in Catalonia and Aragon before the age of twenty-five; in 1306, the French king, Philip the Fair, expelled Jews from all of his realms, which included the county of Languedoc. Intriguingly, neither the furor and enmity caused in Languedoc on account of Rashba's prohibition of philosophic study, nor the upheaval caused to well-established Languedocian Jewish communities whom the French expulsion forced to move to neighboring dominions, stripped of their homes and possessions, appears to have disrupted this intensive, creative communal engagement with the philosophic tradition that continued to deepen through the first half of the fourteenth century. As late as 1380, the Languedocian scholar Joseph ben Saul successfully produced a vast—and as yet unexamined—philosophically inspired Talmudic commentary, comparable in scope to the work of Menaḥem ha-Meiri of Perpignan.

Thus, in the decades immediately before and after 1300, Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc had traveled decisively beyond its initial elite circles of translators and commentators to become the shared religious discourse of the community, its primary lens for interpreting Jewish tradition and for understanding human experience. We are no longer dealing exclusively with Hebrew translations of the commentaries of Averroes (although these do become increasingly prevalent) and with attempts to discover the conclusions of these Aristotelian commentaries in Scripture; popular encyclopedias of philosophy and Judaism, like the *Livyat Ḥen* of Levi ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche-de-Conflent, and codifications of Talmudic interpretation following the distinctive priorities of Languedoc, like the *Bet ha-Beḥirah* of Menaḥem ha-Meiri, have now appeared. Conflict over the role that philosophy ought to play in the life of the community animated Languedocian Jewry from 1304 to 1306. In those years, conservative voices in Languedoc

advocated a return to circumstances in which philosophic awareness belonged almost exclusively to the elite members of the community; while more progressive voices spoke of the current state of Languedocian Jewish culture, in which philosophic perspectives were very widely held, as a fundamentally laudable development.

This two-year-long controversy provides a fascinating historical matrix through which to present many of the intellectual personalities of turn-of-the-century Languedoc and their contributions, as well as to reveal the ambivalence and uncertainty that had developed among Languedocian Jews as a result of their sophisticated and evolving negotiations with the philosophic tradition. The documents of this controversy—open letters written in a high literary style woven from biblical and Talmudic texts and sent from one community or group to another—were edited and published by one of the community's most prominent conservative voices, Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier, under the title *Minḥat Qena'ot* (Offering of Zeal). The excellent state of preservation of these important documents (in one of the finest modern editions of a medieval Hebrew text), along with the vast literary remains of contemporary Languedocian scholars, much already in print and some still in manuscript, call out for a full-bodied historical reconstruction of this dynamic period in Jewish intellectual and religious life.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the stage is set and the background is put in place; first, regarding the incorporation of scientific and philosophic learning into Jewish culture in medieval Languedoc and second, regarding the early stages of the growth in medieval Languedoc of Jewish philosophic culture. Chapter 3 looks at evidence indicating that Languedoc provided a principal western European locus during the High Middle Ages for Jews and Christians engaged in friendly dialogue about their respective religions as well as for their mutual scientific and philosophic collaboration. There can be little doubt that Christians' and Jews' changed perceptions of themselves and each other was critical to this development.

Meiri's transformation of Talmud study: "Philosophic Spirituality in a Halakhic Key," Chapter 4, draws the reader into the creative Jewish intellectual environment of Languedoc that developed out of the translation movement, through a description of the ways in which biblical exegesis, aggadah interpretation, and study of halakhah were profoundly transformed by the gradual injection and integration of philosophic notions into Jewish life. These transformations are presented through a description of the interpretive and literary innovations found in biblical and Talmudic studies in Languedoc and a careful selection of illustrative themes and issues. The way in which Languedocian Jews began to conceive of Judaism as a "religion" (דת) with social and political functions is a particularly striking example because of the unusual possibilities that it opened for comparison and dialogue with exponents of Christianity. Meiri's brilliant theoretical revolution (found discretely embedded in his Talmud commentary), according to which the function and status of Christianity compares favorably with that of

Judaism, constitutes the height of the Jewish reconception of the functional value of "religion" in medieval Languedoc.

Chapter 5 examines the state of Languedocian Jewish culture on the eve of the controversy of 1304–6 through the eyes of two moderate Maimonidean scholars, Meiri and Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier. Out of the discussions among the protagonists of the controversy of 1304–6 and the events that flowed from them an historical narrative emerges naturally, as described in Chapter 6, "1304–1306: Knowledge and Authority in Dispute". The beautifully written open letters of the controversy possess an extraordinary intensity and clarity of expression, but, as one might expect, the content these discussions overlaps to a great extent with related discussions found in contemporary literary works. Through careful reconstruction of the multiple meanings of the unfolding public dialogue in historical context, the intricacy of the personal, intellectual, and political interactions of its participants becomes apparent. What emerges is a series of complex negotiations over the ultimate nature of Judaism and its future as a tradition. Within Languedoc, these negotiations concerned the placement of proper boundaries around the philosophic interpretation of Judaism and the means appropriate to ensure that those boundaries were not breached. Languedocian Jewish scholars of that period agreed that the inner, frequently allegorical meaning of Judaism was philosophical, but disagreed strongly regarding the extent to which this should be made known, as well as whether Judaism was being significantly misinterpreted philosophically. Intriguingly, there was general scholarly agreement in Languedoc that the inner philosophic meaning of Judaism increasingly was becoming much more public among local Jews. There was a full range of views, however, as to whether this development was overwhelmingly positive, whether it needed to be modified gently thorough a variety of directives and instructions, or whether it needed to be opposed actively and forcefully by restricting access to philosophic learning. Those Languedocian scholars who hoped to decrease public knowledge of the philosophic interpretation of Judaism in their community eventually turned outside of that community, to neighboring Catalonia, where they were assured of the support of scholars who were more skeptical of philosophic interpretation and were quite ill at ease with the increasingly public and frequently allegorical fashion in which Languedocian Jews interpreted sacred texts philosophically.

The tensions between religious developments in Catalonia and Languedoc, and the complexity of the personal commitments of the Jews in each region, are highlighted by the controversy in a fashion that is of considerable historical importance, as this controversy took place only shortly after the period that nascent Kabbalah—which was to become the major competing interpretive framework of medieval Judaism—had been pushed out of its birthplace, Languedoc, and gone on to flourish, as yet relatively quietly, in Catalonia and Castile. Chapter 6 throws light on the ways in which the complex intellectual and religious commitments of Languedocian and

Catalonian Jews were subtly expressed in the context of a dispute over the permissibility of astrological cures, then widely used and highly respected. This chapter argues that, contrary to the interpretation of Moshe Halbertal, the controversy of 1304–6 does not represent the fission of immanent Maimonidean dualities—fundamentally different and conceptually opposed interpretations of Maimonides' legacy that had previously coexisted in Languedoc in a state of "virtual hypostasis." Of course, it is unlikely that any living community aught be described in such reified terms, as if its culture were abstractly determined according to a particular interpretation of Maimonides' challenging and multivalent literary corpus. Despite his extraordinary grasp of the relevant material, Halbertal draws the knotty complexities of thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Languedocian Jewish thought into a conceptually brilliant but historically inaccurate and untenable picture. Instead, this controversy represents variant ideas both of how the serious intellectual challenges posed to Judaism by the philosophic tradition might best be addressed, and of the extent of the danger faced by the medieval Languedocian community due to its increasingly public discussion of Judaism's inner philosophic meaning.

Chapter 7, "1306: The Controversy's Resolution and Aftermath," functions as an historical epilogue to the account of the controversy and considers the influence of this intellectual and political dispute over the direction of Languedocian Jewish culture. In 1306, a French royal decree expelling the Jews convulsed King Philip's entire dominion, from distant Paris all the way south to Languedoc—the largest county of southern France, the center of Languedocian Jewish culture, and the home of many of the controversy's participants. The authors of the emotional open letters written during this period preserved personal accounts of the experience of expulsion, mixed with their lofty religious concerns. Importantly, the French expulsion did not affect Jews living in Roussillon and Provence, as the authority of the Capetian Kings did not extend to these neighboring counties of the Midi. Languedocian Jews therefore moved, with only a few of their possessions, west to Roussillon—then under the Crown of Majorca—or east to Provence, a realm of the Kingdom of Burgundy. The journey out of Languedoc was of a few miles, but the controversy concluded with a number of letters—and, ultimately, a published edition of the correspondence of the controversy, selectively edited by the conservative Abba Mari—issuing forth from Provence.

Chapter 8, "Effects of the expulsion: Jewish philosophic culture in Roussillon and Provence", functions as an historical epilogue to the fortuna of Languedocian Jewry. At the mercy of the French monarchy, Jews in Languedoc, the largest county of Occitania, experienced cycles of expulsion and invitation to return throughout the fourteenth century, until the expulsion of 1391, after which no invitation to return was to follow. In post-1306 Roussillon, Jewish culture quickly acquired a Catalonian identity, as might have been expected, given the county's close geographical and renewed political ties to the Crown of Aragon. In Provence, however, the philosophic culture of Languedocian Jewry grew in intensity and sophistication throughout the first

half of the fourteenth century. In those decades, the philosophic approach to the interpretation of Scripture and Jewish law was deeply enhanced by outstanding commentators and halakhists.

The lucid reconstruction and description of Jewish culture's complex relationship to the philosophic tradition in Languedoc from around 1250 to 1350 are among the major outstanding desiderata of the intellectual history of medieval Jewry. The importance of this Languedocian relationship—between Jewish religion, life, and thought, on the one hand, and the philosophic tradition that came to Europe via the Arabs, on the other—lies not so much in its profundity and originality. Indeed, much of Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture (with certain rather notable exceptions) is neither original nor profound. Instead, this culture's historical importance lies in its breadth and scope, in the extensive and substantial ways in which Languedocian Jewish scholars and their communities adopted and elaborated upon a philosophically inflected interpretation of Judaism, one in which Scripture was seen as an allegorical palimpsest for the teachings of philosophy, and the Commandments were understood as moral, political, and spiritual tools for the establishment of a well-ordered society that promoted the philosophic comprehension of God. At least five generations of fecund Hebrew scholarship in Languedoc—philosophic and scientific translation from the Arabic; philosophic sermons, poems, and commentaries on the Bible and midrash; encyclopedias of science and philosophy; and Talmudic commentaries and codes inspired by the sensibilities and goals of this new community—helped to accomplish the task of reinterpreting the vast textual inheritance of classical Judaism and reorienting Jewish life in relation to the philosophic tradition. A sensitive appreciation of this process, through which generations of Languedocian Jewish scholars and communities created their own evolving, philosophically colored view of Jewish tradition, will provide us with a clearer understanding of one of the great achievements of Jewish culture in the Middle Ages.

Notes

1 See Isadore Twersky, "Some non-Halakhic Aspects of the *Mishneh Torah*," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Alexander Altmann, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 95–118; and Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (Mishneh Torah) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 356–514; and more recently, Kenneth Seeskin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*: *The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Jay M. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years*: *Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2007).

2 See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, introduction, based on Proverbs 3: 14. For a full discussion, see Frank Ephraim Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality*, Arthur Green, ed., vol. 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 313–55.

3 Esotericism in the Jewish tradition developed, in a variety of contexts, out of a

centuries-long struggle with a wide range of problems in interpretation and culture. For the contrasting claim that twelfth- and thirteenth-century Jewish esotericism emerges out of a "sense of acute crisis," see Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*: *Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 137.

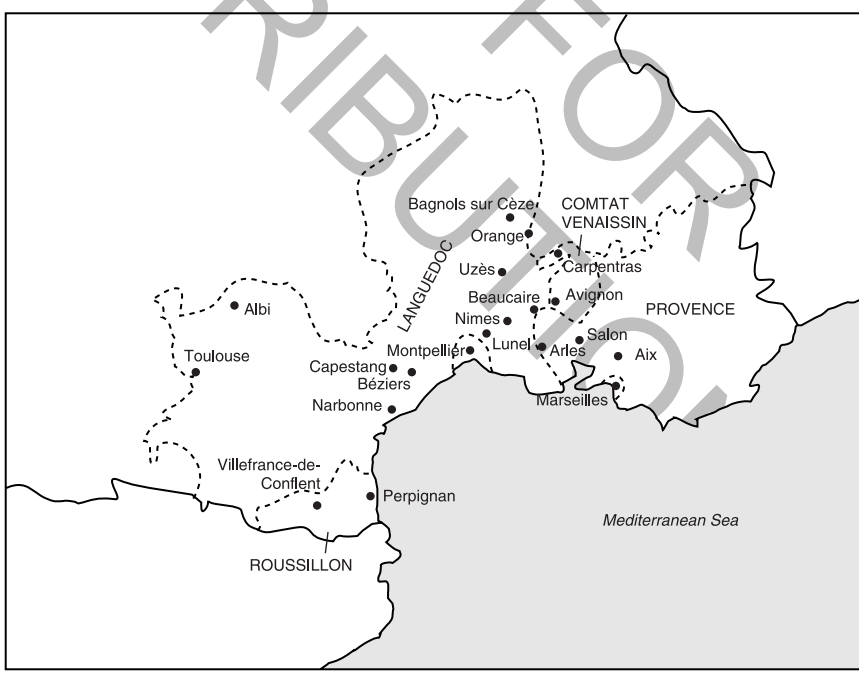
4 Although some scholars have questioned Maimonides' commitment to the survival of the intellect, see Sholmo Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge according to al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Isadore Twersky, ed., vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 82–109.

5 See Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 45–6.

6 On the literary contributions of the Tibbon family, see James T. Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval 'Provence'," in *Be'erot Yitzḥak: Studies in Jewish History and Thought in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, Jay M. Harris, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 193–224.

7 See Carlos Fraenkel, *Min ha-Rambam li-Shmuel ibn Tibbon*: *Darkho shel* Dalalah al-Ha'irin *le*-Moreh ha-Nevukhim (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007), pp. 139–40; and James T. Robinson, "Samuel ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes," 2 vols., PhD diss. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2002), p. 41.

8 See Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, Georges Vajda, ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1968), and Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la kabbale dans la pensée juive du Moyen Age* (Paris: Mouton, 1962).



Map 1 The self-conceived territory of the Languedocian Jewish community: "This Land of ten-day's walk from Perpignan to Marseilles" (see page 151).

1 Jewish learning and thought in Languedoc

The twelfth century's first half

Common descent and shared cultural patrimony led the Jews of Languedoc to regard themselves as belonging to a single region, extending across the counties of Roussillon, Languedoc, and Provence, that they called "this land."[1] While the French monarchy advanced steadily southward toward the Pyrénées throughout the first half of the thirteenth century, Roussillon still stood under Aragonese sovereignty, Provence remained the possession of the Kingdom of Burgundy, and most of Languedoc—with such major centers of Jewish life as Narbonne, Béziers, and Montpellier—had submitted to the French crown only recently.[2]

The earliest traces of Talmud study in Languedoc are to be found at the turn of the eleventh century[3] but by the second half of the thirteenth century the Jews of "this land" could look back on more than one hundred years of diversified cultural achievements in Jewish legal scholarship,[4] the study of Hebrew language and biblical interpretation,[5] preaching,[6] polemics,[7] and poetry.[8] The growth of Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture during this period—from a sapling into a great tree—affected all of these fields and contributed to the self-perception of the community.[9] In comparison to that of the neighboring Jewish communities in Spain, northern France, and Germany, the cultural life of Jews in Languedoc was young,[10] but their achievements belied this youth.

Rabbinic Judaism had flowed out of Palestine in late antiquity and traveled a path to Babylonia, where, from the third century onward, it developed and grew. Generations of rabbinic discourse were redacted, over the fifth and sixth centuries, into the tractates and *suggyot* (discursive units) of the Babylonian Talmud, a literary masterpiece that emerged as the result of a protracted editorial process. The Rabbis continued to prosper in Babylonia following its conquest, in the seventh century, by Arab Muslims as well as the move, in the eighth century, of Abassid Caliphate to Baghdad. Under the Abassids, well-established rabbinical academies, at whose head stood the Geonim, sought out and eventually achieved the hegemony of rabbinic Judaism—in its Babylonian form—throughout world Jewry. Of course,

Karaite Jews, whose influence in the history of medieval Judaism was quite significant, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, did reject their authority. Yet, when Andalusian, Catalonian, Languedocian, French and Rheinish Jewish communities began to grow and to assert their independence from Baghdad as early as the tenth century, they did so by adopting the Babylonian Talmud as the authoritative source from which Jewish law was to be derived. Instead of seeking guidance directly from the Geonim as they had in the past, rabbinic Jews in Europe began to turn to local scholars, who, like their former leaders in Baghdad, ruled based upon their understanding of the Babylonian Talmud.

The Babylonian Talmud is a vast and complex, profoundly non-Western text.[11] Full of the dialectical discussions and analyses of earlier sources, the Talmud surges seemingly without restriction in a stream of consciousness from one discussion to the next.[12] Hardly a text that one would take to be a source of settled law, the Talmud is rather a web of legal deliberations that, with its commentaries, called out to Jewish legal scholars over the ages for codification. Rabbinic Judaism required the codification of its norms in part simply to meet the day-to-day needs of Jewish individuals and communities around the world, and in part so that discourse regarding the settled law, or halakhah, might move forward.

Even though rabbinic law covers all of Jewish life, from the marital to the commercial and from the criminal to the liturgical, the Judaism that had the Babylonian Talmud at its center was never simply a religion of laws. The Talmud itself is best characterized as an exegetical text that moves almost imperceptively from law to narrative and back again, so that only perhaps half of the Talmud concerns law directly, while the other half ranges from medicine to cosmology to rabbinic hagiography to demonology and eschatology. Despite its eventual canonical status and dominance over the curriculum, the Babylonian Talmud was, of course, never the exclusive source from which Jews living in the Iberian Peninsula and western Europe drew the interpretations that made up their religious world. A wide range of Jewish writings that had reached Europe from Babylonia and Byzantine Palestine, including the *Tosefta*,[13] many collections of halakhic and aggadic midrashim,[14] substantial corpora of *piyyut* (liturgical poetry),[15] as well as the Palestinian Talmud,[16] made important contributions as well.[17]

As early as the tenth century, some rabbinic Jews living in Muslim lands came into contact with the philosophic tradition of ancient Greece as elaborated by the Arabs and sought to reinterpret Judaism as a result of this encounter. The most prominent scholar in this first medieval phase of Jewish interaction with the philosophic tradition is Se'adyah (d. 944), an Egyptian Jew who achieved the seat of the Gaon of the Sura Academy in Baghdad.[18] Se'adyah made significant contributions to a vast array of intellectual disciplines, including Hebrew grammar, poetry, liturgy, intercalation, polemics, biblical interpretation, and philosophy.[19] He found the arguments and methods of Mutazilite Kalam, a major stream within the Islamic thought of

his day,[20] most conducive to a philosophic formulation of Jewish religion in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*.[21]

In the Muslim, Arabic-speaking southern part of Spain in the eleventh and into the mid-twelfth centuries, Judaism's interactions with the philosophic tradition continued along a variety of paths.[22] The neoplatonic philosophy of the eleventh-century Hebrew poet Solomon ibn Gabirol, which originally became known in Europe through a medieval Latin translation (*Fons Vitae*)[23] of his Arabic philosophical work, is the earliest of many examples.[24] Abraham Bar Ḥiyya (d. 1136), who grew up and was educated in Barcelona, and Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167), raised and educated in Tudela, also understood Judaism through a neoplatonic lens. Steeped in the Greco-Arabic scientific works available to Jewish intellectuals in twelfth-century Muslim Spain, including works in mathematics, astronomy, and astrology, these two scholars were inclined toward an astrologically informed interpretation of Judaism. On account of his scientific knowledge and astrological commitments,[25] Bar Ḥiyya wrote *Megillat ha-Megale*, a work predicting the onset of the Messianic age (in 1358), astrologically determined.[26] In addition, Bar Ḥiyya produced some of the first Hebrew writings in the fields of geometry[27] and astronomy.[28] As a mature scholar, Bar Ḥiyya relocated to Languedoc, where he spent the remainder of his career. His decision to write in Hebrew, as opposed to his native Arabic, made his work accessible to Jewish readers there. Abraham ibn Ezra followed Bar Ḥiyya in writing in Hebrew and, when he grew older, he followed Bar(iyya) ḥiyya in leaving the Arabic-speaking world as well. Surviving records do not allow us to learn what led these two scholars to leave Muslim Spain. Ibn Ezra spent the last twenty-five years or more of his life wandering from one Jewish community to the next. He seems to have written all of his work during his travels. Historians have been able to reconstruct his journey from Spain to Italy (Rome, Rodez, Lucca, Mantua, Verona), Languedoc (Narbonne, Béziers), northern France (Dreux), England (London), and back again to Languedoc.[29] Ibn Ezra is best known for his path-breaking Bible commentary,[30] which has become a classic in the history of Jewish biblical interpretation. As has been articulated beautifully in recent academic research, this Bible commentary is suffused with an astrological understanding of Scripture and of God's relation to the world.[31]

Abraham ibn Daud[32] and Moses Maimonides[33] were among those Jewish scholars educated in the Arabic-speaking world of Muslim Spain who revered Aristotle as the greatest of all philosophers. For them, more than Plato or any of the other ancient Greeks, it was Aristotle who had achieved the greatest human understanding and whose writing and thought had to be reckoned with and with which Judaism needed to be reconciled. Of course, Aristotle was mediated for Ibn Daud and Maimonides by his Arabic philosophic interpreters, Alfarabi, Avicenna, Avenpace, and perhaps Averroes.

Of course, not all Jewish scholars in Muslim Spain felt drawn to and inspired by the Greco-Arabic philosophic tradition. Bahya ibn Pakuda,[34] an

eleventh-century *dayyan* (judge in a court of Jewish law), and Judah ha-Levi,[35] a twelfth-century Hebrew poet, articulated Jewish religious experience in terms inspired by the language of Muslim Sufi mystics. Written in Arabic, Bahya's *Duties of the Heart* and Ha-Levi's *Kuzari* offer religious visions that are well informed by the philosophic tradition, but seek to know the God of Israel with different tools.

In 1147, the Jews of Andalusia were forced to leave their homes when Berber tribes who would tolerate no other faith but Islam took power there. On account of this Berber invasion out of North Africa, the Andalusian Jewish community—the most sophisticated in the world in terms of its rich, deep, and lengthy interaction with Greco-Arabic learning—was forced beyond its original borders. Some Andalusian Jews decided to move elsewhere in the Islamic world; others relocated northward to Christian Spain.[36] A small but significant group reached Languedoc. Before this new immigration, the Jews of Languedoc were scarcely familiar with the Judeo-Arabic tradition of southern Spain.[37] Without doubt, Languedocian Jews had been introduced to the eleventh-century advancements in Andalusian Hebrew grammar[38] by works written originally in Hebrew[39], including those of Bar iyya and Ibn Ezra, or by certain early translations.[40] The arrival of this new wave of Andalusian Jewish scholars, however, initiated the transformation of Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc and catalyzed its growth. Unlike the Andalusians, the Languedocian scholars had focused their learning almost exclusively upon rabbinic scholarship. The questions, categories, and modes of discussion found in a philosophically and scientifically engaged culture like that of Andalusia were therefore quite foreign to Languedocian Jews. Nevertheless, the intellectual elite of Languedocian Jewry welcomed their newly arrived colleagues and was receptive to their learning.

1147–1250: Knowledge traditions and Jewish scholarly communities in flux

Of course, Languedocian Jews had no knowledge of the Arabic language in which the learning of Andalusia was contained. Following a period of oral transmission of this learning, curious Languedocian scholars commissioned the new arrivals to begin translating philosophic and scientific works from Arabic into Hebrew. As a result of this fortuitous transmission of knowledge from Andalusia to Languedoc, a translation movement developed. One family of translators and commentators, named Tibbon, was central to the translation movement from its beginning. Judah ibn Tibbon, an émigré from Granada, established the family in Languedoc, and in his wake, we know of at least five generations of Tibbonide scholarly activity there. Through their many translations, members of this family, including Judah, his son Samuel, and grandson Moses, taught the Jews of Languedoc about the learning of the Arabic world.[41] In addition, many other scholars joined the Tibbon family by learning Arabic and contributing Hebrew translations. Languedocian Jewry

sustained this movement of translation from Arabic into Hebrew for a period of over 150 years from before 1150 into the first half of the fourteenth century. At first, the translation of more basic works from within Jewish tradition was undertaken, including those of Se'adyah Gaon, Baḥyah ibn Pakudah, Judah ha-Levi, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Maimonides.[42] Subsequently, the translators expanded the scope of their work to produce Hebrew versions of weighty and sophisticated works belonging to the Arabic philosophic tradition. The bulk of the translations, described in Moritz Steinschneider's astounding *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher*,[44] (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), were produced by and for the Jews of Languedoc. The list of translations into Hebrew of Greek, Arabic, and Judeo-Arabic learning in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, ethics, physics, and metaphysics is nothing less than staggering.

A consequential intellectual movement of this nature begs explanation. The translators were aware of a shift in cultural vitality from the Muslim to the Christian world.[43] They may also have been conscious that, were it not for their efforts, many works of Andalusian Jewish creativity would have been lost. However, the translators' love for the original, by itself, would have been insufficient to sustain this massive activity. The Jews of Languedoc, who supported the translation movement, were extraordinarily curious about and

Figure 2 Some major Jewish communities of Catalonia and Languedoc.

eager for this new knowledge.[44] Considering the radical differences between a culture informed by the questions and categories of Greco-Arabic learning and a largely rabbinic culture in twelfth-century Europe, this curiosity is remarkable. Even more remarkable is that this great transfer of knowledge occurred, in its initial phases, in relative tranquility. It may be conjectured that Languedoc's geonic inheritance, as well as early contacts with Andalusian Jewish culture, prepared many Languedocian Jews for these developments.[45]

Relations with Catalonia (Aragon)

In the last decades of the twelfth century, much of Languedoc came under Aragonese sovereignty; but, throughout the first half of the thirteenth century, the French monarchy advanced steadily southward. In 1213, Simon of Montfort defeated (and killed) Peter I; in 1258, Louis IX left his son, James I, with just the counties of Roussillon, Cerdagne, and the city of Montpellier.[46] Until James I's death in 1276, Roussillon (and Perpignan, its chief city) were part of the Kingdom of Aragon. James II then received it, along with Montpellier and the Balearic Islands, as the Kingdom of Majorca. James II made Perpignan his capital.

The growth of philosophic culture in Languedoc, together with Franco-Aragonese political developments, contributed to the shifting cultural circumstances of Jews in Languedoc and Catalonia. In the twelfth century, when the two regions were politically united, their cultural differences seem to have been less pronounced. The first document of rabbinic law from Languedoc, *Sefer ha-'Eshkol* of Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne (d. 1179), is itself a précis of *Sefer ha-'Ittim*, the work of Abraham's teacher, Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona.[47] A portion of another early Languedocian legal work, *Ha-'Ittur* of Isaac ben Abba Mari of Marseilles (d. 1190), was commissioned by Sheshet ben Isaac Benveniste of Barcelona (d. 1209).[48] While Languedoc and Catalonia were united politically, there seems to have been no significant cultural barrier between the Jews of the two regions. As Languedoc moved politically toward France and away from Catalonia (Aragon), however, Languedocian and Catalonian Jews grew apart culturally as well. Indeed, Languedocian and Catalonian Jewries experienced an ironic reversal of commitments during the first half of the thirteenth century.[49] Jewish philosophic study diminished in Catalonia, where it had earlier roots, but traveled to Languedoc, where it flourished on new soil. Kabbalah made its historical appearance in Languedoc, in the circle of Isaac the Blind, the son of Rabad of Posquières.[50] Shortly after this emergence, it traveled to Gerona and Barcelona,[51] where R. Ezra, R. Azriel, Naḥmanides, and Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba) expounded it further. In Languedoc, however, there is no recorded continuity beyond Asher ben David, the nephew of Isaac the Blind.[52] There is little evidence to explain this intriguing reorientation[53]—and any relation between the general political developments and a Jewish cultural shift is

entirely uncertain—nevertheless, the reality of this clean cultural switch is reflected in the writing of Jewish scholars in both regions.[54]

Christian intellectual contacts

A significant and well-documented instance of Jewish–Christian scientific collaboration in the first half of the thirteenth century involves Jacob Anatoli.[55] The son-in-law of Samuel ibn Tibbon of Marseilles,[56] Anatoli happens to acknowledge cordial and intellectually productive contact with a non-Jewish scholar, Michael Scot.[57] The two benefited from the patronage of Frederick II of Naples:[58] Scot as a translator from Arabic to Latin,[59] and Anatoli from Arabic to Hebrew.[60] Anatoli's relationship with Scot, however, was not restricted to transmission. Anatoli records a number of Scot's biblical interpretations in his *Malmad*, a collection of model Sabbath sermons.[61] The two scholars, it would seem, spent a good bit of time discussing the meaning of the Bible in addition to the meaning of Aristotle and his medieval Arabic commentators. Anatoli reports upon Scot's biblical interpretations with the acceptance and openness that most other Jewish writers on the Bible would reserve solely for fellow Jews. Of course, Christian scholars, especially in the Parisian school of St. Victor, had been consulting Jews on the meaning of the Hebrew Biblical books since the middle of the twelfth century. Medieval Jews, however, did not see the Latin Vulgate, from which Christians studied the Bible, as a valuable source for understanding Hebrew scripture, and would have had no parallel motivation to consult Christians for insights regarding their version of the biblical text. Anatoli, however, is an exception: in fact, the only exception of which I am aware. On a number of occasions, he cites the Vulgate as relevant in the interpretation of Scripture.

For Anatoli, Christian interaction also provoked a renewed examination of Judaism and intensified his spiritual quest. In his intercourse with Christians, Anatoli encountered their critique of Jewish practice and observance. Christians deride Jews, he writes in the *Malmad*, because they fail to fulfill the commandments in a spiritually valuable fashion. Rather their observance is routine and mechanical.

> The Lord has so thoroughly baffled the [Jewish] nation during this current Exile that we have become a source of derision among the nations on account of [our lack of recognition of] the philosophic wisdom in the Torah and [our inadequate performance of] the commandments found in it. . . .
>
> Thus, the heretics open their mouths wide against us saying that we eat the husk while they eat the fruit.[62] This is because they attempt to interpret and investigate the Torah according to their Faith. They perpetually preach in public, so that over time they have established falsehood as Truth, while our feet have almost strayed from the Truth that was given to us from God. . . .

> Thus, when we give praise with songs, blessings and prayers, we do not give our minds cause to know that which simply exits our mouths out of habit, so that we have no idea of the many words of philosophic wisdom contained within them. Even that aspect which is clear and well known, we neither pay attention to nor recognize, so that when the time comes, we are often uncertain as to whether we have uttered anything.[63]

Spiritual improvement through the philosophically inspired observance of Judaism is the message of *Malmad ha-Talmidim*. The holidays, ritual practices, commandments and prohibitions of Judaism, when properly intentioned, are the best guide to moral, intellectual, and spiritual achievements, according to Anatoli. Anatoli accepts the Christian critique of contemporary Jewish religious practice as largely valid, and proposes his philosophical interpretations of Jewish practice as a remedy. Anatoli acknowledges the existence of fundamental spiritual goals that he shares with his Christian contemporaries, as well as the fact that their effective critique is a significant contributing factor for the composition of his work.[64] Anatoli's universalistic understanding of the human condition, as implied by these statements, is most clearly and concisely expressed in his emphatic rejection of the view that only Jews are created in the "image" of God. Such a particularistic interpretation seems to have been present among a number of Anatoli's Jewish contemporaries. However, Anatoli associates the divine "image" with the human intellect, and rejects as "utterly foolish" the view that this "image" adheres only to Jews.

The universalistic views of Anatoli and his colleagues were not restricted to the Jewish philosopher-translators of Languedoc. Such views penetrated to Languedocian Talmudists and halakhists as well, a generally much more conservative group.

The maturation of Jewish philosophic culture in the Languedoc

After an early period of tranquility[65a], this newly translated knowledge began to bring deep tensions and uneasiness to Languedocian Jewry. In 1204, Samuel ibn Tibbon completed his translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*.[65b] In studying this scholar's great philosophic work, as well as his code of Jewish law, *Mishneh Torah*, at least a few local scholars began to understand that Maimonides' serious engagement with Greco-Arabic learning had led him to interpret Jewish teachings in ways that were quite foreign to the rabbinic tradition. In 1232, this unease with Maimonidean teaching led Solomon ben Abraham of Montpellier and his students to stir the rabbis of northern France to promulgate a universal ban against the works of Maimonides. Other scholars in the Languedoc then undertook to punish Solomon of Montpellier with excommunication. An intense controversy ensued, which involved the entire Languedocian Jewish community, as well as the Jewish scholars of northern France, Catalonia, and Castile.[66]

The surviving documents of this intense dispute concerning Maimonides' works reveal the varieties of rationalism and anti-rationalism present within European Jewry in the first decades of the thirteenth century. During this controversy, David Kimḥi of Narbonne, an elderly Languedocian leader and prominent rationalist, described himself as unable to find philosophic companionship in the Languedoc.[67] Although Languedoc was dense with Jews devoted to the writings of Maimonides, their understanding of the master's teachings had not progressed to the point that Kimḥi would acknowledge a single peer with whom he might share his concerns.[68] Judah Alfakhar, a sophisticated Toledan intellectual, found himself incapable of communicating—even to Kimḥi—warnings concerning the dangers of Maimonidean naturalism.[69] Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture was in the early stages of its development. One could not expect from first- or second-generation rationalists the mastery and sophistication that Spanish scholars had achieved in the context of a long-standing relationship with the philosophic tradition.

This attempt to forcefully expel the new Judeo-Arabic perspectives from the Languedoc failed, and, in the following decades, the works of Maimonides influenced Languedocian Jewish culture profoundly. Languedocian Jews embraced the newly translated Judeo-Arabic texts and continued to support translation from the Arabic. In addition, the mere study of philosophic and scientific writings translated from the Arabic began to shift to the production of original work in Hebrew as well. Over the course of the thirteenth century, the works of Samuel ibn Tibbon, along with those of his students and followers, came to symbolize the growing philosophic sophistication of Languedocian-Jewish culture and of the growth in Languedoc of a Jewish community whose thought and writing incorporated philosophic and scientific learning. Ibn Tibbon himself believed that the moderate interpretation of Maimonides's ideas prevalent in the Languedoc during the first half of the thirteenth century was based upon a misreading of *Guide of the Perplexed*.[70] Deeply entrenched in the Greco-Arabic philosophic corpus, Ibn Tibbon gave great weight to philosophy in his understanding of Jewish tradition. In his scriptural exegesis, Ibn Tibbon seems less concerned to mediate between the Jewish tradition and philosophy than to reveal the inner philosophic meaning of Scripture. "I have seen that [philosophic] truths which had been concealed [within Jewish tradition] ever since the times of our prophets and sages are known widely today among the nations of the world . . . That is why I revealed what I did in this treatise [*Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim*] and in my *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*; matters that no one has ever revealed."[71]

The ongoing transfer of Greco-Arabic learning to Languedocian Jewish culture through the translation of Arabic philosophic works into Hebrew, as well as the composition, in Hebrew, of original philosophic commentaries and encyclopedias, introduced an extraordinary stimulus and challenge. Over the course of the thirteenth century, Languedocian Jewry encouraged and supported, materially and spiritually, the publication of nothing less than a

tidal wave of new knowledge from the Arabic. The tension between the newly arrived scientific and philosophic learning and Languedoc's indigenous rabbinic culture was very great. A description and analysis of the tension within – and stimulus to – Jewish culture in Languedoc over the next century and a half as a result of its successful, complex, and deep incorporation of the philosophic tradition takes up the remainder of this study.

Notes

1 "הארץ הזאת" (see, for example, Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*" [in Hebrew] in *Seder ha-Qabbalah le-Rabbenu Menaḥem ha-Meiri*, *hi ha-Petiḥah le-Ferusho le-Masekhet* '*Avot*, ed. S. Z. Havlin (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1991), pp. 126, 136; Abba Mari ben Joseph, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in ed. H. Dimitrovsky, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 359, 408, 824–5; Crescas Vidal to Rashba in Abba Mari, *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 367, 372; and Yedayah ben Abraham Bedersi (ha-Penini), "Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut," in Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik, 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 1: 418, pp. 156b, 157a. At times, modern scholars have called the area "Provence," producing significant terminological confusion. See Henri Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), s.v. Provence, pp. 489ff. Shlomo H. Pick, "The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306," PhD dissertation (Bar Ilan University: Ramat Gan, 1996), pp. 22–8, cites many relevant sources relating to this question.

2 J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250–1516* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 243.

3 Continuous literary developments began in the first half of the twelfth century. See Isadore Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," *Journal of World History* 11 (1968): 185–207, reprinted in Isadore Twersky, *Studies in Jewish Law and Philosophy* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1982), pp. 180–202; and Binyamin Zeev Benedict, *Merkaz ha-Torah be-Provence* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1985). Moshe ha-Darshan of Narbonne, whose *Midrash Aggadah* to the Torah survives, lived in the beginning of the eleventh century. He is an isolated, early figure in the Jewish culture of the region. Jewish settlement in Languedoc actually goes back much further. See Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Les premières implantations juives en France," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, *Comptes rendus* 11 (1969): 162–74, reprinted in *Juifs en France: Écrits dispersés* (Paris: Diffusion par les belles lettres, 1989).

4 See, for example, Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières: A Twelfth Century Talmudist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Haym Soloveitchik, "The Rabad of Posquières: A Programmatic Essay," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period Presented to Professor Jacob Katz on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I. Etkes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), pp. 7–37; Soloveitchik, "History of Halakhah—Methodological Issues: A Review Essay of I. Twersky's *Rabad of Posquières*," *Jewish History* 5 (1991): 75–124; Israel Ta-Shma, *Rabi Zeraḥyah ha-Levi: Ba'al ha-Me'or u-Vene Ḥugo* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1992); and, for the first half of the thirteenth century, Benedict, *Merkaz ha-Torah be-Provence*.

5 See, for example, Frank Ephraim Talmage, *David Kimḥi: The Man and the Commentaries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). This work also discusses the contributions of David's father and uncle, Joseph and Moses Kimḥi.

6 See, for example, Joseph Dan, *Sifrut ha-Musar veha-Derush* (Jerusalem: Keter,

1975), pp. 82–91; Israel Bettan, *Studies in Jewish Preaching: Middle Ages* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939), pp. 49–88; and Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 111–36.

7 See, for example, Daniel Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Litmann Library of Jewish Civilization: 2007), passim, concerning Joseph and David Kimḥi, and Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili of Narbonne.

8 Among the secular Hebrew poets of Languedoc in this period are Isaac ha-Gorni (Dan Pagis, *Ḥiddush u-Massoret be-Shirat ha-Ḥol* [Jerusalem: Keter, 1976], p. 186); and Abraham of Béziers. Pagis, *Ḥiddush*, p. 193, describes their work as belonging to the very end of the Spanish tradition.

9 See Twersky, "Provençal Jewry," pp. 185–207; and Gad Freudenthal, "Les sciences dan les communautés juives médiévales de Provence: Leur appropriation, leur rôle," *Revue des Études Juives* 152 (1993): 29–136; and Freudenthal, "Science in Medieval Jewish Culture," *History of Science* 33 (1995): 23–58.

10 See Ta-Shma, *Rabi Zerahyah ha-Levi*, Introduction, p. i.

11 On the culture of the Babylonian Talmud, see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); for a thoroughgoing introduction and critical analysis of selected stories from the Babylonian Talmud, see Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

12 See the fascinating work of Leib Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning: From Casuistics to Conceptualization* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

13 The authoritative academic commentary on the Tosefta is, of course, Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Feshuta*, 10 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–1992). Important recent studies of the Tosefta include Shamma Friedman, *Tosefta 'Atiqta: Masekhet Pesaḥ Rishon, Maqbilot ha-Mishnah veha-Tosefta, Perush u-Mavo Kelali* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan, 2003).

14 For a sound overview of this material, see Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah veha-Midrash* (Tel Aviv: Yad la-Talmud, 1991).

15 For a classic overview of this material, see Ezra Fleischer, *Shirat ha-Qodesh ha-'Ivrit bi-Yeme ha-Benayim* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975); important scholarship in this field includes Fleischer, *Ha-Yotzrot be-Hithavutam ve-Hitpaṭḥutam* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984).

16 For scholarly orientation regarding the Palestinian Talmud, see Abraham Goldberg, "The Palestinian Talmud," in *Essential Papers on the Talmud*, ed. Michael Chernick (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 226–50.

17 Still useful for the general reader is Moritz Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century, with an Introduction on Talmud and Midrash: A Historical Essay*, trans. W. Spottiswoode (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1857).

18 See also S. M. Stern and Alexander Altamann, eds., *Isaac Israeli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955). While work on Se'adyah's philosophy has slowed in recent years, seminal bibliography in this field includes Louis Finkelstein, ed., *Rab Saadia Gaon: Studies in His Honor* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1944); Boaz Cohen, ed., *Saadia Anniversary Volume* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1943); *Saadia Studies*, published by the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, in Abraham A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, eds., *Commemoration of the Thousandth Anniversary of the Death of Saadia Gaon* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1943); Henry Malter, *Saadia Gaon, His Life and Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921); Jacob Guttmann, *Die Religionsphilosophie des Saadia* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1882).

19 On the path-breaking contribution of Se'adyah, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

20 See the classic statement of Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); as well as the posthumously published Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

21 Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948).

22 The best current summary of these developments is Collete Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

23 Clemens Baeumker, ed., "Avencebrolis (ibn Gebirol), Fons vitae ex arabico in latinum translatus ab Iohanne Hispano et Dominico Gundissalino: Ex codicibus Parisinis, Amploniano, Columbino," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Texte und Untersuchungen* vol. 1, parts 2–4 (Münster, Germany: Aschendorff, 1892–1895); and an English translation of the Latin translation, Solomon ben Judah ibn Gabirol (Avicebron), *The Fountain of Life: Fons vitae*, trans. Alfred B. Jacob (Stanwood, Washington DC: Sabian Publication Society, 1987).

24 Only in the mid-nineteenth century was *Meqor Ḥayyim*, a thirteenth-century Hebrew translation of fragments of this same work, identified and published. See Salomon Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie Juive et Arabe* (Paris: A. Franck, 1859). Since that time, scholars have continued to examine and describe the neoplatonic philosophy of this great Hebrew poet. See, for example, Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002); Fernand Brunner, *Métaphysique d'Ibn Gabirol et de la Tradition Platonicienne*, ed. Daniel Schulthess (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1997); José María Millás Vallicrosa, *Šĕlomó ibn Gabirol como Poeta y Filósofo* (Madrid and Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, 1945); David Kaufmann, *Studien über Salomom Ibn Gabirol* (Budapest: Adolf Alkalay, 1899); and Jacob Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Salomon ibn Gabirol* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889).

25 See the letter of Abraham bar Ḥiyya to Judah ben Barzilai al-Bargeloni on the subject of astrology, *Festschrift Adolf Schwartz zum siebzigsten Geburtstage*, ed. V. Aptowitzer (Berlin and Vienna: Z. Schwartz, 1917), pp. 23–36. Shlomo Sela, "Abraham Bar Ḥiyya's Astrological Work and Thought," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13 (2006): 128–58; Sela, "The Fuzzy Borders between Astronomy and Astrology in the Thought and Work of Three Twelfth-Century Jewish Intellectuals," *Aleph* 1 (2001): 59–100.

26 Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Megillat ha-Megaleh*, ed. Ze'ev Poznański and Julius Guttmann (Berlin: Meqitze Nirdamim, 1924).

27 Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Yesode ha-Tevunah u-Migdal ha-Emunah*, ed. José M. Millás Vallicrosa (Barcelona: Consejo superior de investigationes científicas, Instituto Arias Montano, 1952); and Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Ḥibbur ha-Meshi ḥah veha-Tishboret*, ed. Yeḥiel Mikhl Guttmann (Berlin: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1914).

28 See Millás Vallicrosa, "The Beginning of Science among the Jews of Spain," *Binah*: *Studies in Jewish History*, *Thought and Culture* 3 (1994): 35–46. One of these astronomical works, *Tzurat ha-'Aretz*, was considered sufficiently important to be translated into Latin and published in a Hebrew–Latin edition: Abraham bar Ḥiyya Savasorda, *Tzurat ha-'Aretz ve-Tavnit Kadure ha-Raqi'a ve-Seder Mahalakh Kokhvehem*, trans. Sebastian Münster (Basel, Switzerland: [s.n.], 1546).

29 Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris, eds., *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra*: *Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, 1993).
30 See Irene Lancaster, *Deconstructing the Bible: Abraham Ibn Ezra's Introduction to the Torah* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).
31 See Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003); Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).
32 Resianne Fontaine, *In Defence of Judaism*; *Abraham Ibn Daud*: *Sources and Structures of* Ha-Emunah ha-Ramah, trans. Harry S. Lake (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1990).
33 The bibliography on the philosophy of Maimonides is vast. For valuable studies and further information, see Kenneth Seeskin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*: *The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Jay M. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years*: *Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2007).
34 See Diana Lobel, *A Sufi–Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya Ibn Paqūda's* Duties of the Heart (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
35 Ha-Levi does, of course, hold doctrines about God similar to the philosophers. Indeed, he was well versed in their vocabulary and teachings, and frequently was dealing with common concerns. . . . He also shares concerns with other streams of religious thought, such as mysticism. See Diana Lobel, "'Taste and See that the Lord is Good': Ha-Levi's God Re-Visited," in Jay M. Harris, ed., *Be'erot Yitzḥak: Studies in Jewish History and Thought in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 161–78; and Lobel *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's* Kuzari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
36 On these developments, see Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1–2.
37 See Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Ḥibbur ha-Meshiḥah veha-Tishboret*, p. 2; Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Tzurat ha-'Aretz* (Offenbach, Germany: Bana Pentura de la Nay, 1720), introduction; Abraham bar Ḥiyya, *Sefer ha-'Ibbur*, ed. Herschell Filipowski (London: 1851), introduction.
38 The achievements of the tenth-century grammarians Dunash ben Labrat and Menaḥem ibn Saruk were known in Christian Europe. These scholars, however, worked before the critical discovery of the triliteral root by the Cordovan scholar Judah Ḥayyuj.
39 For example, the works of Moses ibn Gikatillia (fl. early twelfth century) and Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167). Concerning these works, see Samuel Poznański, *Moses ben Samuel ha-Kohen Chiquitillia nebst den Fragmenten seiner Schriften* (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1895); and Wilhelm Bacher, *Abraham ibn Esra als Grammatiker: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hebräischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1882).
40 Ibn Ezra—an early arrival from Andalusia—translated three important works by Judah Ḥayyuj: *The Book of Vocalization*, ed. J. L. Dukes (Frankfurt-am-Main: [s.n.], 1844); *The Book of Hollow Verbs*, ed. G. W. Nutt (London: Asher, 1870); and *The Book of Reduplicated Verbs*, ed. M. Jastrow (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1897). On the importance of Ibn Ezra's contribution to intellectual transmission, see the "Translator's Introduction" in Jonah ibn Janah, *Sefer ha-Riqmah*, trans. Judah ibn Tibbon, ed. Michael Wilensky (Jerusalem: ha-Akademyah la-lashon

ha-'Ivrit, 1964), pp. 4–5. Ibn Gikatillia is himself said to have translated the writings of Ḥayyuj and Ha-Nagid.

41 On this family, see James T. Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval 'Provence'," in Jay M. Harris, ed., *Be'erot Yitzḥak: Studies in Jewish History and Thought in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 193–224.

42 The importance—for the transmission of Andalusian–Jewish philosophic culture—of both the Hebrew *Mishneh Torah* as well as Languedocian scholars' direct correspondence with Maimonides should not be overlooked.

43 See Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim*, ed. Mordecai Loeb Bisliches (Presburg, Hungary: Anton Edlen von Schmid, 1837), p. 173–75.

44 See Twersky, "Provençal Jewry," pp. 196–8. For the claim that an ongoing need to discover, transmit, protect and maintain Judaism's "secret 'inner meaning'" was critical to these cultural developments, see Moshe Halbertal, *Seter ve-Gilui*: *ha-Sod u-Gevulotah ba-Masoret ha-Yehudit bi-Yeme-ha-Benayim*, Elḥanan Rainer, Yisrael Ta-Shema, and Gidon Ofrat, eds. (Jerusalem: Ornah Hess, 2001); and Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*: *Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philsophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Halbertal's penetrating analytic claims certainly provide fascinating internal coherence to exegetical developments. Of course, arguments about the deep inner functioning of a culture cannot be evaluated on the basis of documentary evidence and stand beyond the reach of the historian.

45 The considerable volume of geonic material found in the *Sefer ha-'Eshkol* testifies to the transfer of learning from the East (see, for example, Soloveitchik, "The Rabad of Posquières," p. 12). Part of this heritage was the understanding that *aggadot*, which flew in the face of common sense, need not be taken literally. (At times the distinction was made between Talmudic and extra-Talmudic *aggadot*. See, for example, Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne, *Sefer Ha-'Eshkol*, ed. Shalom and Ḥanokh Albeck, [Jerusalem: Ruben Mass, 1935], pp. 157–8.) In regard to Languedoc's Spanish connection: the appearance of distinctive Andalusian influence in Languedocian liturgical poetry from the middle of the 1100s, coinciding with the arrival of the early Spanish travelers, is evidence of substantial contact with the literary conventions that had transformed Andalusian Hebrew poetry (see E. Fleischer, *Shirat ha-Qodesh ha-'Ivrit* [Jerusalem, 1975], pp. 12–13).

46 Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*, p. 243.

47 See Abraham ben Isaac, *Sefer ha-'Eshkol*, pp. 31–65. Meiri vacillates on whether Judah ben Barzilai belongs culturally to Languedoc or to Catalonia. See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," pp. 126, 141. On Abraham ben Isaac and his work, see Shalem Yahalom, "Ḥashivato ha-halakhit shel ha-Ramban le-or meqorotav ha-Provansalim," (Bar Ilan University Dissertation, Ramat Gan, 2003), pp. 7–40.

48 Isaac ben Abba Mari, *Ha-'Ittur*, ed., Meir Jonah Glanovsky (Warsaw: Y. Unterhendler, 1883), Introduction, p. 2a.

49 For the continued role of Languedocian Jewish legal and exegetical thought in thirteenth century Catalonia, see Yahalom, "Ḥashivato ha-halakhit shel ha-Ramban," (Ramat Gan, 2003), pp. 41–91 and 144–74.

50 See Gershom Scholem, "Te'udah Ḥadashah le-Reshit ha-Kabbalah," in Scholem, ed., *Sefer Bialik* (Tel Aviv: 1934), pp. 141–62; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 393–414; and Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 20–2.

51 In fact, Kabbalah may have been expelled from Languedoc. Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili, a halakhist and polemicist of the generation before Meiri, condemned *Sefer ha-Bahir* and its Languedocian students in the strongest terms. See Scholem,

"Te'udah Ḥadashah le-Reshit ha-Kabbalah," pp. 148–9; and Yom-Tov Assis, ed., *Ha-Ḥevrah ha-Yehudit be-Drom Tzarfat* (Jerusalem: Ha-Universiṭah ha-'Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim, Ha-Faḳulṭah le-Mada'e ha-Ruaḥ, ha-Ḥug la-Hisṭoryah shel 'am Yisra'el, 1982), pp. 29–31). Me'ili's uncle Meshullam ben Moshe of Béziers seems to have been "the director of [this] anti-kabbalistic campaign." Meiri, nonetheless, refers to *Sefer ha-Bahir* as a Tannaitic work (see Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," pp. 105–6).

52 See Asher ben David, *Rabi Asher ben David: Kol Ketavav ve-Iyyunim be-Qabbalato*, Daniel Abrams, ed. (Los Angeles: Hotsa'at Keruv, 1996.) In one of the few references to an alternative to philosophy, Jacob Anatoli (d. ca.1240) specifically rejects a certain esoteric teaching of Judaism as a mindless innovation born out of the Talmudists' disdain for the sciences: "The great disdain with which [the Talmudists] hold the sciences [חכמה] caused them to stray and identify 'The Account of the Chariot' with the foolishness of names which mindless men simply made up" (Jacob ben Abba Mari Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, ed. L. Silbermann, [Lyck, Prussia**:** Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1866], Introduction, p. 6a).

53 For a discussion of the issue, and some speculations, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 250–3; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, pp. 164–5, n. 4; and Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 42–3, 397.

54 In the fourteenth century as well, Jews in these two regions maintained close legal and personal ties. In the introduction to *Magen 'Avot*, Meiri refers to disputes with "Naḥmanides' students" in Perpignan as the impetus for his defense of the customs of the Jews of Languedoc. A former student of Rashba in Perpignan wrote a report to Barcelona (see Abba Mari, *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 131); Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon wrote to Rashba to inquire concerning to latter's legal position in regard to the *kapparot* ritual. See Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, 1: 395.

55 On the *Malmad* as a source for Christian-Jewish contacts in Languedoc, see Collette Sirat, "Les traducteurs juifs à la cour des rois de Sicile et de Naples," *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Age: Actes du colloque international du C.N.R.S. organisé à Paris, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, les 26–28 mai 1986*, ed. Geneviève Contamine (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), pp. 169–191; Saperstein, "Christians and Christianity in the Sermons of Jacob Anatoli," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 225–42; and Judah D. Galinsky and James T. Robinson, "Rabbi Jeruham b. Meshullam, Michael Scot, and the Development of Jewish Law in Fourteenth-Century Spain," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007): 489–504.

56 The translator of Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and a central figure in the transmission and development of Jewish philosophic culture in Christian Europe. See Carlos Fraenkel, *Min ha-Rambam li-Shmuel ibn Tibbon: Darkho shel* Dalalah al-Ḥa'irin *le*-Moreh ha-Nevukhim (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2007); and James T. Robinson, *Samuel ibn Tibbon's* Commentary on Ecclesiastes: *The Book of the Soul of Man* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); as well as Fraenkel, "Beyond Faithful Disciple: Samuel ibn Tibbon's Criticism of Maimonides," in Jay M. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years*: *Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2007), pp. 33–63, and Robinson, "Maimonides, Samuel ibn Tibbon, and the Construction of a Jewish Tradition of Philosophy," pp. 291–306.

57 See the introduction to Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, p. 6b.

58 On Anatoli at the court of Frederick II, see Guiseppe Sermoneta, "Federico II e il pensiero ebraico nell'Italia del suo tempo," *Federico II e l'arte del Duecento italiano: Atti della 3 settimana di storia dell'arte medievale dell'Università di Roma*, ed. A.M. Romanini, 2 vols. (Galatina, Italy: Congedo, 1980–1981), II: 183–97; Colette

Sirat, "À la cour de Frédéric II Hohenstaufen: une controverse philosophique entre Juda ha-Cohen et un sage Chrétien," *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 53–78; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Frederick The Second* (New York: Ungar, 1957), pp. 343–6; and David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1988), pp. 244–8, 255–8, and see below, p. 153.

59 See Kantorowicz, *Frederick The Second*, pp. 339–41, 350–2.

60 Anatoli's translations of Averroes' *Middle Commentary to Porphry's Isagoge* and *Aristotle's Categories and Analytics*, completed in Naples, 1232, are dedicated to Frederick II. See Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins Français du Commencement du Quatorizième Siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27: 586–7; and Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1861), p. 188.

61 Michael is cited about sixteen times in Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim* (see, for example, p. 28a). On Michael's interpretations, see Colette Sirat, "À la cour de Frédéric II Hohenstaufen: une controverse philosophique entre Juda ha-Cohen et un sage Chrétien," *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 53–78; Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 226–8; J. Perles, *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adereth: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Breslau, Germany: Schletter, 1863), German section, pp. 13–15, 67–70, Hebrew section, pp. 56–61; and Renan, *Les Rabbins Français*, pp. 584–5. Anatoli also cites one biblical explanation in the name of Frederick II himself (see Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, p. 92b). In the fourteenth century, Kalonymus ben Kalonymous cites having received an oral report of another of Frederick II's interpretations. See Kalonymous, *Kalonymos ben Kalonymos' Sendschreiben an Joseph Kaspi*, Joseph Perles, ed. (Munich: Peretz ben Barukh, 1879), p. 6.

62 Cf. Joseph Kimḥi, *Book of the Covenant*, trans. Frank Talmage (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972), pp. 46–7: The Christian interlocutor accuses his Jewish opponent, "You understand most of the Torah literally while we understand it figuratively. Your entire reading of the Bible is erroneous for you resemble him who gnaws at the bone, while we suck at the marrow within. You are the beast that eats the chaff, while we eat the wheat."

63 Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, Introduction, pp. 5a–b. Cf. ibid., p. 148b, which gives extreme importance to the spiritual moment of the commandment's performance. For a translation of one of Anatoli's sermons, see Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, pp. 111–23.

64 See Saperstein, "Christians and Christianity in the Sermons of Jacob Anatoli," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 225–42.

65a For evidence of a Languedocian Talmudist struggling earnestly with newly-arrived philosophic perspectives, apparently even before the availability of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in Languedoc, see Gad Freudenthal, "A Twelfth-Century Amateur of Neoplatonic Philosophy in Hebrew: R. Asher ben Meshullam of Lunel," *Chôra: Revue d'Études Anciennes et Médiévales* 3–4 (2005–2006): 161–188. Consider, as well, Aaron ben Meshullam's rather limited and relatively simplistic defense of Maimonides during the Resurrection Controversy (see Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, pp. 43–6).

65b Within a few years, Judah Alharizi produced a rival translation of Maimonides' *Guide*. On the standing dispute between Alharizi and ibn Tibbon regarding the translation of philosophic works into Hebrew, see Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, pp. 53–4.

66 Ibid., Chapter 4.

67 Kimḥi wrote to Judah Alfakhar of Toledo, a philosophic conservative whose understanding of Maimonides' *Guide* was profound, "I had indeed craved your fellowship to ask you in person about some of my [philosophical] problems which I felt ought not to be put in writing. For ever since our brother, the great scholar, Rabbi Samuel ibn Tibbon, of blessed memory, was gathered to his fathers, I have

found no one with whom to discuss these matters" (David Kimḥi, letter to Judah Alfakhar, in *Qobetz Teshuvot ha-Rambam ve-'Iggrotav*, ed. A. Lichtenberg [Leipzig: Shnoys, 1859], Chapter 3, pp. 3d–4a, as cited and translated by Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, p. 96). Kimḥi and ibn Tibbon were, after all, the privileged children of emigrants from Granada, and only first-generation Languedocian.

68 Languedocian Jews' rationalist commitment does not contradict this description. Consider, for example, the argumentation of Aaron ben Meshullam during the Resurrection Controversy (see Septimus, *Hispano–Jewish Culture in Transition*, pp. 43–6).

69 Alfakhar's tone is dire, perhaps even insulting, when he tells Kimḥi that no one in Languedoc realizes the poison that they have allowed to enter their borders: the naturalism and philosophic understanding of immortality found in Maimonides' *Guide* are unfaithful to Rabbinic tradition, and its historical understanding of the Commandments makes their authority appear contingent. "Would that it were that this book never existed!" The *Guide*'s translator, Samuel ibn Tibbon, has brought this trouble upon you, Alfakhar exclaims. Finally, Alfakhar delivers an ominous and prescient warning: If you do not expel this material now, in generations to come you will have to deal with heinous misconduct (see Judah Alfakhar's letter to David Kimḥi, in *Qobetz Teshuvot ha-Rambam ve-'Iggrotav*, Chapter 3, pp. 3a–b). For Spinoza's assessment of Alfakhar, see Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-political Treatise* R.H.M. Elwes, trans. (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 191. For evidence of a Languedocian Talmudist struggling seriously with newly arrived philosophic perspectives, apparently even before the availability of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in Languedoc, see Gad Freudenthal, "A Twelfth-Century Amateur of Neoplatonic Philosophy in Hebrew: R. Asher ben Meshullam of Lunel," *Chôra: Revue d' Études Anciennes et Médiévales* 3–4 (2005–2006): 161–88.

70 Robinson, *Samuel ibn Tibbon's* Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Preface, paragraph 33, pp. 175–76; see also Translator's Introduction, pp. 76–81; cited from MS Parma 2182 in Aviezer Ravitzky, "Samuel ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," *AJSreview* 6 (1981): 89–90; and Georges Vajda, "An Analysis of the *Ma'amar yiqqawu ha-Mayim* by Samuel b. Judah ibn Tibbon," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1959): 137–49.

71 Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim*, pp. 173–75; cited in Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Secrets of the *Guide to the Perplexed*: Between the Thirteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Twersky, ed., *Studies in Maimonides* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 179. See Robinson, *Samuel ibn Tibbon's* Commentary on Ecclesiastes, Translator's Introduction, pp. 105–11.

2 Implications of original philosophic work and the diffusion of philosophic learning in Languedoc (1250–1300)

The attempts to expel philosophic perspectives from Languedocian Jewry during the first half of the thirteenth century failed entirely. By mid-century, attitudes of Languedocian Jews toward the philosophic tradition had shifted profoundly. Despite the tension and uneasiness that philosophic and scientific perspectives brought to the Jews of Languedoc, the community now embraced the translated texts of Judeo-Arabic culture. The works of Maimonides achieved very wide acceptance, and translations from the Arabic continued apace. In the second quarter of the thirteenth century, Judeo-Arabic and Arabic learning penetrated deeply into Languedoc; and in the third quarter, mere absorption had gradually shifted to the production of original work. By the thirteenth century's second half, it is possible to speak of the maturation of a Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture and of the growth in Languedoc of a community that thought and wrote philosophically.

The self-perception of Languedocian rabbinic scholars as men "who love Wisdom" and who combined the study of the Torah with the sciences preceded their increased integration of philosophic knowledge in the 1270s and 1280s. This enlightened self-perception was articulated as early as in 1232 by David Kimḥi of Narbonne in his correspondence with Judah Alfakhar of Toledo, and was repeated in 1305, with ardor, by Menaḥem ha-Meiri of Perpignan in a letter to Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier.[1]

Deepening philosophic understanding and new exegetical work in the Maimonidean path

Jewish legal scholarship in Languedoc during the latter half of the thirteenth century is largely unexplored.[2] Nonetheless, it is possible to see at a glance the prominence of Maimonides' work within it, for the investigation of the legal tradition as well as for the construction of a framework within which that tradition should be understood. In the period between 1225 and 1275, the most outstanding figure is Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili of Narbonne (d. 1263),[3] whose Talmudic novellae are entitled *Sefer ha-Me'orot*.[4] Meir is also the author of *Meshiv Nefesh*, a defense of the philosophic positions

articulated in Maimonides' *Hilkhot Yesode ha-Torah,*[5] and *Milḥemet Mitzvah*,[6] a philosophically informed work of anti-Christian polemic.[7]

Abraham ben Isaac of Carpentras (d. 1315), "known as Abraham of Montpellier,"[8] wrote a Talmud commentary in the style of Rashi, but based principally upon the views of Maimonides.[9] Like most thirteenth-century Talmudic interpretation in Languedoc, Abraham's *Commentary* adopts the practice of incorporating practical rulings.[10] David ben Levi of Narbonne (later thirteenth century) may have been a student of the revered rationalist Talmudist Samuel Shakiel. In writing his commentary, *Ha-Mikhtam*, on the *Halakhot* of Alfasi, David followed in an established Languedocian tradition.[11] Manoaḥ of Narbonne (also later thirteenth century) innovated by writing his commentary, *Sefer ha-Menuḥah*, on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*.[12] Manoaḥ and Menaḥem ha-Meiri, the preeminent Languedocian halakhist at the turn of the thirteenth century, in all likelihood shared a teacher, Reuven ben Ḥayyim.[13]

Menaḥem ha-Meiri represents the epitome of a Languedocian synthesis in regard to both literary style and religious teaching. His *Bet ha-Beḥirah* integrates Maimonidean codificatory sensibilities within a unique Talmudic commentary, and his moderate rationalism integrates the legacy of Greco-Arabic learning within Languedocian Talmudic culture. In Meiri's mind, the first synthesis was connected profoundly to the second: Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* provided Meiri's literary ideal for *Bet ha-Beḥirah*; *Guide of the Perplexed*, Meiri's cultural ideal for Languedocian Jewry. Meiri envisioned his own culture as a generations' old community, formed by the great Talmudists of Languedoc, together with its elite group of astronomers, mathematicians, physicians, and philosophers; a community that felicitously integrated Jewish and Greco-Arabic learning in the service both of a greater understanding and more profound worship of God and of the glorification of the Jewish people in the eyes of the nations.

Meiri was born in 1249 and completed his magnum opus, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, in 1300.[14] He was called Don Vidal Solomon in the vernacular,[15] and is now referred to most frequently by his family name, Meiri.[16] As there is no record of his having left Perpignan, Meiri may well have spent all of his productive years there.[17] He was one of the *secretarii aljame judeorum ville Perpiniani*,[18] the small group of councilmen (נאמנים) who ran the city's Jewish community.[19]

Meiri records his commitment to philosophy and the sciences as a change in orientation resulting from Maimonides' intellectual influence, beginning in 1204 with the publication of the Hebrew translation (by Samuel ibn Tibbon) of *The Guide of the Perplexed*.

> Ever since the Spirit of the Lord spoke with us—with the arrival in [our] land of the books of the Master, *The Guide of Righteousness*—great and renowned scholars of the Torah and all other disciplines have been within our borders; expert in all the Orders of the Talmud and the

> Mishnah, while, at the same time, succeeding with philosophy and its books,[20] investigating its wisdom and its secrets.[21]

In Meiri's view, Maimonides had enlightened Languedocian Jews, and had invited them to integrate Greco-Arabic learning into their curriculum; they had done so admirably, without harm to their Talmudic studies. By now (the late 1200s and early 1300s), after four or five generations, many of the Jews of Languedoc had established this broader curriculum as a cultural ideal. Meiri appropriately emphasizes the success of Languedocian Talmudists with philosophic study. The Jewish scholars of Languedoc, he states, have had no difficulty absorbing scientific learning, and it has exercised no deleterious effect upon them. He makes the point that, within traditional values, they are men of the highest rank and beyond reproach; their adoption of this expanded curriculum lends it great religious authority.

> Surely you know or have heard the fame of the distinguished master, the universal scholar, unique in his generation, the man set on high, possessed of every science and discipline, Our Rabbi, Samuel Shakiel, may he rest in Eden.[22] Surely you are aware of the expanse of achievements of the man perfect in every science, crowned with the attributes of every achievement, Our master, Rabbi Gershom of Béziers, may the Spirit of the Lord rest upon him.[23] Surely you have encountered the treasures of the exalted scholar, my lord and master [Reuven ben Ḥayyim], of blessed memory.[24] And [there are] many scholars of [this] land like them, who were completely familiar with the science of the Talmud—being its perpetual students, contributing new insights and interpretations—and in addition, were expert in the sciences, whether all of them, most of them, or some of them. Have you ever heard of any teaching associated with them, whether verbally or in writing,[25] which is not proper,[26] correct, upright[27] and faithful?[28]

Unfortunately, very little is known about these scholars of whom Meiri is so proud. However, a small but informative document from one of their pens does survive, albeit in fragmentary form: a commentary on the prayer book *Sefer ha-Tamid*, by Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim.[29] In this commentary, focused upon the text of the liturgy, Reuven hardly had the opportunity to demonstrate his Talmudic learning.[30] Meiri's description of his teacher will have to suffice in this regard.

> [Reuven] was marvelously proficient in the entire Talmud and a scholar in most of the sciences. He innovated many interpretations with his powerful intellect. His analysis would "leap over mountains and bound over hills."[31]

Nevertheless, as might be expected from Meiri's praise, *Sefer ha-Tamid* shows

quite clearly Reuven's commitment—as an interpreter of traditional texts—to Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture. Meiri only cites Reuven on rare occasions,[32] but *Sefer ha-Tamid* seems to provide an immediate intellectual context for some of Meiri's fundamental views. Despite Meiri's grand obeisance toward his teachers and forbears, one imagines that Meiri himself might have been the best example of the sort of Talmudist whose virtues he praised.

In defense of Languedocian religious practice

Over the course of his career in Perpignan—indeed, we do not know that Meiri ever left that city—he encountered "some" Catalonian Jewish scholars who were quite critical, on formal halakhic grounds, of Languedocian Jewish customs. Of course, politically speaking, Roussillon in Meiri's day was part of northern Catalonia, as it belonged to the Kings of Aragon and Majorca, and Catalonian Jewish visitors must have been quite common. Nevertheless, the Jews of Perpignan were of Languedocian ancestry and viewed themselves as Languedocian Jews. In response to the criticism that he heard of Languedocian Jewish customs from these Catalonian visitors to Perpignan, Meiri wrote twenty-four halakhic essays, most likely over a period of many years. At a later time, Meiri added a philosophically sophisticated introduction and assembled these twenty-four essays into a collection that he entitled *Magen 'Avot* [Shield of (Our) Fathers]. Meiri's refutations of the Catalonian scholars' arguments are quite piquant, as one might well expect from a skilled Languedocian halakhist proud of his local customs. The issues treated range from the proper recitation of the *Shema*' in the morning and evening prayers[33] to the permissibility of the mass production of matzah on Passover.[34] *Magen 'Avot* preserves a number of interesting historical details concerning Jewish scholars in Languedoc.[35] But, more than that, it gives us an immediate sense of Meiri's identity as a Languedocian halakhist, and possesses a certain polemical energy and lively, combative character. These essays are redolent with pride and identification with the ways of an ancient and authentic community.[36]

One of the liturgical differences between Catalonian and Languedocian Jewish scholars concerned the precise manner in which the shofar was to be sounded on Rosh ha-Shanah. In Catalonia, the ram's horn was blown without a breath between sounds, while in Languedoc a breath was taken.

> One of our ancient customs in these lands [of Languedoc] from the days of the great [early] rabbis is: When we blow the sequence of sounds [on the shofar on Rosh ha-Shanah], "*teqi*'*a*, *shevarim*, *teru*'*a*, *teqi*'*a*," we interrupt to breathe between each *shever*, as well as between the *shevarim* and the *teru*'*a*; but we do not wait between them.
>
> When those students [of Naḥmanides'] of whom we have made mention came here, they showed themselves to be astonished at our

> custom. [They said that] the *shevarim* in the sequence, "*teqiʿa*, *shevarim*, *teqiʿa*," as well as the *shevarim* and the *teruʿa* of the sequence, "*teqiʿa*, *shevarim*, *teruʿa*, *teqiʿa*," ought to be blown in a single breath.[37]

If the Languedocian practice was shown to contradict the classical Rabbinic sources, Languedocian Jews would be compelled to humbly submit to the Catalonian interpretation. Meiri proceeds to tackle this dispute with five pages of halakhic analysis. But before he enters into the technical discussion, Meiri records a bit of the spark that generated it.

> I joked with them, saying, "Are [these shofar blasts] Haman's ten sons?!"[38] They answered shouting, "Such is the custom in all of Catalonia—by the word of the master, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman—and in all of France—by the word of the Tosafist scholars!" I said to them, "I have already told you, we need not set aside our practice, and that of our fathers, on account of scholars or rabbis in other countries. Our customs in this country have been set by great rabbis and scholars numbering in the thousands and hundreds—inferior to none in the world."[39]

The fervent regional pride of a member of an independent community comes through quite clearly.

In introducing this collection of halakhic essays, Meiri provides a philosophic explanation for the origin of regional disputes in religious practice. Maimonides explains in *The Guide of the Perplexed* that humans, in contrast to other species of animals, are extremely diverse in their moral habits.[40] Indeed, "one can hardly find two individuals who are in any accord."[41] Therefore, God gave certain individuals the ability to rule; that is, "to prescribe actions and moral habits . . . so that this natural diversity is hidden . . . and so that the community becomes well ordered."[42] That is to say, without legal systems (*nomoi*) and sovereigns, human societies would stand in disarray and natural human differences would endanger civilizations. Not all *nomoi* and sovereigns are of equal stature, however, according to Maimonides; a divinely inspired sovereign and bringer of the *nomos* pays attention "to the soundness of the circumstances pertaining to the body and also to the soundness of belief."[43] Moses was such a prophetic bringer of the *nomos*—the Torah—in addition to being the sovereign who implemented it. In order to explain the accord established by the Torah among diverse Jewish communities, Meiri has recourse to Maimonides' teaching regarding the role of *nomoi* in civilization.

> The Torah perfects [its community] and unites [their] opinions—especially with the help of the prophet, the sovereign, or the sage, who makes known its ways and its paths. So effective was "the perfect Torah of the Lord" that all bringers of *nomoi* coming after it imitated these fundaments in order to unite their peoples' hearts in one view.[44]

The *nomoi* of Christianity and Islam,[45] although they concern themselves with the soundness of morals and beliefs, are not divine. Rather, explains Meiri (following Maimonides), the founders of these communities copied from the teachings of the Torah in order to achieve similar results. Even the divine *nomos*, however, does not eliminate dispute.

> Nonetheless, the Torah and the power of the sovereign did not succeed in absolutely uniting opinions in regard to the details of certain issues. Furthermore, disputes occasionally arose in regard to the interpretation of the Torah, and even more so in regard to the teachings of the Ancient Sages—whose every word and practice we adore and keep and by whose every utterance we are sustained and continue to worship God (may His Name and Memory be praised and blessed).[46]

Inasmuch as the Torah ordains agreement only up to a certain point, disputes did arise concerning its interpretation as well as the interpretation of its oral component, the teachings of the Rabbis. Yet, Meiri continues, disagreements of this type do not exhaust the record of halakhic discord in Jewish tradition; a larger and later category of legal differences is regional discrepancies in religious practice. These develop as the result of the activities of independent interpreters in geographically separate communities.

> Even more do opinions differ concerning variant customs on a number of matters; on account of the distance separating various locales and the distance between the opinions of recent leaders. Each individual—being in his own local—conducts himself as seems fit to him and as is right in his eyes. His descendants hold fast to the same practice, and in their eyes it seems that anyone who departs from it has, as it were, distorted the meaning of the Torah or the intention of the Sages (of blessed memory).[47]

The natural allegiance of community members to their leaders' interpretations gives rise to this type of dispute, Meiri argues. He posits that community members acquire an attachment to the interpretations of their leaders, and the practices that result from them, during a period in which the community is cut off from variant understandings developed elsewhere. The communities' loyalty to their local practices becomes so intense that they come to view variant customs as transgressions. In order to provide a philosophic foundation for this explanation, Meiri appropriated another chapter from *The Guide of the Perplexed*. He restates Maimonides' enumeration of Alexander of Aphrodisias's three causes for philosophic disagreement, and incorporates a fourth cause, which Maimonides added to the catalogue of the Ancients. Meiri writes,

> To you, [O enlightened one],[48] it is well known that the causes of disagreement are four. The first is the desire to win disputes. The second is

> the subtlety and depth of a matter. The third, the ignorance, crudity, and limitations of the intellect of the individual [who would understand]. The fourth, one's community and upbringing—as it is one's nature to love [the practices] of the individual with whom one has been associated or raised. It even seems that that individual's teachings and the details of his practices are, as it were, written in the text. Thus it is difficult for one to depart at all—whether by a great deal or a little—from that path.[49]

Meiri applies Maimonides' fourth cause for philosophic disagreement to his explanation of regional halakhic disputes. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, habituation is responsible for inappropriate attachment to certain prevalent religious beliefs;[50] in *Magen 'Avot*, habituation is responsible for inappropriate attachment to certain local religious practices. Languedocian customs, Meiri argues, are valid on the basis of sound legal reasoning, and Catalonian rabbis should not allow their habituation to their own customs to lead them to conclude otherwise. Meiri internalized the teachings of *Guide of the Perplexed* and employs them in this new circumstance; Maimonides' exposition of the ordering and unifying of effect of the Torah on people's conduct and beliefs becomes the starting point for Meiri's explanation of recent disputes regarding particular observances. Maimonides' fourth cause for popular discord in metaphysical matters becomes Meiri's first cause for regional discord in religious practice.

Meiri also respected non-Talmudists who made one of the seven sciences their field of study. "Many of them," he notes, are scrupulously pious, and their existence constitutes a basic feature of Languedocian Jewish culture.[51]

According to Meiri, the presence within the Jewish community of these learned scholars is not only of value to the community itself; it also enhances the community's stature in the eyes of its Gentile neighbors. In this sense, a philosophically accomplished community is a fulfillment of the biblical verse, "This is a sign of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples . . . who will say, 'Surely that great nation is a wise and discerning people.'"[52]

> It is a great honor for [our] nation, when there are among us, some men—although they be few—perfect in philosophy; so that not all of our people are bereft of [philosophy] to the point that the Gentiles might say, "[Surely that small nation] is a simple and ignorant people" instead of saying, "Surely that great nation is a wise and discerning people."[53]

Thus, the community's own achievement, he argues, as well as the way it appears to the outside world, is dependent upon philosophic study. Without a few accomplished philosophers, Jews might appear "a simple and ignorant people."

From the "perfect in philosophy" among Meiri's immediate predecessors and contemporaries, many works survive: Moses ibn Tibbon of Montpellier (d. 1274)[54] wrote *Sefer Pe'ah*,[55] a philosophic commentary on selected *aggadot*, and the philosophic *Commentary on Song of Songs*.[56] Moses also translated al-Bitruji's *Principles of Astronomy*,[57] numerous commentaries by Averroes,[58] Themistius's commentary on book *Lamda* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *The Book of Intellectual Circles* by Ibn al-Sid of Badajoz, and al-Farabi's *Book of Principles*.[59] Isaac ben Yedayah (d. 1280), most likely of Narbonne, wrote massive philosophic commentaries on the *aggadot* of the Babylonian Talmud and the Midrash Rabbah.[60] Gershon ben Solomon of Arles completed his *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (1280), an impressive encyclopedia of general and Jewish learning.[61] Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche-de-Conflent, the nephew of Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Hayyim,[62] achieved a massive encyclopedia of science, philosophy, and Jewish interpretation, *Livyat Ḥen* (1295).[63] Levi's birthplace, Villefranche-de-Conflent, was a small town about thirty miles up the Têt from Perpignan. Levi is known to have lived in Montpellier, Arles, Perpignan, and Narbonne—in the home of Samuel ha-Sulami (de Escalita)—and was in Narbonne in 1304 when Rashba accused him of excessive philosophic interpretation.[64]

Meiri's early writing on Jewish philosophic spirituality

In his other writings, Meiri frequently refers the reader to a relevant discussion in "the composition of [his] youth," *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah.* This work, therefore, may have been Meiri's first,[65] and his frequent reference to it points to its critical position in relationship to the others. A reference to *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* in *Bet ha-Beḥirah* freed Meiri to focus upon legal matters. *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, moreover, is fundamental to Meiri's work in being the most ample articulation of the religious foundation upon which his other works rest.[66] In it, Meiri discourses expansively on a wide variety of religious-philosophic themes and legal issues,[67] giving us an articulate expression of his rationalist spirituality. In this work, Meiri interacts with the scriptural exegesis of Jacob Anatoli (in *Malmad ha-Talmidim*) and Samuel ibn Tibbon (in his *Ecclesiastes Commentary*),[68] as well as with the interpretations of David Kimḥi and Abraham ibn Ezra[69] (in their *Bible Commentaries*). Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed* figures prominently in most of his discussions,[70] and the Hebrew versions of Arabic proverbs and ethics—*Mishle 'Arav*,[71] *Musre ha-Filosofim*,[72] and *Ben ha-Melekh vehe-Nazir*[73]—support many of his conclusions. The consideration of the opinions of Aristotle[74] and Alfarabi[75] contribute to the seriousness of his rationalist discourse. In the process of Meiri's expansive disquisitions, a few other Andalusian, Catalonian, and Languedocian scholars appear: Jonah ibn Janaḥ ("The Head of the Grammarians"),[76] Solomon ibn Gabirol ("The Head of the Poets"),[77] Abraham ibn Ḥasdai ("The High Prince and Exalted

Poet"),[78] Naḥmanides ("The Geronese Rabbi"),[79] and Reuven ben Ḥayyim ("My Lord and Teacher").[80] However, many of the texts cited in *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* remain to be identified.[81]

Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah consists of four principal sections, encompassing discussions of (1) the concept of repentance, its philosophic underpinnings, and its proper observance; (2) the laws of Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur; (3) the laws of fasting; and (4) the laws of mourning—all as they relate to repentance and its philosophic meaning.[83] The first two sections, grouped together as discussions deriving from the obligation of repentance, are entitled "Meshiv Nefesh."[84] The final two sections, grouped as discussions of required practices intended to foster repentance, are entitled "Shever Ga'on."[85]

The Meshiv Nefesh section survives, very well preserved, in a unique Vatican manuscript "completed in the fortress of Perpignan on Wednesday, the third of Marheshvan, 1316."[86] This manuscript may well have been copied from the author's autograph, perhaps shortly after his death. The Shever Ga'on section, on the other hand, is in a very poor state of preservation, and survives only in three partial manuscripts.[87] Unfortunately, the copyists themselves appear to have edited this second half of Meiri's prolix work. Virtually unknown from the time that it was written until the mid-twentieth century,[88] *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* was first published in New York, in 1950.[82]

Meiri's preface to his instructions concerning the performance of the Rosh ha-Shanah liturgy illustrates his thinking in this work nicely. He begins with a discourse on the importance—for human perfection—of knowledge had by tradition.

> The verification of a matter may be made by any one of four means, as the books of Wise testify. They are: the senses, convention, philosophic demonstration, and tradition. . . . The Generation of the [Tower of Babel] could not conceive of the veracity of anything that was not sensible or conventional. The philosopher adds to this the belief in anything for which there exists a syllogistic proof or demonstration. As a result, he believes in a few of the fundaments of the Torah and its basic principles, like the Existence of God and incorporeal intelligences, His Unity and Incorporeality, and other matters that have genuine benefit for Faith which are known through investigation. However, man's Faith is not perfected by these means. The religious man [בעל דת] must accept upon himself the yoke of heaven to believe everything that religious ways [דרכי הדתות] require. By believing these things, his Faith will be absolutely complete and without imperfection.[89]

As the knowledge had by sensation, convention, and philosophic investigation is, by itself, inadequate to provide the beliefs of a religious man, knowledge had by tradition is required to supplement it.

As a philosophically inclined halakhist, Meiri establishes a remarkable distinction in religious valuation between the petition and praise of God.[90] He argues that petitionary prayer should be limited to the statutory minimum of the traditional liturgy, while praise of God—which leads one to contemplation of the Divine—should be extended as far as possible and repeated perpetually. Meiri recalls, in this connection, that the Rabbis discovered a biblical injunction to pray in the Torah's command to serve the Lord with one's "whole heart." Meiri strikingly argues that petitionary prayer is neither encouraged by the Rabbis nor is it to be considered a "service of the heart." While the Talmud itself is ambivalent as to whether study of the Torah should receive priority over petitionary prayer, Meiri sees fit to resolve this tension by the following forceful interpretation:

> In my view, only one type of prayer, may be deemed, "service of the heart." The understanding ones have already explained that there are two types of prayer. The first type consists in one's petition for his physical and material needs. Of this category, [the Sages] taught that one should not exaggerate its length. Indeed, the [Sages] said, "One might appropriately pray the whole day long."[91] But elsewhere they said, "Rabba found R. Hamnuna extending his prayer. [Rabba rebuked him] saying, '[Y]ou set aside eternal life [in Torah study] and occupy yourself [in supplication for your] immediate needs!'"[92]

In Meiri's typology, the first category of prayer is petitionary. In his interpretation, the Talmud discourages extended petitionary prayer and unequivocally excludes it from genuine divine worship worthy of the designation "service of the heart." In this context, Meiri states that Rabba's criticism of R. Qamnuna's extended prayer was on account of its petitionary nature. Meiri's second category of prayer is praise of the Divine.

> The other type of prayer—it is indeed its primary intention—is to recount the praises of God, His wonders, and His great actions. When one understands—by causing his ear to hear, that which emerges from his mouth—he will achieve the perfection intended [by this type of prayer]. He will cleave to God and His ways until the divine emanation flows upon him and carries him to the lofty goal [of conjunction].[93]

The second category of prayer in Meiri's typology fulfills, in his view, the biblical injunction to pray, to perform the "service of the heart." Meiri styles such worship "the perfect sort of prayer in which one gives no thought to the realm of material needs at all."[94] Such a focus on God's praise, according to Meiri, stimulates contemplation of the Divine that, in turn, may lead to the worshipper's conjunction with the Active Intellect (as the lowest and last emanation of intellect from the Divine is known). Such conjunction is, in the

view of this halakhist, the ultimate noetic experience possible for humans and the goal of Divine worship.

In Meiri's interpretation, it is only regarding the proper "service of the heart" that the Talmud declares, "One might appropriately pray the whole day long." "This [second] type [of prayer] is most worthy," Meiri concludes. "It is fitting to extend it and repeat it perpetually."[95] Of course, there is no evidence in the Talmud of Meiri's distinction between the worth of Divine petition and Divine praise. Yet, by invoking this distinction, Meiri buttresses his two-tiered typology and at the same time resolves a fundamental tension in the Talmudic valuation of study and prayer.[96]

Meiri held that a correct understanding of issues like the creation of the world ex nihilo and the occurrence of miracles are too subtle for men to arrive at philosophically without the guidance of traditional knowledge. Tradition, moreover, provides not only the narrative form of this knowledge (God created the world, God performed miracles); it provides, as well, the means through which that knowledge may be transferred and reinforced (specific commandments).[97] The commandment to wear phylacteries is a good example, according to Meiri. The biblical passages contained in the phylacteries refer to the Israelites' miraculous Exodus from Egypt. Meiri understood the regular use of properly constructed phylacteries as a tool for the acquisition of philosophically correct views. The term "phylactery" is indebted to the Greek word meaning "to safeguard," as observers viewed the phylacteries as being worn to protect the wearer. The phylacteries, or *tefillin* ("prayer," in Hebrew), are two small leather boxes, each containing four biblical passages written on individual parchments, that adult male Jews affix with leather straps; one to the biceps muscle of the left arm, oriented toward the thorax, and the other to the forehead, above the hairline. This is done in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 6: 8: "Bind [these instructions regarding the love of God] as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol between your eyes."

Meiri writes that, through their contact with the body, the four compartments of the head phylactery influence one's sense of sight, sound, smell, and taste, while the one compartment of the hand phylactery influences one's sense of touch. When worn during worship, the phylacteries impress upon the wearer's five senses the message of the Exodus passages—the philosophic possibility of miracles. The phylacteries' influence upon the senses is critical, according to Meiri, as "all five senses are required for the acquisition of Wisdom." By wearing the phylacteries in prayer, Meiri would focus "all of [his] sensory faculties" upon the traditional knowledge that is necessary to pursue philosophic contemplation successfully.

> The wearing of phylacteries—which testifies to the Exodus—fixes in one's heart the belief in miracles and in [God's ability] to alter the laws of Nature. [The phylacteries] also contain the paragraph, "Hear O Israel!

> The Lord is our God, the Lord alone,"[98] [that testifies to] belief in Divine unity.To intensify this lesson, God commanded that the phylacteries be placed upon the head and the hand: "They shall be a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead."[99] Pay close attention to the Rabbis' statement, "[the phylactery] of the head should be positioned at the place where the cranium of a child is soft, and [the phylactery] of the hand should be positioned opposite the heart."[100] The brain and the heart are the guiding organs [which the phylacteries are positioned to influence]. [God] commanded that the head phylactery contain four compartments—corresponding to the head's four sensory faculties—in order to instruct all four of them. [And He commanded that] the hand phylactery contain the four passages (of the head phylactery) in just one compartment—corresponding to the sense of touch.[101]

Meiri has explained how the phylacteries relate to the senses; now he must explain how the senses relate to belief.

> [The influence of the phylacteries upon the senses is critical as] all five senses are required for the acquisition of Wisdom [חכמה], as is well known. Ibn Gabirol explained the verse, "Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her Seven Pillars,"[102] to indicate this fact. [Wisdom's Seven Pillars within man are]: the five senses, the "communication of Messengers," and intellection.The Five Senses are related to the acquisition of Wisdom as one sees with one's eyes, one hears with one's ears, one speaks with one's tongue, and one writes with one's hands. The sense of smell is also related to the acquisition of Wisdom in that the nostrils are proximate to the two cavities of the brain where the ability to visualize concepts resides. The "communication of Messengers" is that which is known without intellection and without sensation, but which anyone might understand: such as, "the season in which the mountain goats give birth,"[103] and the like.[104] The Seventh [Pillar of Wisdom] is intellectual comprehension.

Thus, in Meiri's view, through the commandment to wear phylacteries, [God] has instructed that all of one's sensory faculties, all the components of one's intelligence, and all of one's organs ought to be subjugated to the belief indicated by the ways of the Torah.[105]

The tense relationship in rationalist interpretation between the traditional liturgy—especially petitionary prayer—and philosophic spirituality is hardly lessened as a result of our inquiry into the teachings of Menaḥem ha-Meiri. Meiri's interpretation surely implies a radical devaluation of the statutory petitionary prayer of the liturgy. He informs us that such prayer—clearly the paradigm in the Talmud—is not the true prayer, not the "service of the heart." True prayer, in Meiri's view, should be understood as an expression of

the longing to pursue knowledge of God without the intrusion of one's material needs. He assigns petitionary prayer a didactic function and would have us read the petition of the Divine in Judaism as a mode of instruction to the petitioner to pursue that which he has requested—health, forgiveness, and an abundant harvest, among other things—for the purpose of laying the groundwork necessary to pursue the knowledge of God. Like the praise of God, petitionary prayer, in Meiri's understanding, is thus an indispensable prelude to philosophic contemplation.

Through the vantage point of Meiri of Perpignan, this chapter offers a limited view of the extent to which Jewish culture in Languedoc was transformed in the second half of the thirteenth century. In addition to distinguishing its communal identity—against that of Catalonian Jewry—in regard to Jewish practice and custom, Languedocian Jewry differentiated itself during this period from any other Jewish community by incorporating Maimonidean teaching and philosophic perspectives into its understanding of Judaism to an unprecedented degree. At the turn of the century, we will witness the full flowering of Meiri's halakhic thought and understanding of Judaism, with the completion of his mature work, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*—a multivolume encyclopedia of Talmudic interpretation—as well as his commentaries on Proverbs and Psalms. As we face the thirteenth century's second half, we must consider the significance of Christian-Jewish intellectual contacts during a period in which European Christians and Jews are wrestling simultaneously with the philosophic tradition.

Notes

1 Concerning Abba Mari, see Heinrich Gross, "Notice sur Abba Mari de Lunel," *Revue des Études Juives* 4 (1882): 192–207; Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27: 647–95; and Heinrich Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), pp. 83, 86, 331, 346, 686–7. Abba Mari was involved in viniculture (see Abba Mari ben Joseph of Lunel, ed. and comp., *Minat Qena'ot*, edited by H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. [Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990], p. 408), and also seems to have had some basic acquaintance with contemporary surgical manuals (see Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 240).

2 See Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud be-Eropah uvi-Tzefon Afriqah: Qorot, Ishim ve-Shitot*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 145–73; and Binyamin Z. Benedict, *Merkaz ha-Torah be-Provence* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1985); Renan, *Les Rabbins Français*, pp. 558–62.

3 Me'ili was himself a student of Meshullam ben Moses of Béziers (d. 1238), the author of *Sefer ha-Hashlamah* to the *Halakhot* of Alfasi. H. Gross, "Meïr b. Simon und seine Schrift Milchemeth Mitzwa," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 30 (1881), 295–305, 444–52, 554–69; Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, 423–25; Sigfreid Stein, "Me'ir b. Simeon's Milhemeth Miswah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1960), 45–63.

4 Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili, *Sefer ha-Me'orot*, *Berakhot*, *Pesaḥim*, *Ḥullin*, *Mo'ed*

Qatan, *Shabbat*, 3 vols., ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1964); Me'ili, *Sefer ha-Me'orot*, '*Eruvin*, *Yoma*, *Sukkah*, *Betzah*, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, *Ta'anit*, *Megillah*, ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1966).

5 This work survives in Russian State Library, Moscow. MS Guenzburg 572/19. For now, see S. Z. Havlin, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 22 vols., 2nd edn, Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), p. 785, s.v. "Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili;" and the fragment, Yehudah Hershowitz, ed., "*Meshiv Nefesh* le-Rabi Meir ha-Me'ili," *Minḥat ha-Qayyitz* 8 (2006): 15–28

6 Biblioteca Palatina, Parma, MS 2749 (De Rossi 155) is an *unicum* of this work. For sections of this manuscript, see William K. Hershkowitz, "Judeo-Christian Dialogue in Provence as reflected in *Milḥemet Mitzvah* of R. Meir ha-Meili," PhD dissertation (New York: Yeshiva University, 1974).

7 Concerning the contents of this manuscript, see Siegfried Stein, *Jewish-Christian Disputations in Thirteenth-Century Narbonne: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University College, London, 22 October 1964* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1969); and Robert Chazan, "Confrontation in the Synagogue of Narbonne: A Christian Sermon and a Jewish Reply," *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974): 437–57; Chazan, "Anti-Usury Efforts in Narbonne," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41–2 (1975): 45–67; Chazan, "A Jewish Plaint to Saint Louis," *HUCA* 45 (1976): 287–305; Chazan, "Polemical Themes in the Milchemet Mitzva," in *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: Melanges en l'honneur de B. Blumenkranz*, ed. G. Dahan (Paris: Picard, 1985), pp. 169–84. *Milḥemet Mitzvah* is also an important document for the history of Kabbalah in Languedoc. See Gershom Scholem, ed., "Te'udah Ḥadashah le-Reshit ha-Kabbalah," in *Sefer Bialik* (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Va'ad-ha-yovel uve-Hishtatfut Hotsa'at Omanut, 1934), pp. 146–50. See now the mature synthesis in Chazan, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

8 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, chap. 112. Kalonymus ben Kalonymus met Abraham "twice or thrice," while the later was on a visit to Arles (a day's journey from Carpentras). Kalonymus called Abraham the greatest living Talmudist in Provence and Comtat Venaissin: "Of all the great scholars east of the Rôhne there is none like him." See Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, "'Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan' le-Rabi Kalonymus ben Kalonymus," ed. Joseph Shatzmiller, *Tzefunot* 10 (1966): 17–8, 38.

9 Abraham of Montpellier's *Qiddushin* commentary has been published (in the Romm editions, as the commentary of Isaac of Dampierre); *Perush Rabi Avraham min ha-Har li-Msekhet Yevamot*, ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1962); *Perush* '*al masekhtot Nedarim ve-Nazir*, ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1962); *Perush Rabi Avraham min ha-Har li-Msekhtot Sukkah, Megillah, Ḥagigah, Yoma Rosh ha-Shana*, ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1975).

10 Isaac de Lattes of Perpignan (14th century) reported, "R. Abraham of Montpellier wrote an expansive work on most of Three Orders [of the Talmud: *Mo'ed*, *Nashim*, *Neziqin*] in the style which combines commentary and legal decision. Nothing surpasses it." See de Lattes, *Sha'are Zion*, in Menaḥem ben Solomon ha-Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet 'Avot*" [in Hebrew] in *Seder ha-Qabbalah le-Rabbenu Menaḥem ha-Meiri*, *hi ha-Petiḥah le-Fersho le-Masekhet* '*Avot*, ed. S. Z. Havlin (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1992), pp. 176, 178 (hereafter: "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, 'Avot*").

11 David ben Levi, *Ha-Miktam* to *Pesaḥim*, *Sukkah*, *Mo'ed Qatan* (and Teshuvot), ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1958); David ben Levi, *Sefer ha-Mikhtam: Perush 'al ha-Rif Masekhtot Sukah*, *Betzah*, *Mo'ed Qatan u-Fesaḥim*, ed. Abraham Schreiber, (New York: Hadar, 1959) Pesaḥim, *Sefer ha-Mikhtam 'al*

Masekhet Megillah, ed. Menasheh Grossberg (Lemberg, Austria: [s.n.], 1904); David ben Levi, *Ha-Mikhtam* to *Pesahim*, *Sukkah*, *Mo'ed Qatan* (and *Teshuvot*), ed. Moshe Yehudah Blau (New York: [s.n], 1958); David ben Levi, *Sefer ha-Mikhtam: Perush 'al ha-rif 'al masekhtot Sukah, Betsah, Mo'ed Qatan u-Fesaḥim*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (New York: Hadar, 1959); David ben Levi, *Sefer ha-Mikhtam*, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, *Yoma*, *Ta'anit* in *Ginze Rishonim*, ed. Moshe Hershler (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisre'eli ha-Shalem, 1963); David ben Levi, *Sefer ha-Mikhtam*, *Megillah*, *Yoma*, ed. Menasheh Grosberg (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1967).

12 Manoaḥ of Narbonne, *Sefer ha-Menuhah*, ed. Elazar Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1970).

13 See ibid., p. 27.

14 See Meiri, "*Introduction to Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," p. 143; this work is titled *Seder ha-Qabbalah le-Rabbenu Menaḥem ha-Meiri*, *hi ha-Petiḥah le-Ferusho le-Masekhet 'Avot*. While it is common enough for a medieval Jewish author to record the year in which he completed his work, it is rare for one to mention his year of birth. In regard to Maimonides' birth date, see Isadore Twersky, *Mavo le-Mishneh Torah la-Rambam* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), p. 2, n. 1.

15 See, for example, Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in David Kauffmann, ed., "Simeon b. Josefs Sendschreiben an Menachem b. Salomo," *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz* (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), Hebrew section, p. 142; Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qen'aot*, p. 875; Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, "'Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan,'" pp. 21, 41; and the anonymous owner of Paris MS 893 in Neubauer, "David Kokhabi," *Revue des Études Juives* 9 (1884): 215. Catalan and Provençal Jews conveyed the meaning "son of" simply by juxtaposing their father's name to their own without any patronymic signifier. "Vidal," although not Hebrew or Aramaic, was a common first name among Jews in the Middle Ages. See M. N. Zobel, "Qetzat Peratim le-Toldot ha-Rav ha-Meiri," in *'Eder ha-Yaqar: Divre sifrut u-meḥqar muqdashim le-S. A. Horodetski bi-melot lo shiv'im va-ḥamesh shanah*, ed. Emanuel Ben-Gurion (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1947), p. 89.

16 I.e., "of the House of Meir," presumably the descendant of a certain venerable progenitor, Meir, whose name the entire family bore. Aaron ha-Kohen of Lunel refers to its author as Menaḥem "ben Meir" (see Aaron ha-Kohen, *'Orḥot Ḥayyim* [Florence: [s.n.], 1751], *Yom Tov* 1: 25, p. 86b). Since Aaron refers to the same author as "Menaḥem ben Solomon" (on the same page), it is clear that "ben Meir" is used as a family name.

17 On the association of Meiri with Perpignan see, Benjamin S. Schreiber, *'Or ha-Meir: Toldot Rabbenu ha-Meiri u-Sefarav* (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1942), p. 15. In departing from Perpignan, the poet and lexicographer Abraham Bedersi wrote a farewell poem to Meiri. See George Margoliouth, *Catalogoue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols. (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1965–1977), III: 245 (MS British Museum 930.7); and Arthur Z. Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (Leipzig: K.W. Hiersemann, 1925), I: 118 (Vienna 111C.12). On Bedersi, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit bi-Sefarad ha-Notzrit uvi-Derom Tzarfat*, Ezra Fleischer, ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes/ Ben Tzvi, 1997), pp. 469–498.

18 He is so named, apparently, in two entries of the Perpignan notarial register that survive for this period. See below, p. 70.

19 On the *secretarius*, see Pierre Vidal, *"Les Juifs des Anciens Comtés de Roussillon et Cerdagne," Revue des Études Juives* 15 (1887): 16, 19–55; *Revue des Études Juives* (1888): 1–23, 170–203; reprinted with a preface by Eduard Feliu as Pierre Vidal, *Les Juifs des Anciens Comtés de Roussillon et de Cerdagne* (Perpignan, France: Mare Nostrum, 1992), p. 31; Abraham Neuman, *The Jews in Spain* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1942) 1: 34–47; Y. Baer, *Toldot ha-Yehudim*

be-Sefarad ha-Notzrit (Tel Aviv: ʻAm ʻOved, 1965), pp. 129–38; Yom-Tov Assis, "Yehude ʾAragonyah be-Yeme Shiltono shel Yaʻaqov ha-Sheni (1291–1327)," PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1981, pp. 368–70, 392, 408–11; and Assis, "Ha-Yehudim be-Malkhut ʾAragonia ube-ʾEzore Ḥasutah," in *Moreshet Sefarad*, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), pp. 56–64.

20 "עם היות ידיהם עושות תושייה בחכמה וספריה".

21 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," Hebrew section, p. 162. Yedayah ha-Penini, a generation younger than Meiri, speaks of Maimonides' works as having "established" the community as it now stands. See Yedayah ben Abraham Bedersi (ha-Penini), "Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut," in Rashba, *Sheʾelot u-Teshuvot*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik, 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 1: 418 (for example, pp. 158a and 172a).

22 A wealthy moneylender, Samuel lived mostly in Narbonne, but for a few years in Perpignan. He owned houses and fields (which were seized in the 1306 expulsion), and was recognized as a leader of the Narbonnese Jewish community. His daughter Dulcia was married to Astruc, the son of Crescas Vidal of Barcelona (see below, pp. 154–7), and brought with her a handsome dowry of 6,000*s*. Abraham Bedersi (see above, note 17) presented a *qinah* to Samuel on the occasion of the death of his father, Abraham. See Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIVe siècle* (Paris: A. Picard, 1881), p. 292; Renan, *Les Rabbins Français*, p. 714; J. Régné, *Etude sur la Condition des Juifs de Narbonne du Ve au XIVe siècle* (Narbonne, France: F. Caillard, 1912), pp. 123, n. 1; 134, 215, n. 10; 236; and Richard Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century: An Economic Study Based on Notarial Records* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 17–19, 168, 180–2. On his way to Barcelona, Kalonymus ben Kalonymus of Arles stayed for a short time in Narbonne in the home of Samuel Shakiel. Kalonymus said of Samuel, "[He] dwells in the Palace of Wisdom and Knowledge, and from him Instruction issues throughout the country. . . . However, his devotion to study is insufficient. This is on account of his great wealth and untold power" (Kalonymus, "Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan," pp. 27–8, 41). See the editor's preface to Simeon ben Joseph's "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 149, n. 29; and Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, ʾAvot,*" p. 139, n. 628, for the speculation that Samuel Shakiel was the teacher of David ben Levi of Narbonne.

23 Gershom of Béziers wrote a code, following the organization of *Mishneh Torah*, called *Shalman*. On the incomplete nature of this code, see David ben Samuel Kokhavi, *Sefer ha-Battim*, Moshe Hershler, ed. (Jerusalem: Makhon Shalem-Tzefunot Qadmonim, 1983), 1: 73; Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, ʾAvot,*" p. 140, n. 629; and the fragment published by Israel Mordecai Peles, "*Sefer Shalman*," *Ha-Maʾayan* 47/2 (2007).

24 Ḥayyim Joseph Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*, ed. Isaac Benjacob (Jerusalem: ʻOtzar ha-Sefarim, 1992), *Maʻarekhet Gedolim*, 1: 69a, erroneously names Jonah of Gerona as Meiri's teacher.

25 Cf. *Gittin* 71a, *Yevamot* 31b, "מפידם ולא מכתבם."

26 "חזקה על חבר שאינו יוצא דבר מתחת ידו שאינו מתוקן," found in the context of *terumot* and *maʻaserot*, takes on a literary and intellectual dimension. I owe this last citation to Mr Pinhas Roth.

27 I.e., their teachings are theologically sound; cf. the liturgy of קריאת שמע.

28 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 163. For an alternative viewpoint, see the German-born antirationalist Talmudist Asher ben Yeḥiel, in Abba Mari, *Minḥat Qenaʾot*, pp. 596–7. See Ta-Shma, "Shiqqulim Filosofiyyim be-Hakhraʻat ha-Halakhah be-Sefarad," *Tzefunot* 3 (1985): 99–110. The commitment of Languedocian Talmudists to the sciences went beyond that which was immediately relevant to Talmudic study; such commitment even Asher ben Yeḥiel would grant.

See Twersky, "The Beginnings of *Mishneh Torah* Criticism," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 182. Meiri, nonetheless, relates his experience with the sciences in Talmud study with vigor:

> As my love and concern for you [Abba Mari] lives! When I reached the *suggyah* of 'the window' in the tractate '*Eruvin*, and the *suggyah* of 'the [round] oven' which resembles it, in the tractate *Sukkah*, and the *suggyah* of 'the two finger-breadths' in the clarification of the vessel which is described by Maimonides in the Order *Zera'im*—I was able to clarify everything with complete precision by means of the science of geometry with the help of one of my friends and students who had achieved an extraordinary expertise in geometry and mathematics [by study] from the time of his youth until he arranged to study the science of Talmud with me. So too, in regard to the *suggyot* of *Rosh ha-Shanah*—until God rewarded me with a copy of Maimonides' commentary to the tractate—[I was able to clarify everything] with the help of some of the astronomers.

(Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 165). Cf. Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah, 'al Masekhet Qiddushin*, ed. Abraham Schreiber, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Ha-Teḥya, 1963), 30a: "One should always divide his days into three: by devoting a third to Scripture, a third to Mishnah, and a third to Talmud and other areas of inquiry [מחקר] that are relevant to that which he is studying." But see Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 536.

29 Reuven ben Ḥayyim, *Sefer ha-Tamid*, ed. Y. M. Toledano, '*Otzar ha-Ḥayyim* 11 (1935): 691–95. The unique nineteenth-century manuscript upon which this edition is based was found by the editor in Meknès, Morocco. The manuscript itself had no title. The editor made his identification on the basis of other manuscript works in Morocco that cited Reuven's text as "*Sefer ha-Tamid"* (see editor's introduction, p. ii). A work having to do with prayer by Reuven, bearing the title *Sefer ha-Tamid*, was also known to Aaron ben Jacob ha-Kohen of Lunel [d. 1325]. See Aaron's '*Orḥot Ḥayyim*, *Berakhot* 68, and *Tefillah* 51. Azzariah de Rossi mentions an aggadah commentary by Reuven. See Azzariah de Rossi, *Me'or 'Enayim* (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1970), "'Imre Binah, Yeme 'Olam," Chapter 40, p. 336.

30 One brief responsum from Reuven also survives; for the text, with full bibliographic references and variants, see Manoaḥ of Narbonne, *Sefer ha-Menuḥah*, introduction, p. 26. Manoaḥ himself quotes an astronomical explanation for a halakhah in the name of "his master and teacher, Rabbi Reuven." See ibid., *Berakhot* 10b. Abraham Geiger was the first to suggest that Manoah's "Rabbi Reuven" was Reuven ben Ḥayyim. See Geiger, *Qevutzat Ma'amarim* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1910), p. 256. Elazar Hurwitz gives to this identification his cautious assent in his introduction to Manoaḥ's *Sefer ha-Menuḥah*, p. 27.

31 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot,*" pp. 138–9 (cf. Song of Songs 2: 8).

32 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (New York: Hoza'at Talpiyot, 1950), *Meshiv Nefesh* 2: 4, p. 295, which cites Reuven's *Sefer ha-Tamid* 2: 8 (p. 390); and Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, *Shever Ga'on* 2: 6 (p. 636).

33 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, edited by Yekutiel Kohen (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1988), essay no. 1. Virtually unknown until the twentieth century, *Magen 'Avot* was first edited by Isaac Last (London: Naroditsky, 1909). The Kohen edition makes use of a second manuscript (JTS, Adler 3628, in addition to British Museum 10534) and is annotated more fully.

34 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, essay no. 16.

35 The introduction to essay no. 21 of the work (on the *Lulav*) reads:

> Those [Catalonian] students showed me Naḥmanides' monograph in which he critiques the monograph of Rabad of Posquières on the laws of the *Lulav* and the four species. Rabad composed this monograph after he fled from the rural town of Posquières on account of the war that the *seigneur* of another city waged against his *seigneur*. [Rabad] traveled to Narbonne, the city of his birth. There the elders of Carcassone, the city of my [Meiri's] ancestors, came to greet him and to request most humbly that he dwell in their city. [Rabad] was persuaded, and dwelled in Carcassone for a while in a certain house which belonged to one of our respected elders by the name of Menaḥem ben Isaac. It was in Menaḥem's house that Radad wrote his monograph on the *Lulav* which I am about to consider. [Rabad] even mentioned a certain proof in Menaḥem's name.

On this passage, see Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières: A Twelfth Century Talmudist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 4, 5, 36. On the historical documentation contained in *Magen 'Avot*, see also Zobel, "Qetzat Peratim le-Toldot ha-Rav ha-Meiri," pp. 88–96.

36 For self-consciousness, from the second half of the twelfth century, of regionally distinct Languedocian halakhic practices, see Shlomo H. Pick, "The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306," PhD dissertation (Bar Ilan University: Ramat Gan, 1996), pp. 239–249.
37 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, p. 51.
38 In the liturgical reading of the Book of Esther in the synagogue on Purim, it was customary to read the names of Haman's slain sons (Esther 9: 7–9) in one breath. See BT *Megillah* 16b; and *Shulhan 'Arukh*, *Orekh Ḥayyim*, 690: 15.
39 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, p. 51.
40 Meiri supports his presentation with a brief citation from the *Malmad ha-Talmidim* (Lyck, Prussia: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1866), p. 28b, of Jacob ben Abba Mari Anatoli, but his chief debt—which he does not acknowledge—is to Maimonides.
41 Moses Maimonides. *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), II: 40, p.381.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, p. 30.
45 Maimonides, in contrast to Meiri, did not include Christianity among the religions that would teach sound belief.
46 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, p. 30.
47 Ibid.
48 Meiri refrains, at this point, from the direct citation of the *Guide*.
49 Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, p. 30.
50 Maimonides, *Guide*, I: 31:

> Alexander of Aphrodisias says that there are three causes of disagreement about things. One of them is the love of domination and the love of strife, both of which turn man aside from the apprehension of truth as it is. The second cause is the subtlety and the obscurity of the object of apprehension in itself and the difficulty of apprehending it. And the third cause is the ignorance of him who apprehends and his inability to grasp things that it is possible to apprehend. That is what Alexander mentioned. However, in our times there is a fourth cause that he did not mention because it did not exist among them. It is habit and upbringing. For man has in his nature a love of, and an inclination for, that to which he is habituated.

51 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 163.

52 Deuteronomy 4: 6. Meiri interprets the biblical verse following Maimonides, but uses it to a different end. See Maimonides, *Mishnah: 'im perush Moshe ben Maimon*, trans. Yosef Kafaḥ (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963–67), *Sanhedrin*, Chapter 10; and *Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection: Maqala fi Teḥiyyat ha-Metim*, trans. Samuel ibn Tibbon, ed. Joshua Finkel (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1939). See also Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, pp. 383–6.

53 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishphat," p. 162. Meiri follows Jacob Anatoli; see J. Anatoli's *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, p. 6a. Jacob ben Makhir also employs the verse, "This is proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples," in the sense in which Meiri takes it, as a justification for scientific study. See Jacob's letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 510. Yedayah ha-Penini makes this argument, emphasizing that it would be a "desecration of God's name" for the Jews to appear ignorant of philosophy. See "Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut," p. 172b.

54 Moses, the grandson of Judah (a Granada émigré), was born into a family of translators. On Moses, see Colette Sirat, "La Pensée Philosophique de Moïse ibn Tibbon," *Revue des Études Juives* 138 (1979): 505–15.

55 See Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), MS 939/1.

56 Moses ibn Tibbon, *Moses Ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm*, ed. and trans. Otfried Fraisse (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004). See Sirat, A *History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 228–9: Moses' philosophic interpretations are "moral, medical, historical, geographical, [and] arithmetical."

57 See Bitruji, *On the Principles of Astronomy*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Bernard R. Goldstein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).

58 See, for example, Averroes, *Epitome of Parva Naturalia*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Harry Blumberg (Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961); and Averroes, *De generatione et corruptione: Middle Commentary and Epitome*, trans. Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, Moses ibn Tibbon, and Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben Sheatiel Ḥen, ed. Samuel Kurland (Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1958).

59 Moses ibn Tibbon's most influential translation is Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Ḥayyim Heller (Piotrków, Poland: Moses Tsederboym, 1914). Moses translated, as well, Maimonides *Milot ha-Higayon*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Israel Efros (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938) and many of his medical works. See, for example, Maimonides, *Ketavim Refuiyim*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Süssmann Muntner, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957–).

60 See Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); and Saperstein, "The Earliest Commentary on the Middrash Rabba," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 283–306. In his introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, 'Avot*, Meiri cites an unusual interpretation found in Isaac's writings, but without attribution. See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, 'Avot.*", p. 21, n. 69.

61 Gershon ben Solomon of Arles, *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (Rödelheim: W. Heidenheim and B. M. Baschwitz, 1801). On this work, see James T. Robinson, "Gershom b. Solomon's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim:* Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy*, Steven Harvey, ed. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 248–74.

62 See Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, p. 421. In *Livyat Ḥen* (MS Munich 58, 3: 3), Levi cites

his "master and uncle, the sage Rabbi Reuven." See Abraham Geiger, "Ma'amar 'al R. Levi ben R. Avraham ben R. Ḥayyim u-Ketzat Bene Doro," *Qevutzat Ma'amarim* (Warsaw: Tushiyah, 1910), pp. 256, 267.

63 Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim, *Livyat Ḥen le-Rabi Levi ben Avraham: Ekhut ha-Nevuah ve-Sodot ha-Torah*, ed. Howard Kreisel (Ber Sheva, Israel: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2007); and Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim, *Livat Ḥen: ha-ḥeleq ha-shelishi min ha-ma'mar ha-shishi: Ma'aseh Bereshit*, ed. Howard Kreisel (Jerusalem: World Union for Jewish Studies, 2004). See also Gad Freudenthal, "Sur la partie astronomique du Liwyat Ḥen de Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim," *Revue des Études Juives* 148 (1989): 103–12. Levi also wrote a didactic poem on the sciences, "Batte ha-Nefesh veha-Laḥashim" (1276). See Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim, "Ha-Ma'amar ha-Rishon min Sefer Batte ha-Nefesh veha-Laḥashim," ed. Israel Davidson, *Yedi'ot ha-Makhon le-Ḥeqer ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit be-Yerushalayim* 5 (1939): 3–42; and Davidson, "Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim, A Mathematician of the 13th Century," *Scripta Mathematica* 4 (1936): 57–65.

64 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 385–99. On Levi and the controversy, see Warren Zev Harvey, "Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche's Controversial Encyclopedia," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Steven Harvey (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 171–88; as well as the classic essay of Abraham S. Halkin, "Why Was Levi ben Ḥayyim Hounded?" *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966): 65–7. Isaac Albalag's Averroistic *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot* (if, indeed, it belongs to Languedocian provenance) adds to the picture of growing intellectual independence and radicalism in Languedocian Jewish culture in the second half of the thirteenth century. See Georges Vajda, *Isaac Albalag—Averroiste juif, traducteur et commentateur d'Al-Ghazali* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1960); C. Touati, "Vérité philosophique et vérité prophétique, chez Isaac Albalag," *Revue des Études Juives* 121 (1962): 35–47; Seymour W. Feldman, "An Averroist Solution to a Maimonidean Perplexity," *Maimonidean Studies* 4 (2000): 15–30; and Charles Manekin, *Medieval Jewish Philosophic Writings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. xviii–xxi.

65 See, however, Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 375, 379, where Meiri refers to his *Talmud Commentary*; and *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 259, where he mentions his introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* and his *Psalms Commentary.*

66 Cf., for example, the opening paragraph of Meiri's major work, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, p. 7.

67 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 2, "My words here center upon religious practices that contain philosophic meanings, as well as the legal details [which appertain to them]."

68 For the location of these citations, see the index in Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. vii–xiv.

69 Cited most frequently as "אבי העזרי"—"my teacher of the Ezra family."

70 Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and *Mishnah Commentary* appear quite often, as well.

71 *Mishle* '*Arav* survives in a number of manuscripts (for example, Bodelian Mich. 240 [Neubauer 1402]), and was published in serial form in *Ha-Levanon* 2–6 (1865–1869). Concerning this work, see M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), pp. 884–7; and Israel Davidson, ed., *'Otzar ha-Shirah veha-Piyyut*: *Mi-Zeman Ḥatimat Kitve ha-Qodesh 'ad Reshit Teḳufat ha-Haskalah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1933), 4: 423–4, s.v. Isaac Krispin.

72 See Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq al-'Ibādī, *Musre ha-Filosofim*, trans. Judah Alharizi, ed. A. Loewenthal (Frankfurt-am-Main: [s.n.] 1896); and Israel Davidson, ed., *'Otzar ha-Meshalim veha-Pitgamim mi-Sifrut Yeme ha-Benayim* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957).
73 See Abraham ibn Hasdai, trans., *Ben ha-Melekh veha-Nazir*, ed. A. M. Habermann (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut be-Siyu'a Mosad ha-Rav, 1950).
74 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 292, 393, 537. Some of these citations are derived from *The Guide of the Perplexed*.
75 See ibid., pp. 428–9, 636. Vajda, "He'arot le-*Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* le-Rabbenu Mena ḥem ben Shelomo ha-Meiri," *'Iyyun* 20 (1970): 242–4, notes that one of these citations (concerning the survival of the soul) derives from the *Ḥayy ben Yaqdhan* of Ibn Tufayl.
76 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 2, 270–3; Meiri cites Jonah ibn Janah's *Sefer ha-Riqmah* (trans. Judah ibn Tibbon, ed. M. Wilensky, 2nd edn [Jerusalem: Ha-'Akademyah la-lashon ha-'Ivrit, 1964].)
77 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 2, 257; Meiri cites Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Tiqqun Middot ha-Nefesh* (trans. Judah ibn Tibbon [Pressburg, Hungary: A. Alka-'la'i, 1896]); and Solomon ibn Gabirol, *Improvement of the Moral Qualities*, ed. S. Wise (New York: Columbia University Press, 1902).
78 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 137.
79 See ibid., p. 544; Meiri cites his *Torah Commentary*, Leviticus 1: 9.
80 See ibid., p. 295, 390, 636; Meiri cites his *Sefer ha-Tamid*.
81 The editor, Abraham Schreiber, is often forced to note his inability to identify a source.
82 In the summer of 1939, Isaac Bulka, a Nürnberg printer who had fled to Warsaw, undertook to publish *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah.* Bulka died in the Warsaw Ghetto, but his son carried some pages of his work to the United States. These are published, with annotation, in Samuel Mirsky, "Peraqim mi-Sefer ha-Teshuvah shel Rabbenu Menaḥem ben Shelomo ha-Meiri," *Talpiyot* 4 (1949): 417–524.
83 The halakhic disquisitions of *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* are filled with the opinions and interpretations of many scholars of the region: Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona, Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne, Zeraḥyah ha-Levi Gerondi, Abraham ben David of Posquières, Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, and Asher ben Meshullam of Béziers. The geonim, Rashi, Rashbam, and Rabbenu Tam are also selectively mentioned. (For the location of these citations, see the index in *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. vii–xiv.)
84 With reference to Psalms 19: 8, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul."
85 With reference to Proverbs 16: 18, "Pride precedes ruin, arrogance precedes failure."
86 See Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 574.
87 See ibid., pp. v–vi.
88 In Abraham ben Solomon ha-Levi Bukarat, *Sefer ha-Zikaron: Be'ur 'al Rashi 'al ha-Torah* (Livorno, Italy: Eliezer Ashkenazi, 1845), Ashkenazi, the book's printer, wrote in his introduction that he intended to publish *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah.* Solomon Alkabetz (d. 1597) cited an interpretation from *Shever Ga'on* in his *Manot Levi* (Lemberg, Austria: Joseph Zaphuhn, 1911), Esther 5: 1, p. 145a. Nathan of Gaza (d. 1680), reproduced *Shever Ga'on* I: 1–7 in his *Ḥemdat ha-Yamin* (Livorno, Italy: [s.n.] 1764), IV: 76b. (This section introduces Nathan's discussion of the three-week period between the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Av.)
89 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 256. Cf. Twersky, "Halakhah u-Mada': Hebetim be-Epistomologia shel ha-Rambam," *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-'Ivri* 14–15 (1988–1989): 121–51.

90 For an insightful characterization of the historical development of attitudes toward prayer in the Jewish tradition from antiquity to the medieval period as a move away from an interpersonal relationship between man and God, see Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*: *Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 139.
91 BT *Berakhot* 31a.
92 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 507 (see BT *Shabbat* 10a).
93 Ibid., p. 507.
94 Ibid., p. 509.
95 Ibid., p. 508.
96 This observation is made in Moshe Halbertal, "R. Menaḥem ha-Me'iri: ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah," *Tarbitz* 63 (1995): 69–71, and repeated in his *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provence* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 26–27. See, also, Howard Kreisel, "Me-Du-Siaḥ le-Hitbonnenut: Ha-Transformatzia shel Mahut ha-Tefillah be-Parshanut ha-Filosofit ha-Yehudit be-Provans bi-Yeme ha-Benayim," in *Shefa' Tal: 'Iyunim be-Maḥshevet Yisra'el uve-Tarbut Yisra'el: Mugashim li-Berakhah Zaq*, Ze'ev Gris, Ḥayim Kreisel and Bo'az Hus, eds. (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 2004), pp. 59–83.
97 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* III: 44.

> The commandments comprised in the ninth class are the commandments that we have enumerated in the "Book of Adoration." All of them have manifest reasons and evident causes. I mean that the end of these actions pertaining to divine service is the constant commemoration of God, the love of Him and the fear of Him, the obligatory observance of the commandments in general, and the bringing about of such belief concerning Him, may He be exalted, as is necessary for everyone professing the Law. Those commandments are: prayer, the recital of the *Shema*, the recital of grace after meals, the blessing of the Priests, phylacteries, *mezuzah*, acquiring a Torah scroll and reading it at certain times. All of these are actions that bring about useful opinions. This is clear and manifest and does not require another discourse, for that would be nothing but repetition.

98 Deuteronomy 6: 4ff
99 Exodus 13: 16.
100 BT *Menaḥot* 37a–b.
101 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 257.
102 Proverbs 9: 1. I have failed to locate Ibn Gabirol's interpretation.
103 Job 39: 1.
104 The precise nature of this nonsensory communication is unclear.
105 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, pp. 257–8. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Tefillin*, 4: 25.

> The sanctity of phylacteries is a high degree of sanctity. As long as the phylacteries are on a man's head and arm, he is humble and God-fearing, is not drawn into frivolity and idle talk, does not dwell on evil thoughts but occupies his mind with thoughts of truth and righteousness. A man should therefore endeavor to wear the phylacteries the whole day.

And cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Mezuzah* 6: 13,

> A person should pay heed to the precept of the *mezuzah*; for it is an obligation perpetually binding upon all. Whenever one enters or leaves a home with the *mezuzah* on the doorpost, he will be confronted with the declaration of God's unity, blessed be His holy name; and will remember the love due to

> God, and will be aroused from his slumbers and his foolish absorption in temporal vanities. He will realize that nothing endures for all eternity save the knowledge of the Ruler of the universe. This thought will immediately restore him to his right senses and he will walk in the paths of the righteous.

Cf. also, *Mishneh Torah*, *Mezuzah* 5: 4. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, p. 420–1, calls this interpretation of the phylacteries and *mezuzah* a "teleological-spiritualistic conception" of these commandments.

3 Languedocian Jewish contacts with Christian intellectuals and Christian intellectual trends (1250–1300)

To a historian considering the reception and accommodation of philosophic learning among Jewish scholars in Languedoc in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the question of the parallel reception of much of the same material among Christian scholars presents itself ineluctably. Indeed, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Christian scholars in southern Mediterranean cities like Toledo and Naples were translating many of the same Arabic scientific and philosophic works into Latin that Jewish scholars in Languedoc were translating into Hebrew.[1]

In fact, Jewish scholars seem, not infrequently, to have found work assisting in a Latin translation by providing an intermediate translation of an Arabic original into a Romance vernacular for a Christian translator. For example, the great Jewish philosopher Abraham ibn Daud (d. 1180), having settled in Christian Toledo after being forced to depart from Muslim Cordoba, seems to have collaborated in this fashion, in around 1160 with archdeacon Dominicus Gundissalinus, to translate a section of the philosophical encyclopedia of Avicenna (d. 1037).[2] Other examples of similar Jewish-Christian collaborations in translation from Arabic to Latin are documented in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as well, such as that between the Christian translator Michael Scot and the Jewish translator and exegete Jacob Anatoli at the court of Fredrick II at Naples in the mid-thirteenth century.The multiple collaborative translations from Hebrew into Latin (and from Latin into Hebrew) by Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon[3] and Armengaud Blaise at the turn of the thirteenth century are other important examples.[4] Jacob's description of a new type of astrolabe was translated into Latin with the help of Armengaud, an important physician at the University of Montpellier. The introduction to the Latin version describes the circumstances of the work's translation.

> Thus begins the treatise of Profait of Marseilles [i.e., Jacob ben Makhir] concerning the Quadrant, which he composed for the discovery of whatever might be learned using the Astrolabe—translated from Hebrew into Latin by magister Armengaud Blaise, following [Profait's] oral instruction, in Montpellier, in the year 1299 of the Incarnation of our Lord.[5]

Jacob and Armengaud shared a vernacular language, thus overcoming the difficulty that neither was expert in both Hebrew and Latin. Jacob translated his original Hebrew into some language he held in common with Armengaud—Catalan, Occitan, or Provençal—and Armengaud took that "oral instruction" into Latin.[6] In collaboration, Jacob could describe to Armengaud what he wished to convey and Armengaud could ask Jacob what he meant. Jacob also translated Arnald of Vilanova's *Regimen sanitatis* into Hebrew,[7] perhaps by direct translation, or, more likely, by reversing the above method.[8] These numerous collaborations ran from the mid-twelfth century to the early fourteenth century, notwithstanding, one hastens to add, that Christian scholars performed the great majority of their vast translation of the Greco-Arabic legacy into Latin without any Jewish assistance. Over the course of his career, Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187), the greatest of the Toledan translators, converted over seventy Arabic works into Latin, ranging from mathematics to medicine to Aristotelian philosophy. While Hebrew translators in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were advocates and interpreters of the legacy of Greco-Arabic learning in the Jewish community, in addition to being its Hebrew voice, Latin translators, by contrast, seem largely to have restricted their activity to the production of usable translations of this invaluable corpus of scientific and philosophic knowledge, which they intended to pass on to other Christian scholars for study and interpretation. The latter scholars did not, as a rule, live near the southern Mediterranean centers in which Greco-Arabic learning was translated into Latin. Instead, they were philosophers and theologians who belonged to the faculties of the universities that, in the twelfth century, had grown out of the cathedral schools in cities like Oxford, Bologna, and Paris.

The Jewish and Christian reception: a comparison

The philosophic positions taken in the second half of the thirteenth century by Christian scholars in Paris and Jewish scholars in Languedoc on the substantive issues raised by accommodation to Greco-Arabic philosophic learning do bear significant conceptual similarities and deserve careful comparison on phenomenological grounds. Both the Christian and Jewish contexts possessed new, maverick philosophic voices willing to move audaciously forward with the most controversial implications of Averroes's writings, as well as more moderate thinkers who struggled to integrate deeply held and cherished traditional religious views with the newly arrived philosophic perspectives. In Paris, the most easily identifiable maverick was Siger of Brabant (d. 1283), while the most articulate, moderate, and striving to integrate and bridge the old and the new was Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). In Languedoc, the more radical voices are not as easily pinpointed, but they seem to have been followers in the interpretive path established by Samuel ibn Tibbon of Marseilles, who died around 1232, while the most articulate moderate voice was that of Menahem ha-Meiri of Perpignan, who died

nearly a century later, in 1315. Although he was clearly a fellow traveler of the moderate Meiri, the positions of Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier should perhaps be compared with that of the philosophically conservative Franciscans, who hoped to defend and maintain traditional positions in Paris by using inherited religious views to control philosophic inquiry.

Meiri and Aquinas

Maimonides' treatment of this issue provides essential background for Meiri's teaching. Maimonides recognized numerous obstacles to metaphysical comprehension: the student's material circumstances, innate abilities, and motivation, and the inherent difficulty of the subject matter.[9] He also insisted upon a progression in stages from moral to intellectual perfection.[10] Meiri, however, went much further, insisting that one must be committed to traditional notions *before* setting out upon investigation if one hoped to arrive at a philosophically correct understanding.[11] Without such a prior commitment, wrote Meiri, the "joy" of knowledge would yield to the "pain" of uncertainty.[12] Meiri expressed this view repeatedly, using the verse in Psalm 19 ("The testimony of the Lord is trustworthy") as his vehicle. The following articulation comes from the opening sentences of *Bet ha-Behirah*, Meiri's master work—a clear indication of the importance that Meiri attributed to this idea.

> The "testimony of the Lord," may He be praised, "is trustworthy":[13] It is fitting to believe it without investigations and inquiries. But after the achievement of faith [אמונה], it is fitting to examine its contents philosophically. Through this investigation one acquires the ultimate perfection, by arriving at through speculation those things that were not comprehended by our opponents—by subjecting [their positions] to difficulties and objections, perhaps even more powerful and persuasive. (All the more so, he will achieve, along with this, the perfection of investigation in the other fundamentals also comprehended by our opponents, His existence, may He be praised, His unity, and the absence of all corporeality from Him.) But despite the knowledge of these things, their intellects remain "innocent" and impoverished from [the knowledge of] the area just mentioned. When they understand [the guidance provided by tradition in philosophic matters], they will comprehend completely.[14]

Meiri's claim that religious commitment is, in practice, a prerequisite for correct philosophic reasoning in regard to certain difficult issues thus involved a rather aggressive departure from, or selective reading of, Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed*, which Meiri held as authoritative. In Maimonides' consideration of the world's creation or eternity, for example, he appealed to prophetic tradition. Maimonides argued that Aristotle

himself was aware that he had no decisive proof that the world always existed as it is now and was not created;[15] that there are technical philosophical reasons why it is preferable to assume that the world was created;[16] and that although biblical texts might be reinterpreted in favor of the world's eternity, this view *should be avoided*, as it requires the notion of an inactive God.[17] Judaism could *not* live with such a God, according to Maimonides. Nevertheless, he accepted the possibility of a philosophic demonstration of the world's eternity that, in his understanding, would *require* the existence of such a God. The availability of this startling conclusion for Maimonides—even if only in theory—indicates to degree to which, for him, the philosophic question remained open.[18] Not so for Meiri. Furthermore, in Maimonides' *Guide*, the term translated as "אמונה" by Samuel ibn Tibbon means "holding as true a proposition about the nature of reality": "Belief is . . . the notion that is represented in the soul when it has been averred of it that it is in fact just as it has been represented."[19] Ibn Tibbon's rendering "אמונה" for Maimonides' Arabic might itself be glossed as "belief" or "firm position," but never as "faith." While semantic differences do not prove substantive disagreement, for Meiri "אמונה" has the sense of commitment to a proposition as correct on the basis of Divine authority (and only subsequently subject to philosophic confirmation).

> In my opinion, [the notion that faith is a prerequisite for correct philosophic reasoning], provides the connection between the word "[The decrees of the Lord are] trustworthy," and [the phrase] "making the simple wise."[20] He chose the word "simple," as he wished to signify innocent and impoverished in certain areas until, as it were, a Spirit pours out upon him from above.[21]

Deprived of authoritative revelation, Meiri's disputant—the "simple" man—is in practice incapable of reaching the philosophically correct conclusion.[22] Meiri's view that faith leads to knowledge does bear a rather striking resemblance to the view of the one scholar in Paris who forcefully and consistently brought together the perspectives of the philosophers and the theologians: Thomas Aquinas. In the following passage from his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas characteristically couples that which reason can prove with that which it can only confirm, in a manner that parallels Meiri's likewise characteristic coupling of these same categories. So that for Aquinas, like Meiri, knowledge is perfected by faith.

> It is impossible to attain to the knowledge of the Trinity by natural reason. . . . Reason may be employed in two ways to establish a point: firstly, for the purpose of furnishing sufficient proof of some principle. . . . Reason is employed in another way, not as furnishing a sufficient proof of a principle, but as confirming an already established principle. . . . In the first way we can prove that God is one; and the like. In the

> second way, reasons avail to prove the Trinity. . . . Hence Augustine says that by faith we arrive at knowledge, and not conversely.[23]

In a fashion rather analogous to Meiri's, Aquinas would place the Unity of God in his first category and the creation of world ex nihilo in the second. Aquinas's "confirmation" of an already established principle is analogous conceptually to Meiri's "neutralization of severe difficulties" in regard to the same, although the two should not be identified technically. The "neutralization" of philosophic arguments against a position by "subjecting [the opposing position] to difficulties and objections, perhaps even more powerful and persuasive" has a Maimonidean context that Aquinas's "confirmation" of traditional positions does not share. Nevertheless, the similarities are suggestive. To attempt to establish any connection between Meiri and Aquinas on the basis of specific Latin texts makes little sense, as we have no hint that Meiri had access to them. Indeed, there were, during Meiri's lifetime, Italian Jewish scholars who expounded Aquinas's thought in Hebrew. Hillel of Verona, about twenty years Meiri's senior, is the most prominent. Of course, Meiri may have studied Hillel's Hebrew interpretation of Aquinas, but, once again, there is no evidence of any such acquaintance. This uncertainty notwithstanding, Meiri's known oral colloquy with Christian scholars in Languedoc suggests itself as the most likely conduit to him of Scholastic thinking. Minimally, it is possible that conversations with local Christian scholars started Meiri's thinking along Scholastic lines and that he arrived at similar conclusions without knowing of Aquinas's work. Furthermore, local Christians scholars may have spoken to Meiri about Aquinas's writings specifically. In this fashion, Meiri may have learned of something of Aquinas' thought indirectly, although he could not have read Aquinas on his own. As noted earlier, Meiri acknowledged that his thinking in regard to the concept of repentance in Judaism was stimulated through conversations with a local Christian,[24] and this contact may well have been significant in other areas of his thought. In such circumstances, we should not expect to find precise technical similarities between Jewish and Christian thinkers, but general conceptual resemblances. As this is what we have in fact observed, we may conclude that the environment of Christian Scholasticism, to which Meiri did have several points of access, could easily have supported and reinforced his own ideas.

Jewish allegorical exegesis in a Christian environment rich in allegory

In Judaism, as in Christianity, the allegorical interpretation of Scripture was integral to achieving an accommodation with scientific and philosophic learning. Indeed, the ubiquitous nature of allegorical exegesis, of all types, among both Christians and Jews during the High Middle Ages was conducive to such an accommodation.[25] Allegoresis could solve formidable interpretive

problems, and could make the Bible and the Talmud more intimately relevant to their readers. Meiri, for example, interprets the biblical story of the building of a tower to the heavens—which God and His Court frustrated—as a trope for the builders' arrogant denial of things divine.

> The generation of Babel attempted to build "a tower whose pinnacle reached the heavens." The meaning of this narrative element is not that this generation was able to build "a tower whose pinnacle reached the heavens." Rather, this may be understood figuratively, after the expression, "Great cities, fortified to the heavens,"[26] or after the narrative element of the stairway whose "top was in the heavens" so that "the Lord was standing on it."[27] [The meaning of the tower, on the contrary,] is that this generation could not comprehend things in the heavens and above them. They could not see "the Lord standing [at the top]." Instead, they denied His existence, may He be praised, and the existence of incorporeal intelligences.[28]

For Meiri, the very idea of the existence of a tower, stairway, or fortress that reached the heavens—and God—was absurd. An interpretation of such narrative elements in the Bible must therefore vitiate their "external-literal" meaning. As allegoresis tended to diminish or, as in the above example, negate the surface meaning of the text, it was also fraught with danger. If misapplied, the techniques of allegory might render the foundational practices of the community uncertain or undermine the historicity of its basic narratives. Because of its latent antinomianism, radical philosophic exegesis recalls Christian modes of interpretation. At the turn of the thirteenth century, many Jewish scholars became concerned about the practice of philosophic interpretation of this type among the Jews of Languedoc.[29] In the first decade of the fourteenth century, Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba) of Barcelona described recent Languedocian Jewish philosophic interpretation as more extreme in its misappropriation of the text than Christian allegoresis.[30] In Montpellier, at about the same time, Simeon ben Joseph described the new Jewish interpretation as "Christian" in method.[31] Meiri, as well, considered the exegesis of local Jewish radicals in relation to Christian interpretation.[32] In a reading in '*Avot*, he demonstrates an awareness of the affinities between the two groups of interpreters and condemns the use by Jews of Christian modes of interpretation.

> "If a man discloses meanings of the Law improperly . . . he has no share in the World to Come."[33] That is: he presents himself as if he knows the Secrets of the Torah, and he uncovers them as antinomian meanings. ["He has no share"] because he denies the "apparent" [כגוד] level entirely. He says that this was not God's intention; rather, it is an allegory [לשון] for something else, while the "apparent" meaning is nothing at all. This is one of the roots of heresy, because—although some of the

> Commandments do have a "hidden" [בסחו] meaning—the "apparent" meaning is without doubt the principal intention of the commandment.This matter requires more expansive explanation: The person who holds this belief says that the intention of the Torah is *not* that one should not eat the flesh of swine. Rather, [he says] that the Torah's prohibition of swine flesh is purely allegorical [לשו], meaning that one's character should not be unseemly or dirty. Anyone who says this—if he is one of our nation—is a heretic and has no place in the World to Come.[34]

The inappropriate allegorization of biblical narrative, according to Meiri, might be impious and might even impugn certain fundamental beliefs. A thorough allegorical reading of a commandment, however, presents an even more immediate and tangible concern: it might throw daily practice into disarray. The interaction of allegoresis and reasons for the Commandments (*ta'ame ha-mitzvot*) is therefore a vital context in which to discuss the parameters of interpretation.[35] As an example of antinomian allegory, Meiri chooses a standard Christian interpretation of the prohibition of eating pig—and quietly points to its Christian context. Meiri's argument implies that certain Languedocian Jews did daringly present this prohibition, like Christians, as a moral allegory.[36] He reads the mishnah to say that it is a grave crime to use allegory, as Christians do, to vitiate the apparent sense of the Law.[37]

Christian interpretation of Aggadah

In the second half of the thirteenth century, Christian efforts to convert Jews underwent significant intellectual developments.[38] One of the outstanding features of these developments was the use of Rabbinic literature, the Talmuds, and midrashim as missionizing tools. When Naḥmanides was summoned by King James I of Aragon to a disputation in Barcelona in 1263, Pablo Christiani, the other disputant, was prepared with new interpretations of Rabbinic texts to which Naḥmanides would be forced to respond. In 1278, Raymond Martini completed *Pugio Fidei* [The Dagger of Faith], a monumental compendium dedicated to this type of argumentation. Martini presented the Rabbinic text in the original, translated it into Latin, and provided its interpretation for the missionary.[39] Meiri was aware of the recent Christian interpretation of aggadah and responded to it, although more briefly than did his contemporary, Rashba.[40] In the introduction to *'Avot*, written in 1300,[41] Meiri digresses from the story of Abraham's monotheistic mission with the following explanation: "We have departed from our intended discussion so as to rescue this aggadah from the hand of the mocker, aggrandizer, and plotter, who asserts opposing interpretations of it against us."[42] In his history from Adam to Moses, Meiri connects the onset of Abraham's monotheistic mission with the conclusion of the "Era of Desolation" and the beginning of the "Era of Torah."[43]

> These years [following Adam] are called by our Rabbis, "The Two Millennia of Desolation," as until the coming of Abraham, peace be upon him, there was no one to call in the name of God and send the multitude away from sin. Then began the "Two Millennia of Torah."[44]

This aggadah, however, continues, "[A]nd the next two thousand years is the Messianic Era." Thus, there were two thousand years of desolation between Adam and the mission of Abraham and two thousand years of Torah between Abraham and the Messianic Era.[45] In the Christian interpretation of this aggadah, the Era of Torah ended at the turn of the fourth millennium, in 240 C.E., and the Messiah must have arrived just over one thousand years ago.[46] Meiri rejects this interpretation, but does not reject this aggadah.[47] He assigns the mission of Abraham as the beginning of the Era of Torah, and therefore must explain the end of that era and the onset of the Messianic Era in 240 C.E.

> They called the two millennia following these, "The Days of the Messiah," as this is the period in which the [Jewish] nation should begin to hope for the Days of the Messiah. [The aggadah does not mean] that the Law will disappear in this period. God forbid that His Word be repealed by the annulment of the Law of the Torah, which was given ab initio for eternity, for all the days that Man was placed upon the Earth![48]

To the Christian interpretation, Meiri responds that the beginning of the Messianic Era of this aggadah refers not to the time at which the Messiah *will* arrive, but to the period during which the Messiah *may* arrive. And although the Era of Torah is now complete, the Torah itself is eternally valid. Similar problems are raised by another aggadah that speaks chronologically: "R. Kattina said, 'The world shall exist for six thousand years, and for one thousand it shall be desolate, as it is written, "And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."'"[49] Meiri offers an interpretation of this aggadah, and then negates one that had been proffered by Christians.[50]

> [The aggadah] states that there will be a "Millennium of Desolation." In my view, this refers to one of the previous six millennia, and hints at the great tragedies and confusion which, according to [this] tradition, are promised for the sixth millennium. This does not mean the establishment of a new religion, or the destruction of the world. The world shall continue to exist or be destroyed following the Will of the Ruler.[51]

Around the turn of the fifth millennium, in 1240, with their integration into the Kingdom of France, the Jewish communities of Languedoc experienced Louis IX's attack on usury, the cornerstone of their economic life.[52] Meiri

may have associated his interpretation with these events. However this may be, Meiri was also able to replace the Christian reading of this aggadah with a philosophic allegory.

> According to some commentators, this aggadah contains other allegorical meanings. [According to one] it refers to the seven sciences. (Thus the word "thousand" [אלפים] is used in the sense of, "And I will teach you [ואאלפך] Wisdom."[53]) Thus [the statement] mentions [the sciences] in pairs until the seventh,[54] ["Devastation"], which cannot be comprehended without the negation of everything corporeal.[55] The comparison of intellectual apprehension to destruction is expressed in the Rabbinic statement, "The Torah does not subsist save in one who kills himself in its acquisition."[56] The comparison is expressed, as well, in the statement of the Philosophers, "If one who wishes to revive his soul [after death], let him kill it. If one wishes to kill his soul [after death], let him enjoy life with it."[57]
>
> [According to another allegorical meaning, the aggadah] refers to the years of Man, which are seventy. The term "thousands" was chosen in place of "tens" so as to hide [the intended meaning].[58]

In the first allegory, the "Millennium of Desolation" refers to that science which requires asceticism (and guarantees immortality): Aristotelian metaphysics. In the second allegory, old age, the final decade of man's life, is called the "Millennium of Desolation." Isaac ben Yedayah (d. 1280), in his philosophical aggadah commentary at this point, also tells us that the ancient Rabbis used numbers in the thousands of years in order to conceal their intentions. In fact, R. Isaac, most likely of Narbonne, transposes all passages dealing with the chronology of the Messianic Age to human life.[59] Like R. Isaac, Meiri wished to demonstrate to Christians and Jews that the Messianic chronology of the Talmud had meaning within Jewish tradition.

Universalism invites a spiritual encounter with Christianity

As a thirteenth-century scholar in the Languedocian tradition, Meiri understood Judaism as an instrument that leads the individual Jew and the Jewish community to lofty moral and intellectual goals. Such an understanding of Judaism allowed for— and, in fact, invited—the comparison of Judaism with Christianity, and the consideration of how each religion moved its community of adherents toward their shared spiritual goals. In Meiri's case, one might go so far as to conjecture that the universalistic stance to which he was heir in Languedoc required an openness to consider Judaism's spiritual achievements and deficiencies with learned Christians in Perpignan.In fact, as a young man around 1270, Meiri experienced an encounter with a Christian scholar that spurred him to spiritual self-examination and literary activity; he

viewed his own rationalistic spirituality as the best response to the Christian critique of rabbinic legalism. Meiri relates that his *Treatise on Repentance* is, in part, a response to a local Christian scholar who communicated to him a critique of Jewish spirituality found in Latin writing.

> I felt bestirred to take action when a Gentile scholar spoke to me and, among other things, informed me of their wonderment (in their commentaries) that the members of our religion have entirely abandoned the practice of repentance—do not heed [divinely imposed] suffering, stand aghast at [their] ill fate,[60] or incise the flesh of their hearts.[61] [He told me that] they discuss this at length, and that they especially disparage our practice of confession [directly to God] as our people's "transgression is forgiven [in an essentially private manner], while its sin is covered over" [without the knowledge and absolution of a priest].[62][The gentile scholars] have concluded among themselves that we are in such dire circumstances on account of the fact that—with the exception of discussions here and there in scattered places—we possess no single comprehensive work treating all the practices of repentance. From this fact they deduce the absence of [genuine] penitential practice among us and attribute to us the un-repented sins of youth.
>
> Therefore, I have intended to clarify the subject of repentance, its requirements, conditions, general principles and details. . . .[63]

His *Treatise on Repentance* is a volume of philosophic interpretation of religious observances intended to infuse spiritual moment into practices related to repentance. In response to learning of this Christian challenge, Meiri elaborated his own philosophically inspired spirituality. His acknowledgment that Christian critique encouraged him to write the treatise points to the connection for him, both polemically and personally, between interaction with Christians and the quest for spirituality. For Meiri, rationalistic interpretation was the answer to the problem of spirituality in Judaism focused upon by Christian critique.[64] As Meiri reported his encounter as one of bafflement on the part of the Christian scholar, who was unlikely to have been a stranger, one imagines that Meiri shared with him some of what he would later write in the treatise. Not long after his encounter with this Christian scholar, Meiri went on to develop an understanding of Christianity as a religiously significant moral and theological teaching that guides conduct and belief in a fashion comparable to Judaism. Indeed, as will be shown in this discussion of his views on Christianity in Talmudic law,[65] such profoundly universalistic understanding of the human condition is already in evidence in his *Treatise on Repentance*.

A sense of a fragile and abused community

Let not the reader imagine that Meiri's unusual openness to genuine dialogue with Christians bespoke a lived experience in Languedoc entirely at odds with that of Jews elsewhere in Christendom. It did not. Meiri used Psalms, with seemingly little restraint, to express the negative aspects of his experience of living within Christendom. In Psalms, he found vivid descriptions of the Jewish community's suffering in Exile.[66] In his introduction to Psalm 35, he explains,

> Certain commentators wrote that this psalm too refers to David's flight from Saul, but, to me, it seems fitting to interpret with reference to this prolonged Exile. The flow and connection of the verses nonetheless works nicely with either interpretation; in accordance with the desire of the interpreter.[67]

In his introduction to Psalm 22, Meiri addresses his reader, "You may carry out the close interpretation of this psalm with reference to any subject you wish; but as a whole, it reads most nicely with reference to the details of this Exile."[68] In this psalm, Meiri compares his community to the prey of lions, huddling in their homes, overwhelmed with fear and unable to escape the lions (Christians) who stalk them.

> "Dogs surround me, a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions [they encircle] my hands and feet." Just as the lion causes dread, [raising its] tail, making a circle. All the animals that see the circle do not emerge from their hiding places—out of awe and fear of the lion—but draw in their hands and feet. And from the circle the lion seizes its prey. So too are we within the lion's circle, unable to exit, but wringing our hands and feet in fear of him.[69]

Meiri focuses upon the image of the victim's hands and feet. He explains that the ravenous Christian oppressors ("a pack of evil ones") may be compared to circling lions that send their prey helplessly into hiding, their "hands and feet" cringing. Meiri's psalmist continues: Jews express the most profound sympathy for the sorrows of their Christian neighbors. These neighbors, however, observe Jewish suffering with pleasure.

> "When I stumble, they gather gleefully." That is, although we mourn for them "as one mourning for his mother," they rejoice in our pain and distress, and gather to see it. "Wretches gather against me." To me, it seems fitting to interpret: Even those gentiles who have become wretched in their own suffering and illness, gleefully gather to see our suffering, and forget theirs on account of ours. "I know not why." That is: I know not why they hate us so. Or, the text may be read, "I did not notice." That

> is: out of their great joy, they came so suddenly that I almost did not sense their arrival. "They limp, but are not silent." . . . In my opinion, this phrase continues the thought expressed in our explanation of the "wretches." That is: those gentiles who are in such great distress that they limp, nevertheless—when they see our suffering—make great their mocking as if chance or punishment had not come upon them.[70]

The alacrity and intensity of Christian hatred is difficult for Meiri's psalmist to comprehend. In Meiri's interpretation, joyfulness at Jewish humiliation overcomes even the lowliest and most miserable Christians. Seeking the intervention of local Christian rulers in response to the harassment is consistently ineffective.

> "I take count of all my bones [עצמותי]." Some interpret: [I recount all] my pleas [עצומותי].[71] That is, I relate all of my pleas and complaints to the their rulers, [reporting how] they have disgraced me. "They [the rulers] look on and gloat [יראו בי]"—following the usage, "Do not stare [אל תראוני] at me because I am swarthy"[72]—that is, they never rebuke [their subjects].[73]

By reading the word "bones" as "pleas," Meiri finds in this verse an expression of despair at the frequent indifference of local Christian rulers to his community's appeals for intervention. In Meiri's interpretation, the rulers, like the masses, take pleasure in viewing the Jews' humiliation and stand by, gloating. But the Jews' humiliation and subjugation do not satisfy the rulers.

> "They divide our clothing among themselves." That is, they continually plunder our wealth, even our clothing. "For our garments, they cast lots." That is, so that they might distribute [our garments] among them, [saying,] "[T]his is for me, that is for you."[74]

In Meiri's view, Christians thoroughly denude the Jews of their wealth; indeed, of their very clothing. According to Meiri's psalmist, the rulers accuse Jews of wrongdoing to which they are unconnected, and plot to convict them even of capital crimes. Despite this abuse, Jews sincerely pray for their rulers' welfare and fast for their victory in battle.

> "Malicious witnesses appear who question me about things I do not know." They oppress us on account of things which we have no knowledge. We, on the other hand, pray for their well-being; as is required of us in the statement of the Rabbis, "Pray for the welfare of the government."[75] "When they were ill, my dress was sackcloth, I kept a fast." That is, at the time of their conflicts and wars, we fast on their behalf. They, on the other hand, manufacture pretexts against us, and even find us guilty of capital crimes. Therefore, "May my prayer return to my bosom." That

> is, our prayers were pure and sincere, unlike their plotting. Would that our prayers for them would return to our bosom![76]

On account of this severe mistreatment, Meiri's psalmist begs that the community's earnest prayers to God on behalf of the rulers be annulled.Perhaps even more indicative of Meiri's experience of a profound social divide between Christians and Jews in Languedoc, much like that experienced by Jews elsewhere in the thirteenth-century Europe, was his personal aversion to Christians. Once again, Meiri expresses his strong feelings as an interpretation of a verse in Psalms. On this occasion, it is the verse, "The fear of the Lord is pure, abiding forever."[77] Meiri glosses "The fear of the Lord" as that category of commandment whose reasons are not known to most men, and therefore generally observed out of fear alone.

> This [verse] refers to that portion of the Commandments whose reasons are not clear, like [the prohibition against] the consumption of pork, and [against] the wearing of *sh'atnez*, and [other commandments] similar to these. These commandments are fulfilled on the basis of fear, as one fulfilling the decree of a king, without any assistance from reason—save for exceptional individuals to whom the reasons for the commandments have been revealed.[78]

Christians often attack Jews, Meiri states, for their literal observance of these seemingly irrational commandments that Christians interpret allegorically. He explains that these commandments—designated "The fear of the Lord"—are said to be "pure" because they free one from the "filthy" habits of idolaters.

> [The Psalmist] refers to the subject matter [of this category] as "pure." That is to say, that although its intention is hidden [from most men], it purifies the soul from all disease, and prevents it from being drawn after the practices of those made filthy by [the worship of] idols, and their loathsome habits. As [the Torah] said, "[Do not follow after] the practices of the land of Egypt [where you dwelt] or the practices of the land of Canaan . . .,"[79] and, "So let not the land vomit you out . . .."[80]

Meiri notes that the precise manner in which abstention from pork (and the like) "purifies the soul" is not apparent or generally known.[81] One may nevertheless confirm, he points out, that consistent vigilance in these prohibitions makes one pure by considering those who do not refrain: one's Christian neighbors.

> Even though one who holds fast to [these commandments] does not understand their cause and function, nevertheless, with continual [observance] of their details, he finds himself free of all impurity. One can

> discern this by recognizing the disease and the filth found in others. For this reason, [the purifying fear of the Lord] "abides forever."[82]

Christians have retained certain idolatrous habits, Meiri says; one does not know why these should make any difference, but one can see their effects. Thus, in Meiri's interpretation, the reasons for the Torah's prohibitions are unclear, but their benefits are quite clear; this usefulness gives them eternal validity. The commandments called "the fear of the Lord" make "pure" and therefore "abide forever."[83]As we have seen above, Meiri was concerned about the presence of antinomian allegory in Jewish interpretation, as it might undermine observance of the Commandments. Meiri made clear through his interpretation of the verse "The fear of the Lord is pure, abiding forever" that, in his view, Christian "disease and filth" gave sufficient support for the continued observance of these vulnerable and problematic prohibitions by European Jews. Given Meiri's deep anguish at Christian persecution and quiet disgust at Christian life, his unusual receptivity to Christian critique of Jewish religious life is remarkable.In Languedoc, during the second half of the thirteenth century, Jewish–Christian intellectual contact included instances of collaboration in scientific study and translation, as well as the discussion of shared spiritual goals. Intriguingly, Jews in Languedoc and Christians in Paris were involved, in rough parallel, in the complex process of incorporation of the classical tradition of science and philosophy into their separate curricula. This shared process, however, is geographically distinct. While phenomenological comparison between the Christian and Jewish developments in the history of Western thought ought to be pursued, there is no basis to consider any actual contact or interaction regarding similar discussions that unfolded in Christian Paris and Jewish Languedoc within decades of each other. With the pursuit of allegory widespread among western Christians in the thirteenth century, Languedocian Jewish concern mounted over the appropriate use of allegory in its own exegetical practice. In the second half of the thirteenth century, the Christian use of aggadah for polemical purposes emerged prominently in Catalonia, and Jewish efforts to respond effectively to this innovative use of rabbinic literature are found there as well as in Languedoc. Deep anguish at Christian persecution and quiet disgust at Christian life are, of course, by no means unique to the Jews of Languedoc, but are found virtually throughout the Jews of Europe in the thirteenth century. Languedocian Jews nevertheless distinguished themselves during this period in the incorporation of philosophic perspectives into their halakhic literature, the topic to which we now turn.

Notes

1 See D. Lindberg, "The Transmission of Greek and Arabic Learning to the West," in David C. Lindberg, ed., *Science in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 52–90.

2 Charles Burnett. "The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century," *Science in Context* 14 (2001): 249–88.

3 "והוא אצלנו מן הנודעים בחייהם במעלה וחסידות ויראת חטא." (see Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kauffman [Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884], p. 153–4). Judah ibn Tibbon tells proudly of the honor bestowed upon himself by the presence of Christian nobles and clergymen at his son Samuel's wedding. See Judah ibn Tibbon, "A Father's Admonition," in Israel Abrahams, ed., *Jewish Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1926), I: 66–7. Thus, the unusual evidence of cordial relations with Christians extends in the Tibbon family from Judah (in the mid-twelfth century), through his granddaughter's husband, Jacob Anatoli, to his great-grandson Jacob ben Makhir (at the turn of the thirteenth century).

4 See Joseph Shatzmiller, "Contacts et Échanges entre Savants Juifs et Chrétiens a Montpellier vers 1300," *Juifs et Judaïsme de Languedoc*, Marie–Humbert Vicare and Bernhard Blumenkranz, eds. (Toulouse, France: Edouard Privat, 1977), pp. 337–44; and Shatzmiller, "In Search of the 'Book of Figures': Medicine and Astrology in Montpellier at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century," *AJSreview* 7–8 (1982–1983): 383–407.

5 "Incipit tractatus Profacag, de Marsilia, supra quadrantem, quem composuit ad inveniendum quicquid per astrolabium inveniri potest, translatus ab hebreo in latinum a magistro Hermegando Blasii, secundum vocem ejusdem, apud Montem Pesulanum, anno incarnationis Domini 1299" (Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. [Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877], 27: 607–11). Although his locution may be formal only, Jacob seems to refer (in the introduction to a book of astronomical tables) to Christian scholars as his friends:

> Ideo ego Prophatius Judeus, de Monte Pessulano, primo ad honorem Dei et gloriam, et ad amicorum meorum et generaliter ad omnium utilitatem, sequendo radices de tabulis tholetanis acceptas, de novo edidi has tabulas, sumentes sue computationis exordium ab anno christianorum 1300, a prima die martii.

The corresponding passage in the Hebrew version reads,

> "לכן טרחתי לכבוד למחלים פני לשבר הלוחות הם ולעשות חדשות ולהיות התחלתם אחר אלף שלוש מאות להגשמה."

Jacob's book interested Christians enough to merit a second version by Pierre de Saint-Omer, the Chancellor of Notre-Dame, Paris. See Renan, Les Rabbins français, pp. 616–19.

6 Bernard Gordon, another prominent Montpellier physician, asked Jacob to execute a concentric map of the celestial sphere. See Luke E. Demaitre, *Doctor Bernard de Gordon: Professor and Practitioner* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), p. 10. That the *De remediis* of Armengaud—at the time, physician to James II of Aragon—was translated into Hebrew in Barcelona in 1306, just after the Jews' expulsion from royal France, is very likely a result of his associations in Montpellier. See Ernest Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893), 31: 361–62. Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle," pp. 404–5, makes clear that Armengaud's translator, Estori ha-Parḥi (d. 1355), was a Montpellier refugee and a relative of Jacob ben Makhir's. Ha-Parḥi eventually settled in Palestine and wrote *Kaftor va-Feraḥ*, the first topographical work on the Holy Land.

7 MS Escorial G-III-20 is the translation of Crescas Caslari in 1322. According to Caslari's introduction, Ibn Tibbon was unable to finish his translation and his

work was lost in the expulsion of 1306. Caslari did not elaborate on the manner in which these translations were accomplished. See Shatzmiller, "In Search of the 'Book of Figures,'" p. 388, n. 19. Arnald of Vilanova's *Treatise on Paralysis* was translated into Hebrew by Jacob ha-Levi ben Joseph of Alés. See Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), pp. 780, 801; Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français," pp. 655–66.

8 Before the fifteenth century, very few Jews seem to have made direct use of Latin sources. See, for example, Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 215–16. The late Professor Shlomo Pines, however, has distinguished certain similarities between Hebrew and Latin authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that point to isolated familiarity with certain highly technical Christian philosophic innovations. See Pines, "Scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and the Teachings of Hasdai Crescas and his Predecessors," trans. Alfred Ivry, *Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings* 1, no. 10 (1967); in Hebrew in *Proceedings of the International Israel Academy of Sciences* 11 (1965): 1–73.

9 See Moses Maimonides. *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I: 34.

10 See *Guide* III: 51, 54.

11 According to H. A. Wolfson, "The Double Faith Theory in Saadia, Averroes, and St. Thomas," *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and G. H. Williams (Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 1973), p. 597: "Arabic Jewish philosophy started with Saadia's double faith theory, then developed, in Ha-Levi, a single faith theory of the authoritarian type, and ended up with Maimonides' single faith theory of the rationalist type." Meiri's faith theory, within this scheme, is not double in the same sense as Saadyah's. For Saadyah there is *a demonstration* for the Creation, but access to it is limited by contingent factors like intelligence and resources. For Meiri there is *a neutralization of difficulties* against the Creation, but access to it is basically contingent upon the guidance of faith.

12 Menaḥem ben Solomon ha-Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), p. 12. Cf. Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, ed. M. M. Meshi-Zahav (Jerusalem: Otzar ha-Posqim, 1968), introduction, pp. 2–3: "[Our philosophic disputants] frighten us with their arguments, and terrify us with their logical syllogisms—המפחדים אותנו בראייותיהם והמבהילים דעתינו במופתיהם"; and the formulation of Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim:

> משמחי לב, כי בשקר לא ינוח לב האדם, ולא ישקוט מרוב המבוכות והספקות המתחדשות בו תמיד." "[The precepts of the Lord are clear,] rejoicing the heart" (Psalms 19: 9). [This is the case] because everything that is true is clear without proof. "Rejoicing the heart" because falsehood gives no rest to man's heart, and on account of the multitude of perplexities and difficulties that arise in it continually, it does not remain quiet. But once it reaches the territory of truth, man's heart rests and rejoices. The heart, it should be clear, refers to the intellect.

(Reuven ben Ḥayyim, "Sefer ha-Tamid," ed. Y. M. Toledano, '*Otzar ha-Ḥayyim* 11 [1935], p. 10). "Falsehood" in this context appears to be the lack of a reliable tradition in regard to certain troubling intellectual matters. If this is correct, Reuven's words become much more intelligible when juxtaposed to those of his student Menaḥem.

13 Psalms 19: 8.

14 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 8. The term "אמונה" in the above pas-

sage has a sense of religious faith hardly found in Maimonides' writing. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, the term translated as "אמונה" by Samuel ibn Tibbon means "holding as true a proposition about the nature of reality": "Belief is . . . the notion that is represented in the soul when it has been averred of it that it is in fact just as it has been represented" (Maimonides, *Guide* I: 50). In this passage from *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, on the other hand, the term "אמונה" has the sense of commitment to a proposition as correct on the basis of divine authority (and only subsequently subject to philosophic confirmation).

15 See Maimonides, *Guide* II: 15.
16 Ibid., II: 24.
17 Ibid., II: 25.
18 Maimonides did, indeed, argue that Aristotle himself had no decisive proof that the world always existed as it is now (ibid., II: 15); that there are technical philosophical reasons why it is preferable to assume that the world was created (ibid., II: 24); and that the view that the world is eternal *should be avoided*—although biblical texts might be reinterpreted in its favor—as it requires the notion of an inactive God (ibid., II: 25). Judaism could *not* live with such a God, according to Maimonides. Nevertheless Maimonides accepted the possibility of a philosophic demonstration of the world's eternity that, in his view, would *require* such a God's existence. The possibility of this startling conclusion for Maimonides—even if only in theory—suggests that, for him, the issue was open to philosophic demonstration.
19 Ibid., I: 50, p. 111. But, cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Yesode ha-Torah* 8: 1.
20 Psalms 19: 8. Since they are trustworthy, they make the simple wise.
21 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 8. Cf. Reuven ben Ḥayyim: "'The testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the simple wise.' ['The testimony of the Lord'] is true because God gave it, and God is truth and all His words are truth. The evidence to its truth is that it 'makes the simple wise' (because truth makes one wise, not falsehood). 'The simple one' is he who is empty of Wisdom חכמה]] on account of the magnitude of his desires' enticement." ("Sefer ha-Tamid," p. 10). Reuven's interpretation seems to differ from Meiri's.
22 Nevertheless, "אמונה" for Meiri does not transcend reason, as it did for other Jewish thinkers; for example, Jacob ben Sheshet (mid-thirteenth century), Todros ben Joseph Abulafia (d. 1298).
23 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I: 32: 1, reply to objection 2. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1978), pp. 284–93.
24 Meiri reports a conversation with a certain Christian scholar, unnamed, that led him to recognize the need within the Jewish community for his *Treatise on Repentance* (see Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. Abraham Schreiber [New York: Hotsa'at Talpiyot, 1950], p. 2).
25 See Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York, NY: Harper 1958); Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–1963), 2: 2: 7–40; M.-D. Chenu, "The Symbolist Mentality," in Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed. and trans. by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 99–145; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).
26 Deuteronomy 1: 28.
27 Genesis 28: 12–13.
28 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet 'Avot*, ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1995), 3: 11 (p. 132). This interpretation is also

found in Meiri, *Hibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 256; Meiri is indebted to Samuel ibn Tibbon (*Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim*, ed. Mordecai Loeb Bisliches [Presburg: Hungary: Anton Edlen von Schmid, 1837], p. 145) for this interpretation.

29 See Isaak Heinemann, "Die Wissenschaftliche Allegoristik des Jüdischen Mittelalters," *HUCA* 23 (1951): 637–43. (Translated as "Scientific Allegorization during the Jewish Middle Ages," in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Alfred Jospe [Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1981], pp. 247–69.)

30 See Abba Mari ben Joseph of Lunel, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990),

> "וקשה גזרתו של זה וחבריו מגזרת הגוים, אם הגוים חולקים ומפרשים כדעתם שנים ושלשה מקראות, וזה וחבריו לא ישאירו בתורה אפילו אות" (ע' 381).
> "ולא טוב לשמוע מן הנכרים שמפרשים קצת המצות למשל, מלפרש כפירוש אלה המתעבים משפט" (ע' 382–83). "אנא התערור וכלה לכלות מקרב הארץ כל טוען טועה ועורר. כי עוד לא נתבטלו כל המעוררים להציל מידי האנשים המתנכרים יותר מן הנכרים". (ע' 4–383)

31 See Simeon ben Joseph, "Hoshen Mishpat," p. 151, bottom. "ידעת גבירנו ידעת, רבים הרימו במרום קולם, דורשים באגדות של דפי יטו לארץ מנלם, מתארי התורה ומצותיה כמשפטי הנכרים באו שערים."

32 Like Rashba (*Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 412), Abba Mari (*Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 443)—and Levi ben Ḥayyim (below, p. 139)—Meiri uses a loan translation of the Latin term *figurae* [צירים] to describe the illicit interpretation (Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 166).

33 "*Megaleh fanim ba-torah she-lo kha-halakhah* . . . ['*en lo ḥeleq ba'olam ha-ba*]" (Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot* 3: 11; in other editions, 3: 15).

34 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin (Cleveland, Ohio: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1995), 3: 11, pp. 127–29. In response to a parallel Mishnaic passage, Meiri briefly restates this interpretation. See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah ha-shalem 'al Masekhet Sanhedrin*, ed. Yitzḥaq Ralbag (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1971), 11: 1.

35 Meiri's conservative position concerning "reasons for the Commandments" rigorously follows the lines established by Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. See *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Hilkhot Me'ilah* 8: 8; and Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 407–8; Twersky, "Birur be-Divre ha-Rambam Hilkhot Me'ilah Pereq 8, Halakhah 8—le-Farashat Ta'ame ha-Mitzvot le-Rambam," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period, Presented to Professor Jacob Katz on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I. Etkes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), pp. 24–33. Meiri argues that one should never publicize one's personal understanding of a commandment's reason or consider oneself to have discovered its divine intention, as this may lead to the replacement of the commandment with the antinomian pursuit of its alleged goal. See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, 3: 11, pp. 134–35.

36 The Barcelona excommunications claimed that the Languedocian radicals questioned the literal nature of the prohibition to eat swine. See Abba Mari, ed. and compl., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 721, 735. On this issue, see the valid critique of Halbertal by Ḥannah Kasher, "Divre ha-Meiri 'al Parshanut ha-Nortzrit ha-'Alegorit le-'Isur 'Akhilat Ḥazir," *Zion* 69 (2004): 357–60.

37 For the prohibition of swine flesh as moral allegory, see, for example, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I–IIae, Q.102, A.6, ad 1: "The figurative reason for these things is that all these animals signified certain sins, in token of which those animals were prohibited. Hence Augustine says (*Contra Faustum* vi. 7): 'If the swine and lamb be called in question, both are clean by nature, because all God's creatures are good: yet the lamb is clean, and the pig is unclean in a certain signification.' . . .

The animal that chews the cud and has a divided hoof, is *clean in signification*. Because the division of the hoof is a figure of the two Testaments: or the Father and the Son: or of the two natures of Christ: or of the distinction of good and evil. While chewing the cud signifies meditation on the Scriptures and a sound understanding thereof; and *whoever lacks either of these is spiritually unclean. . . .*" My emphasis.

38 See Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*: *The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), and Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

39 In addition to Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 129–54; and Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, pp. 115–36; see Reuven Bonfils, "The Image of Judaism in Raymond Martini's *Pugio Fidei*," *Tarbiz* 40 (1971): 360–75. On the value of the *Pugio* for scholarship in Rabbinics, see Saul Lieberman, *Shqi'in* (Jerusalem: Bamberger et Wahrman, 1939). For an index of Rabbinic citations, see Chen Merchavia, "*Pugio Fidei*: Mafteaḥ Muva'otav," in *Galut 'Aḥar Golah*: *Meḥqarim be-toldot Yisra'el Mugashim le-Hayyim Beinart li-Melot lo Shiv'im Shanah*, eds. Aharon Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Zvi, 1988), pp. 203–34.

40 See Solomon ibn Adret, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), 1: 1: 201–12 (*Siman* 37: 7–9); and, in addition to Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 155–63, and Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, pp. 137–58, see Cohen, "The Christian Adversary of Solomon ben Adret," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 71 (1980–1981): 48–55.

41 See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet 'Avot*" [in Hebrew] ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1991), p. 10. This volume is entitled *Seder ha-Qabbalah le-Rabbenu Menaḥem ha-Meiri*, *hi ha-Petiḥah le-Ferusho le-Masekhet* '*Avot*, but hereafter will be referenced as "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah, 'Avot.*"

42 Ibid., p. 22.

43 "Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches, 'The world is to exist for six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; for two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic Era.'" (BT *Sanhedrin* 97a, BT '*Avodah Zarah* 9a).

44 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet 'Avot"*, p. 20.

45 For the chronological issues surrounding Abraham's mission, see ibid., p. 19.

46 See Raymond Martini, *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* (Leipzig: Friderici Lanckisi and Johannis Wittegau, 1687), pp. 395–6: "Cum duratio sex millium sit annorum; et horum duo milla ultimi debuerint esse dies Messiae, ut in bis praemissa traditione per Eliam, et domum suam, id est per discipulos suos, traditum est poteris: mundus vero jam plusquam quinque millia duraverit, *ut per Judaicum computum palam est, Messiam jam venisse plus sunt quam mille anni consequens est*. Porro cum nullus adhuc venerit cui dicta per Prophetas de Messia conveniant nisi Dominus noster Jesus Christus; ipsum esse Messiam manifestum est. . . ." Emphasis mine.

47 On Naḥmanides' demurral from certain *aggadot*, see Bernard Septimus, "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Naḥmanides and the Andalusian Tradition," in *Rabbi Moses Naḥmanides (Ramban) Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 17–23.

48 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*," p. 20.

49 BT *Sanhedrin* 97a, BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a (cf. Isaiah 2: 11).

50 See Martini, *Pugio Fidei*, pp. 420, 878: "Animadverte, Lector, quod isti Judaeorum sapientes, quia non probant, quod dicunt, per ea, quae inducunt, insipientes fiunt:

nulla enim ratione cogente sequitur, quod mundus per mille annos sit destructus, quando 'Deus solus fuerit exaltatus'. . . ."

51 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction to '*Avot*," p. 20–1.
52 See Robert Chazan, "A Jewish Plaint to Saint Louis," *HUCA* 45 (1976): 287–305.
53 Job 33: 33.
54 I.e. metaphysics.
55 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*," p. 21.
56 BT *Berakhot* 63b.
57 In BT *Tamid* 32a, this statement is quoted as a response of the Elders of the Negev to Alexander the Great. For the suggestion that Meiri intends here to cite *Musare ha-Filosofim*, see Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*," p. 2.
58 Ibid., pp. 21–2.
59 See Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 114.
60 Cf. Psalms 107: 26.
61 Cf. Leviticus 21: 5.
62 Cf. BT *Yoma* 86b: "It is written, 'Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, while his sin is covered over' (Psalms 32: 1); and it is also written 'He that covereth his transgression shall not prosper' (Proverbs 28: 13). There is no difficulty: one verse speaks of sins that are not known [to the public], the other verse of sins that have become known." According to this Talmudic statement, only those sins that have become known ought to be confessed publicly.
63 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 2.
64 Cf. Isadore Twersky, "Religion and Law," in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S. D. Goitein (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974), pp. 69–82; Twersky, "Talmudists, Philosophers, and Kabbalists," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. Cooperman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 431–59; Twerksy, "Law and Spirituality in the Seventeenth Century," in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Twersky and B. Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 447-67; and Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), pp. 28ff.
65 See, below, pp. 85–93.
66 See, for example, Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, Psalm 22, 35, 121, 123.
67 Ibid. Psalm 35 (p. 75).
68 Ibid. Psalm 22 (p. 52).
69 Ibid. Psalm 22: 17 (p. 53).
70 Ibid. Psalm 35: 15 (p. 77).
71 Cf. Isaiah 41: 21.
72 Song of Songs 1: 6.
73 Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, Psalm 22: 18 (p. 53). The text continues, "Others interpret '[עצמותי] bones' literally, and take 'I recount [אֲסַפֵּר]' in the sense of "I count [אספור]." That is, I am dejected in Exile to the extent that I can count all my bones, one by one, and the enemy just gloats at my dejection and mocks me."
74 Ibid. 22: 19 (p. 53).
75 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot* 3: 2.
76 Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, Psalm 35: 11–3 (p. 76). Meiri concludes, "If, however [these verses] indeed refer to David's enemies—following my first interpretation—perhaps certain details which happened to him resemble the events of our times."
77 Psalms 19: 10.
78 Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, Psalm 19: 10. For the issue of "reason for the Commandments" in Meiri, see above, esp. note.
79 Leviticus 18: 3.
80 Ibid. 18: 28. Cf. Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 53, "It has already been explained that these [prohibitions against involvement with gentiles] were said in

reference to those times in which there were idolatrous nations, who were made filthy in their practices and loathsome in their habits. Similar to the matter where it is said, 'Do not follow after the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt or the practices of the land of Canaan. . . .'"

81 Meiri, however, probably knew Maimonides' view, as expressed in *Guide* III: 48: "I say, then, that to eat any of the various kinds of food that the Law has forbidden us is blameworthy. Among all those forbidden to us, only pork and animal-fat [חלב] may be imagined not to be harmful. But this is not so, for pork is more humid than is proper and contains much superfluous matter. The major reason why the Law abhors it is its being very dirty and feeding on dirty things. You know to what extent the Law insists upon the need to remove filth out of sight, even in the field and in a military camp (Deut. 23: 13–15) and all the more within cities. Now if swine were used for food, market places and even houses would have been dirtier than latrines, as may be seen at present in the land of the Franks [i.e., western Europe]. You know the dictum [of the Sages], may their memory be blessed, 'The mouth of a swine is like walking excrement (*Berakhot* 25a).'"

82 Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, Psalm, 19: 10.

83 Meiri's subdued defense of the seemingly irrational commandments from Christian mockery should be contrasted to David Kimḥi's use of the same verse in Psalms for his own vituperative attack on Christian allegorical interpretation. David Kimḥi, *Ha-Perush ha-Shalem 'al Tehillim*, ed. Abraham Darom (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1967), Psalm 19: 10. On this passage, see Frank Talmage, "R. David Kimḥi as Polemicist," *HUCA* 38 (1967): 213–35. Meiri regularly cites David Kimḥi's *Psalms Commentary*, often with the anonymous incipit "There are those who explain." Thus, it seems clear that Meiri wrote his *Psalms Commentary* with Kimḥi's commentary before him. See Yehudah Fries-Horev, "He'arot le-Ferush ha-Meiri 'al Tehillim," *Qiryat Sefer* 14 (1937): 16–20; and Joseph Stein, "Zu Meiris Psalmenkommentar," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 82 (1938): 46–56. In contrast to Kimḥi, Meiri does not react at this point in an overtly polemical fashion; Christian "disease and filth" gives sufficient support to the commandments' continued relevance.

4 Meiri's transformation of Talmud study

Philosophic spirituality in a Halakhic key

Jews first settled in Perpignan in the last years of the twelfth century,[1] probably from the ancient Jewish communities of Carcassonne and Narbonne.[2] A Jewish quarter, the "Call,"[3] was set aside in Perpignan in 1243; from 1251, Jews were compelled to live there. Until 1314, when the wearing of a badge was imposed, Jews wore a cape as a distinctive garment. There were perhaps a hundred Jewish families in Perpignan in 1290—probably less than a thousand people, or about 5 per cent of the estimated total of twenty thousand.[4] Jews in Perpignan worked as bookbinders, tailors, goldsmiths, and dyers of textiles. They also owned land and houses and collected rent.[5] But in the 1270s and 1280s, the Jewish community existed mainly by moneylending, and it seems that they prospered in this occupation. While the average laborer in the larger Christian community at the time may have earned 100*s* (solidi) per annum,[6] the average Jewish household with a single principal wage earner may have earned 1200*s* for the same period.[7] Capital was required to fuel the economic growth that Perpignan was then experiencing; Jews moved there from other Languedocian cities to enjoy the increased lending opportunities.[8] In 1275, James I of Aragon ordered his representatives in Perpignan to fine heavily any Christian layman who tried to avoid payment to a Jew on the basis of Canon law, which prohibited usury by both Christians and Jews.[9] Under James's decree, a cleric who turned to an ecclesiastical court was not to receive the secular assistance necessary to enforce that court's decision. Like many medieval rulers, James himself was dependent upon Jewish tax revenues, and he repeatedly enforced the repayment of debts held by Jews, including those of compounded interest. Jews also made many loans to villagers outside the city.[10]

"Vital Salamon Mayr"—presumably Don Vidal Solomon ha-Meiri—was himself an active moneylender, whose name appears thirty-eight times in the Perpignan notarial registers.[11] Of Meiri's twenty-five recorded loans, five were for more than 100*s*, while the largest was for 450*s*. Other Perpignan Jews are recorded to have lent much larger sums, but single loans exceeding the annual income of a worker cannot be described as small. Bernardus de Ulmis, a knight who is known to have been heavily in debt, borrowed from Meiri.[12] This picture of Meiri's financial activity is based

upon a study of the seventeen notarial registers (1261–1287) that survive from Perpignan for the period.[13] There is no mentioning of whether this information is representative of this period or other periods in Meiri's life; the surviving records seem to indicate that, for his time and place, Meiri earned a good living.

The corpus that Meiri has left us is vast and diverse, covering most of the genres that were available to a Hebrew author of the thirteenth century.[14] *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, his grand compilation analyzing the Talmudic interpretation of his predecessors and concluding with practical legal decisions, stands out in size and importance among all his work.[15] The rabbinic genre that combines Talmudic interpretation with practical decision is found in Andalusia with Joseph ibn Migash, d. 1141,[16] and in Languedoc as early as Rabad of Posquières, d. 1197.[17] As type of rabbinic literature, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* is therefore hardly the first of its kind.[18] In fact, ha-Meiri's prominent twelfth-century predecessors in this genre likely exceeded him in originality and depth of interpretation. *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, nevertheless, constitutes a masterful literary innovation: its lucid reformulation of the major interpretive issues of the *suggyah*, its systematic exposition of the Talmudic text, and its simplification of Talmudic terminology are some of the features that earn it a unique place in the history of medieval Talmud commentary. *Bet ha-Beḥirah* is a self-consciously Languedocian work,[19] rooted in its regional traditions, but it is more cosmopolitan than many of its Languedocian predecessors. From its pages, one gets a sense of the full range of European Talmudic activity over the centuries in Andalusia, Castile, and Catalonia, northern France, and Germany, as well as Languedoc. Languedoc was at a cultural crossroads and Meiri took full advantage of its position.[20]

In *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, Meiri strove to move away from the protracted harmonization and unabridged analysis characteristic of *Ḥiddushim* and to proceed instead toward a discussion of what was essential for reaching a practical decision on a variety of matters. Meiri's own *Ḥiddushim* (of which only the smallest portions survive)[21] may therefore have been preparatory to *Bet ha-Beḥirah.* Certainly, the unabbreviated investigation found in his *Ḥiddushim* would have been necessary to bring forth *Bet ha-Beḥirah*'s lucid and systematized presentations.[22] Thus, his successful departure from the conventions of the commentary style of Jewish legal writing is Meiri's signature in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*.

Meiri was in deep sympathy with Maimonides' goals, in the latter's *Mishneh Torah*, of organization and clarification,[23] and he described his own legal activity as a response to Maimonides' achievements and their limitations. Since Meiri observed that Maimonides' code had not been adopted by rabbinic authorities as the central instrument of study, he thought to produce a work—albeit entirely different from *Mishneh Torah*—that might in its own way provide systemization and clarification. Meiri possessed a precise knowledge of the history of codification and the nature of Maimonides' contribution to it. In the second half of the introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*,[24]

he presents a description of the circumstances of codification before *Mishneh Torah*.

> You already know that everything that has been written until now on the Talmud in the fashion of a code does not fulfill this requirement—that is of mentioning things by way of authority alone—except the Code of the Master, [Maimonides], the Teacher of Righteousness.[25] All the writers in the style of a code before his coming, of blessed memory, had two goals in mind. First: they separated from each and every tractate all that is necessary for us in this [exilic] period—but put aside the rest without mentioning it at all. Second: they gathered together all the relevant material for each subject in one place.[26]

The *Halakhot* of Alfasi, from eleventh-century North Africa, is a good example in this context; but the characterization holds also for '*Eshkol* and '*Ittur*, from twelfth-century Languedoc, as well as for the *Halakhot Pesuqot*, from eighth-century Baghdad.[27] Codification consisted in excising those matters without practical consequence and gathering together all the material on a given subject.

Meiri compared *Mishneh Torah* to these works. His assessment of Maimonides' accomplishment is at once perceptive and compressed—a deft articulation of Maimonides' thunderous contribution.

> In his composition, however, the Master, the Teacher of Righteousness, innovated other features: He gathered all relevant material into one place, as did the other writers, but innovated by writing in an authoritative fashion, without mention of Talmudic dispute and dialectic. He also innovated by writing in mishnaic Hebrew, and found the intellectual courage necessary to include in his work all the subjects treated in the Talmud, whether necessary for this [exilic] period or not. Thus he mentioned everything, section by section, in its entirety; a complete and perfect work upon which there is nothing to add, or to subtract. Before him there was no similar composition by the geonim or the Rabbis—a composition organizing the entire Science of the Talmud, everything in its place, in a felicitous and complete order—and after him there will be none other.[28]

Meiri combines thorough description with lofty praise: Maimonides' work, he states, is the apex of its genre. Maimonides, writes Meiri, perfected the codificatory form by replacing the Talmudic mode of discourse with authoritative statement; he maintained mishnaic vocabulary and syntax without resort to the Hebrew–Aramaic language standard for discussions of rabbinic law; he confronted huge, complex legal areas, like sacrifices and ritual purity, left in desuetude for centuries; and he established a new, elegant classification system, departing from the organization of the Talmud.

But about one hundred years after its publication, Meiri realized that *Mishneh Torah* had failed, despite its astounding accomplishments, to achieve Maimonides' anticipated intellectual reorientation.[29]

> [His innovations were so stunning and his reconception of the Talmudic material so powerful that] it is almost as if his intention were that, after his Code, there should be no need for any of the tractates of the Talmud or the ancient compositions; just as the Master, of blessed memory, made known in the Preface to his code.[30]
>
> If this were the case, there could be no proper place, after him, to write a book in this style, that is, by way of testimony and authority.
>
> But the generations of scholars did not see fit by any means to abandon the Talmud. Rather, universal opinion was to raise it to the head of their studies, so that it might be the basis and the pillar, and all the other writings like branches to them.[31]

Meiri inches toward saying something quite provocative, and then expresses it only by implication: "It would seem" from the literary evidence that Maimonides intended to change the nature of Jewish legal study, introducing a text so attractive that it, and not the classical rabbinic texts, would become the focal point.[32] In Meiri's view, if that were the intention of Maimonides' innovations, then there would be no room to follow his example; to do so would be to attempt to replace his work.[33] And, in any case, Maimonides didn't succeed.[34] Meiri, a moderate Maimonidean, hardly denies Maimonides' revolutionary intentions.[35]

Meiri describes Maimonides' failure ("But the generations of scholars did not see fit by any means to abandon the books of the Talmud") as an observer who could have imagined things differently. Jewish legal history, for Meiri, was contingent upon the nature of *Mishneh Torah*'s reception. Maimonides' attempt to simplify and systematize the Torah was not a priori an unacceptable distortion of tradition. But, after the fact, Meiri believed he knew why things had happened the way they had: students at all levels, due to a natural and legitimate inquisitiveness to reach the authoritative source, would not accept as their central instrument of study an elegantly written presentation of the Law unless it was tied to the text of the Talmud.

> By nature, it is more pleasing to an individual to reach understanding by investigating, researching and examining the matter itself—alongside its counter indications—than to understand on the basis of authority alone. Therefore, every intelligent person is not satisfied until he investigates matters at the place of their source—at the rock from which they were hewn—and sees the basis of the conflicting opinion.[36]

Thus, he says that although "most of the masses of our day" will find their educational needs met "in true perfection" in the Code of the Master (a

tolerable form of intellectual lethargy)[37] instead of studying Torah "from the rock from which it was hewn," for a presentation of Talmudic law to justify itself before "most of the small number of serious students of our day," it must relate to its sources.[38] For the sake of serious students, Meiri aimed to incorporate, as much as possible, the attractive literary features of Maimonides' code in a work of interpretive essays running parallel to the Talmud.

> On these grounds, I, Menaḥem ben Solomon of the House of Meir, resolved to take action—to benefit myself and those fellows who would listen to my voice—to write this treatise, whose intention is to explain the Talmud in the fashion of practical decision only [דרך פסק לבד] without mention of the ancient disputes and dialectical interchange found therein. Thus I do not intend to discuss matters in the "style of analysis" [דרך מחקר] such that the basis of the decision, and the refutation of the dissenting opinion is made clear. Rather, matters will be presented in the "style of testimony" [דרך עדות]. I mean by the term "testimony," the "style of authority" [דרך קבלה]. As we have made clear in interpreting the verses to which we have related our discussion: things known by authority, without syllogistic deduction and investigation, are called "testimony" [עדות].[39]

The reader of Meiri's long introduction feels at this point a sense of completion: the argument for *Bet ha-Beḥirah* has been presented; and the rhetorical connection for thirty-two dense pages of diffuse, almost wandering, exegesis articulated. Meiri's resting point is the word "*Beḥirata*" (selected authoritative and trustworthy statements), the title of the mishnaic tractate *Testimonies* [עדויות], as glossed by the Rabbis.[40] Meiri explains that his work is called *Bet ha-Beḥirah* [The Collection of Testimonies] to indicate that it is a well-selected compilation of legal interpretation from which "all types of confusion, discord and dialectic" have been removed.[41] Again, inspired by Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Meiri created a new style of Talmud commentary, in which attention to dialectic is expressed in the effective presentation of "testimonies." Meiri's testimonies provide distinct, smoothly flowing statements of various authorities' treatments of significant interpretive issues that, on account of their clarity and compression, also preserve the dynamism of the *suggyah*. *Bet ha-Beḥirah* is not, therefore, written purely in "the style of decision and authority," but its innovative departure from "the style of analysis" earns the work its title.

Meiri built *Bet ha-Beḥirah* as a commentary upon the Mishnah, followed by an analysis of its Talmudic discussion. Unlike Rashi, whose remarks on the Mishnah are often preliminary and who frequently promises that the Mishnah's interpretation will emerge in the *Gemara*, Meiri examines the Mishnah as an independent text[42] and presents its meaning based on a distillation of Talmudic interpretation.[43]

> It was my intention, in this work [*Bet ha-Beḥirah*], to make the Mishnah the center of study, and the organizing principle for [any] matter I should wish to explain. The subjects that follow from [the Mishnah] in the Talmud shall be [positioned] as derivative details and particulars. I shall explain the whole Mishnah in this fashion,[44] section by section in the fashion of a basic commentary. I shall discuss all the subjects, disputes, and dialectic that the Mishnah contains. Following this commentary, I shall pronounce a practical ruling on each issue.[45]

Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, d. circa 1213, and Meir ha-Levi Abulafia, d. 1244, preceded Meiri in adopting this structure;[46] thus, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* may be placed within this tradition of commentary. Meiri's refrain (at the beginning of each tractate, chapter, and mishnah) that the Talmud digresses from the topic at hand in a stream-of-consciousness fashion suggests that he chose a Mishnah-commentary structure in part as an aid to clarity. His analysis of the Talmud's long discussions of minute details and frequent digressions is isolated as a supplement.

In his introduction, Meiri justifies the arrangement of individual tractates within *Bet ha-Beḥirah*[47] and, without fail, opens his remarks to each tractate with reference to this arrangement and justification. In addition, Meiri provides each tractate, each chapter within the tractate, and each mishnah within the chapter with a description of contents.

> I shall include in this composition [*Bet ha-Beḥirah*], at the beginning of each mishnaic Order, an indication of the contents of that Order. At the beginning of each tractate, [I shall include] the contents of that tractate, the order of its chapters, and the number of its subject divisions. And at the beginning of each chapter, [I shall enumerate] the contents of that chapter, and its smaller subject divisions; and [at the head] of each and every mishnah, [I shall enumerate] its contents as well.[48]

Meiri's concern on every level, from tractate to individual mishnah, for articulation of contents and systematized presentation is unique among Talmud commentaries. His presentations of complex discussions within this structure are often quite lucid and elegant. His style is readily identifiable: a very pure Hebrew, with relative independence from Talmudic terminology and some use of Tibbonide expression.[49] His execution of all these features with great consistency in such a massive work is most impressive.

In his survey of Talmudic scholarship from its literary beginnings with the geonim until his own *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, Meiri enumerated the medieval scholars whom he concealed throughout the remainder of his work.[50] He divided his survey according to communities of scholars within geographic regions.

From the Magreb and Andalusia, he mentions Rabbenu Hananel, Rabbenu Nissim, Samuel ha-Naggid, Isaac ibn Ghayyat, Isaac Alfasi, Joseph ibn Migash, Meir ha-Levi Abulafia, and Maimonides.[51]

From the Franco-German region, Rashi, Rabbenu Jacob Tam, Samuel ben Meir, Isaac the Elder, Samson of Sens, Meir of Rothenberg, and Rabbenu Peretz.

From Languedoc, Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne, Rabad of Posquières, Zeraḥiyah ha-Levi of Gerona, Meir ben Isaac of Trinquetaille, Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, and Meshullam ben Moses of Béziers.[52]

From Catalonia, Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona, Jonah Gerundi, Moses ben Nachman of Gerona (Naḥmanides), Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret, and Aaron ha-Levi of Barcelona.

These are the major figures whose anonymous teachings concerning various *suggyot* are presented in Meiri's massive work. Meiri's anthology, however, is a critical harvest. The Languedocian tradition of interpretation, which he defends with pride in *Magen 'Avot*, is almost always present. In the case of the contentious issues of *Magen 'Avot*, Meiri shows us the extent to which allegiance to local practices guided his interpretation. Were one to conduct a careful investigation, it is to be expected that this could be shown in *Bet ha-Beḥirah* as well.

Again, we see that Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* was basic to Meiri's legal study: he systematically confronted its implications for the interpretation of the *suggyah*.[53] Contemporary Catalonian Talmudists, like Solomon ibn Adret and Yom Tov ben Abraham Ishbilli, cited *Mishneh Torah* when its implied interpretation was particularly interesting or problematic. In contrast, *Sefer ha-Menuḥah* of Manoah of Narbonne and *Sefer ha-Battim* of David ben Simeon of Estelle were devoted to the interpretation of *Mishneh Torah*; and the *Talmud Commentary* of Abraham of Montpellier is very much guided by Maimonides' code. Meiri, therefore, was in step with the trend among his Languedocian contemporaries to use *Mishneh Torah* in this fashion. The presence of the Palestinian Talmud on the pages of *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, on the other hand, seems much more substantial than in the majority of the works of other medieval commentators.[54] Meiri's considerable citation of the "Western Talmud" is worthy of an independent study.[55]

Modern readers have been puzzled by Meiri's consistent use of sobriquets in place of authors' names in his encyclopedic citation from the literature of Talmudic interpretation.[56] Some of Meiri's epithets are meaningful, even intriguing, but many are shifting and ambiguous.[57] The same medieval author is often given many different nicknames and, conversely, several different authors are referred to by the same name. The sobriquets of certain major figures are relatively stable, and thus their referents are transparent—"the Great Codifiers," intriguingly in plural, refers to Maimonides; "the Great Decisors," once again in plural, to Alfasi; "the Great Rabbis," consistently in plural, to Rashi—while those of most lesser figures change, so their referents are therefore often uncertain.[58] Our puzzlement at this name usage is perhaps lessened by consideration of Meiri's expressed desire to incorporate many of the literary features of *Mishneh Torah* into *Bet ha-Beḥirah*. By obscuring the relationship between individual interpretations and specific historical figures,

Meiri produced a summary of Talmudic interpretation with an air suggestive of an apodictic code.[59] By the use of sobriquets, Meiri may not have wished so much to characterize the interpreters whom he cited as to maintain an aura of authority that befits the "testimony" style for which *Bet ha-Beḥirah* was named.

Two central monographs

Meiri provided his highly original Talmud commentary with rich accompaniment. Two gems set within the *Bet ha-Beḥirah* in the form of introductions—one to the work as a whole and the other to the tractate *'Avot*—are long, independent essays of great significance for Jewish intellectual history.[60]

The introduction to the *Bet ha-Beḥirah* is an unusually complex piece of writing.[61] Structured as an exhaustive exegesis of two verses from Psalms, it touches upon virtually every feature of Meiri's intellectual and spiritual world, from the nature of the relationship of religious faith and philosophic demonstration to the internal problematics of the tradition of Talmudic interpretation. The introduction culminates in a justification for Meiri's own work: an elaboration of the scholarly desiderata which rendered it necessary and therefore permissible.[62] The body of this introduction—a thick tissue of scriptural and Talmudic interpretation—discusses an array of loosely connected themes, including the limitations of human knowledge, the reasons for the commandments, the necessity for esotericism, the philosophic interpretation of aggadah, and the nature of astral influences upon the lives of both Jews and gentiles, to name only a few. In these fifty or so pages prefaced to his great work, Meiri manifests his spiritual personality in a concentrated and articulate fashion.

'Avot's introduction, the second independent essay set within *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, is principally a history of Rabbinic literature and Jewish legal scholarship. It begins, as was common,[63] with the story of mankind's early relationship to God, from Adam until Abraham.[64] It passes to the prophecy of Moses and then rapidly through the train of prophets and judges who received and transmitted the tradition, to the scholars of the Mishnah. It then travels through the scholars of the Talmud, the saboraim, and geonim.[65] Meiri's history allows us to see that he perceived the production of works for the interpretation of Jewish law as an enterprise carried out in interdependent, geographically-defined scholarly communities and necessitated by the gradual waning of oral discourse as a means of scholarly transmission.[66] Meiri saw his own composition as a contribution to the significant progress made in the preceding three hundred years.

In *'Avot*'s monograph-length introduction,[67] Meiri attempts to account for the disparity between tradition's exalted assessment of geonic scholarly achievement and the scanty literature that had reached Languedoc from the East. He describes a preliterary phase in the geonic academies and in the various regional Jewish cultures of western Europe and northern Africa in

which the quantity of knowledge generally available was so great and the level of understanding was so high that there was scarcely any need for literary production. For this reason, according to Meiri, geonic writing consisted mostly of *responsa*, monographs, and other treatises composed on an ad hoc basis; similarly, early European and North African halakhic writing was very thin. Oral culture, which many in the ancient and medieval worlds viewed as superior to literary culture, was predominant.[68]

It is only after this insightful and partially credible explanation of the quality of geonic literature, as well as that of early northern African, Spanish, Languedocian, and Franco-German rabbinic literature, Meiri makes the following intriguing comment:

> The power of [the scholars'] knowledge and the force of the quality of their interpretations was not apparent from their writings. Thus if the character [of the geonim] were not known by tradition and publicized by oral transmission, we would not—on the basis of their compositions—consider them of truly the highest perfection.[69]

So, in contrast to Maimonides, who took the position that the quality of the Talmudic understanding of individual geonim may be discerned by the careful reader,[70] Meiri argues that their stature in our eyes is basically dependent upon oral tradition. Maimonides implied that if the work of a *gaon* appears in some way deficient, it is a result of the deficiency of the *gaon*. Meiri believed that the works of the *geonim* were in some ways deficient, but he may have found Maimonides' implied conclusion incongenial; thus, it is not surprising that he rejected Maimonides' premise.[71]

The development in northern Africa and western Europe of a substantial and impressive literature of commentary and codification over the three or four centuries following this period of oral culture led Meiri to conclude,

> From the time of the presidium of R. Hananne[l] [eleventh century, North Africa] and forward, though the knowledge of scholars decreased, the quality of codes and commentaries increased.[72]

There is no reason to doubt Meiri's conviction that postgeonic Jewish scholars were intellectually inferior to the geonim. But is it not ironic to read—from the pen of a man committed to the notion of the diminution of authority and stature over the generations—that progress in rabbinic literature is inversely related to intellectual achievement? That "we moderns are vastly inferior to the ancients" was a powerful and pervasive frame of mind in the Middle Ages,[73] but Meiri found a way to reconcile this reverential attitude with recognition of the accomplishments of recent generations. For Meiri, furthermore, these acknowledged gradations in authority were not absolute. With a critical stance that resembles that of some of his

predecessors, [74] Meiri extends his interpretive scrutiny as far back as the geonic clarifications of the Talmud.

> [Rabbi Judah] said in the form of a generalization, "[Our predecessors] left us room [to make a name for ourselves]." [75] That is to say: there is not [sufficient] perfection in created beings—even in the choicest among them—to bar latter-day scholars from challenging them on certain points. [76]

The interpretation of Aggadah

The use of aggadah in *Bet ha-Beḥirah* to define norms of ethical behavior constitutes an innovative feature in the history of Talmud commentary. To the sphere of compulsory Talmudic law, Meiri added the sphere of hortatory Talmudic instruction. This type of aggadah interpretation—ethically, morally, and spiritually oriented—is by far the most common use to which *aggadah* is put in *Bet ha-Beḥirah* and is a basic component of the work. Just as the halakhic rulings of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* may be drawn together as a treatise on Meiri's view of Jewish legal doctrine, this material might be gathered as a supplement of metalegal teachings—for Meiri's view of how one ought to live. [77]

Within the spectrum of the medieval Talmud commentaries, *Tosafot* (critical and explanatory northern French glosses beginning in twelfth century) comment upon aggadah most frequently, very often in relation to their harmonizing concerns. Catalonian and Languedocian commentators generally excised aggadah from their works, in order to focus on Talmudic law; Meiri isolated an ethical-hortatory portion of Talmudic aggadah that deserved inclusion in his practical-oriented Talmud commentary. As *Mishneh Torah* also contains aggadah interpretation of an ethical-hortatory character, Maimonides may have pointed Meiri in this direction.[78] Meiri certainly responded to many more aggadot than did Maimonides; nevertheless, he passed over the largest portion of this vast Talmudic genre in silence.

From as early as the tenth century, Jews with rationalist sensibilities experienced difficulty in explaining—to themselves as well as to outsiders—the nonlegal disquisitions of the Talmud.[79] As early as the geonic period, Hai and Sherira made distinctions between authoritative aggadot, which required an interpretation, and nonbinding aggadot, which might be rejected because of their problematic nature. Over the twelfth century, from Abraham ibn Ezra and Judah ha-Levi to Maimonides, a small literature developed to address the problem of aggadah. Nonliteral interpretation seemed to be the solution most intensively pursued.[80] In Languedoc, geonic-Andalusian approaches to aggadah had been adopted even before philosophical thinking had made significant inroads.[81] By the middle of the thirteenth century, the rationalist interpretation of aggadah was a significant feature of Jewish culture in Languedoc.[82]

Meiri often states his ethical teaching in general terms, introduced by the word *Le'olam*, ordinarily meaning "One should always" or "One should never." Following this general statement, he introduces the citation of the relevant Talmudic aggadah with one of the several formulas: "They said by way of hyperbole," [83] "They said by way of literary flourish,"[84] or "They said by way of ethical instruction."[85] These terse statements describe the nature of the Rabbis' departure from the literal and signal that the citation is not to be taken at face value, but in the manner Meiri indicates.[86] The systemic treatment of aggadah in this fashion may have been inspired by Maimonides' claim that aggadah was written and should be read as a type of poetic language.[87] If each of Meiri's formulas has a precise literary meaning, they may denote a typology of aggadic statements.

In one example, the Talmud recalls the statement of Aḥa bar Ḥanina: "Anyone who visits the sick, removes, as it were, one sixtieth of his illness."[88] The Talmud takes this statement literally and objects that the visitation of sixty persons should then cure the man. This does not occur, the Talmud explains, since the beneficial diminution is to be computed serially. Thus, each visit lessens the man's illness by one-sixtieth, but, by this formula, will never cure him entirely. Meiri seems to set aside the Talmud's presumption that Aḥa bar Ḥanina's statement should be taken literally, and takes it instead as an exhortation to visit the sick.

> One should always be diligent in regard to the commandment of visiting the sick, because the visitor lightens the illness of the sick. [The rabbis] said by way of encouragement, "Anyone who visits the sick, removes, as it were, one sixtieth of his illness."
>
> Thus [the specification that the visit will be efficacious if the visitor] is "the same age" [as the sick person] means: If the visit is pleasing to the sick person, his illness will lighten due to his enjoyment of the visitor. At times, the visit is the [indirect] cause of the sick person's cure; whether due to the visitor's [medical] knowledge, or several other causes. For these reasons [the Rabbis] said [this].[89]

According to Meiri, a visit may have psychological as well as practical benefits for the sick person. He is silent concerning the Talmud's almost mechanistic interpretation that such a visit diminishes illness by a particular fraction; rather, he interprets the statement of Aḥa bar Ḥanina as instruction that a visit to a sick person might help in his cure, emotionally or possibly medically.

In a much rarer type of aggadah interpretation, if the contextual meaning disturbed his rationalist sensibilities, Meiri gave new meaning to the Talmudic explanation for a practice or norm. In the Talmud's discussion of the sounding of the shofar on Rosh ha-Shanah, it gives a reason for the form of the ritual.

> Why do they blow *teqi'yot* and *teru'ot* during the silent prayer and again in the reader's repetition of it? In order to confuse Satan R. Isaac said, "If the shofar is not sounded at the beginning of the year, evil will occur by year's end." Why so? Because Satan has not been confused.[90]

According to the Talmud, the sounding of the shofar confuses and deters Satan from his intended prosecution of the Jews' transgressions. Thus, in the Talmud, the shofar appears to be an instrument—perhaps magical—for protection from Divine punishment.

To the Tosafists, the shofar seemed a necessary element to ameliorate their judgment on Rosh ha-Shanah.[91] Concerned over their loss of the shofar's capacity on a New Year's Day that occurs on the Sabbath, the northern French Tosafists adduced the authority of a geonic code to the effect that harm will not come in such circumstances.

> In *Halakhot Gedolot* it is explained that [evil will not occur by year's end] on the occasions when Rosh ha-Shanah falls out on Shabbat—and it is rabbinically prohibited to sound the shofar—but only on the occasion of unforeseen circumstances.[92]

According to *Halakhot Gedolot*, as understood by the Tosafists, if calendrical considerations are the cause of the shofar's silence, the Jews will not suffer; only if, for example, the shofar is lost, Satan will be permitted to prosecute. Meiri, however, felt compelled to reinterpret this story of Satan's prosecution of the Jews.

> Every year that—through carelessness—they fail to sound the shofar on Rosh ha-Shanah, they should worry that evil will occur by year's end. But when they sound the shofar, pray, are humbled, and come before the Lord, praised be He, as if impoverished [of good deeds], they may be certain that they will be answered.[93]

The message of the shofar blasts is to repent;[94] Meiri interprets "Satan" as the habituation that dulls one to this message.[95] Thus, the repetition of the shofar's sounding is an attempt to overcome this habituation, "to confound Satan."[96] Only Jews who blithely neglect to sound the shofar, and thus surely fail to recognize their sins, will be punished. Following the Tosafists, not absence of an instrumental rite, but only sinfulness leads to punishment. Meiri's interpretation is antimagical and, as such, also opposed to that of the Tosafists.

Meiri responds in a similar fashion to the Talmud's explanation for the prohibition of Aramaic personal prayer.

> Rabbah b. Bar Ḥanah said, "When we followed R. Eleazar to inquire after a sick person, sometimes he would say to him [in Hebrew], 'May the

> Omnipresent visit you with peace'; at others, he said [in Aramaic], 'May the Omnipresent remember you in peace.'"
>
> But how could he have done thus? Did not R. Judah say, "One should never pray in Aramaic"? Furthermore, R. Jonathan said, "When one prays in Aramaic the Ministering Angels do not heed him, for they do not understand Aramaic." It is different [in the case of] a sick person, because the *Shekhina* is with him.[97]

R. Jonathan teaches that the Angels who carry prayer to God do not understand Aramaic. The Talmud reconciles this statement with the report that R. Eleazar occasionally prayed for a sick person in that language by establishing that the Divine Presence, Who surely hears all prayer, is at the bedside of the ill.

To Meiri, the notion that Angels (that is, for him, disembodied intelligences) related to anything other than abstract thought would have seemed unlikely. Moreover, that prayer needed to be transmitted to God by an intermediary who must understand it surely was problematic; God was hardly a distant Being dependent upon a messenger from below.

> One should never pray in Aramaic. Since the average man is not fluent in it, he will not possess the requisite concentration for his prayer to be accepted. Nevertheless [in the case of a prayer] for a sick person, since one [generally] concentrates more, there is no place for concern.[98]

Meiri interprets the Talmud's insistence upon Hebrew as an injunction to encourage the concentration of the supplicant, not the comprehension of the Angels. In the case of a person who is ill, one's powers of concentration increase, perhaps because the seriousness of the loved one's illness. The proximity of the Divine Presence is, therefore, not a problematic description of the reduction of physical distance between God and the supplicant (eliminating the need for an intermediary), but a metonymy for one's increased ability to concentrate in prayer: God is closer, as it were. In addition, Meiri confidently extended his rationalistic interpretation of the *Shekhina*'s proximity to a geonic responsum in which the same language appears.

> For this reason [on account of increased concentration], the geonim have written that communal prayer may be offered in any language: "Because the *Shekhina* is with them,"[99] that is to say, because a congregation [generally] has great concentration.[100]

Meiri's prohibition of Aramaic personal prayer is no longer a measure to insure transmission, but a measure to encourage prayerful concentration. This interpretation eliminates the role of the Angels and ignores the common

knowledge that the average person in Talmudic times could have prayed more easily in Aramaic than in Hebrew.

Meiri's rationalist interpretation of aggadah raises the question of the critique, if any, implied by such exegesis[101] and leads us to consider the relationship between the desire to give a text new meaning and the attempt to free it from a problematic one. The subversive potential of nonliteral interpretation made other rationalist Talmudists reluctant to find new meanings, even for problematic aggadah.[102] Interpretation is a double-edged sword: replacement almost always implies preference over—and perhaps disapproval or even rejection of—an older meaning. Meiri salvaged the statement of Aḥa bar Ḥannina regarding visiting the sick, but in doing so set aside the Talmud's seemingly mechanistic interpretation of it. He provided a new spiritual interpretation for R. Isaac's statement regarding the sounding of the shofar, but in the act took Satan out of the picture. He preserved R. Judah's prohibition of Aramaic personal prayer, but at the expense of R. Jonathan's teaching regarding angels. Since, from the tenth century on, rejection coexisted with rationalist interpretation as an alternative response to the troubling aggadic text, Meiri's excision of Talmudic aggadah from *Bet ha-Beḥirah* may, at times, signal his decision to set a problematic passage aside. Ultimately, however, the rather conservative nature of Meiri's rationalist aggadah interpretation seems rather carefully formulated to diminish the question of any critique it may imply. Without jarring his readers, Meiri quietly downplayed the offensive or disturbing meaning that a text may once have had. In this way, in fact, his interpretation of aggadah is characteristic of his rationalism in general.

Restricted by *Bet ha-Beḥirah's* practically oriented goals, Meiri, nevertheless, did, at times, turn his attention to aggadah interpretation, simply in order to explain the text that lay before him. In his *Ḥiddushim*, Meiri found cause to analyze a Talmudic incantation as an attempt of the reciter to reduce his fear of harm.

> Our Rabbis taught: One should not drink water in the night. If he does drink, his injury is his own responsibility; for it is dangerous. What danger is there? The danger of Shabriri, the demon of blindness. But if one is thirsty, how can he put things right? . . . Let him knock with the lid on the jug and say to himself, "So-and-so the son of so-and-so, your mother has warned you to guard yourself against *Shabriri*, *briri*, *riri*, *iri*, *ri*, in blinding vessels."[103]

The Talmud warns that demons that cause blindness inhabit water jugs at night. Should one require a drink at that time (and be without a companion to awaken), he should ward off the demon with an incantation. Meiri's brief comment on this aggadah offers a psychological and antimagical interpretation: "With the diminution of the word [*Shabriri*], his psychic fear diminishes."[104] The incantation reduces the name of the demon until there is

nothing left; the final component of the incantation is silence. In this interpretation, Meiri's distance from Talmudic demonology is most apparent. The incantation is not reinterpreted to some higher religious goal; rather, it is categorized as a behavior whose motivation is to diminish an irrational fear.[105] Meiri may not have considered this incantation a component of Talmudic teaching, but a common folkway.[106] Nevertheless, the interpretation of a tannitic statement in such a fashion demonstrates Meiri's capacities as a critic of aggadah.

In his introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, Meiri considered the Rabbinic teaching that God gives man an "additional soul" on the eve of the Sabbath and withdraws it from him at the Sabbath's close.[107]

> When one wishes to use the theoretical-intellectual soul during weekdays, at times of distraction, the practical-intellectual soul—which stands in relation to the theoretical, as a horse to its rider—struggles against it, so that its rider falls to the ground. The cause of this is [the practical intellect's] turning after material things, and the mind's weariness with them.
>
> But on the Sabbath—as it is entirely designated to God and devoid of attention toward material things—the heart of the practical-intellectual soul, and its servants, turn toward the service of their master [the theoretical-intellectual soul] with a special service.[108] "Where the [theoretical-intellect] guides them, they go. They do not reverse their movement."[109] And thus, with this aid, the additional activity of the theoretical-intellectual soul intensifies, and is aided by the practical-intellectual soul as the rider is aided by the good conduct of the horse. And thus, on the Sabbath one has an "additional soul" for contemplation.[110]

Few medieval interpreters could imagine the bestowal of an additional "soul," as the Talmud implies. Given the philosophic notion of the soul as the embodiment of particular functions like growth, movement, and intellection, such a concept was especially difficult: some additional "substance" could not augment the faculties of which a person is possessed. Meiri solved this problem by equating the additional "soul" of the Talmud with the increased theoretical-intellectual comprehension that the repose of the Sabbath facilitates.[111]

This interpretation is found at the conclusion of a prolix disquisition on the human soul and its components, of which the above passage is merely the final part. Such philosophical interpretation of aggadah is found in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*.[112] Meiri was eminently capable in this genre of rationalist Jewish writing; nevertheless, he generally excluded lengthy expositions of this type from his commentary.

Christians and Christianity in Meiri's thought

Meiri's successful accommodation to the philosophic tradition is nowhere in greater evidence than in his radically innovative creation of a new status for Christians and Christianity in Talmudic law. In a great interpretive breakthrough, Meiri adopted an account of humanity's philosophic maturation through which he transformed his Christian neighbors into "people constrained by religious law," for whom the vast array of Gentiles' disabilities in Talmudic law no longer applied. Meiri's rigorous application of this radical innovation throughout *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, with only negligable exeptions, constitutes nothing less than a quiet revolution in Jewish thought. Meiri's thoroughgoing incorporation into Jewish tradition of a philosophic understanding of human history involved probably the most fundamental reconfiguration of the relationship between the self and the other in the history of Judaism.

Talmudic law makes a strong distinction between Jew and idolater.[113] It prohibits a wide range of activities between them and establishes different rules of conduct toward each group. As Christians' belief in the Trinity and worship of images seemed to make them idolaters,[114] these rules proved problematic for Jewish life in medieval Europe. Jews' business transactions on Sundays had to be justified,[115] since trade with idolaters is prohibited on their holidays.[116] In religious polemics, Jews were called upon to explain the Talmudic permission to take advantage of an idolater in trade[117] or to take possession of an object that an idolater has lost.[118] The Talmud even exempts from the death penalty a Jew who has killed an idolater.[119] These are only a few examples.

Medieval Talmudists solved these problems by establishing the status of Christians as somewhat different from that to which the problematic law was applicable. Thus Rashi argued, in response to a question concerning one such law, that contemporary Christians were not to be considered expert in idolatry.[120] In order to address the same problem in regard to a different law, Rabbenu Tam insisted that contemporary Christians had never actually worshipped idols.[121] In the polemical context, both Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel (c. 1170) and Yeḥiel ben Joseph of Paris (1240) suggested a formal distinction between the ancient Cannanite idolaters, to whom the Talmudic laws apply, and all others.[122]

Meiri addressed this established problem in medieval Jewish law in a striking fashion. He was the first Jewish thinker to teach that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are "religions" with a similar functional value. Modern legal scholars and theologians have described Meiri's interpretation as a "theory of tolerance."[123] While roughly correct, this description is nevertheless anachronistic and misleading. In Talmudic interpretation, Meiri widens the circle of Jewish communal responsibility to include Christians and Muslims in an impressive range of areas. The conceptual basis of Meiri's broader inclusive notion of religious community developed out of a particu-

larly Languedocian post-Maimonidean matrix. This matrix allowed Meiri to minimize the profound theological differences that separated the three faiths and to focus on their common moral and social benefits. Of course, Meiri did not provide us with a systematic presentation of his views. Rather, he embedded his understanding in the interpretation of complex Talmudic excurses. Not surprisingly, therefore, Meiri's position has proven somewhat recalcitrant to scholarly analysis. Although much progress has been made in recent years, an historical understanding of Meiri's views still requires some clarification.

According to Talmudic law, a Gentile who *formally accepts* the seven Noahide laws becomes a "resident alien,"[124] and if he is in need, Jews are required to support him.[125] The "resident alien" laws prohibit idolatry and by implication require the recognition of God.[126] In a polemical work—*Milḥemet Mitzvah* (c. 1246)—written about a generation before Meiri, the Languedocian Talmudist Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili explains to his adversary that the correct belief of Christians bestows upon them the status of "resident alien."

> Concerning a gentile who does not worship idols, we are commanded to sustain him. . . . It is well known from your sages that you believe that the Creator is without beginning or end, is One, created both the upper and lower worlds, is immanent but unseen, examines the heart, rewards the good and punishes the wicked. This is the essence of the Faith that one must hold.[127] Hence it is proper to guard your persons and your goods.[128]

Ha-Me'ili does away with the requirement of formal acceptance[129] and designates Christian worship as an abandonment of idolatry. By their belief in the Trinity, Christians do not deny that God is One, says ha-Me'ili.[130] The distance, however, between ha-Me'ili and Meiri is significant. In ha-Me'ili's presentation, there are three groups: pagans, Jews, and resident aliens. Ha-Me'ili did not create a new, post-Talmudic legal category or shift emphasis from the theological to the moral. Also, ha-Me'ili's argument, directed toward a Christian audience, had an uncertain meaning for himself and his Jewish colleagues.

In Meiri's Talmudic commentary, there are four categories: pagans, who have improper worship and no religion to guide their conduct; resident aliens, who worship God but have no religious laws; Jews, who worship God and follow the Torah; and "constrained nations," which includes Christians, who "worship God in some fashion, although their faith is far from ours"[131] and who follow the moral ways of their religion.

Meiri refers to Christians as "peoples who are constrained by religious laws,"[132] to whom the category of idolater does not apply.[133] Christians, in Meiri's view, "believe in His existence, may He be praised, His unity, and His omnipotence, although they err in certain matters according to our faith."[134]

Furthermore, Christians "worship God in some fashion, although their faith is far from ours." Their beliefs and worship notwithstanding, the defining characteristic of Christians as "constrained peoples" appears to be their moral character: not only are "they free of pagan moral turbidity, but punish such practices."[135] The groups opposing Christians and Muslims, on the other hand, Meiri writes, are those peoples "not constrained by religious laws." They "have no religion at all, and are not subjugated by any fear of divinity, rather they offer incense to the heavenly hosts and worship idols."[136] Once again, their moral conduct defines them, not their beliefs and worship. According to Meiri, "They are filthy in their deeds and turbid in their behavior"[137] and "every transgression and perversion is pleasing in their eyes."[138]

Within the medieval philosophic tradition, and especially in the writings of Languedocian scholars in the generations preceding Meiri, one discerns the notion of "religion" as belief in a creating, overseeing, and recompensing Deity who cannot be known through reason. Based on this literature, Meiri constructs an intellectual and spiritual history of the West, in which societies progressed from the apprehension of the material world to the apprehension of abstract truths known through reason and, finally, to the apprehension of the transcendent reality upon which "religion" and law-bound religious conduct are based.

> Beliefs must be arrived at through one of four ways: sense perception, self-evident claims, [philosophic inquiry], or received tradition. In ancient times, [people] of flawed views gave credence only to that which might be perceived through the senses or that which was axiomatically self-evident. Accordingly, they denied the existence of God or anything non-material and [rejected] all the bounds of religion; only a few such people now continue to inhabit various remote places. The philosopher, however, acquires through inquiry those beliefs that may be attained through syllogism and demonstration. Even so, mankind's beliefs could not be perfected until the Torah arrived. One who accepts it, takes on the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and, in addition to the foregoing, believes in everything that the ways of religion require in a perfect fashion that lacks nothing.[139]

Meiri styles those who are committed to an incorporeal Deity and believe in His reward and punishment as people "bound by the ways of religion." Religion, in Meiri's post-Maimonidean, Languedocian understanding, not only provides the beliefs necessary for human perfection, but also constitutes the social order, in that its teachings underwrite the law-bound behaviors and practices that are integral to civilization. According to this view, humans without religion and its restrictive ways invariably pursue '*avodah zarah* (i.e. strange worship, usually rendered, "idolatory"), a morally depraved, materialist fetishism once dominant in the ancient world. As Meiri states,

> [That we may leave them in the pit] refers to the idol worshipers who were "not restrained by religious ways." On the contrary, every transgression and every loathsome act is comely in their eyes. As the chief philosopher [Aristotle] has said, "Kill anyone who has no religion."[140]

"Religious ways" control mores, so that anyone without a religion is deserving of death for his loathsome actions. The worshiper of '*avodah zarah* must be left to die because, without belief in an incorporeal God who punishes and rewards, he is lawless and society cannot bear his presence. In Meiri's philosophically inflected history of western religion, the spread of civilization is thus inextricably linked to the rise of Christianity and Islam. It was these two faiths that, in the centuries since the Talmudic era, expelled the materialist fetishism and moral depravity of '*avodah zarah* beyond the borders of the known world and transformed the West into a society "bound by the ways of religion."[141] By recasting the definition of "idolatry" to exclude Christianity, however, Meiri employed elements of Maimonidean philosophy and history of religion, in stark opposition to the views of their author.[142]

Meiri took the rather daring step of incorporating his understanding (from the realm of philosophic discourse) of the history of western religion into the interpretation of Jewish law. He accomplished this in a number of ways. He argued brazenly that the Talmud's prohibitions of commerce with worshipers of '*avodah zarah* simply do not apply to Christians. (Of course, as unequivocal monotheists, these prohibitions did not apply to Muslims.) In Meiri's view, the legal barriers needed to protect Jewish society from the ancient philosophic materialists were no longer applicable in the law-bound, religious societies in which Jews now lived. In these new societies of religious faith and lawful conduct, Christianity (and Islam) functioned like Judaism to provide the core beliefs necessary for social order and civilization. With the same reasoning, Meiri argues that commerce in Christian ritual objects is not prohibited:

> We have already explained that rules such as this were instituted in their times, when those idolaters were devout in their idolatry, but now idolatry has come to an end in most places, and there is accordingly no need to be stringent with respect to [these rules].[143]

Regarding the prohibition on deriving benefit from the ordinary drinking wine of idolaters, normally prohibited on account of its use in idolatrous worship, Meiri says, "In my view, those places where idolatry endures remain subject to this stringency applicable to the ancient [idolaters],"[144] while most other places do not.[145] Meiri maintains that Jews now live among people of "religion": "In my opinion, [only] those remote places in which '*avodah zarah* remains are still subject to the rulings applicable to the ancient nations."[146]

The meaning of these dramatically new formulations, and the nature of Meiri's innovation, has generated considerable scholarly discussion. In an article published in 1953,[147] Jacob Katz argues that Meiri's creation of a new, nonidolatrous category for Christianity represents "a kernel of a theory of religious toleration."[148] Katz's interpretation was harshly criticized within the Israeli academy. Writing in 1980, E. E. Urbach argues that there is little new in Meiri's formulations in regard to Christians, as Meiri did not use his concept of "peoples constrained by religious laws" to advance new and unconventional legal rulings. Rather, Urbach claims, Meiri refrained from such innovation in the variegated realms in which medieval Jewish law maintained a separation between gentile and Jew.[149] Intriguingly, Meiri himself indicates that his intention is not to establish new norms, but to explain established ones. He makes clear, nonetheless, that the manner in which these norms are to be sustained is comprehensive and innovative:

> We have noticed that many scholars are astounded that, in our times, people do not at all observe these matters [restricting interaction with idolaters]. But we have already explained upon which "nation" the chief intention of this tractate is based—as the above-mentioned days of idolatrous worship show: all these days belong to "the ancient peoples who were not constrained by religious laws," but were wholly given over and accustomed to the worship of idols, stars, and talismans; and all these things, and those like them, are the basic practices of idolatry, as has been explained.
>
> Nevertheless, all the nations have the same status in regard to the protective Sabbath prohibitions, the protective prohibitions concerning foods and drink—like libation wine, and ordinary [gentile] wine, and other prohibitions similar to these—whether these things were prohibited from benefit, or from eating, or those [prohibitions] which [the Rabbis] decreed for fear of intermarriage. Henceforth, let this matter [concerning the applicability of these prohibitions] be set strait in your heart. We shall have no need to address them at every occurrence. Rather, you must determine in which case you should explain them as referring to the "ancient nations," and in which case as referring to all non-Jews. Understand and know![150]

Notwithstanding Meiri's novel formulations, Urbach insists that genuine intellectual innovation must be marked by legal innovations. In response, Katz does not return to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* to refute Urbach's argument by discovering Meiri's novel rulings. Instead, Katz allows the matter to stand as methodological dispute between himself and Urbach, declaring Urbach's methodological requirements to be dogmatic and inappropriate for modern historical analysis.[151]

Over the course of time, scholars have confirmed Katz's position regarding the novel meaning of Meiri's interpretations. Gerald Blidstein and, especially,

Moshe Halbertal have made significant contributions toward clarifying Meiri's views on this topic and demonstrating that Meiri, indeed, did move Jewish law and thought to an entirely new position. Allowing for Urbach's premise, Gerald Blidstein[152] points to two small legal innovations that resulted from Meiri's application of the "constrained nations" concept.[153] He argues that Meiri's concept of the gentile "constrained by religious laws" derived from the traditional concept of "resident alien,"[154] and that Meiri's interpretation of numerous passages related to the "resident alien" also shows unusual concern for the legal and moral status of the gentile. In one especially conflicted passage, Meiri, with one hand, forces the word "brother" to refer to the resident alien, but, with the other hand, withdraws from the innovative consequences that this would imply.[155] While the instances adduced by Blidstein are persuasive, and clearly do move research forward, they are not sufficiently broad, numerous, or substantial to eliminate Urbach's objection.

As to the status of Christians as nonidolaters, the legal consequences of Meiri's sweeping exemption are not nearly as great as one might have expected. Indeed, European Talmudists had already resolved most of the practical halakhic difficulties that their communities faced on account of Christians' idolatrous status through a variety of context-specific distinctions. No doubt, Meiri's frequent citation of the formulations of his European predecessors approvingly has muddied the waters. In addition, the absence of any dramatic departure from European legal consensus in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*'s rulings concerning the idolater has led some contemporary Orthodox halakhists to maintain that Meiri's attitude toward Christians is not fundamentally different from that of the Tosafists.[156] Only after much wresting and soul searching could one academic historian with strong allegiance to the Orthodox Jewish community acknowledge Meiri's clear theological departure from the established medieval view that Christianity is idolatry.[157] Had Meiri stopped at the law of the idolater, Urbach's critique of Katz—that Meiri's interpretation does not result in any significant legal innovation—could not be gainsaid decisively. Meiri's innovation, however, does not reside principally in his sweeping exclusion of the Christian from the status of idolater.

Moshe Halbertal establishes the radically innovative nature of Meiri's distinction by pointing out the fact that Meiri used his unique formulation in a second, far reaching, and unprecedented fashion.[158] Meiri assigned to "people restricted by the ways of religion" a range of juridical rights and privileges previously denied all non-Jews, however they worshiped. Such rights and privileges included compensation for property damage, return of lost property, protection from delay in payment due, protection from excessive prices, rescue from danger, and help in loading a beast of burden, as well the prosecution of robberies and murders whose victims are non-Jews.[159] In all of these cases, Meiri maintained that Talmudic law distinguishes not between Jews and non-Jews, but between law-bound religious persons and

persons without religion and law. With this extraordinary interpretative shift, Meiri drew Christians and Muslims into a circle of brotherhood with Jews, and moved the "other" of Talmudic discourse beyond the bounds of civilization. Concerning the right of the return of lost property and the right to prosecute robberies, Meiri explains, "Thus, all people who are of the nations that are restricted by the ways of religion and worship the Divinity in any way, even if their faith is far from ours, are excluded from this principle [of inequality]. Rather, they are like full-fledged Jews with respect to these matters, even with respect to lost property and returning assets gained through error and all the other matters, without any distinction whatever [from Jews]."[160] Meiri reiterates the principle expressed here in his consideration of each and every right and privilege previously withdrawn from non-Jews in Talmudic law.

Beyond the category of rights and privileges traditionally withdrawn from non-Jews, Meiri applied his distinction between law-bound and lawless nations to points of Talmudic law that often had made Jewish social relations with non-Jews quite tense. For example, Meiri unreservedly permitted the preparation of food to be consumed by a non-Jew on a Jewish holiday, and unequivocally mandated the violation of the Sabbath in order to save a Christian or a Muslim life; two matters for which Meiri's predecessors in Jewish legal interpretation could find no comfortable way out. Meiri further eased social tensions by marshaling his innovative distinction in order to exclude non-Jewish houses of worship from the curse required of idolatrous temples[161] (mosques, of course, were never considered by Jews as idolatrous) as well as to permit the expression of affection and attachment toward non-Jews, despite the prohibition of expressing such feelings toward idolaters.[162]

The great spiritual and psychological depths of Meiri's identification with Christians and Muslims as people of faith are also manifest in his exegetical claim that all law-bound religious people are the spiritual partners of the Jews. "Anyone bound by religious ways is within [the protection of the ban on] excessive profit in commercial transactions, but idolaters are not within the law against excessive profit. The Rabbis established the principle, 'Do not wrong one another' [Leviticus 25:17] to mean, 'You shall not wrong one who is with you in the Torah and commandments.'"[163] In one intriguing expression of Christianity's new religious status, Meiri likens the value of Judaism and Christianity for moral education. This comparison of the practices of Israel and the "nations constrained by religious laws" appears in the context of an explanation of the relationship between the effects of astrological forces and free will.

> It is among the fundaments of religion and the principles of faith to believe that every individual has free choice in all of his actions. If, however, it is known through Science [החכמה] that the astral configurations [מערכת הכוכבים] at [the time of] one's birth—either due to the hour or the day—requires the acquisition of certain character traits, one should

> nevertheless believe that free choice is not taken away. One should not consider his behavior necessary—he sins solely by free choice and will—as God gave him the freedom to overcome the disposition of his birth.
>
> Religious laws will turn him away from his nature. So that he might rule over himself and not follow after the path of his disposition, they will habituate him to alter his nature. The following Talmudic passage contains narratives that teach this belief which [the Rabbis] expressed by the rule, "Israel has no zodiacal sign." The meaning of the term "Israel" is "one who is constrained by religious laws."[164]

Meiri understood that certain human dispositions are necessitated by the position of the astral system at the time of one's birth. As examples, he mentions that the stars may determine the disposition toward violence, stinginess, and libidinous activity. But, in Meiri's view, as one has the ability to overcome his dispositions, he is still responsible for his actions. Moreover, religious laws constitute a unified regimen to correct these astrally determined dispositions;[165] one is commanded to give charity, which helps to overcome stinginess; sexual relations are elaborately restricted, which helps to diminish the libido. According to Meiri, the Talmudic teaching that Israel is protected from astral influences means that by virtue of its religious laws, Israel is directed away from its defective, astrally determined dispositions. Meiri goes so far as to give the name "Israel" to all law-bound religious people when he interprets a Talmudic saying, "Israel is not subject to the Zodiac." In Meiri's words, "[The Rabbis] mean by the name 'Israel,' all those restricted by the ways of religion."[166] Meiri is prepared to go this far as he believes that the restrictions of the religious life "free one from what might otherwise have been decreed by ordinary [astrological] causation."[167]

Meiri's conception of nonidolatrous religions profoundly affected his analysis of heresy and apostasy. Meiri agreed with the traditional Jewish view that one who converted to paganism was without religion and a heretic. The heretical departure from all religion implied a loathsome lack of mores, deserving of death. Meiri declared that moving from one religious community to another, however, as in the conversion from Judaism to Christianity, still left one with "the restraints of religious laws." The most dramatic innovation that Meiri achieved by applying to Jewish law his understanding of Christian and Muslim religious commitment was that the conversion of a Jew to Christianity or Islam was not to be deemed apostasy. According to Meiri, only one's conversion outside of religion, to '*avodah zarah*, is punishable by death.

> Heretics [*minim*] and non-believers [*epiqorsim*] may be directly harmed, while informers [*masorot*] may [be harmed] but their property may not [be used]. One who apostatizes to idolatry is within the class of heretics. This is the case, however, only for one who remains a Jew, for any Jew who repudiates religion is subject to severe punishment; he has become

> a heretic, and is as one who has no religion. Even so, one who leaves Judaism to become a member of another religion has a status equivalent to that of any other member of the religion to which he has joined in regard to every legal matter, with the exception of divorce and marriage. Thus my masters have taught.[168]

In this striking interpretation, a Jewish convert to another law-bound faith is not an apostate; rather, only the Jew who converts to '*avodah zarah* is guilty of the capital crime of denying the existence of God and casting off the restraints of law. Meiri's ruling was, of course, unprecedented, and was a clear indication of the far-reaching consequences that he saw for his understanding of the function of religion.[169]

With his quiet innovation—the understanding of civil and moral conduct as dependent upon the beliefs taught by "religion," expounded only partially in a wide variety of loci in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*—Meiri played down the profound theological differences between the three faiths and assigned to Christians and Muslims the juridical rights and privileges reserved by earlier Talmudists exclusively for Jews.

The notion that idolatry consisted not in a misconception of the Divine but in the failure of humans to conceive of the reality of Divine Beings, including God, as incorporeal intelligences, may be found in the *Ma'amar Yiqqavu ha-Mayim* of Meiri's revered Languedocian predecessor Samuel ibn Tibbon. According to that work, written in the first decades of the thirteenth century, the transgression of the generation of the Tower of Babel was to insist that the Divine realm was material, and that humans might literally reach God and His heavenly court by building a tower touching the sky. As we have seen above,[170] Meiri adopted this interpretation of the Babel narrative as a philosophical allegory as his own.[171] According to Samuel ibn Tibbon, a quantum leap occurred in the history of civilization with Israel's ability to grasp the reality of incorporeal intelligences. Meiri took the bold and far-reaching step of incorporating this uniquely Languedocian philosophical understanding of idolatry into Jewish law. He thus relocated the idolater of Talmudic discourse—who is deprived of these specific legal privileges—from the pagans of the Mediterranean world in Antiquity, as reconceived by Samuel ibn Tibbon, to the realm of the "barbarians" on the very margins of medieval civilization. As these "barbarians" were neither Jews, Christians, nor Muslims, they must have been idolaters, incapable of conceiving of civilization's basic shared conception of the Divine.

Meiri's profound reconfiguration of Jewish law to the benefit of Christendom and Islam would have been of little practical consequence for the Jews of Languedoc. Indeed, we have no indication of its being known to non-Jews at the time. However, this daring new interpretation expresses with great clarity how deeply and energetically Meiri reinterpreted Judaism—as well as Christianity and Islam—along the innovative Languedocian philosophic lines to which he was committed.

The *Fortuna* of Meiri's magnum opus

Isaac de Lattes, of fourteenth-century Roussillon, spoke glowingly of Meiri's achievements as a Talmudist.[172] Yet *Bet ha-Beḥirah*—despite its massive learning and unique presentation—had few readers in the centuries following its completion.[173] Aaron ben Jacob ha-Kohen of Lunel (d. 1325) appears to be the last regional author to cite Meiri, in his a *summa* of Languedocian Jewish practice, *Orḥot Ḥayyim*.[174] Citation of this great work between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, hardly to speak of influence, was virtually nil. While Meiri's *Proverbs Commentary* was indeed published, with that of Gersonides, in 1492, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Megillah*, the first section to be published, does not appear until almost three hundred years later—in 1769, in Amsterdam. Meiri's great work received negligible citation during these intervening centuries, and even those handful of authors who made some brief mention of his work hardly made use of it.[175] Certain isolated citations were included in two important anthologies: *Shitah Mequbbetzet* of Bezalel Ashkenazi (d. 1594)[176] and *Bet Yosef* of Joseph Karo (d. 1575).

Without doubt, manuscripts of parts of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* were in circulation over the centuries, but they were quite rare. Surviving manuscripts of single tractates preserved in the great libraries—the British Museum, the Bodleian, the Vatican—when assembled, contain not even a quarter of the whole work. That even one, nearly complete[177] manuscript of the massive *Bet ha-Beḥirah* survives is, indeed, a fortuitous occurrence. The six-volume manuscript was most likely copied from 1450 to 1456 in Avignon or Arles by Nathaniel Kaspi for Mordechai Nathan.[178] From Avignon, the manuscript was carried to Casale and then to Modena. In Modena, in the late eighteenth century, it was examined by two scholars, who immediately recognized its importance: the Hebrew bibliographer, Ḥayyim Joseph Azulai (d. 1806), and the Christian Hebraist, Giovanni Bernardo de-Rossi (d. 1831).[179] In 1793, Moses Benjamin Foa, a book collector, purchased the manuscript and took it to his home in Reggio Emilia. At this juncture, the tomes yielded two publications: *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat* (Livorno, 1794), and *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Nedarim*, *Sotah*, *Nazir* (Livorno, 1795).[180] In 1846, the Foa Collection—and the manuscript of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* within it—was sold to the Palatine Library of Parma by two scholar-book dealers, Salman Gottlieb Stern from Rechnitz, Hungary and Mordecai Bisliches from Brody, Poland, along with 111 other valuable Hebrew manuscripts.[181] At present, the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma contains one of the largest and most important collections of medieval Hebrew manuscripts in the world. Most of these volumes derive from the collection assembled by G.B. De Rossi, who acquired many of the codices for his own research at the University of Parma. By obtaining the patronage of Maria Luisa of Austria, De Rossi succeeded in housing his collection permanently in the Library of the city where he taught. In 1816, Maria Luisa—as duchess of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla—purchased De Rossi's collection for the Biblioteca Palatina and built a new room, "Sala De Rossi per le lingue

orientali," to house it. Again in 1846, Maria Luisa came forward to provide the funds for the Palatine Library to make the Hebrew manuscript purchase from Stern and Bisliches. Pietro Perreau (d. 1911), keeper of the De Rossi collection after 1860 and director of the Biblioteca Nazionale of Parma from 1876 to 1888, contributed most to the description of the Library's later Hebrew acquisitions, including the *Bet ha-Beḥirah* manuscript in the Stern-Bislichis Collection.[182]

However, not only Meiri's writing but also a large portion of the Languedocian legal-interpretive legacy became submerged—or disappeared—during the late middle ages and early modern period. It seems likely that, to a great extent, the gradual dissolution of Languedocian Jewry over the course of the fourteenth century affected this disappearance.[183] The important Parma manuscript of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* was produced in the Comtat Venaissin, a region that preserved allegiance to the traditions of Languedoc. Hebrew writing that impacted upon normative practice did not necessarily travel in an allegiant community;[183] Sepharadim at times preserved Ashkenazic works, and vice versa. Nevertheless, these two great communities retained their group continuity in new regions after their geographic displacement; the Sepharadim in North Africa and the Near East; the Ashkenazim in Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and the Balkans. Languedocian Jewry, on the other hand, was, after its eventual expulsion, absorbed into other Jewries that failed to save its cultural legacy from desuetude.

Notes

1 See Richard W. Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 11–6.
2 Meiri mentions the population and traditions of these communities as the source for the Jewish population and traditions of Perpignan: "We, in this city—that is, the city of Perpignan—have held fast to many practices which we have as an inheritance from our forbears and teachers in Carcassonne and Narbonne (may they rest in Eden) whence our community has ancient roots. The sages of Béziers and the great ones of Montpellier, as well as most of the country of Provence, likewise held all or most of these practices as an inheritance." See Menaḥem ben Solomon ha-Meiri, *Magen 'Avot*, ed. Yekutiel Kohen (Jerusalem: [s.n.] 1983), p. 35.
3 I.e., street. On the map of medieval Perpignan in Philippe Wolff, ed., *Histoire de Perpignan* (Toulouse: Privat, 1985), p. 31, the Call is long and narrow; as if it had one main street. On the development of the Jewish quarter in Catalonia and Roussillon, see Yom Tov Assis, "Ha-Yehudim be-Malkhut 'Aragonia ube-'Ezore Ḥasutah," in *Moreshet Sefarad*, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), pp. 49–56.
4 See Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan*, pp. 11, 15.
5 See ibid., pp. 1–2, 75–9.
6 See ibid., p. 128–30.
7 See ibid., p. 106. The soldo (sueldo) of Barcelona was gradually debased until 1256, when its alloy was stabilized at one-quarter silver. See Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society: Distributed by Boydell & Brewer , 1986), p. 139; Spufford, *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988),

p. 292; and Assis, "Yehude 'Aragonyah (1291–1327)," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1981, pp. 691–2 (Appendix 5: Coins in Aragon and Majorica). In order to determine the standard of living in Perpignan in this period, annual earnings would have to be compared with the price of goods.

8 See Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan*, pp. 98–9.

9 See ibid., pp. 88–93.

10 On the complexities of Christian attitudes toward their Jewish creditors, see Joseph Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered: Jews*, *Moneylending*, *and Medieval Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

11 See Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan*, pp. 28–31, 47. Saige and Gross made the identification of Don Vidal Solomon ha-Meiri with "Vital Salamon Mayr" based on an early modern copy of a 1281 loan act (see Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIVe siècle* [Paris: A. Picard, 1881], pp. 113, 210; and Henri Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionaire Géographique de la France* [Paris, 1897, reprint, Amsterdam, 1969], pp. 461–4).

12 See Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan*, pp. 46–7, and p. 183, n.127.

13 See ibid., p. 3.

14 A manuscript of thirteenth-century Languedocan liturgical works attributes a short *Pizmon* for *Musaf Rosh ha-Shanah*, perhaps a fragment, to Meiri. See Adolf Neubauer, "Liturgien aus der Handschrift *Casanata* H.V. 7 in Rom," *Israelietische Letterbode* 7 (1881–1882): 27. A three line *piyyut*, with the signature "Menaḥem bar Shelomo," is reprinted in L. Zunz, *Nachtrag zur Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin: A. Cohn Verlag und Antiquariat, 1867), p. 41. Zunz speculates that the author is Meiri, and that the lines may have formed the conclusion of a larger composition. These three lines are found as an alternate *piyyut* for the taking out of the Torah in "Shaḥarit le-Shabbat Hol ha-Mo'ed shel Pesaḥ," in *Seder li-Shelosh Regalim ke-Minhag Qehilat Qodesh Carpentras* (Amsterdam: [s.n.], 1759), p. 70a.

Two responsa of Meiri to Abraham of Montpellier have survived and are published (see Meiri, "Un Recueil de Consultations de Rabbins de la France Méridionale," ed. Israel Lévi, *Revue des Études Juives* 75 (1899): 116–20). Meiri refers to having written other responsa, but they seem not to have survived (see Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet 'Avot*," ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin [Cleveland, Ohio: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1992], pp. 69–70). Despite his stature in Languedoc, he may not have been especially active in this field. Cf. Abraham Schreiber, ed., *Teshuvot Ḥakhme Provinsiyah* (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1967).

15 *Bet ha-Beḥirah* covers the Talmudic tractates commonly studied in Languedoc, on account of their continued relevance for practice in the Diaspora. See Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction" [in Hebrew] found in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), p. 32. In *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Seder Mo'ed*, Meiri includes his discussion of *Berakhot* and *Ḥullin*. He splits his study of *Pesaḥim* and inserts a treatment of *Ḥallah*. After *Sheqalim*, he follows with an investigation of *Tamid* and *Middot*. In *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Seder Nashim*, Meiri includes his study of *Niddah* and *Miqva'ot*. And in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Seder Neziqin*, he includes a study of *Horayyot*, '*Eduyyot*, and '*Avot*. The total number of tractates covered in the work is thirty-seven. On the basis of a reference (at the conclusion of the Parma manuscript) to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Pe'ah*, Abraham Schreiber speculates that Meiri wrote, or intended to write, on *Seder Zera'im*. See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Bava Batra*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (Jerusalem: 1972), p. 733. In fact, Meiri may have planned to address all six Orders of the Mishnah. See Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," pp. 32, 36.

16 See Israel Ta-Shema, Yetzirato ha-Sifrutit shel Rabbenu Yosef ha-Levi ibn Migash," *Qiryat Sefer* 46 (1970): 136–46, 541–53; 47 (1971): 318–22.

17 See Haym Soloveitchik, "The Rabad of Posquières: A Programmatic Essay," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period Presented to Professor Jacob Katz on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. I. Etkes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), pp. 7–37.
18 Meiri himself gave a brief history of this *genre* in his essay on the chain of tradition and Torah study (see Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," pp. 132–3).
19 In his introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, Meiri places *Bet ha-Beḥirah* in the context of the evolution of Talmudic study in Languedoc (and the rest of Europe) until his day. In *Magen 'Avot*, Meiri explicitly articulates his self-consciousness as a Languedocian halakhist and learned defender of the regional Jewish customs of Languedoc.
20 For a masterful survey of the history of rabbinic literature in medieval Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the position of the rabbinic literature of Languedoc within that history, see Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud be-Eropah uvi-Tzefon Afriqah*: *Qorot*, *Ishim ve-Shitot*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000). Ta-Shma's assumption that Meiri "did not have access" to Italian rabbinic literature, however, is puzzling. See Israel Ta-Shma, "La Cultura Religiosa – The Chain of Tradition: South-Italian Rabbinic Tradition in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Creativity and Tradition: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2006), pp. 70–71.
21 The surviving segments of Meiri's *Ḥiddushim* are: *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri 'al Mesekhet Betzah*, ed. A.M. Blotnick (Ashdod, Israel: [s.n.], 1995); *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri 'al Mesekhet 'Eruvin*, ed. S. Z. Brodie (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1971), Chaps. 1–4; and *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri 'al-Masekhet Pesaḥim*, in *Sefer ha-Battim 'al ha-Rambam le-Rabbenu David ben Shemuel ha-Kokhavi*, ed. Moshe Y. Blau (New York: [s.n.], 1978). Meiri refers to his *Ḥiddushim* in his introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* (see, for example, pp. 24, 31), and in his introduction to *'Avot* (see, for example, pp. 10, 143).
22 Meiri, however, also refers to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* in the *Ḥiddushim*, making the order of composition uncertain (see, for example, Meiri, *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri 'al Masekhet Betzah*, 31a). Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27:536, suggests that the *Ḥiddushim* and *Bet ha-Beḥirah* may have been composed simultaneously. One must say, at least, that each work reflects knowledge of the other.
23 See Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 97ff.
24 I.e., Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," pp. 22ff.
25 Cf. Hosea 10:12 by association to Maimonides, *Guide*.
26 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 25.
27 One might mention, in addition, the early Franco-German code of Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz (*Ra'avan*).
28 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 25. Moshe Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provans* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 51–62. Halbertal casts the difference between Meiri and the Jewish philosopher translators of Languedoc a bit too harshly. In Halbertal's presentation, Meiri's decision to write *Bet ha-Beḥirah* on the Talmud constituted a conscious and unequivocal repudiation of the Languedocian philosophers' desire to eliminate the Talmud, with its impractical dialectic, as a source for Jewish legal study. However, Meiri was as disdainfully adverse to impractical Talmudic discourse as the exclusive philosopher, as his practically oriented encyclopedia of Talmudic interpretation

consistently executed over such a vast terrain clearly shows. The philosopher translators, on the other hand, maintained a keen interest in the deeper meaning of rabbinic literature. They surely would have been fascinated, for example, by the allegorization of specific *halakhot* by Meiri's younger contemporary ha-Kokhavi. Furthermore, scriptural exegesis was the philosophers' principal medium. They did not simply wish to "move on" to Averroes' commentaries on the works of Aristotle, as Halbertal implies.

29 "Maimonides' soaring ideal of a compressed but all-embracing study of Torah . . . was eclipsed; his program of comprehensive albeit simplified and systematized Talmud study was not implemented, and his vision never became a reality" (see Twersky, *Introduction*, p. 532).

30 The relevant section of Maimonides' preface reads: "On these grounds, I, Moses the son of Maimon the Sefardi, bestirred myself, and relying on the help of God, blessed be He, intently studied all of these works, with the view of putting together the results obtained from them in regard to what is forbidden or permitted, clean or unclean, and the other rules of the Torah—all in plain language and terse style, so that thus the entire Oral Law might become systematically known to all, without citing difficulties and solutions or differences of view, one person saying so, and another saying something else, but consisting of statements clear and reasonable, and in accordance with the conclusions drawn from all these compilations and commentaries that have appeared from the time of our Holy Master [Judah ha-Nasi] to the present, so that rules shall be accessible to young and old, whether these appertain to the [Scriptural] precepts or to the institutions established by the Sages and prophets, *so that no other work should be needed for ascertaining any of the laws of Israel*, but that this work might serve as a compendium of the entire Oral Law, including the ordinances, customs and decrees instituted from the days of our teacher Moses till the compilation of the Talmud, as expounded for us by the geonim in all the works composed by them since the completion of the Talmud. Hence I have entitle this work *Mishneh Torah* [Repetition of the Law], for the reason that a person who first reads the Written Law and then this composition, will know from it the whole of the Oral Law, without having occasion to consult any other book between them." *Mishneh Torah*, introduction, p. 3a.

31 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," pp. 25–6.

32 On the history of this view, which began in Maimonides' lifetime, see Twersky, "R. Yosef 'Ashkenazi ve-Sefer Mishneh Torah le-ha-Rambam," in *Salo Baron Jubilee Volume* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1975), Hebrew section, pp. 183–94.

33 For the argument that Meiri, and Languedocian Talmudists in general, had a more conservative understanding of *Mishneh Torah*, see Moshe Halbertal, "What is *Mishneh Torah*?: On Codification and Ambivalence" trans. Joel Linsider, in Jay M. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years*: *Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 2007), p 102. A close reading of Meiri's words, as we have shown, does not allow this interpretation.

34 *Mishneh Torah* had a magnificent and consequential *fortuna* of a sort entirely unintended or unanticipated by its author: as a code that stimulated a whole "source-identification" literature and had a very weighty effect on subsequent legal decisionmaking; and as a Talmudic commentary that inspired further exposition and commentary. Meiri's discussion of the problematics of *Mishneh Torah* study describes these genres. He based his observations upon his own experiences working through legal issues using the Talmud and *Mishneh Torah* (see "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 28), upon his familiarity with the way in which a variety of types of students of Jewish law, average and advanced, are inclined

to proceed (see "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 26), and upon his knowledge of recent literary developments in Languedoc where *Mishneh Torah* was competing with the *Halakhot* of Alfasi as a central text upon which commentary might be written. See, for example, *Sefer ha-Menuḥah*, ed. Elazar Hurvitz (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1970) of Manoaḥ of Narbonne.

35 For the analysis and harmonization of many seemingly conflicting Maimonidean statements regarding these intentions, see Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, esp. pp. 20–47 and 488–500; and Twerksy, "Sefer Mishneh Torah la-Rambam, Megammato ve-Tafqido," *Israel Academy of Sciences*, *Proceedings* 5 (1972): 1–22. The most controversial statements are in the introduction to *Mishneh Torah* and in the letter to Joseph ben Judah, discussed in Abraham S. Halkin, "Sanegoriyah 'al Sefer Mishneh Torah," *Tarbitz* 25 (1956): 413–28.

36 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 26. But cf. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, p. 104, n. 14.

37 Meiri did not address the problem that *Mishneh Torah* could not serve as an adequate guidebook for legal conventions of Languedocian Jewry. Perhaps Meiri wished to focus here solely upon the question of the literary merits of the "*Mishneh Torah* style" for popular study.

38 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 28.

39 Ibid., p. 24.

40 His starting point is the verse "I am your servant; make me understand, so that I may know your Testimonies" (Psalms 119: 25).

41 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 32.

42 On the medieval consciousness of the Mishnah as an independent text, see Jacob Sussmann, "Kitve Yad u-Messorot Nusaḥ shel ha-Mishnah," in *Divre ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-Shevi'i le-Mada'e ha-Yahadut*: *Meḥqarim ba-Talmud* (Jerusalem: Ha-Igud ha-'Olami le-Mada'e ha-Yahadut, 1981), pp. 222–7.

43 The availability of Maimonides' *Mishnah Commentary* as a model for thinking about the Mishnah as an independent text should not be discounted. In the principal manuscript of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* (Parma MSS 3551–6), the full text of Maimonides' *Mishnah Commentary* precedes Meiri's exposition of every mishnah. This integration of the two works, presumably at the initiative of the scribe or his employer, is an indication of the importance attributed to Meiri's organization. The copyist invites us to study the two Mishnah commentaries at once, and to compare them. In the modern period, Meiri's exposition of the Mishnah has been extracted from *Bet ha-Beḥirah* as an independent text, *Perushe ha-Mishnah leha-Meiri*, ed. M. M. Meshi-Zahav (Jerusalem: Itri, 1971–1974).

44 Meiri may have planned to address all six Orders of the Mishnah (see *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction, pp. 32, 36).

45 Ibid., p. 31.

46 See Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, *Perush Rabbenu Yonatan ha-Kohen mi-Lunel 'al ha-Mishnah ṿeha-Rif*: *Masekhet Bava Qama*, Shamma Friedman, ed. (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1969), introduction, p. 9; and Israel Ta-Shema, "Yetzirato ha Sifrutit shel R. Meir ha-Levi Abulafia," *Qiryat Sefer* 43 (1968): 569–76.

47 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," pp. 32ff.

48 Ibid., p. 32.

49 Meiri occasionally had recourse to Catalan and Provençal terms (see, for example, the pharmaceutical prescription [to enhance memory] in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Horayyot*, ed. A. Schreiber, [Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1958], 13b, p. 287.) For a discussion of the vernacular terms in Meiri's Bible commentaries, see Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, ed. Joseph Cohn (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1936), pp. vi–vii; and Renan, *Les Rabbins Français*, pp. 540–1. (Renan notes that *Perush Tehillim* contains a much greater number of vernacular terms than does *Perush Mishle.*)

50 See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," pp. 133–43, and the notes of S. Z. Havlin regarding all of the scholars enumerated.
51 As scholars in "other fields," Judah ibn Ḥayyuj, Jonah ibn Janaḥ, Solomon ibn Gabirol, Moses ibn Ezra, Judah ha-Levi, and Abraham ibn Ezra are listed.
52 Meiri devoted separate sections to the scholars of Narbonne and Béziers, in which he enumerates many obscure figures (concerning these scholars, see the exhaustive notes in the Havlin edition of Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*").
53 Meiri also describes his frustrations at studying the Talmud with the *Mishneh Torah* (see *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction, p. 28).
54 Meiri mentions that he possessed only a small portion of the commentary to the Jerusalem Talmud of Isaac ha-Kohen. See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," p. 138.
55 See Samuel Mirsky, "Toldot R. Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Sefarav," in Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (New York: Hotza'at Talpiyot, 1950), pp. 40ff; and Mirsky, "Menaḥem ha-Meiri: Ḥayyav, Shitato, ve-'Oro 'al ha-Yerushalmi," *Talpiyot* 4 (1949): 42–51.
56 From the sixteenth century, scholars began to suggest referents for Meiri's sobriquets. See, for example, Mordekhi ben Simeon Serillo (fl. 1559), cited in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah: Hu Be'ure u-Fisqe Masekhet Nedarim, Nazir, Soṭah ve-ḥidushe Shevu'ot leha-Rav Nimuḳe Yosef* (Halberstadt, Germany: Yeruḥam Fischel and Tzvi Hirsch ha-Levi, 1860), p. 51b; Bezalel Ashkenazi, *Responsa* (Venice: [s.n.], 1590), no. 34, p. 99b; Simeon Algazi, *Halikhot 'El: Kelale ha-Talmud ve-ha-Tosafot* (Izmir, Turkey: [s.n.], 1663), p. 19a [Gimel: 209]; H. J. Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem* ed. Isaac Benjacob (Jerusalem: 'Otzar ha-Sefarim 1992), II: 22a–b [Gimel, Kuntres 'Aharon]. The discrepancies between their suggestions give some indication of the difficulty that the reader frequently experiences in discerning to whom Meiri refers (see Benjamin Schreiber, *'Or ha-Meir: Toldot Rabbenu ha-Meiri u-Sefarav* [Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1942], pp. 33–4).
57 See Haym Soloveitchik, "History of Halakhah—Methodological Issues: A Review Essay of I. Twersky's *Rabad of Posquières*," *Jewish History* 5 (1991): 105; and Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières: A Twelfth Century Talmudist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 78.
58 J. Lange suggests that Meiri adopted this style of reference to avoid confusing the average reader; see, "Einleitung [zur *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*]," in Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft zu Frankfurt a.M., ed., *Festschrift zum 75 jährigen Bestehen der Realschule mit Lyzeum der Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft* (Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany: Hermon 1928), p. v.
59 In *Mishneh Torah*, the sobriquet *"Ḥakhamim Rishonim"* is often found for an individual Talmudic sage. Maimonides, unlike Meiri, uses this universalizing sobriquet to designate universal teachings.
60 Meiri also wrote, or intended to write, as a preface to the tenth chapter of tractate *Sanhedrin*, a monograph entitled *Ketav ha-Dat*-concerning the resurrection of the dead and the world to come, as well as other beliefs that he considered fundamental to the Jewish religion – but this treatise has not come down to us (see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Sanhedrin*, ed. Yitzḥaq Ralbag [Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1971], Chapter 11, introduction, p. 257, and conclusion, p. 269).
61 The introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* was first published in Livorno, in 1795. See Meiri, *Bet ha-beḥirah: Pisqe hilkhot Masekhet Nedarim Sotah ve-Nazir*, an edition that includes most of the introduction, up to p. 32 of the current edition, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964).

62 In justifying his own work, Meiri stepped back from the independent stance expressed in his introduction to *'Avot*, which left open the possibility for each generation to critically review the work of its predecessors and to innovate. In this introduction, to *Bet ha-Beḥirah* itself, Meiri went so far as to consider the prohibition on committing Oral Law to writing as being still in force (see Meiri, "Introduction, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*," p. 24).

63 On histories of tradition, see Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, ed. and trans. Gerson D. Cohen (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), pp. lii ff; and Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, p. 28, n. 41.

64 Meiri's indebtedness to Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, 1: 1, for this account hardly precludes the presence of idiosyncratic formulations; rather, it alerts one to search for them. See, for example, Meiri's polemic against the Christian interpretation of an aggadah (*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, introduction, p. 20, and the notes there).

65 For the extraction of hundreds of names from primary sources, Meiri is indebted to the *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* of Abraham ibn Daud. See Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," pp. 23ff (Editor's Introduction), and notes to text, passim, by Bernard Septimus; and B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 26.

66 See, as well, *Sha'are Tziyon* of Isaac de Lattes (14th century), in Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*." This work is very much indebted to Meiri's history.

67 Meiri's *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot* and "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*" were first published in Salonica, in 1821. The Parma MSS 3551–6 does not contain *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot* and its important introduction. Thus, until the 1992 publication of MS Firkovich II A 9 by S. Z. Havlin, the Palache edition (Salonica, 1821) was the only source upon which our knowledge of this text was based. Samuel Uceda (b. 1540) cites *Bet ha-Beḥirah* in his commentary to *'Avot*, *Midrash Shemuel* (Bene Brak, Israel: SLA, 1989), *'Avot* 3: 14, p. 404.

68 The same might be said about the gradual appearance of rabbinic literature in eastern Europe in the fifteenth century. For an analysis of this theme as well as Meiri's articulation of it see, Twersky, "The Contribution of Italian Sages to Rabbinic Literature," in *Italia Judaica: Atti del I Convegno internazionale Bari 18-22 maggio 1981* (Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1983), pp. 385–87. The classic study, recently reissued, is Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 2002). Regarding orality in Geonic culture, see Daphna Ephrat and Yaakov Elman, "Orality and the Institutionalization of Tradition: The Growth of the Geonic Yeshiva and the Islamic Madrasa," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 107–37; in Rabbinic culture, see Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

69 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," p. 124–5.

70 Maimonides, *Haqdamot li-Ferush ha-Mishnah*, ed. Mordecai Dov Rabinowitz (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1961), p. 86.

71 Maimonides' implied conclusion is somewhat softened because his use of the term "gaon" is a less specific than Meiri's. But Maimonides' comment remains opposed to Meiri's theory that there is an inverse relationship, in the history of halakhic literature, between level of scholarship and quality of writing.

72 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*," p. 128.

73 See ibid., p. 23: "The work of the latter-day scholars does not perfect the accomplishments of the earlier scholars; because in their own time the earlier scholars' work was not in need of enhancement. And if the work of the earlier

scholars did indeed require correction due to some shortcoming, it could not be perfected by the work of latter-day scholars; because an imperfect person cannot correct the work of a perfect one."

74 See, for example, Israel Ta-Shma, *Rabi Zeraḥyah ha-Levi: Baʿal ha-Meʾor u-Vene Ḥugo* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1992), pp. 117–18; and Twersky, *Rabad of Posquiéres*, pp. 215–21.

75 Meiri, *Bet ha-beḥirah ʿal Masekhet Ḥullin*, ed. Avraham Liss, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1970), 7a.

76 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *ʾAvot*," p. 103. Cf. Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Sanhedrin*, 17a: "The great interpreters [i.e., Rabad] wrote, 'The Talmud was handed over only to those possessed of the Tradition, or capable of correct reasoning' (*Hassagot le-Hilkhot Shemitah ve-Yovel* 9:8) and cool judgment, in order to subtract, add, and expound. But this curtain is closed before the majority of men, and only the outstanding member of his generation in knowledge, insight, clear argumentation, and settled mind is worthy of this [authority]." Meiri abstracts Rabad's self-description as an interpreter wisely and prudently striving to harmonize divergent sources, and makes of it an arresting statement of the unencumbered interpretive creativity of the true Talmudist, "to subtract, add, and expound."

77 For the placement of Meiri as an innovator in the history of aggadah interpretation, see Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud be-Eropah uvi-Tzefon Afriqah*: *Qorot*, *Ishim ve-Shitot*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 190–201. An anthology of Meiri's ethical teachings, *Sefer ha-Midot*, ed. M. M. Meshi Zahav (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1966), gathers much of its material from segments within *Bet ha-Beḥirah* of this type.

78 See Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, pp. 150–3, 219–20. *Mishneh Torah* also contains theological interpretations of aggadah, which are not significant in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*.

79 On the problem of aggadah, see Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*: *A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), esp. pp. 1–20; and Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, pp. 76–9.

80 Maimonides, in the twelfth century, made a promise—which he did not fulfill—to write a commentary revealing the inner philosophic meaning of many troubling *aggadot*. See the "Introduction to *Pereq Heleq*," in Maimonides, *Haqdamot li-Ferush ha-Mishnah*, pp. 133–4. Nonetheless, in Maimondies, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Shlomo Pines, trans. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), among other places, he gave us a taste of his aggadah interpretation (see, for example, *Guide* III: 43, and I: 59).

81 See Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières*, pp. 270–71.

82 See, for example, mention of the aggadah interpretation of Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim, in Azzariah de Rossi, *Sefer Meʾor ʿEnayim* (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1970), *ʾImre Binah*, *Yeme ʿOlam*, Chapter 40, p. 336; and see, generally, Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*.

83 "דרך הפלגה," for example, Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Sanhedrin* 17a.

84 "דרך צחות," for example, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Berakhot* 43b; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah ʿal Masekhet Sukkah*, ed. Avraham Liss, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1966), 28a.

85 "דרך הערה," for example, Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah ʿal Masekhet Nedarim*, ed. Avraham Liss (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1965), 39b.

86 These terms are also found in Meiri's other writings, for example, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, passim, and *Psalms Commentary*, introduction, passim. On these terms, see Charles Touati, "Ha-Méiri Commentateur de la *Aggadah*," *Revue des Études Juives* 166 (2007): 543–49.

87 "[Aggadah] has the character of poetic conceit whose meaning is not obscure

to one endowed with understanding. [In the Talmudic period], this method was generally known and used by everyone; just as poets use poetic expressions" (Maimonides, *Guide* III: 43).

88 BT *Nedarim* 39b.

89 Ibid., 39b.

90 BT *Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16b.

91 Rashi and Tosafot, ad loc., tell of how Satan is awed and confused by the shofar.

92 Tosafot, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16b, s.v. שאין תוקעין בתחילתה. Cf. "Quntres 'Irvuv ha-Satan," Benjamin Manasseh Lewin, ed. '*Otzar ha-Geonim*, *Rosh ha-Shanah* (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1933) 5:89–99.

93 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (Tel Aviv: Sinai,1958), 16b, p. 41. The text continues, "This is the meaning of their statement, 'Every year that is poor at its opening, becomes rich before it ends.'" See BT *Rosh ha-Shanah* 16b, "R. Isaac further said, 'Every year that is "poor" at its opening becomes "rich" before it ends.'"

94 Cf. Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 277; and Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3: 4.

95 "השטן, המסית והמדיח בהתמדת המצווה." In Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 277, Meiri interprets the "confounding of Satan" as the disruption of "the evil inclination."

96 See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16a, p. 40, bottom.

97 BT *Shabbat*, 12b.

98 Meiri, *Bet ha-beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Shabbat*, ed. Yitzḥaq Shimhon Lange (Jerusalem: Daf Ḥen, 1976), 12b, p. 52. Meiri passes over in silence a parallel passage (BT *Sotah* 36b) that would seem to call for further comment. There the angels are said to have taught the seventy languages of man.

99 See Albert Harkavy, ed., *Teshuvot ha-Geonim* (Berlin: Itskovsky, 1887), no. 373, p. 189.

100 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat* 12b, p. 52.

101 The latent connection between the rational interpretation of aggadah and the potential subversion of its authority was an issue of significance in the first half of the thirteenth century (see Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, pp. 76–85). For the attack on the authority of aggadah—as part of the seventeenth-century controversy concerning the validity of the Oral Law—see Shalom Rosenberg, "Emunat Ḥakhamim," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 291–2.

102 See Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, p. 84.

103 BT '*Avodah Zarah*, 12b; BT *Pesaḥim* 112a.

104 Meiri, *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri* '*al-Mesekhet Pesaḥim*, in *Sefer ha-Battim* '*al ha-Rambam le-Rabbenu David ben Shemuel ha-Kokhavi*, ed. Y. Blau (New York, 1978), p. 380. Cf. the interpretation of Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim of Mishnah *Shabbat* 2:4, "When the imaginative faculty becomes more active, one imagines many false things. At times, one will see in his imagination certain terrible forms standing before him. This is the true meaning of the mishnaic term, 'evil spirit,' which appears on account of adversity and illness that affect one's psychic state" (Reuven ben Ḥayyim, *Sefer ha-Tamid*, ed. Y. M. Toledano, '*Otzar* [Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1967], p. 3).

105 Maimonides gives a psychological (and antimagical) explanation for the Talmud's permission to chant an incantation over a snakebite wound. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, '*Avodat Kokhavim* 11: 11. See Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, p. 481.

106 Meiri delineates behaviors which were popular in the Talmudic period and tolerated by the Rabbis, but which the Rabbis themselves did not adopt. He

argues that the custom to avoid doing things "in pairs," under discussion in *Pesaḥim*, was one such practice: "We have explained in several places that in [Talmudic] times the common people were drawn toward folk ways like incantations, divinations, and folk practices. The Rabbis did not concern themselves to uproot any such behaviors that had no part in idolatrous custom or Amorite ways. Especially any practice in which they were habituated to the extent that their observance was ingrained to a greater or lesser degree." See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Pesaḥim* 109b, p. 234. For a similar observation concerning Talmudic medicine and amulets, see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat* 53a, 61b, 67a. Cf., also, Rashba's magical interpretation of '*Avodah Zarah* 12b in Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, Aaron Zaleznik, ed., 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 1: 61 (no. 167), and 1: 280 (no. 825).

107 Cf. BT *Betzah* 16a, and see Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 15. This interpretation is also found in Meiri, *Ḥiddushe ha-Meiri* '*al Masekhet Betzah*, ed. N. A. Goldberg (Berlin: E. Shtainthal, 1859), 16a, but it is omitted from Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Betzah*, ed. Yitzḥaq Shimshon Lange and Kalman Schlesinger (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1956), ad locum.

108 Cf. Exodus 14: 5.

109 Cf. Ezekiel 1: 12.

110 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 16.

111 Meiri seems to have inherited this interpretation from his teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim. Cf. the following excerpts from Reuven's commentary to the liturgy, *Sefer ha-Tamid.*

> ". . . וכן הוא השבת למשכילים, שהוא יום הפנאי וההשגה הטובה. ועוד נאמר כי בו, *העולם הזה*, באוכלו המעדנים, ובו *העוה*" ב, בעת השינה שתתעורר הנפש ויישן הגוף, ובעת הקיצה, *תחה*" מ, ואחר הקצתו, *זמן המשיח*, שאינו עוסק כ"א בענייני הנפש לבד, לא בענייני הגוף כלל, כי הוא נגאל מהם ביום השבת. ולכן הזכיר הנה הארבעה זמנים" (ע' 31). "*מנוחה וקדושה*, כי בו מנוחה לגוף וקדושה לנפש מהלאת הגוף, כי כל ימי החול הוא מגואל בענייני הגוף וכל מחשבותיו בהם. ומלבד זה העוסק בהרבה מלאכות, אי אפשר שלא יטמא בכמה טומאות, ושלא יגע בכמה דברים הנמאסים, ושלא יחשב מחשבות און ורמאות המטמאות הנפש" (ע' 33). "*וזקף כפופים* אשר נטו מעט מדרך השכל, ויבינו בלבבם, ישובו ורפא להם. ואפשר שנאמר זה בשבת מפני שהוא עת הפנאי ותמצא בו נפש יתרה" (ע' 29).

112 See, for example, Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*," pp. 21–2; and Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Batra* 4a, p. 15.

113 On the theological imagination expressed by the ancient Rabbis through these prohibitions, see Jeffrey Rubenstein, " *Eschatological Drama: Bavli Avodah Zarah* 2a–3b," *AJS Review* 21 (1996): 1–37.

114 See, for example, Maimonides, *Mishnah: 'im perush Moshe ben Maimon*, trans. Yosef Kafaḥ (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957) '*Avodah Zarah* 1: 1; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*: *Hu ha-Yad ha-Ḥazaqah* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957–)., '*Avodat Kokhavim* 9:4; and Tosafot, '*Avodah Zarah* 2a, s.v. "אסור."

115 For a discussion of the problem and some new documents that relate to the issue, see Israel Ta-Shema, "Yeme 'Edehem," *Tarbitz* 47 (1978): 197–210. See, as well, Jacob Katz, "He'arot le-Yeme 'Edehem," *Tarbitz* 48 (1979): 374–6; and Ta-Shema, "He'arah le-he'arah," *Tarbitz* 49 (1980): 218–9.

116 See BT '*Avodah Zarah*, Chapter 1. One Talmudic authority goes so far as to entirely prohibit trade with Christians. See the variant readings of the statement of R. Ishmael in BT '*Avodah Zarah*, 6a. For Meiri's comment on this passage, see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet* '*Avodah Zarah*, ed. A. Schreiber, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Ha-Teḥiya, 1964), p. 4. For an unusually creative *quellenforschung* of

Meiri's comment, see Lawrence Zalcman, "Christians, Notzerim, and Nebuchadnezzar's Daughter," *JQR* 81 (1991): 411–26.

117 See BT *Bava Metzi'a*, 59a.

118 See BT *Bava Qamma*, 113b.

119 BT *Sanhedrin* 57b.

120 See Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi), *Teshuvot Rashi bi-Sheloshah Ḥalaqim* ed. Israel Elfenbein (New York: [s.n.] 1943), no. 327.

121 See Tosafot, BT '*Avodah Zarah* 2a, s.v. "אסור."

122 See Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, *Perush Yehonatan ha-Kohen mi-Lunel 'al ha-Mishnah veha-Rif: Masekhet Bava Qama*, ed. Shamma Friedman (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1969), p. 106; and Yeḥiel ben Joseph of Paris, *Vikkuaḥ* (Thorn, Poland: [s.n.], 1873), pp. 9–11.

123 See, for example, Moshe Halbertal, "Human Rights and Membership Rights in the Jewish Tradition," *Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life*, Moshe Halbertal and Donniel Hartman, eds. (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 179–87 and Gary Remer, "Ha-Me'iri's Theory of Religious Toleration," in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 71–91. For a critical discussion of the notion of tolerance, see Adam B. Seligman, *Modest Claims: Dialogues and Essays on Tolerance and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); and, in Judaism, see Suzanne Last Stone, "Tolerence versus Pluralism in Judaism," *Journal of Human Rights* 2 (2003): 105–117.

124 I.e. גר תושב.

125 BT '*Avodah Zarah* 65a.

126 See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet 'Avodah Zarah*, pp. 59–60.

127 The MS reads, "וזהו עיקר האמונה שראוי להאמין."

128 See Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili, *Milḥemet Mitzvah*, MS Parma 2749-De Rossi 155, folio 225a (examined from a microfilm copy at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, reel P113.). On this passage, see Sigfried Stein, *Jewish-Christian Disputations in 13th-Century Narbonne* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1969), pp. 18–19; and Robert Chazan, "Anti-Usury Efforts in Narbonne," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 41–2 (1975): 64–6. For greater context regarding Me'ili's polemical work, see Chazan, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On MS Parma 2749, see Benjamin, Richler, ed., *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*: *Catalogue*, palaeographical and codicological descriptions, Malachi Beit-Arié (Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2001), Cat. no. 1393.

129 In order to loosen restrictions on wine trade with Muslims, Maimonides and the geonim eliminated the requirement of formal acceptance for the "resident alien" (see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* [Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965], *Ma'akhalot 'Asurot* 11:7). In this one instance, Meiri applies the same modification of the "resident alien" concept also to Christians (see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Avodah Zarah*, p. 214). These scholars, however, would not have considered this modification to obligate the Jewish community to support a Muslim (or Christian) as a "resident alien."

130 In his letter to Louis IX, ha-Me'ili begins with the statement that both Christians and Jews agree on the unity of God (see Me'ili, *Milḥemet Mitzvah*, folio 64a–b). On this letter, see Chazan, "A Jewish Plaint to Saint Louis," pp. 287–305. Cf. Solomon ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah* ed. Azriel Shoḥat (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1947), p. 29: "Thomas said, 'That great scholar [an Abravanel] showed me a commentary of one the great early sages of more than six hundred years ago. It

said the following, "One who believes in the existence of God, the Creation [of the world], prophecy, and reward and punishment is a religious man." Christians believe in all these. And although they believe in the Trinity, this is not a denial of Divine Unity, as they maintain that the Trinity is a Unity. Therefore they are religious men, and we have no permission by religious law to kill them or harm their property.'"

131 "ועובדי האלהות על אי זה צד "אעפ"י שאמונתם רחוקה מאמונתנו," Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Qamma*, p. 330. Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim also writes of non-Jewish religions in a comparatively positive and universalistic tone: *תהילת ה' ידבר פי, כל היום וכן בדורות הבאים לעולם. יברכו כל בשר שם קדשו,* כי בכל דור ודור התפלה מצויה בנו, וגם כל האומות איש איש לפי אמונתו, כמו שנאמר, "ובכל מקום מוקטר מוגש לשמי, ומנחה טהרה." *ואנחנו נברך יה,* אנחנו ישראל נברך יה יותר מהם, כי אנו יודעים לפני מי עומדים, והם לא ידעו ולא יבינו ואין להם חלק לג ע. ולכן אנו מברכים אותו בעוה"ז ולעוה"ב, כי כל ישראל יש להם "חלק לעוה"ב" עמ' 1–20; השווה רמב"ם, מו"נ" א:לו; ומשנה תורה, "ע"ז, א).

Reuven explains that all the nations worship God; although not as perfectly, and with the same reward, as the Jewish people.

132 On the meaning of the term "דת" see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan 1964), pp. 290, n.67; 191, n. 34; and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Milon Leshon ha-'Ivrit* (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'ah le-'Or le-Zekher Eli'ezer Ben-Yehudah, 1948–1954), pp. 1011–12, s.v. "דת." Concerning Meiri's use of the phrase, "דרכי הדתות—religious laws," cf., for example, "that which is necessary to believe according to religious laws," in his description of his lost work, *Ketav ha-Dat* (*Bet ha-Beḥirah ha-Shalem* '*al Masekhet Sanhedrin*, ed. Yitzḥaq Ralbag (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1971), Chapter 11, introduction); Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Ḥulin*, ed. Avraham Liss, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1970), introdution; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Mo'ed Qatan*, ed. Binyamin Tzvi Yehudah Rabinowitz-Te'omim and Shim'on Streilitz, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Harry Fischel Institute, 1962), 28a; Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction" [in Hebrew], in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), p. 14 (hereafter, this portion of *Bet ha-Beḥirah, Berakhot*, will be "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction"*)*; Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, ed. Joseph Cohn (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1936), 123:4; and Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 256.

133 See, for example, Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Pesaḥim*, ed. Yosef ha-Kohen Klein (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), 21b; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Yoma*, ed. Joseph Klein (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1970), 84b; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Qiddushin*, ed. A. Schreiber (Jerusalem: Ha-Teḥya, 1963), 18a; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Qamma*, 37b, 113a-b; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Metzi'a*, 24a, 59a, 111a; and Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, 13b, 26a. For a thorough listing and reproduction of passages, in addition to a reactionary interpretation, see D. Z. Helman, "Leshonot ha-Meiri she-Nikhtevu le-Teshuvat ha-Minim," *Tzefunot* 1 (1989): 65–72.

134 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Gittin*, ed. Kalman Schlesinger, 5th ed. (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1967), pp. 257–8.

135 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 53.

136 Ibid., p. 39.

137 Ibid., p. 53.

138 Ibid., p. 59.

139 Meiri, *Psalms Commentary*, p. 47

140 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 59. Cited in a fragment of pseudo-Ghazali, entitled *Mozne ha-'Iyyunim le-Tzaddeq ha-Sarappim*, known only in

the Hebrew version of Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, published from a Paris manuscript by Y. L. Dukes in '*Otzar Neḥmad* 2 (1857): 194–99. This text warns the philosopher of his obligation to belong to the normative community of a particular religion; for a man with no religion is worthy of being put to death. "Aristotle's command" is in fact harsher than any interpretation of the Talmudic ruling. On this text, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: *Das Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart.* 10 vols. eds. Jakob Klatzkin and Ismar Elbogen (Berlin: Eschkol, 1928), 2:291, s.v. Algazali.

141 In *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides explains that theological and moral truths are the basis of the perfection of a community, and that many laws of the Torah are designed to combat the irrational and immoral ways of the Sabian culture that enveloped ancient Israel. See Maimonides, *Guide*, III: 27, and II:40. Jacob Katz suggests that Meiri's conception of the "constrained peoples" is indebted to Maimonides' description of the moral and theological functions of the Law, just as Meiri's conception of the "nations not constrained" is indebted to Maimonides' description of Sabian culture. See Maimonides, *Guide*, III: 29ff. See Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 210–13; J. David Bleich, "Divine Unity in Maimonides, the Tosafists, and Me'iri," *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 237–54.

142 Meiri knew that Maimonides considered the doctrine of the Trinity an idolatrous negation of the absolute Unity of the Deity—a transgression of the highest order. Nonetheless, Meiri found in Christian belief and conduct sufficient theological and moral merit to grant them the new nonidolatrous status of "nations constrained by religious laws." The extent to which Meiri thought of himself as departing from the Master is unclear.

143 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 28

144 Ibid., p. 48

145 Meiri left the prohibition on drinking ordinary gentile wine, and other measures tied to the ban on intermarriage, in place. "The remaining similar prohibitions, whether related to the derivation of benefit or eating, are among those that were decreed because of concern about intermarriage, and they are equally applicable to all nations," ibid., p. 59.

146 Ibid., p. 214. The justification for this discrimination, in Meiri's view, was that a lawless nation need not be treated in accordance with legal constraints.

147 Jacob Katz, "Sovlanut Datit ba-Shitato shel Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri," *Zion* 18 (1953): 15–35. See also, Katz, *Ben Yehudim le-Goyim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1960), Chapter 10.

148 Katz, "Sovlanut," p. 27.

149 E. E. Urbach, "Shitat ha-Sovlanut shel R. Menaḥem ha-Meiri-Meqorah u-Migbalotehah," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society*, ed. Etkes and Salmon, pp. 34–44.

150 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 59.

151 See Katz, "'Od 'al Sovlanut ha-Datit shel R. Menaḥem ha-Meiri," *Zion* 46 (1981): 243–6.

152 Gerald Blidstein, "Yaḥaso shel R. Menaḥem Meiri le-Nokhri-ben Apologetica le-Hafnamah," *Zion* 51 (1986): 153–66. See also, Blidstein, "Maimonides and Meiri on the Legitimacy of Non-Judaic Religion," in *Scholars and Scholarship in Jewish History*, ed. Leo Landman (New York: Ktav, 1990).

153 (1) The legal obligation to return a lost object to a gentile "constrained by religious laws" is the same as the obligation to return a lost object to a Jew (see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Qamma*, p. 330). (2) Although the text as we have it is unclear, the prohibition of "abuse" [אונאה], perhaps mercantile but at least

verbal, is identical for Jew and gentile "constrained by religious laws" (see Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Metzi'a*, pp. 100, 219, 329).

154 In a polemical work written about a generation before Meiri (c. 1246), the Languedocian Talmudist Meir ben Simeon ha-Me'ili explains to his adversary that the correct belief of Christians bestows upon them the status of "resident aliens," who, when in need, are to be supported by Jews. "Concerning a non-Jew who does not worship idols, we are commanded to sustain him. . . . It is well known from your sages that you believe that the Creator is without beginning or end, is One, created both the upper and lower worlds, is immanent but unseen, examines the heart, rewards the good and punishes the wicked. This is the essence of the Faith that one must hold (זהו עיקר האמונה שראוי להאמין)." See Me'ili, *Milḥemet Mitzvah*, folio 225a. Me'ili does away with the Talmudic requirement of formal acceptance of these laws, and designates Christian worship as an abandonment of idolatry. By their belief in the Trinity, Christians do not deny that God is One, says Me'ili.

The distance, however, between Me'ili and Meiri is significant. In Me'ili's presentation, there are three groups: pagans, Jews, and resident aliens. Me'ili has yet to create a new post-Talmudic legal category, and to shift emphasis from the theological to the moral. On the passage cited above, see Stein, *Jewish-Christian Disputations*, pp. 18–19; and Chazan, "Anti-Usury Efforts in Narbonne," pp. 64–66.

155 See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Metzi'a*, p. 401. Meiri does not wish to eliminate the permission to lend to the "resident alien" at interest, yet he wishes him to be called a "brother" in as far as there exists an obligation to support him.

156 See Judah Herzl Henkin, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Bene Banim* 4 vols. (Jerusalem, [s.n.]: 1980–2004), 3:35. I thank Rabbi Robert Klapper of the Center for Modern Orthodox Leadership for this citation.

157 David Berger, "Jews, Gentiles, and the Modern Egalitarian Ethos: Some Tentative Thoughts," *Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age*, Marc Stern, ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 83–108.

158 Moshe Halbertal, "'Ones Possessed of Religion': Religious Tolerance in the Teachings of the Me'iri," *Edah* 1 (2000): 1–24; trans. from Moshe Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provans* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 80–108.

159 Maimonides disqualifies Muslims and Christians equally from the whole range of juridical rights and privileges denied gentiles in Jewish law. Although it is impossible to determine, Maimonides may have posited an ontological gap between Jews and gentiles, regardless of their theological commitments, in order to reach his decision.

160 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Qama*, p. 330.

161 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 207.

162 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Gittin*, pp. 257–8.

163 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Bava Metzi'a*, p. 219.

164 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet Shabbat*, ed. Yitzḥaq Shimhon Lange (Jerusalem: Daf Ḥen, 1976), pp. 614–15 (cf. Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 14). Abba Mari ben Moses takes the Talmudic text as a statement of God's ability to alter the astral configurations (see Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 260).

165 Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *De'ot*, Chapter 2; and Maimonides, *Mishnah: 'im perush Moshe ben Maimon*, trans. Yosef Kafaḥ (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963–1967), '*Avot*, Intro., Chapter 4, for a nonastrological version of this teaching.

166 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat*, p. 615.

167 Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, p. 637.

168 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avodah Zarah*, p. 61; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Horayot*, ed. A. Schreiber (Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1958), p. 275. The phrase with which the passage concludes, "Thus have my masters taught," may only refer to the ruling itself in regard to the legal status of the apostate (cf. Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Yevamot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. [Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1967], pp. 69, 91). See also, Gerald Blidstein, "Who is not a Jew: The Medieval Discussion," *Israel Law Review* 11 (1976): 369–90.

169 Gedaliah Oren, "'Aḥvat ba'ale ha-Dat ha-Gedurim be-Darkhe ha-Datot: Nokhri, Ger Toshav ve-Isha be-Mishnat ha-Meiri," *Da'at* 60 (2007): 29–49, sees Meiri's analysis, questionably, as reaching even further.

170 In *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*, 3: 11.

171 See above, pp. 34 and 54.

172 Isaac de Lattes, *Sha'are Tziyyon*, in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Masekhet 'Avot*, introduction, ed. Havlin, 2nd ed. (Cleveland: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1995), p. 179.

173 For the speculation that Meiri's rationalist interpretations and his prophilosophic stance in the Second Controversy contributed to the neglect of his works, see Michael Guttmann, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Mesekhet Sanhedrin*, Abraham Schreiber, ed. (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1930)," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 74 (1930): 474–5.

174 Aaron ben Jacob ha-Kohen of Lunel, '*Orḥot Ḥayyim*, Moshe Schlesinger, ed. 2 vols. (Berlin: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1902). On the work of Aaron ha-Kohen of Lunel, see Harry Fox, "Pesaqim u-Teshuvot mi-Ge'one Mizraḥ u-Ma'arav," *Mada'e ha-Yahadut* 37 (1997): 239–265; and the response of Simḥa Emanuel, "R. Aaron ha-Kohen mi-Lunel u-Shitat ha-Meḥqar be-Sifrut ha-Rabanit," *Mada'e ha-Yahadut* 38 (1998): 393–408.

175 See, for example, David ben Solomon ibn Abi Zimra, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Radbaz* (New York: Otzar ha-Sefarim, 1962), 3: 405, on the worship of demons; and Samuel Uceda, *Midrash Shemuel*, '*Avot* 3: 14, p. 404, on the abuse of allegory.

176 These citations include Meiri's significant statements concerning the status of the Christians and Christianity in Talmudic law.

177 As indicated in n. 65, above, Parma MSS 3551–6 does not contain *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot* and its important introduction.

178 See Richler, Benjamin, ed., *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*: *Catalogue*, Palaeographical and codicological descriptions Malachi Beit-Arié (Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2001), Cat. no. 741. Mordecai Nathan was a physician, whom Joseph ben Solomon Colon (Maharik) calls "his teacher." For other manuscripts ordered by Mordecai Nathan, see Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B.Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 18), 31:580–2. On Mordecai Nathan, see Ram Ben Shalom, "Yitshaq Natan, *Me'or Galutenu*: Hanhagah, Pulmus vi-Yetsirah Intelektu'alit be-Merkaz Ḥayeha shel Yahadut Provens, ba-Me'ah ha-15" (MA Thesis : Tel-Aviv University, 1989).

179 See Ḥayyim Joseph Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*, ed. Isaac Benjacob (Jerusalem: 'Otzar ha-Sefarim 1992), *Ma'arekhet Gedolim* I: 68b; and Giovanni Bernardo de-Rossi, *Dizionario Storico degli Autori Ebrei* (Parma: Dalla Reale Stamperia,1802), 2: 48.

180 See the Hebrew approbation and the "Note Storico-Critiche" in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah: Pisqe hilkhot Masekhet Nedarim Sotah ve-Nazir*, Moses Benjamin Foa, ed. (Livorno: A. Sa'adon, 1795).

181 Giuliano Tamani reports that: "Stern himself had described [these manuscripts] in a special catalogue, now in Parma MS 3558, which bears the following title: *Catalogo ragionato* (*in ebraico e in italiano*) *dei 111 codici ebraici manoscritti*, *che divisi in 119 volumi comprendono 206 opere acquistati nel 1846 dalla Ducale Biblio-*

teca di Parma con approvazione della graziosissima Sovrana S.A.R. Maria Luigia felicemente regnante, nel quale si descrivono essi codici nella forma esteriore ed intrinseca per il loro merito letterario ed antiquario, e con alcune notizie biografiche degli autori e degli amanuensi. Per cura de Salomo Gottlieb Stern da Rohonci in Ungaria. Parma, 1847. Most of the manucripts come from the private collection of the already mentioned M. B. Fo·. At present they are in Parma, bound in 102 volumes, in the following MSS: 3546–3557." (Tamani, "The History of the Collection," in Richler, Benjamin, ed. *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*: *Catalogue*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.) See also the preface and afterword of Salman Gottleib Stern to Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot* (Vienna: Adalbert della Torre, 1854).

182 See Pietro Perreau, "Catalogo dei Codici Ebraici della Biblioteca di Parma non descritti dal De-Rossi," in *Cataloghi dei Codici Orientali di alcune Biblioteche d'Italia* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1878); and see Moritz Steinschneider's related notes in *Hebräische Bibliographie* 7 (1864): 118, and 8 (1865): 96; and in Kobak, ed., *Jeschurun* 6 (1868): 49–50.

183 See Soloveitchik, "The Rabad of Posquières," p. 17. Powerful creative Talmudists in the Middle Ages took (and, today, still take) very little interest in Meiri's light and breezy discussions of the Talmudic *suggyah*. The great Jewish legal minds of the thirteenth and fourteenth century—the Catalonians, Ramban, Rashba, and Ritva—dealt extensively with the writing of the twelfth-century Languedocian Talmudists Rabi, Rabad and Zerahyah ha-Levi. They did not, however, cite the work of the succeeding generations of Languedocian Talmudists at all. While acknowledging that much later Languedocian Jewish legal writing was simply not of the caliber necessary to engage the attention of the great Catalonian Talmudists, Moshe Halbertal nevertheless suggests the Catalonian Talmudists consciously abandoned Languedocian halakhic writing on account of the rationalistic orientation of its authors; a fascinating but completely unsubstantiated hypothesis. See Habertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 219–220. The utter lack of interest of the Catalonian Talmudists in the vast halakhic literature of contemporary Languedoc of course remains intriguing. For a detailed account of the expulsions from the kingdom of France that were not complete until 1394, see W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last of the Capetians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 214–59.

184 A comprehensive examination of the practices of transmission of medieval Hebrew texts would allow us to weigh the role of an allegiant community in their preservation. Precise studies that address this question are, as yet, lacking. The question is a large one, and can, at this time, be answered only impressionistically.

5 On the eve of the controversy (1300)

At the turn of the thirteenth century, Meiri of Perpignan was the pre-eminent halakhist of Languedocian Jewry. Meiri represents the epitome of the new Languedocian synthesis in regard to both literary style and religious teaching. His *Bet ha-Beḥirah* integrates Maimonidean codificatory sensibilities within a unique Talmudic commentary; his moderate rationalism integrated the legacy of Greco-Arabic learning within Languedocian Talmudic culture. In Meiri's mind, the first synthesis was connected profoundly to the second: *Mishneh Torah* provided Meiri's literary ideal for *Bet ha-Beḥirah*; *The Guide of the Perplexed*, his cultural ideal for Languedocian Jewry. Meiri envisioned the great Talmudists of Languedoc—together with its elite group of astronomers, mathematicians, physicians, and philosophers—as forming a generations-old community that felicitously integrated Jewish and Greco-Arabic learning; the goal of this learning being a greater understanding and more profound worship of God, and the glorification of the Jewish people in the eyes of the nations.

Perceptions of exile and immortality

Meiri's vision was, essentially, that of Jewish scholars secure in their shared work in their Languedocian exile. The Maimonidean conception of Judaism and immortality that held sway in Languedoc also appears to have affected that Jewish community's perceptions of Exile. Maimonides and his followers taught that the pinnacle of Torah study is the study of philosophic metaphysics. Maimonidean scholars understood the commandments of Judaism as extraordinarily well-designed social and political instruments, intended to fashion a society in which a distinguished individual might best develop the moral and intellectual characteristics necessary to pursue pure metaphysical study. The Maimonidean interpretation of Judaism equates the comprehension of the metaphysics of Aristotle, as understood through his medieval Arabic commentators, with knowledge of God. It deems such knowledge as the goal of humanity and the key to immortality, by which the individual human intellect, upon passing, may attach to the lowest celestial Intelligence, known as the Active Intellect. Such a universalistic Torah—a teaching that

the highest human good is to be achieved through the comprehension of philosophic metaphysics—might serve to revalue radically the historic prominence given in Jewish tradition to the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews then living in the Land of Israel. Within the Languedocian understanding of Judaism, both theologically and legally, it might well be that any place where a community of Jews is likely to achieve philosophic comprehension of God may be deemed as a "homeland." In fact, one may follow Meiri making an argument along this line. Using the claim of the midrash that "the world did not achieve its purpose until the day in which the Song of Songs was given," Meiri comments,

> That is to say: the creation of Man—which is the final goal of this lower world—does not achieve its purpose until [an individual] achieves that which is intended allegorically in the Song of Songs. This [achievement] is the final goal and the pin upon which everything hangs, which is the conjunction of the soul upon its separation from this sordid matter and its unification with the Separate Intelligence, as is intended allegorically in the verse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth (Song of Songs 1: 2)."[1]

The goal of humanity, according to Meiri, is for the individual to be able, through focused, philosophic contemplation at the moment of death, to bring his or her soul into conjunction with the Divine. Such an act of conjunction is described in medieval (and later) Jewish philosophic literature as "death with a kiss." Thus the first verse of the Song of Songs—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—is to be understood, according to Meiri, not as an alluring erotic statement, but as an allegorical expression of King Solomon's ultimate desire: to die in a state of contemplative ecstasy through which he will become conjoined with the Active Intellect, as if by a "kiss." In teaching that Creation's purpose was not fulfilled until the giving of the Song of Songs, the midrash, in Meiri's understanding, hints at that book's allegorical instruction that human perfection consists in the philosophic comprehension of God and the ability to ecstatically unite at death with the lowest celestial Intelligence. In Meiri's reading, both the Bible and the Rabbis speak, in one voice, of the metaphysical comprehension of God as the greatest human happiness. "Thus," Meiri explains,

> King David stated, 'You have undone my sackcloth and girded me with joy' (Psalms 30: 12) allegorically. As 'sackcloth' allegorically points to matter and the body, [King David] meant that with it being stripped away from him, he would be girded with the true Joy.[2]

In a profound manifestation of the cultural transformation of Languedocian Jewry, Meiri came to understand traditional Jewish study—the proverbial "four cubits of halakha"—to include the ability to distinguish truth from

falsehood philosophically. Such a conception does not, in Meiri's view, displace Torah study as the means through which human perfection is to be achieved, but rather demands the reconfiguration of Torah study so that its goal is philosophic discrimination. To this end, Meiri divided humanity into three groups: workers, statesmen, and philosophers. Only the philosophers, in his interpretation, are beloved by God, as, in the words of the Rabbis, "the Holy One, blessed be He, only has room for the four cubits of halakha":

> The human species may be divided into three groups, according to the tripartite division of the soul. It is well known that these faculties of the soul are the vegetative, the generative, and the intellectual. . . .
>
> The first category of humans follows the vegetative faculty. This is the majority. They consist of farmers and tradesmen, as all their activity relates to Man's growth and development. On account of their primary activity, this group does not posses intellectual perfection, or even [perfection] in moral conduct. One should not glory in this group or pay any attention to its contribution. . . .
>
> The second category of humans follows the generative faculty. They are the lawmakers, political leaders, and persons possessed of good character and disposition. Although this group possess one of the perfections in [the ability] to select good from evil, since they have no relation to philosophic truth and [the ability] to select truth from falsehood, this group is not the principle existence of Man. [Their perfection] is on its own worthless, but is preliminary to "its fellow who is superior to it."
>
> The third category of humans follows the intellectual faculty. They are the scholars who grasp the Truth. They are called "God's children," born in His image and form. They are the foundation of the world and its basis, and they are the goal of the existence of the human species as "the Holy One, blessed be He, only has room for the four cubits of halakha."[3]

As Meiri restricts intimacy with God in "the four cubits of halakhah" to "the scholars who grasp the Truth," we now know that the philosophic comprehension of God is not only the goal of human existence, as expressed allegorically by Kings David and Solomon, but the desired end of Torah study as well. Meiri expresses this view in a wide range of exegetical contexts. For example, he understands the appearance of the *Shekhinah* said by the Rabbis to be consequent upon the study of Torah as metonymy for philosophic comprehension. Regarding the saying in Mishnah *'Avot*, "When ten [people] sit and occupy themselves with Torah, the *Shekhinah* dwells among them," Meiri comments, "That is to say that something of His Glory, may He be blessed, is comprehended by them, according to their subject of study."[4]

In Meiri's view—not unlike in Maimonides'—the goal of the Torah is none other than the universal human goal of an environment supported by workers and maintained by statesmen for the purpose of philosophic comprehension. Meiri, however, draws a novel halakhic conclusion from his

philosophic interpretation of Jewish tradition: a Jew who lives in a place of knowledge and ethics lives, as it were, in the Land of Israel, and is forbidden to leave there in order to live in other lands. The Talmudic text from which Meiri derives this ruling reads, "Just as it is prohibited to depart from the Land of Israel in order to live outside of the Land, so too it is prohibited to depart from Babylonia in order to live in other lands." On this basis of this text, Meiri establishes a general rule:

> Every place where wisdom and fear of sin are found has the status of the Land of Israel. Thus the Rabbis said; "Anyone who lives in Babylonia lives, as it were, in the Land of Israel."
>
> The Rabbis [prohibited departure from the Land] because Israel does not ordinarily attain wisdom and fear of sin outside of it—on account of the multitude of troubles and the yoke of Exile that they suffer there—save by great effort. . . .
>
> In the Land of Israel, however, wisdom and fear of sin are ordinarily found, so that on account of them, its inhabitants comprehend the Glory of their Creator and merit to enjoy the radiance of the *Shekhinah*.[5]

The special status of Land of Israel is due, in Meiri's view, to the likelihood that "wisdom" (scientific and philosophic learning) and "fear of sin" (observance of basic moral laws) are to be found there. Therefore, any land where scientific learning and the observance of basic moral laws are to be found has the legal status of the Land of Israel, in Meiri's view; anyone who lives in such a land lives, as it were, in the Land of Israel. Its inhabitants may experience the glory of God through philosophic comprehension and so (as is characteristic of Meiri's reading of the Rabbis) enjoy the radiance of the *Shekhinah*.

An intellectual context for this startling view—that Jews living in a territory characterized by knowledge and ethics live in "the Land of Israel"—may be found in the theory of the philosophic progress of humanity that Meiri shares with Samuel ibn Tibbon (d. 1235) and his Languedocian heirs.[6] In the intellectual and spiritual history of the West, Meiri saw a progression from societies' apprehension of the material world, to their apprehension of abstract truths known through reason, to their apprehension of the transcendent reality upon which, in Meiri's words, "Religion" and "law-bound religious conduct" are based.

> Beliefs must be arrived at through one of four ways: sense perception, self-evident claims, [philosophic inquiry], or received tradition. In ancient times, [people] of flawed views gave credence only to that which might be perceived through the senses or that which was axiomatically self-evident. . . . Accordingly, they denied the existence of God or anything non-material and [rejected] all the practices of religion; only a few such people now continue to inhabit various remote places. The

> philosopher, however, acquires through inquiry those beliefs that may be attained through syllogism and demonstration. Even so, mankind's beliefs could not be perfected until the Torah arrived. One who accepts it, takes on the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and, in addition to the foregoing, believes in everything that the ways of Religion require in a perfect fashion that lacks nothing.[7]

"The ways of Religion," in the Languedocian philosophic tradition in which Meiri worked, is the belief in a creating, overseeing, and recompensing Deity Who cannot be known through reason. Religion, in this view, constitutes the social order, as its authoritative teachings guarantee the law-bound behaviors and practices that are an integral part of civilization. Meiri took the courageous and brilliant step of applying this Languedocian understanding of the function of religion to the religious history of the West as well as to the interpretation of halakha. In Antiquity, it had been the unique role of Judaism, in Meiri's view, to protect civilization from the barbaric forces of paganism. The rise of the Christian and Muslim faiths over the past millennium, however, had transformed most of the known world into a society of religious belief and lawful conduct, and had pushed paganism and lawlessness beyond its borders. Therefore, Meiri could argue that the Talmudic laws discriminating against idolaters do not apply to Christians and that Jews might create a "homeland" in Christendom.

Moderate Maimonidean scholars

At the turn of the thirteenth century, there were a range of views in Languedoc regarding the way in which the philosophic tradition and Judaism ultimately ought to be reconciled. Following the path of Samuel ibn Tibbon, there were Jewish scholars inclined to find the teachings of Aristotle and Averroes in the deepest layers of Scripture. Such scholars, for example, increasingly avoided the understanding that Scripture taught the creation of the world out of absolute privation by the will of God. They felt compelled to interpret Scripture more naturalistically, despite the profound theological reorientation that such an interpretation entailed, as they had come to understand the cosmogony along these lines. Similarly, many of the philosophically informed Jewish scholars in Languedoc had become persuaded by the internal logic of models for human survival after death that emphasized the role of the properly developed intellect in one's survival. Of course, any model of human immortality that required philosophic comprehension raised doubts about the precise relationship between the individual's observance of the Commandments and his or her ultimate reward. Other Languedocian Jewish scholars, although philosophically informed, sought out philosophic interpretations of Judaism of a more moderate character. Such interpretations had the advantage, in their eyes, of allowing a greater role for traditional understandings on such issues as Creation and immortality.

Because of the centrality of Maimonides' contribution to the synthesis of Judaism with the philosophic tradition, the debate about the character of the synthesis frequently took the form of a debate about the meaning of Maimonidean teaching. Of course, the proper interpretation of Maimonides is notoriously difficult and continues to vex scholars to this day. In the context of early-fourteenth-century Languedoc, a wide range of scholars argued that Maimonidean teaching supported their views, some rather moderate and some quite radical. One such scholar was Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier. Abba Mari drew heavily on Maimonides' *The Guide of the Perplexed* and acknowledged it as the authoritative expression of the Torah's inner philosophic meaning. As Abba Mari's philosophic teachings are quite moderate in character, he is usually termed a moderate Maimonidean thinker. His Maimonidean commitments are present throughout his writing. Regarding Maimonides' signature interpretation of ancient Judaism's long-lost esoteric branches of learning, "The Account of Creation" and "The Account of the Chariot,"[8] as Aristotelian physics and metaphysics, Abba Mari's Maimonidean allegiance shines through clearly. As Abba Mari explains in his manifesto, *Sefer ha-Yareah*:

> It is well known to wise men that there are two classes of sciences. The first is the science of nature [physics], which is the science of "The Account of Creation." The second is the science of divine things [metaphysics], which is "The Account of the Chariot"[9] . . . Without doubt, all of the sciences were known to the scholars of our Torah[10]. . . . On account of our sins, which had multiplied, the wisdom of our scholars was lost—with the loss of our secret books on the esoteric sciences—when we were exiled from our Land. Only the smallest amount of these esoteric teachings, which were like mountains suspended by a hair, were transferred to the books of other peoples and distributed among the nations. These very teachings are that which is found in the works of speculation written by the sages of Greece.[11]

Following Maimonides, Abba Mari understood that the ancient Jews were the original possessors of a large body of esoteric teaching, remains of which are now to be found in Greek philosophy. Due to exile, persecution, and the constraints of esotericism, this ancient wisdom was lost to the Jewish people.[12] The philosophic positions of Abba Mari and Meiri are extremely close. Meiri's interpretation of the Talmudic texts that refer to "The Account of Creation" and "The Account of the Chariot" easily demonstrate Meiri's Maimonidean identification of Judaism's long-lost esoteric lore with philosophy. Meiri glossed "The Account of Creation" as "the knowledge of the science of nature [physics] that included the knowledge of two worlds: the world of the elements and the world of the spheres." "The Account of the Chariot" mentioned in the Mishnah was, in Meiri's words, "knowledge of metaphysics,[13] the world of the angels; that is the knowledge of their true

existence, and the knowledge of His existence, may He be praised, and His unity."[14] Effectively hidden by the severe halakhic restrictions upon its instruction, there remains of this original teaching only the inner meanings of certain biblical passages and scattered observations encased in the "husks" of rabbinic *aggadot*. Nevertheless, the Maimonidean scholar desires, and indeed is obliged, to penetrate these inner meanings, and thus to remove the husks encasing them. As a result, the remnants of the lost physics and metaphysics of the Jews will emerge.

Articulating another position that defines the moderate Maimonidean stance, Meiri and Abba Mari shared the view that in order to reason correctly through the question of the world's creation or eternal existence—as well as other delicate philosophic issues—tradition's guidance is necessary, as this is not subject to philosophic demonstration. In this archetypal moderate Maimonidean interpretation, the danger inherent in investigating fundamental questions of this nature is too great without grounding in Jewish tradition. In fact, Meiri opens the introduction to his massive *Bet ha-Beḥirah* with the exposition of this view.

> You already know that our opponents—I mean those who follow demonstrative proofs and philosophical syllogisms in all their beliefs—attribute severe difficulties to us on account of certain beliefs. . . .[15] The complete neutralization of these difficulties cannot be achieved by just anyone; only singular individuals, servants of the Lord, "who stand in the House of the Lord at night."[16]

In regard to philosophic questions that have no clear proof, each side naturally presents arguments that cast doubt upon their opponents' position; the arguments produced by opponents of traditional views are the "severe difficulties" of which Meiri wrote. Though these arguments are not decisive, the ability to neutralize them with stronger counterarguments that support traditional views is the domain of "God's [philosophically trained] servants," and for all practical purposes lies beyond the reach of philosophers not committed to religious tradition.[17] Philosophic questions of this type are too subtle for men to analyze correctly without the guidance of traditional knowledge. One must be committed to the traditional notion of the world's creation before setting out upon his investigation, if one hopes to arrive at a philosophically correct understanding of this issue. Meiri expressed this fundamentally moderate philosophic view in an interpretation of a verse in Psalms:

> The "testimony of the Lord," may He be praised, "is trustworthy"[18]: It is fitting to believe it without investigations and inquiries. But after the achievement of faith [אמונה], it is fitting to examine its contents philosophically. Through this investigation one acquires the ultimate perfection, by arriving at through speculation those things that were

> not comprehended by our opponents—by subjecting [their positions] to difficulties and objections, perhaps even more powerful and persuasive.
>
> All the more so, he will achieve, along with this, the perfection of investigation in the other fundamentals also comprehended by our opponents, His existence, may He be praised, His unity, and the absence of all corporeality from Him. But despite the knowledge of these things, their intellects remain "innocent" and impoverished from [the knowledge of] the area just mentioned. When they understand [the guidance provided by tradition in philosophic matters], they will comprehend completely.[19]

The view that knowledge resulting from religious commitment is a prerequisite for correct philosophic reasoning is stated nowhere in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, and more radical readers of the *Guide* would have found such a view contrary to Maimonides' intention. Meiri's moderate understanding of this central philosophic issue, however, dovetails quite nicely with the understanding of Abba Mari. In fact, Abba Mari saw eye-to-eye with Meiri on the relationship between "tradition" and "demonstration," as may be seen from Abba Mari's introduction to *Minḥat Qena'ot*:

> This then is the good gift that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Israel: For concerning this issue [of creation or eternity]—about which the non-Jewish sages of those days became so confused that they tripped, as it were, and fell into a deep pit from which they were unable to emerge—the Lord enlightened our eyes, and revealed the answer to us by means of true and correct prophecy of which there is no doubt.[20]

As moderate Maimonidean thinkers, Meiri and Abba Mari shared a common view of the critical role that faith has in Judaism. Both scholars maintained that commitment to tradition provides the key to acquiring firm knowledge of the creation of the world. In the face of philosophic adversaries, both Meiri and Abba Mari pointed to the Sabbath as the Torah's testimony to God's creation of the world.[21] In Abba Mari's presentation, Abraham deduced philosophically that the world was created, but Moses—as is manifest by the Torah's commandment to observe the Sabbath—knew this with a certainty beyond the reach of philosophic investigation.[22]

Regarding the critical and controversial question of the nature and extent of immortality, Meiri and Abba Mari are aligned as well. As thinkers committed to a philosophic understanding of Judaism, both scholars upheld the theory that makes the achievement of immortality directly dependent upon the actualization of the human intellect through the attainment of metaphysical knowledge. After death, only the intellectually actualized component of the soul would join the divine realm. In his discussion of the existence of God as one of the "roots" of Judaism, Abba Mari concluded, "The

philosophic comprehension of Him, may He be praised, is the ultimate reward, the true deliverance, and eternal life. It is the ultimate goal of the Torah."[23]

The actualization of the human intellect through the philosophic comprehension of God is itself the attainment of immortality, because, through it, a component of the human soul survives death. Abba Mari describes such metaphysical comprehension as "the conjunction of the human intellect with the Heavens."[24] The actualized intellect is no longer the ephemeral stuff of this earth, but part of the Divine. Meiri expresses this same understanding of immortality in technically precise terms:

> The Active Intellect is the cause that leads the human intellect from its potential to active state. Through comprehension of the Active Intellect, the human intellect separates from the body so that it unites with the Subject of its contemplation.[25]

As a result of comprehending the "Active Intellect," the transient material intellect develops into and merges with the undying Divine Intellect, which is the object of its contemplation.

This naturalistic theory of intellectual immortality raised a delicate question: would the souls of those good and pious individuals who were unable to study metaphysics simply perish? Less moderate Maimonidean thinkers in the Languedoc strongly implied that this was indeed the case. They argued, somewhat brazenly, that the study of metaphysics was indeed necessary to achieve immortality.[26] As moderate Maimonidean scholars, Abba Mari and Meiri, however, thought not. They had found a way out of the strong position that required every Jew who would survive his death to pursue philosophic study. Abba Mari and Meiri understood traditional Jewish observance to teach the Jew a modicum of philosophic truths, and thus to enable a portion of his soul intellectually to survive death.[27] In an interpretation of King Solomon's words in Song of Songs, Abba Mari explains that the Torah provides a substitute for philosophic understanding.

> Solomon advised: [Israel], if you are unable to comprehend the roots of the Torah on the basis of philosophic syllogism [חכמה ומפורת]—which is true knowledge and complete comprehension—"go follow the tracks of the sheep." That is to say: scrupulously observe the Torah and the commandments, and have faith in the received wisdom of the Sages, who received it from the Prophets. This is what is meant by, "graze your kids by the tents of the shepherds."[28]

For the non-philosopher, Jewish study and observance provide a sufficiently abstract understanding of God, in Abba Mari's view. According to this interpretation, precise philosophic knowledge of God constitutes a higher level of understanding required for "true knowledge and complete comprehension."

Meiri also saw observance of the commandments as the means through which most Jews could grasp the metaphysical truths needed to live beyond their days on earth.

> The fulfillment of the Commandments—as long as the intention of those who observe them is the worship of their Creator—is sufficient for the masses and the general populace. But it is fitting for special individuals to proceed to the very end of what it is possible for the human intellect to reach. . . . This knowledge is the final goal of those who seek perfection.[29]

Only "special individuals" will reach philosophic comprehension, "the final goal of those who seek perfection." While defending Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc against Catalonian mockery, Meiri explicitly distances himself from the more extreme view that the soul ignorant of metaphysics dies with the body:

> I was told that some students in the study house of our master [Rashba] were mocking certain authors in this country [Languedoc] for maintaining that the soul does not survive death unless it has achieved philosophic knowledge and comprehension.
>
> I responded with an analogy in praise of philosophy: The simple believer, in my view, is like the philosophic cognoscente. "The share of those who remain with the baggage shall be as the share of those who go down to battle; they shall divide together."[30]

In this and other comments, Meiri consistently defends the sufficiency of traditional belief and publicly rejects the view that only the philosophically sophisticated will attain immortality. Rather, the philosopher and the believer alike shall receive a share in the future world.[31] To "go down to philosophic battle" is, of course, more commendable than to "remain with the traditional baggage." Through careful analyses such as this one, Meiri worked in concert with other moderates to forge a path that respected and sought to enhance both tradition and philosophy. Meiri is circumspect, however, as to how much better it is to achieve understanding philosophically than merely to accept traditional teachings; to trumpet the superior portion of the philosophic elite might disturb the average believer. Meiri supported Abba Mari's view that philosophic interpretation had become inappropriately popularized in the Languedoc.[32] Nonetheless, Meiri implies laconically that one's recompense increases with increased philosophic understanding. "'The more Torah study, the more life.'[33] That is, eternal life; so much the more so with one's comprehension of the Glory of his Creator, to the extent to which this is possible."[34]

The more traditional study, the greater will be one's philosophic actualization of intellect, which is one's eternal survival. The metaphysical comprehension of God, furthermore, results in the richest eternal life. Like

Meiri, Abba Mari also holds that immortality consists in the philosophic actualization of the intellect. He acknowledges, as well, that comprehension is superior to belief. Abba Mari, therefore, probably shared with Meiri a conception of degrees of eternal reward.[35] Abba Mari and Meiri strenuously objected to the complete exclusion of the philosophically unsophisticated from eternal life. Instead, they both found a way to grant the average believer a portion of the philosopher's life after death.[36]

Despite all of these profound similarities, Abba Mari and Meiri differed on the degree of danger involved in philosophic study. This difference between the two moderate Maimonidean scholars is reflected in their different exegesis of the biblical verse, "Incline your ear and listen to the words of the philosophers [חכמים], but let your heart follow my position."[37] Both men interpret this verse as granting permission for the faithful student to engage in philosophic study, but they disagree as to whom the verse should be applied. Meiri's exegesis appears as part of his presentation of Ecclesiastes as a model for philosophic study.

> [King Solomon] composed Ecclesiastes to reflect the process of study in which one should seek to understand opposing [philosophic] views—given that one's fear of God precedes his investigation. Let no one dissent and contend that through this study [the student] may depart from the True path.
>
> [Solomon] relied upon [the student's fear of God] when he said, "Incline your ear and listen to the words of the philosophers [חכמים], but let your heart follow my position." Upon which the Rabbis comment, "The text does not read '[let your heart follow] their position,' rather, '[let it follow] my position.'"[38] That is: although I have granted you permission to listen to the words of the philosophers [חכמים]—their arguments, proofs and syllogisms—do not entertain thoughts of confusion and uncertainty; rather "let your heart follow my position," that is, the position of the Torah.[39]

Since faith will guard against the deceptive proofs of the philosophers, Meiri permits any believer to pursue philosophic study without further prerequisites. Abba Mari also interprets the words of Solomon to permit the study of philosophy. He restricts the verse's application, however, to "great scholars":

> For great scholars, the way [to philosophic study] is not closed off, because they remove the meal and retain the flour. . . . King Solomon, of blessed memory, referred to them when he said, "Incline your ear and listen to the words of the Wise, but let your heart follow my position." The Rabbis explain, "The text does not read 'to their position,' rather 'to my position.'" This exegesis is supported by the Rabbis' statement, "Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate [his heretical teacher Elishah ben Abuyah], he ate the fruit and discarded the rind."[40]

> But average men—who are not perfect in their knowledge of the Torah, who have not reached the age at which it is appropriate to involve oneself with this science, and who do not know how to take precautions—should reject the fruit lest they choke on the rind.[41]

Abba Mari enumerates the prerequisites necessary, in his view, to be a "great scholar": those who have perfect knowledge of the Torah, have reached an appropriate age, and are able to guard against dangers inherent in this inquiry. Abba Mari thought that both he and Meiri were worthy to enter God's inner chamber of philosophic study. As we shall see, however, Abba Mari was concerned that many Languedocian Jews far less worthy had entered as well.

Philosophic allegory

Philosophic allegory drove the interpretation of both Abba Mari and Meiri. As a follower of Maimonides, Abba Mari viewed philosophic allegory as essential to a correct understanding of the Torah. Like the author of the *Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Abba Mari maintained that correct allegorical interpretations of, for example, biblical references to God's body and God's emotions should be publicized and made known to all Jews. In Abba Mari's own writing—in his introduction to *Minḥat Qena'ot*, for example, or in his *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*—extensive knowledge and use of the Languedocian Jewish tradition of philosophic allegory are in evidence. As a leading Jewish scholar engaged in biblical interpretation, Meiri made extensive use of philosophic allegory as an interpretive tool; both in his linear, verse commentaries, two of which have come down us (Proverbs and Psalms),[42] as well as in his extensive exegetical writing in *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah* and *Bet ha-Beḥirah*. In *Proverbs Commentary*,[43] Meiri drew from a broad swath of the geonic-Andalusian-Languedocian legacy of biblical interpretation,[44] as well as from the Hebrew translations of Arabic proverbs and philosophic ethics.[45] Meiri first analyzed each verse grammatically and then probed for its internal, allegorical meaning. Through allegorical interpretation that generally preserves the text's external meaning, Meiri found in the three books of the "Solomonic Corpus"—Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Song of Songs—three distinct stages in King Solomon's spiritual development (or, perhaps, modes of his spiritual expression).[46] This exegetical strategy is also the basis of Samuel ibn Tibbon's *Ecclesiastes Commentary*, his son Moses' *Song of Songs Commentary*, and Jacob Anatoli's *Malmad ha-Talmidim*.[47] Ecclesiastes is the metaphysical grappling of a youth; Proverbs, the mature work of philosophic ethics; and Song of Songs, the yearning and anticipation of an elder for the departure of his acquired intellect and its subsequent union with God. In the introduction to his *Proverbs Commentary*, Meiri describes the Solomonic parable and indicates its ethical value for the masses and the elite.

> When the fool reaches the kernel [beneath the chaff], his curiosity diminishes and he is as satisfied as one who has reached the grain within. So too is the parable in the mouth of the fool: His curiosity diminishes upon comprehension of the literal meaning [הנגלה] as if he had arrived upon the allegorical meaning [הנסתר] hidden within it. Although the revealed meaning has benefit for the masses, this benefit is meager in comparison to the allegorical meaning—the genuine benefit for the perceptive and understanding.[48]

The reader must recognize the nature of Proverbs and strive to the best of his ability to reach the ethically nourishing grain hidden within the kernel.[49] Thus Meiri's *Proverbs Commentary* and his other writings share exegetical goals. In fact, Meiri frequently notes in this commentary that he is reiterating an expansive interpretation of a verse that appears in one of his other works. Meiri might have seen a verse-by-verse commentary to this biblical book, in part, as a way to anthologize and gain control over his scattered interpretive insights.[50]

In Proverbs 18: 16, Meiri found guidelines concerning the importance of philosophic instruction and the requirements of esotericism. The verse reads, "A man's gift eases his way, and places him among the great." Meiri takes "a man's gift" to refer to the philosophic knowledge that one might bestow upon others.

> In this statement, [Solomon] points allegorically [בדרך נסתר רמז] to the consequences of favorable intellectual influence over one's colleagues—the highest stage of human achievement.[51] [Favorable influence of one's colleagues] perfects one and enables one to stand among "the upright,"[52] who are called "great ones." Thus, in my interpretation, "A man's gift" is that which "gives him access." Teaching others will "ease his way." This is the case so long as one "places [his teaching] before great ones." I mean qualified students who are prepared to receive this overflow. Thus, the Sage said, "Do not confer Wisdom upon one who is not fit, lest he destroy it. And do not withhold [Wisdom] from the wise, lest they be destroyed."

Teaching others that which one has come to understand is the highest level of human perfection; one's contribution of teaching philosophy to others will place him among the great. Meiri then reverses the implied subject and object to yield additional meaning: man must also place his gift among the great—that is, qualified—students—in order to achieve perfection. Meiri supports his interpretation with a epigram from *Mivhar Peninim*: if placed before the wrong people, Wisdom will be harmed; if deprived of Wisdom, the wise will be harmed.[54]

In Proverbs 21: 30–1, Meiri found an admonition concerning any attempt to step beyond the limits of human knowledge. The verse reads, "No wisdom,

no prudence, and no counsel can prevail against the Lord. The horse is readied for the day of battle, but victory comes from the Lord." Meiri took Wisdom's struggle to "prevail against the Lord" to refer to Man's intellectual hubris. "The readied horse" is the arrogant philosopher's hylic intellect.

> Allegorically interpreted [בדרך נסתר], this passage is a reminder that discussion of that which is beyond human comprehension is logically absurd.[55] Man must take care "not to break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against him."[56] Thus [Solomon] said, "No wisdom can prevail against the Lord." And although "the horse"—that is the [hylic] intellect striving to become Active—"is readied for the day of battle"—that is the Torah battle to reach the *Summum Bonum*—[the horse] must come to know and recognize that "victory comes from the Lord"—that one is obliged to praise and exalt Him, and to deny oneself the presumption to His comprehension, may He be praised.[57]

In Meiri's view, the human intellect is extremely limited in its ability to comprehend such metaphysical matters as the nature of God and the incorporeal intelligences. Trying to understand the nature of God directly is logically absurd, an overstepping of bounds, and an assault upon the Deity. In the exalted religious struggle to reach the "*Summum Bonum"*—that is, the contemplation of metaphysical matters—man, Meiri states, must humbly recognize his intellectual limitations and be bound by them. By accepting that "victory comes from the Lord," one may reach this highest goal.

Reading from a cluster of verses from Psalms 36, Meiri offers a particularly rich philosophic interpretation.[58] His approach to these verses also may be taken as indicative of his understanding of prayer at its most subline, "the service of the heart" (or praise of God), and the Divine contemplation that it stimulates. The liturgical Psalms text (part of the weekly prayers) to which Meiri addresses himself reads in part, "O Lord, Your Mercy is in the Heavens. Your faithfulness reaches the skies. Your righteousness is like high mountains. Your justice is like the great deep. Man and Beast You deliver, O Lord."[59]

Meiri treats this text as a philosophic palimpsest in which he discovers three distinct philosophic readings. His final interpretation of the same two verses makes them a figural allegory for the neoplatonic cosmos. On this occasion, a phrase of the psalm "Your Mercy is in the heavens" is made to refer to the celestial world of the angels and the spheres; and our terrestrial world is the referent of the phrase "Your justice is like the great deep." As was well known to Meiri's readers, individual "form" continually departs from and returns to discrete fragments of "matter."

> In regard to the interpretation of this psalm, I have observed that some have given the phrase, "Your righteousness is like high mountains," a

> more hidden allegorical referent [דברים יותר נסתרים]. . . . "Like high mountains" refers to the existence of the two Upper Worlds: the World of the Angels and the World of the Spheres. They are called "high mountains" because of their exalted position and stature. This interpretation explains why the verse has the word "like" instead of the word "in [high mountains]." The two worlds are called "Your righteousness" on account of their Eternity. "Your justice is like the great deep" therefore refers to the existence of the Lower World, which persists by the will of God and endures by His general causation—i.e., the preservation of species, although individuals will continually perish and be replaced. In this interpretation, "[Man and Beast] You deliver, [O Lord]" means: You cause them to persist. Thus [the Psalmist] called "Form," "Man," and "Matter," "Beast," and attributed persistence to each in order of its importance. However, this interpretation does not sit so well with the literal sense of verses.[60]

The "high mountains" of the psalm are the worlds of the angels and the spheres; this lower world is the "great deep." Individual forms continually depart from and rejoin different portions of matter of varying quality. It is by preserving this state of affairs that God "delivers Man and Beast," form and matter. Meiri dismisses his final, most philosophic interpretation as awkward and unlikely, but finds it worthy of mention nonetheless.[61]

Limits of allegorical interpretation

In an excursus on the proper use of allegory in biblical exegesis, Meiri clarifies the way in which philosophic sermons in Languedoc might shift from the allegory he advocated and practiced extensively, to the allegory he prohibited and would polemicize against. Meiri speaks of Scripture as divisible into three types of texts, which should be interpreted in three different ways:[62]

> Our Torah and Holy Books may be divided into three categories. The first category consists of [those texts] which should be understood only according to their "hidden" [בסתר][63] meaning, not according to their "apparent" [בגלה] meaning. . . . All the verses referring to the corporeality of God, may He be praised, or His bodily parts—as well as *aggadot* and stories of impossible occurrences that have no connection to miracles and wonders—should be understood after this manner of interpretation.[64]

In Meiri's first textual category, elements of biblical narrative that present philosophic problems, are given exclusively figurative interpretations. One such group of narrative elements are references to God's body. It is known that God has no body, as a body would imply in Him multiplicity and imperfection.[65] Biblical texts that refer to God's body must therefore be

interpreted so as to negate their literal meaning.[66] Meiri also takes certain *aggadot* to belong to this textual category.[67]

Meiri's second category is the inverse of his first: biblical texts that must be interpreted literally. In the first category, texts that seemed to imply philosophic problems are assigned new, nonliteral meanings. In the second category, texts are protected from allegorical interpretation.

> The second category consists of [those texts] which should be understood only according to their "apparent" meaning. [This category includes] the "intelligible commandments," which would be fitting for mankind to observe even if they had not been commanded, like the prohibitions against murder, theft, and robbery, as well as honoring one's father and mother, and the like. These have no "inner meanings," and make reference to nothing other than themselves. [This category also includes] the story of the Creation, and other miracles.[68]

In the description of this category, Meiri prohibits the allegorical interpretation of texts such as those that had been the subject of the problematic sermons in Languedoc. The Creation story, like the prohibition of murder, is not to sacrifice its literal meaning; miracles are to be understood as they were related. Meiri also makes an analogy between the minor details of commandments and the minor details of narrative. Post-Maimonidean rationalists generally held it futile to assign philosophic meanings to legal details that could not avoid being specified.[69] Meiri claimed that it is similarly futile to assign allegorical meaning to narrative details that could not help but be related: once it was commanded that sheep were to be sacrificed on a certain day, there would be a specific number of offerings. So, too, once Eliphaz's concubine's name was given, she could not have a different one. As both types of details were enumerated out of necessity, neither should have any deeper intentions. Meiri accuses the preachers who violate this logic of foolishness and heresy. Only if there is some moral lesson to be derived from a necessary narrative detail may this interpretive restriction be relaxed.

Meiri's third category strives to distinguish between interpretation that replaces the literal meaning of a commandment and interpretation that deepens it. As long as the revealed "hidden" meaning leaves the "apparent" sense in place, such uncovering is desirable.

> The third category is [those texts] whose "apparent" [בגלה] meaning is their principal intention, but which point to some "hidden" [בסתר] meaning that issues from [the principal intention] and is more exalted than it. . . . The commandments [in this category] are to be fulfilled based upon their "apparent" meaning, but are to be understood based upon their "hidden" meaning. [The "hidden" meaning] will be the "fruit" of the commandment, while the fulfillment of its "apparent" meaning will guard the "fruit."[70]

In Meiri's first textual category, a hidden meaning simply *replaces* the problematic literal element of narrative. In his third category, interpretation sustains the literal meaning and *adds* a new, hidden meaning. To illustrate this third category, Meiri mentions two examples: the prohibition to shave certain parts of the head and the commandment to rest on the Sabbath. The prohibition of shaving, he explains, may be intended to prevent a practice which could lead to idolatry.[71] Rest on the Sabbath inculcates the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which in turn allows for the possibility that the world's laws might be temporarily altered by their Founder. In regard to both examples, Meiri explains, the interpretation of the commandment does not obviate its literal observance; in fact, it may enhance it.

Taken together, Meiri objects to the application of exegetical techniques to laws and historical narratives that he endorses, employs, and even requires for the interpretation of other categories of Scripture, as well as problematic *aggadot*. With an analogy to various species of fruit, Meiri attempts to clarify and concretize the type of interpretation appropriate to each of his three textual categories.

> The textual category in which only the "hidden" meaning is to be accepted resembles those fruits whose shell is discarded and whose inner part is consumed, "like the first fig to ripen on the fig tree,"[72] almonds, peanuts, and their kind. The textual category in which only the "apparent" meaning is to be accepted resembles those fruits whose shell is consumed and whose core is discarded, like the citron, the pear, and the apricot. The textual category in which the "apparent" meaning is to be fulfilled while the "hidden" meaning is to be believed resembles those fruits whose shell and core are consumed together, like "grapes in the wilderness"[73] and their kind.[74]

Meiri requires allegorical interpretation—like the shelling of a peanut—for philosophically problematic narrative elements whose apparent meaning must be discarded. He prohibits allegoresis of intelligible commandments, so that their literal sense may be enjoyed—like an apricot whose core is left uneaten—without the complication of a deeper meaning. He endorses allegorical interpretation that preserves the apparent sense of those commandments that—like a grape whose skin and fruit are both consumed—possess two levels of meaning.

Whether a proposed hidden meaning actually deepens—or undermines—the apparent meaning of a text for its audience was a delicate and uncertain matter, which gave rise to much uneasiness in Languedoc. Meiri therefore hoped to steer the radical allegorists in his community away from those texts where the dangers of antinomianism and excessive naturalism were most significant (categories two and three), turning them toward those texts that the rationalist tradition had established as rich in philosophic insights (category one). Meiri does not appear overly concerned as to the precise

means by which preachers of inappropriate allegory in Languedoc are brought back into interpretive compliance; yet he does not think it necessary or appropriate to remove allegorical interpretation from public sermons altogether. To protect the literal meaning of the Torah's laws and the historicity of many of its narratives, he would rather restrict the application of allegory. In addition, he would enforce the prohibition against public exposition of the Torah's "Secrets"—the allegorical interpretation of those texts that both Meiri and the preachers held to contain statements of Judaism's esoteric lore.[75] Meiri says that he would give Abba Mari his full support to pursue such a plan.

> You [Abba Mari] should have expended maximum effort [to combat philosophic sermons]. Not that I would disallow them entirely, but I would loosen the rein for [the preachers] to allegorize as they please in *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Canticles*, *Ecclesiastes*, the *Midrashim*, the *aggadot* that are related to [philosophic] matters, and some of the *Psalms* that are related to physics. But they should not extend their hand to the three accounts of the Chariot,[76] the account of Creation, any of the Secrets of the Torah and Prophecy and their profundities, or the few *aggadot* which relate to these matters.[77]

As we have seen, Meiri himself followed this advice and directed his substantial allegorical interests and intuitions toward Proverbs and Psalms, but refrained from any such activity in regard to the Torah and Prophets. In regard to the philosophic interpretation of *aggadah*, Meiri restrained himself along similar lines. In response to an exegetical problem that he found in a highly esteemed literal interpretation of an *aggadah*, he actually proposes a new, allegorical interpretation.[78] But in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*, commenting on the passages which hint at the Torah's secret teaching, Meiri comments laconically, "These Talmudic *aggadot* contain many esoteric statements concerning the 'Account of Creation' and the 'Account of the Chariot' which it is not within the bounds of this work to explain."[79] *Bet ha-Beḥirah* is devoted to the study of Talmudic law, and justifiably passes over much Talmudic *aggadah* in silence. At this point in his commentary, however, Meiri wished to inform us that he is constrained by the bounds of esotericism.

At the dawn of the fourteenth century, Meiri and other Jewish scholars made an impressive intellectual home in Languedoc—a home sufficiently comfortable and innovative to encourage Meiri so far as to include Languedoc philosophically within the boundaries of the Land of Israel. However, in every home there are arguments; a major one loomed in Languedoc, one that would draw in the neighbors. Meiri and his fellow moderate, Abba Mari, were about to find themselves on opposite sides of one of the most important and bitter family arguments in Languedoc in many decades.

Notes

1 Menaḥem ben Solomon ha-Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, ed. M. M. Meshi-Zahav (Jerusalem: Otzar ha-Posqim, 1968), p. 3.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 25.
4 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* '*al Masekhet* '*Avot*, ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1995), p. 118.
5 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ketubot*, ed. M. Cohen (Jerusalem: Orah, 1976), p. 433.
6 Cf. above, pp. 34, 54 and 93.
7 Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, ed. Joseph Cohn (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1936), p. 47.
8 See Mishnah *Ḥagigah* 2: 1.
9 Abba Mari, *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 1 in Abba Mari ben Joseph of Lunel, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 648–9.
10 Ibid., Chapter 2 in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 649–50.
11 Ibid., Chapter 6 in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 653.
12 Cf. Maimonides, *Mishnah: 'im perush Moshe ben Maimon*, trans. and ed. Yosef Kafaḥ (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963–67), *Ḥagigah*, 2: 1; and Maimonides, *Guide*, 1: 71.
13 Lit. "מה שאחר הטבע–that which is beyond the physics."
14 See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*, ed. Yitzḥaq Shimshon Lange (Tel Aviv: 'Atid, 1956), 11a (p. 27). In Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*. ed. Havlin, 2nd ed., 3: 22 (pp. 58–9), this interpretation of the "Account of Creation" and the "Account of the Chariot" is strongly implied.
15 For example, creation ex nihilo and the disruption of nature through miracles.
16 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), p. 7, para. 2.
17 Cf. above, pp. 51–3.
18 Psalms 19: 8.
19 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," p. 8.
20 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., "*Minḥat Qena'ot*", Chapter 14, p. 259; see also ibid., Chapter 10, p. 250.
21 See "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Berakhot*, ed. Shemuel Dykman, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1964), p. 7 (cf. Exodus 20: 11). See also Meiri, *Perush Tehillim*, ed. Joseph Cohn (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1936), 19: 10, 123: 4; Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. A. Sofer (New York: Hotza'at Talpiyot, 1950), p. 256; and Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, ed. Menaḥem Mendel Meshi-Zahav (Jerusalem: Otzar ha-Posqim, 1968), 3: 8 and 11: 14**.**
22 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, introduction, Chapter 13, p. 255.
23 Ibid., Chapter 9, p. 247.
24 See ibid., Chapter 9, p. 244, and Chapter 8, p. 242.
25 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*, 11a, p. 27.
26 See the letter of a five-member group from Montpellier, Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 845–53, esp. p. 852; Solomon of Lunel, pp. 470–5; and Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, pp. 506–13.
27 For the suggestion that this theory has its basis in the writings of Maimonides, see Arthur Hyman, "Maimonides' Thirteen Principles," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 119–45, esp. p. 142.

28 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, Chapter 3, pp. 234–5. Cf. Song of Songs 1: 8.
29 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction," pp. 7–8. A similar teaching is found in the commentary of Reuven ben Ḥayyim, *Sefer ha-Tamid*, ed. Y. M. Toledano, *'Otzar he-Ḥayyim* 11 (1935), p. 28.
30 See Simeon ben Joseph, *Ḥoshen Mishpat*, p. 155 (cf. I Samuel 30: 24). For this use of I Samuel 30: 24 outside of the apologetic context, see Meiri, *Perush Mishle* 17: 5, "The philosophically innocent man is 'poor,' but he who mocks him 'affronts his Maker.'"
31 In granting the sufficiency of simple observance and belief, Meiri does not deny the philosophic conception of immortality. To describe Meiri's defense of the metaphysically innocent as protecting an esoteric view is to misstate Meiri's moderate Maimonidean position. See, however, Moshe Halbertal, "R. Menaḥem ha-Me'iri: ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah," *Tarbitz* 63 (1995): 71–4; and Habertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provans* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 29–33.
32 See Simeon ben Joseph, "Hoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufman (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), Hebrew section, p. 150.
33 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, ed. Havlin (Cleveland, OH: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1995), 2: 6.
34 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, p. 87. In a similarly cautious stand, Meiri does not deny corporeal resurrection, but explains a mishnah to refer first to the revivification of the soul and then to the "traditionalist doctrine of the revivification of the dead." See ibid., 4: 26 (p. 216). In the commentary of Meiri's teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim, however, the spiritual interpretation of resurrection is unequivocal. *Sefer ha-Tamid*, p. 31. Moshe Halbertal suggests that Meiri and his teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim, held "esoteric" views on a number of major issues, including the resurrection of the dead and the creation of the world. Indeed, a number of Meiri's formulations regarding such sensitive issues are extremely cautious and compressed, and Meiri can be caught contradicting himself on these same delicate topics. It seems most unlikely, however, that either Meiri or his teacher turned to modes of esotericism—deliberately contradicting themselves or elaborately concealing their true views, for example—as a strategies for scholarly communication. See Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 133–140.
35 Simeon ben Joseph, a member of Abba Mari's circle, finds Meiri's position praiseworthy, *Ḥoshen Mishpat*, pp.155–6. Simeon does not object to the superiority of the philosopher to the believer, but to the complete exclusion of the pious believer from eternal life.
36 I thank Professor M. Schmidman for his suggestion to investigate the role of "demonstrated" versus "nondemonstrated" faith for Abba Mari and Meiri.
37 Proverbs 22: 17.
38 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah* 15b.
39 Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, introduction, p. 4. Isaac bar Sheshet Perfet (Rivash), d. 1408, writes that Maimonides quotes Proverbs 22: 17 as the third introductory verse to *The Guide of the Perplexed* in order to invoke this interpretation. See Isaac bar Sheshet Perfet, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rav Yitzḥaq bar Sheshet*, ed. David Metzger (Jerusalem: Mekhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1993), Chapter 45, p. 51a.
40 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah* 15b.
41 *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter14 in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 659–60.
42 There seems to be no evidence for the claim that Meiri wrote a commentary to the whole Bible. See Joseph Stein, "Zu Meiris Psalmenkommentar," *Monatsschrift*

für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums 82 (1938): 46–7. This dubious claim travels from Geiger, "Ma'amar 'al R. Levi ben R. Avraham ben R. Ḥayyim u-Qetzat Bene Doro," *He-halutz* 2 (1853): 16; to Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27: 538; to Benjamin Schreiber,'*Or ha-Meir: Toldot Rabbenu ha-Meiri u-Sefarav* (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1942), p. 28. The claim is made on the basis of Meiri's reference to his previous interpretation of verses from various biblical books. Meiri most likely refers to his interpretation of that verse in one or another of his known works.

Isaac ben Solomon ha-Kohen, *Job Commentary* (Constantinople: [s.n.], 1545), introduction, pp. 1b, 3a, praises a certain Meiri's *Job Commentary* above all others, and expresses his intention to imitate its structure. Isaac refers, however, to *Meir 'Iyov* (Salonica, 1517) of Meir ben Isaac Arama. See Zobel, "Qetzat Peratim," pp. 92–3. Isaac ben Solomon Yavetz acknowledges the use of Menaḥem Meiri's *Commentaries* to Psalms and Job in his own *Commentaries* to those books, *Tehillat ha-Shem* and *Yir'at Shaddai*. See Isaac ben Solomon Yavetz, *Torat Ḥesed* (Istanbul: [s.n.], 1593), introduction, p. 2b. Yavetz may refer as well to Meir Arama, who also penned a commentary to Psalms, entitled *Meir Tehillot* (Venice, 1590). This matter requires investigation. One manuscript of Meiri's *Proverbs Commentary* does conclude with reference to his *Job Commentary*. See Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, p. iv.

43 Meiri's *Proverbs Commentary* was first published in Leiria, Portugal, in 1492, facing the commentary of Gersonides. This edition was one of five Hebrew volumes printed by Samuel ben Abraham de Ortas before the cessation of Jewish printing in Iberia in 1497. Meiri's *Commentary* in this edition, which I have examined in microform, contains a number of interpolations by a certain Solomon. See Renan, *Les Rabbins français*, p. 540. The publisher of this now-rare Portuguese incunabulum justifiably saw the rationalist interpretations of these two Languedocian scholars as complementary. Abraham ben Jacob Gavison (d. 1578) of Tlemcen, Algeria, used the two commentaries found in the Leiria edition as the starting point of his investigation of each verse of Proverbs. See Abraham Gavison, '*Omer ha-Shikhehah* (Livorno: Abraham Meldola, 1748; reprint, with introduction by Rene Sirat, Jerusalem: Kedem, 1973). The Gavison family moved from Granada to Tlemcen with the expulsion of 1492.

44 Most notably, Meiri cites (without attribution): Se'adyah Gaon's *Derishat he-Ḥokhmah*, Jonah ibn Janaḥ's *Sefer ha-Riqmah*, Joseph Kimḥi's *Sefer Ḥuqqah*, and David Kimḥi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim*. See editor's notes, Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, passim.

45 For example, Solomon ibn Gabirol, *Mivhar Peninim* ed. and trans. B.H. Ascher (London: Trubner, 1859). On the authorship of this work, see Alexander Marx, "Gabirol's Authorship of the *Choice of Pearls* and the Two Versions of Joseph Kimḥi's *Shekel Hakodesh*," *HUCA* 4 (1927): 438–48.

46 See Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, introduction., pp. 3–4.

47 Cf. Meiri's and Anatoli's interpretations of Ecclesiastes 12: 11, "The teachings of the wise are like goads," in, respectively, *Perush Mishle*, introduction, pp. 9–10, and Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, introduction.

48 *Perush Mishle*, introduction, p. 11. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* I: introduction; and Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," *Journal of World History* 11 (1968): 203: "Scriptural exegesis is perhaps the major vehicle for popular philosophic expression."

49 See *Perush Mishle*, introduction, p. 12.

50 On the relationship between philosophic teaching and exegesis, see Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 95.

51 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* III: 51.
52 Cf. Zechariah 3: 7.
53 Meiri, *Perush Mishle* 18: 16, p. 182. See *Mivhar Peninim*, *Sha'ar he-Ḥokhmah*, p. 13a.
54 This interpretation encapsulates Meiri's position in the Second Controversy.
55 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, Epistle Dedicatory I: 31–4.
56 Cf. Exodus 19: 24; and Mishnah *Ḥagigah* 2: 1; Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*, ad loc.; and Maimonides, *Mishnah Commentary*, ad loc.
57 Meiri, *Perush Mishle* 21: 30–1, p. 213.
58 Meiri's *Psalms Commentary* seems to have been one of his later works, since in it he mentions *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* (completed in 1300), and the *Proverbs Commentary*. Meiri's *Psalms Commentary* lacks the *Proverbs Commentary*'s two-tiered literal/allegorical structure, and lacks as well the latter's density of philosophic interpretation. *Psalms Commentary*, rather, focuses on the surface meaning of Psalms, and is saturated with anonymous citations from David Kimḥi's *Psalms Commentary* that address this interpretive category. See Yehudah Fries-Horev, "He'arot le-Ferush ha-Meiri 'al Tehillim," *Qiryat Sefer* 14 (1937): 16–20; and Joseph Stein, "Zu Meiris Psalmenkommentar," pp. 48–50. But, as Psalms are the songs of David and not the wisdom of Solomon, this interpretive focus is appropriate. Nonetheless, when Meiri confronted worthy passages, he provided philosophic interpretations similar to those in his other works. The exegesis of Psalms 19: 8–10, for example, is a principle source for Meiri's monograph-length introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*. In *Psalms Commentary*, Meiri reiterated much of this earlier interpretation of the verse, and then referred the reader to it. See *Perush Tehillim* 19: 8–10; and Joseph Stein, "Zu Meiris Psalmenkommentar," pp. 51–54, where *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, introduction, and *Perush Tehillim* 19: 10 are reproduced in parallel columns and compared.

Meiri's *Psalms Commentary* was published for the first time in Jerusalem, in 1936. This edition, the only one available, is not of the highest quality. It was prepared in Jerusalem from a photograph of one incomplete and unreliable manuscript (Vatican, Heb. 527), and supplemented by a photograph of pages from another (Oxford, Opp. 213), in sections where the text of the first had been destroyed. The readings from Kimḥi's *Commentary*, reproduced by Fries-Horev, are helpful in reconstructing the text.
59 Psalms 36: 6–7.
60 "ואין פשטי המקראות מתישבים בזה כל כך." Cf. Meiri, *Perush Tehillim* 1: end; 22: end; and 45: end.
61 For Meiri's relationship to scriptural allegory and its Languedocian context, see above, pp. 58–61 and below.
62 Yedayah ha-Penini speaks of two types of biblical texts and four types of aggadic texts, and considers whether each should receive literal or nonliteral interpretation. See Ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, in Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashbah*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), I: 418, pp. 169b–71b. Centuries earlier, Se'adyah Gaon spoke of four conditions under which a biblical text should be removed from its literal sense. See Se'adyah ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt (New Haven, CT: 1948), 2: 17, p. 415.
63 Maimonides uses the word "בסתר" in this sense—allegorical without external meaning—in his description of the exegetical basis of Christianity. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *hu ha-Yad ha-hazakah*, 14 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), *Melakhim* 11: 4 (uncensored).
64 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *'Avot*, 3: 11, p. 132.
66 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* I: 35.
64 Another instance of an element of biblical narrative that belongs to this category

is the story of the building of a tower to the heavens—which God and His Court frustrated. Meiri interprets it as a trope for the builders' arrogant denial of things divine. See Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*, 3: 11, p. 132. For Meiri, the existence of a tower, stairway, or fortress that reached the heavens—and God—was absurd. An interpretation of such a narrative element must therefore vitiate its "apparent" meaning. See above, p. 54. For the exciting and consequential *quellenforschung* of this biblical interpretation, see Moshe Halbertal, "R. Menaḥem ha-Me'iri: ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah," *Tarbiṣ* 63 (1995): 114–18.

67 He would therefore most likely view the aggadah of the entombed patriarch Abraham lying in the bosom of his wife Sarah as having no literal meaning. He might even have accepted the interpretation that the Talmudic text was a description of the relationship between form and matter.

68 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*, 3: 11, p. 133.

69 Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, III: 26.

70 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*, 3: 11, p. 134.

71 Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, '*Avodah Zarah* 12: 1; idem, *Sefer ha-Mitsvot* trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Shabbetai Fraekel (Jerusalem: Kehilat Bene Yosef, 1995), *Lo Ta'aseh*, no. 43; idem, *Guide*, III: 37.

72 Cf. Hosea 9: 10.

73 Cf. ibid.

74 Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*", *Avot*, 3: 11, pp. 135–6.

75 For a similar argument, cf. Ha-Penini, *Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut*, pp. 157a and 157b–158a.

76 Ezekiel 1: 1–28 and 8: 1–4; and Isaiah 6: 1–13.

77 Simeon ben Joseph, *Ḥoshen Mishpat*, p. 167.

78 See Meiri, "*Bet ha-Beḥirah*", *Avot* 5: 7, pp. 235–43.

79 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Ḥagigah*, 2: 1 (p. 28).

6 Knowledge and authority in dispute (1303–1304)

The clear voices and perceptive interpretations of Meiri and Abba Mari are representative of the conflicts and tensions that animated Languedocian Jewish culture at the dawn of the fourteenth century. Languedocian scholars were responsible for a thriving network of learning that connected the Jewish communities in the cities and larger towns of Languedoc, Roussillon, and Provence. The remarkable philosophic sophistication of the broader Jewish community in Languedoc is reflected in the Talmudic and scriptural exegeses of a wide range of scholars, from those who wholly embraced the philosophic tradition to those who took an extremely cautious stand in relation to it. Jewish scholars with a variety of interests and inclinations were at work concurrently in Languedoc: a small, elite cluster of scholars labored, through their translations and commentaries, to move toward the frontiers of knowledge in a wide range of fields, from logic and mathematics to astronomy and metaphysics; other Languedocian Jewish scholars pursued disciplines—from liturgical poetry to travel writing—that did not put them in direct contact with the Greco-Arabic philosophic tradition. Nevertheless, the deep roots of philosophic translation, interpretation, and inquiry in Languedoc after Maimonides marked metaphysics as the pinnacle of the curriculum in the Jewish community. The fact that so many in Languedoc were delving into this lofty realm troubled some, especially Abba Mari, who agreed with Meiri on so many issues concerning the relationship philosophic investigation and faith. Abba Mari was of the opinion that some teachers within his community had taken philosophy far beyond its proper bounds in the breadth of their audience as well as in the character of their interpretations. Indeed, he believed that as esoteric knowledge, philosophy ought to remain the occupation of a chosen few.

In 1303, Abba Mari joined with Solomon ibn Adret of Barcelona, known as Rashba, to rein in the philosophic character of Languedocian Jewish learning. The controversy that ensued reveals the complexity of Languedocian Jewry's philosophic engagement as well as the diversity of its members' views.[1] Of course, this dispute forms part of the stream of argument that—in the wake of the publication of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide of the Perplexed*—sprang up, then grew ever wider, over Judaism's relationship

to the philosophic tradition. During Maimonides' lifetime, Jews began to wrangle with each other over the issues inspired by his teachings, such as the nature of resurrection and immortality. Throughout the thirteenth century, torrents rose up at various moments and locals. In Christian centers of learning, similar conflicts arose during the same period, as Latin translations of Arabic philosophic works traveled northward from the Mediterranean world.[2] Indeed, the parties to this controversy recalled earlier disputes that helped shape the context of their animated exchanges. Tallying the number of conflicts makes little sense, as it implies that they were more alike than their different times and circumstances indicate. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that all of these swells and disturbances resulted from the challenge of integrating newer and frequently more naturalistic perspectives with established knowledge traditions.

In this chapter and the next, we take up the history of the dispute initiated by Abba Mari and Rashba. The story has many players and themes, therefore, a brief overview and description of the record are in order.

Dimensions of the controversy (1304–1306)

Tensions in Languedoc over philosophical study as part of Jewish learning did not abate completely after the controversy of 1232; but, perhaps as a result of the very success of Maimonidean inquiry (the ever-expanding number of Maimonidean scholars and topics), tensions again mounted as the fourteenth century opened. Once again, controversy ensued, following a correspondence between Abba Mari and Rashba, which apparently began sometime in 1303. Abba Mari had written to Rashba to enlist his aid in restraining philosophical interpretation and study. Abba Mari's correspondence with Rashba set off a turbulent exchange of letters involving many scholars concerning the relationship of Greco-Arabic learning, especially philosophic inquiry, to Jewish tradition. These exchanges, which lasted for more than two years, cover many issues that illuminate the intellectual and spiritual conflicts of the time. In the pursuit of his goal to restore philosophic study in Languedoc to a small elite group, Abba Mari found a number of allies. From his *bet din* in Barcelona, Rashba engaged in intensive correspondence actively supporting Abba Mari's cause in Languedoc. Two other Catalonian Jews, Bonafoux Vidal, who lived in Barcelona,[3] and his brother, Crescas Vidal, who had settled fairly recently in Perpignan,[4] were among the earliest supporters of Abba Mari's view that a public condemnation of recent curricular and interpretive developments in Languedoc was required. Among the Languedocian Jews of Perpignan, Abba Mari found only the support of Moses ben Samuel,[5] the father-in-law of his son, Meshullam.[6] In Montpellier, the brothers Todros and Jacob of Beaucaire stood by Abba Mari at certain important intervals in the conflict, as did his assistant and protégé, Simeon ben Joseph. Finally, the support of the Nasi of Narbonne, Kalonymus ben Todros, was critical to Abba Mari's successfully obtaining greater

intervention from Rashba in the midst of the controversy. On the surface, the alliance between Abba Mari and Rashba is surprising: Abba Mari was a moderate Maimonidean in the Languedocian mold, while Rashba—a towering Jewish legal decisor—was not only Catalonian but a discreet follower of the Kabbalah. Abba Mari came to this unexpected partnership after he failed to gather significant local scholarly support for his plan to restore philosophy to its esoteric status in Languedoc. In apparent frustration, he turned outside of his immediate community to a scholar who, Abba Mari had reason to believe, would lend a sympathetic ear to his cause and perhaps his authoritative pen as well. Meiri stood firmly on the other side of the issue. Notwithstanding the significant proximity of his views to those of Abba Mari, Meiri aligned himself with those Languedocian Jewish scholars—like Yedayah ha-Penini, and Solomon of Lunel, Isaac de Lattes, and Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon of Montpellier—who opposed any condemnation of their scholarly culture or any intervention in its course. An accurate understanding of the unfolding conflict over the character of Judaism and its relationship to the philosophic tradition—a conflict between Abba Mari and his supporters, on the one hand, and most Languedocian Jewish scholars, including Meiri, on the other—is of no small consequence for the interpretation of Jewish culture at the dawn of the fourteenth century. One may even claim that this controversy embodied a significant aspect of Judaism's course through history, as well as of the history of the transmission of classical heritage to our day. Of course, the conflict between those who would preserve norms and reduce inherent tensions through communal legislation and those who would eschew authoritarian measures in order to pursue intellectual and spiritual inquiry resonates in many contexts, including our own.

The documentary legacy and historiography of the controversy over philosophic study

A striking feature of the controversy over philosophic study is the quantity of surviving evidence as to its energetic argumentation and discourse. The abundance of letters written by scores of scholars in high literary style, dense with allusion to biblical and rabbinic sources, and frequently in rhymed prose, provides rich evidence of the cultural achievements of Languedocian Jewry. These documents, through which we may reconstruct the controversy, come from four independent sources. Two of the sources are anthologies of correspondence. The first is *Minḥat Qena'ot*, a collection of approximately 127 letters from the controversy edited by Abba Mari himself sometime after 1306.[7] This collection includes *Sefer ha-Yareah*, a pamphlet that Abba Mari published during the controversy to clarify his position.[8] The second is Rashba's voluminous collected responsa, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashbah*, published after his death in 1310.[9] Contained in this collection are the Barcelona excommunications signed by Rashba and his court[10] and *Ktav*

ha-Hitnatzlut,[11] a letter by the Languedocian philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer Yedayah ha-Penini, at the time a man in his twenties. Yedayah responded in detail to the accusations contained in the Barcelona excommunications and defended Languedocian Jewry and its cultural commitments.

The other two sources of letters from this affair derive from unique manuscripts that the distinguished Hungarian scholar David Kaufmann discovered and published in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.[12] The story of "Ḥoshen Mishpat," the first of these discoveries, is as follows: Although Abba Mari did include some of the correspondence of his Languedocian adversaries in *Minḥat Qena'ot*,[13] he deliberately excluded, among other items, an exceedingly important letter by Menaḥem ha-Meiri.[14] Perhaps Abba Mari intended to publish this letter in a promised companion volume of a number of the "more lengthy" epistles of his adversaries; however, as far as we know, this subsequent edition was never accomplished. As these materials apparently have not survived on their own, Abba Mari's decision to exclude them from his *Minḥat Qena'ot* indirectly caused their loss to posterity. The bulk of Meiri's letter, nevertheless, has survived due to an extraordinary set of circumstances. A protégé of Abba Mari, Simeon ben Joseph, wrote a lengthy, point-by-point rebuttal to Meiri's letter, which he entitled "Ḥoshen Mishpat."[15] This rebuttal has survived in a unique copy, discovered by David Kaufmann,[16] within the folios of a seventeenth-century Ottoman manuscript,[17] now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.[18] Were it not for Simeon's extensive citation of Meiri's letter in "Ḥoshen Mishpat," the contents of that letter would have been lost to us entirely. In a second scholarly article, Kaufmann published his discovery of two additional letters by Simeon ben Joseph written during the controversy, the first having been sent to Rashba and the second to relatives in Perpignan.[19] These two letters sharpen our understanding of elements of the dispute.

Since the 1838 publication of *Minḥat Qena'ot* by Mordecai Loeb Bisliches,[20] historians have discussed the chronology and meaning of the dispute using a variety of approaches.[21] Some studies have focused on clarifying the role and position of individual scholars, like Yedayah ha-Penini and Levi ben Ḥayyim;[22] others have attempted to view the controversy from the vantage point of Christian authorities in Languedoc.[23] Still others have examined the controversy in terms of the development of communication in the Mediterranean world of the later Middle Ages.[24] Many more recent studies have made substantial contributions to the reading of texts, the description of the unfolding controversy, and the elucidation of the underlying intellectual and religious concerns of its participants.[25] As an intellectual historian, I argue that the typologies of medieval Jewish philosophic positions[26] or even the sophisticated analytic clarifications of this controversy[27] of other scholars have rather missed the mark. In regard to conceptual analysis, I maintain that imposition of one's interpretation—however brilliant—of the Maimonidean legacy onto the positions and actions of

medieval Languedocian scholars lies outside historically informed discourse. Such interpretive activity should be kept to the ambit of the theologian or legal scholar who seeks to make present-day religious or judicial use of fascinating medieval Hebrew texts. My objection to such an imposition is not due to the fact that our fourteenth-century authors were unaware of this analysis, which, in fact, may not have been the case. Indeed, a beautifully simple conceptual interpretation certainly may clarify a murky historical episode, at times. I object, rather, to the violence required, in this instance, to impose a crystalline conceptual structure onto the messy historical reality that emerges from our evidence. When I use the categories "moderate" and "extreme" in regard to the philosophic positions taken by the Jewish scholars of Languedoc, I intend to use them in a descriptive rather than analytic sense. I aim to provide a properly nuanced historical narrative that recreates some of the color and complexity of this important moment in Jewish intellectual history.

Some moderates' growing unease

Abba Mari's growing consternation over both the broad accessibility of philosophic learning among Languedocian Jews and that community's increasingly widespread discussion of the philosophic meaning of Jewish tradition provides the germ of the controversy. Abba Mari esteemed philosophy as the very pinnacle of the Jewish tradition and felt it critical to enforce the Maimonidean injunction to restrict philosophic study to the qualified elite. He hoped that the Jewish scholars of Languedoc would censure those who, in his view, had overly popularized the philosophic tradition in their community. The ways in which the generations of students following Samuel ibn Tibbon sought to widen the scope of allegorical interpretation and make it more accessible to a wider audience seemed to Abba Mari to endanger the historicity of biblical narrative and, at times, even threaten the literal meaning of the commandments. Abba Mari went so far as to proclaim, "They have nearly stripped the Torah of its literal meanings and left it naked!"[28] In his correspondence, Abba Mari seems at times to emphasize the oral presentation of philosophic allegory at community gatherings, such as synagogue sermons and weddings as particularly problematic; at other times, he seems more concerned about recently composed allegorical commentaries on the Torah. In either case, he scrupulously avoided mentioning the transgressors by name. So the historian is left struggling to reconcile Abba Mari's description of interpretive practices in Languedoc with the descriptions of other contemporaries, as well as with the substantial literary evidence at our disposal.

As Abba Mari would have it, the devotion of a certain group of Languedocian scholars to Averroes's *Commentaries* inspired their reckless interpretations.[29] In Languedoc, Aristotle's writings[30] were not studied directly, but only as they were found embedded in Averroes' *Commentaries*. Translated

in large part by Samuel ibn Tibbon's son Moses in the mid-thirteenth century,[31] Averroes's *Commentaries* on the Aristotelian corpus were among the most sophisticated philosophic works in circulation at the dawn of the fourteenth century. Enthusiasm for the Hebrew translations of Averroes's *Commentaries* placed the scholars whom Abba Mari condemned squarely within the cultural orbit of the philosophic translators and biblical commentators of Languedoc,[32] although Abba Mari never informs us precisely to whom or to which works he refers. He opens *Minḥat Qena'ot*[33] with the words, "I became enraged with zeal for the Lord, God of Israel, when I saw a man of the Holy Seed defiling himself with 'the food of the gentiles,' destroying the narrative of the Torah [with allegory], while she had no one to find out and save [her]."[34] At times, Abba Mari reports of "just two or three [persons]"[35] who require censure, but at other times he stands aghast at the troubling and dangerous philosophic interpretations that a small group of "youths" share publicly in the synagogue.[36] Abba Mari's description of the suspect teachings is limited to a few slogans: Abraham and Sarah are *figurae* for form and matter; the four matriarchs indicate the four elements; Jacob's twelve sons represent the signs of the zodiac; and the Urim and Thummim may be understood as an astrolab.[37] Abba Mari feared that the unidentified scholars' "Christian-like" reading of the Commandments endangered religious observance, and their public discussion of the Torah's inner philosophic meaning violated Talmudic law.[38]

While most Languedocian scholars dismissed Abba Mari's accusations entirely, Meiri acknowledged that certain individuals who misused philosophic allegory shared their inappropriate interpretations too frequently at public gatherings.[39] Meiri strenuously denounced the activity of these unnamed interpreters as "the evil that renews itself daily before thousands of men, because the interpreters have become a daily troupe that sing their song and disperse."[40] He expresses great concern for the abuse of the Torah and for the honor of Languedocian Jewry on account of the significant public forum for transgressive philosophic allegory:

> The nakedness of this country [Languedoc] and our shame is that ignorant men continuously rise against us and preach in public. They teach antinomian interpretations of the Torah [מגלים פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה] and out of the literal sense of Scripture produce far-fetched *figurae* [ציורים] which have no basis in the biblical text or rabbinic tradition.[41]

The radical philosophical interpreters, according to Meiri, undid the laws of the Torah and assigned fanciful and unprecedented meanings to its narratives. Intriguingly, Levi ben Ḥayyim condemned "teaching antinomian interpretations of the Torah"[42] by using the same Mishnaic idiom—which literally means "the improper uncovering of the Torah's face"—as Meiri. In fact, Abba Mari and Rashba also describe antinomian interpretation as "the improper uncovering of the Torah's face."[43] Perhaps the existence of a

distinctive, shared expression to refer to antinomian interpretation is yet further indication of the widespread concern over the correct use of allegory at the dawn of the fourteenth century. Abba Mari's initial efforts to put a stop to such "improper uncovering" in the synagogues of Languedoc pleased Meiri.

> Your fame, [Abba Mari], reached us long ago when you began to show your greatness and your mighty hand in order to put an end to those public sermons; either by consensus, ban, or curse; either to put an end to them entirely, or to permit [the preachers] only to use the Torah, Talmud, and midrash, and occasionally to explain an aggadah or a biblical verse on the basis of philosophy [תכמה]—concerning a matter where there is no tearing down [of fundamental beliefs] or disclosure of one of the Secrets of the Torah and Prophecy.
>
> We rejoiced upon [hearing] your purpose like one who discovers a massive treasure. We venerated it, praised it, approved it, and fulfilled it as seemed fit. We thought, "By your hand the Lord will grant us respite from those who anger and sadden us," for the righteous act only righteously. Daily we yearned for your plans to come to fruition. [We thought,] "We will rejoice and be glad on your account. We will esteem your efforts more than wine. The upright will love you for months or years."[44]

While Meiri appeared rather distressed by the dangerous misapplication of allegory and its crude publicity that he saw in his community's philosophic interpretation, there is no record that he took any action to condemn these developments. In fact, Abba Mari relates how Languedocian scholars declined to intervene in response to his initial expressions of concern.

> The great ones of the generation were silent, and no one rebuked those people. They said, "Leave them until Elijah arrives or Michael appears." About this, I discretely called out and complained to one of the distinguished members of his generation, as great as Hillel and Shammai. I said, "Give counsel! Speak to rebuke those who entrap and deceive." He answered me, "Do not place me among those who are held suspect for silence. Leave me be! Let there be only peace and truth in my days."[45]

Could this "discrete" communication have occurred between Abba Mari and Meiri? Meiri is the Languedocian Talmudist who fits Abba Mari's description, "one of the distinguished members of his generation, as great as Hillel and Shammai." If such an interaction took place between the two scholars, we might better understand Meiri's puzzling silence and lack of participation until late in the controversy. Abba Mari's efforts to suppress the letter in which Meiri finally condemns his behavior, as well as Abba Mari's subsequent decision not to publish this letter from Meiri in *Minḥat Qena'ot*

support this hypothesis. What, if anything, happened as a result of Abba Mari's first steps to control Jewish philosophic discourse in Languedoc is not known; whatever Meiri's response might have been, Abba Mari was not satisfied.

Abba Mari's early strategy for restoring philosophy to esoteric status

In Abba Mari's vision, the study of science and philosophy in Languedoc would be restricted to the community's senior members, drying up the stream of scientific translation and innovative commentary that the Tibbons had inspired. Esoteric knowledge, by definition, should be available only to a circumscribed few. He therefore interpreted the biblical verse "Incline your ear and listen to the words of the philosophers but let your heart follow my position"[46] to grant the pious student permission to engage in philosophic study, but he restricted the verse's application to "great scholars."[47] To stem the flow of preaching, over-eager teaching, and other public, popularizing conduct, Abba Mari took on the Tibbonide stream in Languedocian Jewish culture directly. He attacked the writings of the Languedocian philosopher-translators themselves, while expressing great esteem for the Greco-Arabic philosophic works that they had translated. The translated philosophic works of non-Jews, he argues, posed no danger to Jews because they could be identified by all as foreign and studied with the appropriate skepticism.

> As for myself, I am not angry with one who holds fast to the books of the Greeks. I do not consider him a heretic, or one who has changed an ordinance, or abandoned and broken the covenant. If there is a single good thing in those books, even a single page, it vindicates the entire book. I am certain that even men who are as "dumb as beasts" will not err in reading them, as their authors are already known, identified by name, and are renowned as non-Jewish Sages.[48]

For example, according to Abba Mari, non-Jews may reason philosophically that the world is eternal, as they are not obligated to believe in the Creation. They had not experienced the miracles of the Exodus, nor did they benefit from the revelation at Sinai. In Abba Mari's understanding, Maimonides had removed any intellectual threat to the Jewish community from the non-Jewish arguments by demonstrating that the eternity of the world cannot be proven.[49]

Abba Mari argued that the danger to the community lurked only in Jewish philosophic works, as the simple believer or the unripe student might read them with uncritical acceptance. In his view, Languedocian Jewish scholars who adopted the positions of the Arabic philosophers and reinterpreted the Torah in their light could not be excused: their works had to be destroyed.[50] He exhorts,

> But these books which are [in Languedoc], since they are of Jewish authorship, if some of them turn toward heretical ideas—even if this is only hinted at in the most obscure fashion—it is an obligation to perform upon them the positive commandment: destroy, burn, obliterate. Lest the students who leaf through them on the Sabbath and the New Moon err, and believe in them as if they were written with Divine inspiration.[51]

Because the new works of Jewish philosophic interpretation might infect the innocent and credulous mind of the casual reader who stood open to and unguarded against their heresy, even a thick veil of esotericism would not offer sufficient protection. Thus, the very presence of such works within the Jewish community was intolerable. In Abba Mari's thinking, philosophic works by Jewish authors would still be available for the Languedocian scholarly elite.

The extent of Abba Mari's early efforts (to restrict Jewish philosophic study and interpretation) before he turned outside of his community for support is uncertain. He may have found, or perhaps already knew of, substantial local opposition to his proposals. In either case, Abba Mari failed to achieve sufficient support among the Jewish scholars of his community. This apparent lack of concern among his colleagues did not dissuade him from his mission, however; rather, it appears to have strengthened his resolve to secure the intervention of a powerful authority.

The particulars of Abba Mari's appeal to Rashba

We don't know whose counsel Abba Mari sought before taking the momentous step of soliciting Rashba's support. Because Rashba was widely regarded as the greatest Jewish legal scholar of the day, his support would be invaluable. Because it was also widely known that Rashba did not endorse philosophical studies,[52] Abba Mari would most likely have written to him with confidence that his request to censure the philosophic allegorists of Languedoc would be well received.

> Today, those who break down the fences have multiplied those who loathe instruction and despise the rebuker at the gates. They hold fast to the waste and abandon the essence. They break the covenant by diminishing their Torah study; they please themselves with the children of strangers;[53] they destroy the richness of the Torah. They expound defective interpretations [of Scripture],[54] from which they have written several books. Some of them are submerged in logic, and I have seen men entombed in physics as well. Their cornerstone is the writing of Averroes, and the axis of their foundation is the teaching of Aristotle. They are almost captured in their net, and, fallen into their trap; they have placed their feet in stocks.[55]

With a gravity and formality appropriate to the circumstances, Abba Mari publicly called upon Rashba to exercise his renown as a legal scholar to lead Languedocian Jewish authorities in action against those who systematically reinterpreted Jewish tradition with far-reaching philosophic allegory:

> Now, our lord and our teacher, prince and ruler, savior and master, like whom there has been none since the judges, Jerubbaal and Bedan, sole authority, unique in his generation—will you restrain yourself concerning these things!? How are you able to witness the consumption of the Sanctuary, the Books of the Tradition in their destruction?
>
> Gird your sword on your loins! Take your staff and whack their skulls! Give counsel! Instruct that a fence be built in order that the jackals not break through! Let the sword of your elocution soar over the face of the scholars of this country [Languedoc], [let] your letters fly to the leaders! I surely know that your words will be received and they will honor you. They will all agree with you for good.[56]

Of course, the letters of the controversy were not sent to their addressees to be held in confidence by them; rather, they were "open" letters that, once executed, were copied at their source as well as at their destination, and were disseminated widely. This call for Rashba's intervention brought Abba Mari the wide attention that he sought, along with the consternation of many local scholars.

Abba Mari attempted, as we shall see, to factor in the crosscutting dimensions of Rashba's scholarship and authority, but apparently failed to do so adequately. Indeed, while all the parties involved in the controversy professed great respect for one another, closer examination reveals that the respect was often categorical; that is, it covered an aspect of a particular scholar's work, not all of it. Even the preeminent Rashba was not immune from these mixed judgments. Meiri, for example, was of two minds about the Barcelona sage. In his introduction to tractate *'Avot*, in *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, Meiri lauds Rashba as a Talmudic commentator and reports on his correspondence with him, which does not survive.

> Rabbi Solomon of Barcelona, the great rabbi, the noble vine,[57] the son of the great scholar, Rabbi Abraham Adret, who disseminated knowledge of the Torah and enlarged the community of scholars, and who wrote compositions shedding light upon every obscurity: With his help, I have gained the assistance necessary to clarify a number of abstruse *halakhot* from a number of Talmudic tractates. In the generosity of his heart, he turned his graciousness upon me, supplementing the perfection of his commentaries and codes with the pleasantness of his responsa.[58]

However, Rashba's orientation toward esoteric knowledge was kabbalistic theosophy, which had died out as a field of study in Languedoc by 1300, but

was thriving in Catalonia. Like most other scholars in Languedoc, Meiri did not endorse Rashba's kabbalistic commitments, nor would he simply have deferred to Rashba's legal authority, because Rashba was the leader of the Jewish community in "another land." As we shall see, these sentiments were the frame through which most of Abba Mari's colleagues viewed his turn toward Catalonia.

The Torah's hidden meaning as philosophy or Kabbalah: Seeing different knowledge in the same text

Abba's Mari's choice of Rashba as a potential ally proved to be complex and fraught with tension, especially since Abba Mari himself did not agree with much of what Rashba professed. Rashba held that the Maimonidean identification of Jewish esoteric teaching with philosophy was fundamentally incorrect and deeply misguided. Indeed, in his response to Abba Mari, Rashba argued that physics and metaphysics were a noxious and basically valueless Greco-Arabic intrusion upon the Jewish tradition, with which it was incompatible. Rashba wrote that the great Torah scholars of Languedoc initially were ignorant of Arabic philosophy.[59] Once this new learning arrived, he continued, they falsely identified it with the esoteric teaching of the Torah, with the discipline that the Mishnah calls "The Account of the Chariot." Regarded in Languedoc as the very pinnacle of Jewish tradition, the philosophic interpretation of the Torah through allegory had become common knowledge among "both young and old." Rashba comments sarcastically,

> If new [prophets] have come up, have told us truth, and will instruct us to know God the Ruler of all living things, come let us cavil against Akiva ben Joseph, and let us add complaint against Our Holy Rabbi [Judah ha-Nasi], who amplified the Torah of the Lord for us to expound, and provided us with several Orders [of the Mishnah], but did not arrange works for us on these topics! Concerning "the bounding chariot"[60]—which is well known [in Languedoc] to both young and old, and which they expound as if from the mouth of Ezekiel—why have the Sages of Israel obscured and hidden from us its secret? Behold Aristotle and his colleagues expound it among the nations, while the scholars of the Torah have sealed it up with many seals and sanctified it from approach.[61]

Should one identify the esoteric lore of the Jews with metaphysics, asks Rashba, and complain that the works of the Tannaim fail to discuss this subject? To maintain that "Aristotle and his colleagues" lectured publicly on the Hidden Teaching while the Jewish Sages and their students remained largely ignorant was absurd. Rashba, therefore, is little moved by Abba Mari's dire plaint that arrogant interpreters in Languedoc recklessly revealed Hidden Teaching.

> Concerning those wretched men whom you said illicitly reveal "The Account of the Chariot" in preaching before the congregation in the synagogue: May the heavens uncover their sin, seeing that they preach nonsense and proclaim their inanity in public. However, insofar as you named them guilty of revealing that which the Ancient of Days has covered: My heart tells me that they have revealed nothing from Hidden Teaching, and theirs is not the iniquity of revealing. Their stupidity and their ignorance have saved them from their sin. What they have preached—from the point of view of revealing—is permitted, as they have revealed nothing from Hidden Teaching. [62]

In this way, Rashba remonstrates to Abba Mari that his region's troublesome interpreters were speaking nonsense and inanity but not, in his opinion, revealing the Torah's Hidden Teaching. Rather, they were reckless with what Abba Mari and his community claim was the "Chariot." Rashba's own understanding of "The Account of the Chariot" may be confirmed in his little-known "*Responsum* to the Scholars of Provence."[63] This responsum takes the form of an extended commentary upon a Talmudic statement, "The 'great matter' is the Account of the Chariot and the 'small matter' is the arguments of Abaye and Raba."[64] In this responsum, Rashba informs us that "The Account of the Chariot" is none other than "the [kabbalistic] things that are hinted at by the commandments of the Torah." Using a pharmacological analogy,[65] Rashba concludes: "The Account of the Chariot" is the study of the commandments' pharmacodynamics, their technical [kabbalistic] modes of operation,[66] while the intricate Talmudic "deliberations of Abbaye and Rava"[67] are their pharmaceutics, being concerned with the proper preparation of an extraordinarily efficacious prescription. As a result, knowledge of a substance's pharmacodynamics can have no benefit—unless the substance is put to use. Indeed, one cannot achieve the commandments' goals by any means other than their performance, contrary to the antinomian claim. As Rashba would have it, the "Supreme Chariot," far beyond the grasp of the gentile philosophers, no less the crude allegorists of Languedoc, is none other than the ten *sefirot*.[68]

The tradition of philosophic interpretation adhered to by the Languedocian scholars and kabbalistic interpretation adhered to by Rashba and others in Catalonia were clearly at odds with one another. Indeed, as part of his initial communication to Rashba, Abba Mari played the two traditions against each other to provide political cover for his stunning appeal to a Catalonian kabbalist regarding Languedocian philosophic study. In fact, Abba Mari was to claim to an audience of Languedocian scholars that he wrote to Rashba about another matter entirely, and philosophic interpretation in Languedoc only as an afterthought.

The astrological image as a symbol of religious orientation

Most of the scores of public letters that the scholars of Languedoc and Catalonia exchanged during the conflict treat the central issue of the position of philosophic and scientific learning in the Jewish tradition. Nevertheless, a seemingly tangential matter entered this correspondence right at its beginning that tells much about these scholars, their dispute, and their sense of the world: a long-running apparent digression on the status of medical use of astrological images in Jewish law. As an addendum to his urgent request regarding philosophic study, Abba Mari included a critique of Rashba's permissive views regarding astrological cures. Abba Mari chose the subject matter for his addendum carefully, knowing that Rashba's permission to use a medallion of Leo to ease the passage of a kidney stone had already become a symbol of the opposing religious orientations of the scholars of Catalonia and Languedoc.[69] This issue took on a life of its own for a short time as the communities of scholars in Languedoc and Catalonia observed Abba Mari and Rashba exchange a series of public letters disputing the permissibility of astrological medicine, in a quarrel that clearly could not be resolved on the basis of Jewish law. Abba Mari had a specific motive, however, in carrying on this minor dispute. He appended his objection to the use of astrological images to offset his main request; concerned not only that his condemnation of popular philosophic interpretation in Languedoc would appear to be a betrayal of his community's Maimonidean commitments, but also that his colleagues would reject his attempt to involve a community outsider and adversary of the philosophic interpretation of Judaism. Therefore, he publicly invited Rashba with one hand and forcefully distanced himself from the sage of Barcelona with the other. Abba Mari used the ongoing debate over astrological medicine in his interaction with Rashba to signal his fundamental allegiance to the religious ideal of Languedocian Jewry; a Languedocian scholar, fiercely loyal to his particular understanding of philosophy's place in Judaism, exploited the formal halakhic discourse regarding astrological cures to spar with a known kabbalist deeply suspicious of many aspects of Maimonidean teaching. While his colleagues clearly appreciated and relished Abba Mari's gesture, it could not compensate for the outrage his main action had caused.

The context of Abba Mari's critique was the popularity that a specially prepared medallion, engraved with the constellation Leo, had achieved among both Christian and Jewish physicians in Catalonia and Languedoc in easing kidney stones.[70] A physician would etch a gold medallion with the sign of Leo at an astrologically appropriate hour and strap the coin-sized object over the patient's troubled kidney.[71] The astrological potency that the medallion had acquired upon engraving would then work to ease the kidney stone out of the body.[72] Astrological remedies of this type came to Europe beginning in the twelfth century in the form of anonymous Hebrew and Latin translations of Arabic magical texts.[73] Abba Mari knew that, a few years

prior, the physician Isaac de Lattes of Montpellier had received Rashba's permission to use astrological cures. Abba Mari had heard that Rashba deemed the use of an astrological image for healing as the legal equivalent of the use of an effective amulet, which the Talmud unequivocally allows.[74] In the passage below, he calls upon Rashba to defend his permission to use the medallion of Leo.

> One of my colleagues has informed me that you have permitted the manufacture of a image of Leo—which they engrave on a certain day, when the moon is at a certain mark in the sky—as it is proven and salutary for kidney disease; as if it were a tested amulet [which the Talmud permits].
>
> I am astounded! "How could a holy mouth utter such a thing?"[75] There is no clearer transgression than this of the biblical prohibition, "Thou shall not practice divination [לא תעוננו]."[76] This is the case, as in tractate *Sanhedrin* . . . we find the interpretation, "Thou shall not consider the cyclic periods [עונות תחשבו]."[77] That is to say, the essence of the prohibition refers solely to those who calculate celestial cycles on the basis of astrology.[78]

Thus, on account of the astrological considerations involved, Abba Mari took issue with Rashba's permission to use such a cure. According to Abba Mari, such behavior was a violation of the biblical prohibition against divination. Rashba responded to Abba Mari with a searching and comprehensive legal analysis for the permissibility of astrological remedies. In his answer, Rashba acknowledges that, indeed, he had allowed the use of an astrological-medical image, just as Abba Mari had heard. "Let me say that, in fact, one of your country's sages [de Lattes] once asked me about making a Lion medallion in metal for medical purposes; and I permitted it. As I said at the time, I see no prohibition against making an astrological image . . .."[79] Although no text of de Lattes's original question survives, we do possess what appears to be Rashba's responsum to him.[80] In that earlier correspondence, Rashba presents as evidence to the inquiring physician a Talmudic passage that interprets the Mishnah to permit the wearing of a *sela*' coin over a callus on the sole of the foot on the Sabbath.[81] The Talmud elaborates that a *sela*' is specified because only it has all the desired protective and therapeutic characteristics: hardness, corrosion, and *an engraved image*. Now, reasoned Rashba, if the medicinal use of an engraved image were forbidden, would the Talmud permit one to be worn on the Sabbath for that purpose? This text, indirect as it may seem, was the only reference to astrological medicine Rashba was able to adduce from Rabbinic literature. The passage may have suggested itself to him because of the coinlike character of the images then in use. In order to refute Abba Mari's argumentation regarding astrological medicine, Rashba took issue with Maimonides' understanding of nature, claiming that the latter provided no intellectually coherent justification to

exclude the possibility that an astrological image might acquire "special" properties.[82] In this context, Rashba presents an intriguing new scientific theory that expanded upon available pharmacological thought.

> It is my opinion, that it was among the kindnesses of the Most High at the beginning of Creation to bring into being in His world things to maintain the health of [His] creatures. [He did this] so that if incidents occur—due to illness or other reasons—that cause beings to depart from their healthful state, these things will be available to restore or maintain them in health. [God] placed these capacities in the essence of things; they exist as properties explicable through rational inquiry . . . or as "special" properties,[83] inexplicable through rational inquiry.[84]

In medieval pharmacology, the property of a compound drug that could not be explained as the result of the "simple" properties of its elements was called "special." Rashba argues that the special properties often responsible for healing did not belong exclusively to drugs. Certain manufactured objects, and perhaps even language, might possess special properties. The astrological image on a medallion was just such an object, according to Rashba. During the process of manufacture under specific celestial influences, the image acquired a particular special property that could be used to help the patient. Rashba emphasizes, "All categories of materials possessed of 'special' properties—drugs and purgatives, for example—operate by natural means. Just like the well-known cures whose function is understood by rational inquiry, there is nothing idolatrous about these things."[85] Rashba extended the concept of "special" property from a compound drug to manufactured objects created under a specific celestial influence.[86] Having suggested a naturalistic context for the functioning of special properties, Rashba permits the activity of one who makes an image for healing "while directing his mind toward Heaven; as opposed to those who direct their intention toward the ministering angel who rules over that time period, as this is a form of worship."[87] Thus Rashba acknowledges the legally problematic context out of which astrological practice originated, but argues that such practice legitimately may be abstracted from its former context and understood as a permissible medical intervention for which no scientific theory may be articulated, as it is simply beyond human ken.[88] Rashba's genuine perplexity in adjudicating which medical procedures might be deemed useful and his profound conviction of the incoherence of the Maimonidean position resound throughout his argument. In answer to Abba Mari's signal of Maimonidean allegiance, Rashba provides a powerful and innovative critique of Maimonidean teaching. In Rashba's initial response to Abba Mari on this issue, he refers to the earlier objections of certain "dissenting sages."[89] From a letter penned by Moses ben Samuel after a wedding in Perpignan (detailed below, in this chapter), we learn that the "dissenting sages" were none other than Meiri himself. Moses wrote:

> I heard from you [Abba Mari] that you wrote to the master [Rashba], may his Rock guard and save him, on the subject of astrological images, to learn of the orientation of the light of his intellect, and that he answered you what seemed right to him. You therefore thought to show me the entire correspondence, although we have not had the opportunity. When the sage, our teacher, Rabbi Menaḥem [ha-Meiri], may his Rock guard and save him, heard this—when he met our group—he was delighted [שמח מאד] about your inquiry on the subject of astrological images, as he too had struggled with [Rashba on that matter].[90]

Certainly, "delight" is not the response that one would expect from a distinguished Talmudist upon learning that an old dispute of his with another outstanding scholar had been rejoined, but Rashba would have had no doubt as to the basis of Meiri's feelings. To an unnamed former student living in Perpignan, Rashba acknowledges that the debate concerning the permissibility of the medallion of Leo had become emblematic of the profound religious differences between himself and the scholars of Languedoc.

> On the matter of the [Leo] medallion which you have mentioned: The people of the [Languedoc] region have troubled me several times about it, but truly I did not wish to respond to them, as I knew that some of them sought a pretext to fight, and considered [my permission of the medallion of Leo an admixture of] idolatrous error with faith. . . .[91]

Meiri, it seems, sometime before the completion of *Bet ha-Beḥirah* in 1300, had had a stalemate encounter with Rashba on the latter's decision to allow the use of astrological images. Indeed, *Bet ha-Beḥirah* preserves what Meiri must have written to Rashba; according to Meiri, the Talmud permits one to wear an engraved coin on the Sabbath simply to protect the callus, not to soothe it astrologically.[92] Meiri would therefore have us understand the Talmudic phrase "on account of the [coin's] image [צורתא]" as "on account of the [coins'] indented image," not as "on account of the [coin's] astrological image."[93] Meiri, like Abba Mari, was certain that astrological medicine was a variety of astral worship and therefore forbidden. At the core of Abba Mari and Meiri's strenuous objection to astrological medicine stood the distinctively Maimonidean teaching that astrological practice necessarily involved polytheistic beliefs.[94] Although the controversy over philosophic study was to highlight those areas where they fundamentally differed, these two scholars nevertheless shared a moderate Maimonidean orientation. Rashba understood the deep anger he had aroused in his colleagues residing north of the Pyrénées from his permission to use astrological medicine. Indeed, Rashba's small treatise in defense of astrological medicine did not put an end to his sparring with Abba Mari; rather, their debate continued for another intensive round. Abba Mari tried to persist even further, but Rashba refused to continue the discussion, claiming that he had elaborated his views

fully.[95] In light of the opposing commitments on either side of the Pyrénées, the intensity of the debate over astrological images may be understood.[96] The controversy over philosophic study, however, had only just begun.

Abba Mari's betrayal of the religious ideal of Languedocian Jewry

With his double-pronged call to arms, Abba Mari initiated an intensive open correspondence between himself and Rashba—as well as between himself and scholars from all over Languedoc—about the nature of Languedocian Jewish culture and the proper place of allegorical interpretation and Greco-Arabic philosophy in the curriculum of Languedocian Jewry. Abba Mari's electrifying literary exchanges compelled other Languedocian scholars to write open letters to Rashba on these very same matters, and Rashba felt obligated to respond publicly to them as well. The prose of this extensive correspondence evinces considerable emotive force and literary craft. The felicitous and often entertaining reuse of phrases from biblical and rabbinic texts and the frequent introduction of rhymed prose were among the literary devices that these writers skillfully exploited. Abba Mari's initial, appended critique of Rashba and continued reposts over astrological images not withstanding, the fact that he had asked the sage of Barcelona to intervene in local philosophic matters created the impression among the Jewish scholars of Languedoc that he had abandoned their commitment to combine Torah and philosophy. Reactions to Abba Mari's extraordinary step rippled not only within but also between communities in Languedoc. A view of the consternation in Perpignan, for example, comes from Abba Mari's relative and ally in that city, Moses ben Samuel. Moses wrote to Abba Mari to inform him of the mixed local reaction to his behavior.[97] A group of scholars in Perpignan had seen two of Rashba's open letters;[98] they were concerned that Abba Mari had maligned the Languedocian Jewish community; and Moses ben Samuel tried to convince them that Abba Mari shared their rationalistic commitments.[99] Abba Mari thanked Moses ben Samuel for having defended his honor and sent his apologies to the elders of Perpignan for any offense.[100] Scholars in Abba Mari's home city of Montpellier were also upset. About this time, the Montpellier physician-scholar Issac de Lattes (the physician who, earlier, had requested permission from Rashba to use an engraved coin to cure kidney stones) traveled to a wedding in Perpignan, where he encountered Meiri. He updated Meiri on recent developments and sought his advice. Later, Meiri would describe the exchange:

> A few of the revered scholars of Montpellier came here [to Perpignan] for the wedding of the revered youth Don Samuel Nathan, and among them was the exalted Rabbi Isaac de Lattes. They carried with them copies of letters of some of their revered scholars [concerning the controversy] which I had not seen. That scholar [de Lattes] inquired of me—

"What is my opinion of the matter?"—because he had heard most of the revered scholars of the city [Perpignan] discussing it with astonishment, while from me he had not heard.

He learnt that I too was wroth, and that in my eyes it was astounding as well; that it was strange to me—considering your pleasant ways and broad spirit—that you [Abba Mari] would cause a region of ten-days journey in length, known for its lineage, wealth, and wisdom in every discipline to become odious before the highness of our master, the Rabbi [Rashba]—may the Merciful One guard him, who in my eyes is like six-hundred thousand men—and his entire country [the Crown of Aragon].

In the eyes [of the scholars of Perpignan] this would have been enough to start a quarrel and to inflict serious injury, were it not for the perfection of Our Master, the Rabbi [Rashba] and the pleasantness of his spirit. "If there is iniquity among us, let [God's] hand be upon us, but why has this one [Abba Mari] brought us to our father [Rashba]?!" [De Lattes] answered that the scholars of Montpellier—and all the scholars of the region surrounding them—also thought that it was wicked.[101]

Abba Mari clearly had not increased his Languedocian support through his action, as scholars in Perpignan and Montpellier were actively registering distress. Indeed, although initially an ally of Abba Mari's, de Lattes already had shifted his stance.[102] Moreover, Meiri, too, was now displeased and agreed that Abba Mari's request for Rashba's intervention had been a serious offense to their community. In this opposition, the esteemed halakhist was joined by a distinguished group of Languedocian encyclopedists, poets, translators, astronomers, and mathematicians, including Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, Solomon of Lunel, and Yedayah ha-Penini. One feels Meiri's sense of betrayal and shame that Abba Mari had turned to Rashba for judgment. In this context, Meiri describes his change of heart toward Abba Mari—from being his strong supporter to his unequivocal adversary.

While I [Meiri] was still speaking [your praises], this [message] arrived saying: Since your counsel was not executed in its time, you have made the earth tremble, you have cloven it, you have positioned yourself to argue before our master, the Rabbi, [Rashba], you have placed [your case before him] for judgment—so that the sciences [חכמה] might be handed over to despoilers, and its students to ruin.[103]

Languedocian Jewry viewed Rashba as an unsympathetic outsider; Meiri argues that Rashba's involvement not only would be considered an intrusion, it should be considered irrelevant.[104] He maintains that, as a kabbalist and adversary of philosophy, Rashba may not meaningfully express an opinion regarding the disputes then going on in Languedoc regarding philosophic study and interpretation.

> And now, [Abba Mari], our leader! Although our master the Rabbi [Rashba] is a father to us all, and no one would raise a twig or open his mouth and chirp against the perfection of his rank, you are well aware that in these [metaphysical] matters there are a variety of opinions. [Rashba and his school] have chosen as their lot the science of the Kabbalah. In their view, most of the discussions of philosophy are a demon, a she-demon, and injurious angels.[105]

Under the pressure of the controversy, Meiri gave explicit expression to an observation that, while perhaps generally known, made numerous contemporaries aghast at its frankness and its unequivocal exclusion of a preeminent religious authority.[106]

Rashba's refusal to intervene

By publicly irritating and frustrating Rashba with hardnosed anti-astrological argumentation, Abba Mari intended to show his Languedocian colleagues that he was not reluctant to confront Rashba with the Maimonidean commitments of their community. While some Languedocian scholars, Meiri included, found this display to be entertaining indeed, their sense of Abba Mari's betrayal of their community was not diminished. Of course, Rashba could hardly have enjoyed the experience of having Maimonidean principals, which he felt unjustified and contradictory, brazenly rubbed in his face by an agitated Languedocian scholar. Nevertheless Rashba wanted to help Abba Mari, as he sympathized deeply with his cultural agenda for Languedoc; however, he surely understood that were he to have taken up Abba Mari's request to condemn the interpretive transgressions of Languedocian Jewry, a pointless, intercommunal estrangement would have ensued. The Catalonian scholar therefore asserted publicly that, while Abba Mari's intentions pleased him, he had no authority to intervene in the affairs of the Jews of Languedoc.

> I know that they will say to me, "Who is this that has come to rule over us in our homes, and teach us the way of knowledge?" We also have great authorities of Scripture and Tradition, who possess the basic skills for all the tasks of understanding: The Science of the Torah and the Science of the Greeks.[107]

Rashba, instead, encouraged Abba Mari to find like-minded Languedocian scholars who would take his concerns to heart. Rashba felt that God would give them the resolve to pursue the honor of the Torah, like "the great holy remnant that was formerly in their land."[108] "The great holy remnant" may refer to the kabbalists of early thirteenth-century Languedoc, such as Isaac the Blind and Asher ben David.[109] In an unsigned, private note, however, written to Abba Mari and inserted into the manuscript quire of the

Catalonian leader's responsum,[110] Rashba revealed his intense antipathy toward an emblem of Languedocian Jewish culture, the *Malmad ha-Talmidim*—the most popular and esteemed Torah commentary in Languedoc, written in 1232 by the philosophic translator Jacob Anatoli,[111] son-in-law of Samuel ibn Tibbon (see Chapter 1). According to Rashba, in that work, Anatoli—whom the Barcelonan sage derides as the "elderly king"—made plain how "the Torah conceals that which Existence has revealed to the philosophers."[112] Rashba writes,

> [Concerning] the "elderly king" who rules [in Languedoc] over the majority of the people: (They have placed him like a seal on their hearts, like a seal upon their arms. They have accepted him upon themselves and upon their descendants.) [His] is the book that pounds our hearts like one who pounds an anvil. We called him injurer and not pleasant one. For the sake of the majority who assiduously study him, I did not mention him explicitly except to you [Abba Mari] privately.
>
> We have expunged him from our borders, we, our scholars and our elders, because the author wrote in his book words bitter like wormwood and gall. But we have heard that [Languedocian Jews] have placed him as a crown to the head. Every week they expound those things, which are in our eyes are all gloom and disarray. But since it is the leaders who have made the breach, and they rush to him every morning, what can I say or do? Can my horses run upon a rock, can I plow there with oxen?
>
> Yet, if someone would aim his arrow to destroy:[113] We are certain that The Owner of the Vineyard will Himself come and remove the thistles.[114] And Abraham will rejoice with his progeny.[115]

Therefore, after publicly refusing to acknowledge any justification for his intervention, Rashba concludes, under the cover of private, unofficial communication, We here in Catalonia take the strongest possible exception to Languedocian philosophic interpretation as represented by the "elderly king,"[116] but we can take no action against your leaders who expound it. When eventually leaked,[117] Rashba's private message created a furor in Languedoc. While Abba Mari never denied that Rashba penned this note, he insisted, "We do not know . . . precisely [to which scholar the note] refers."[118] Many others in Languedoc, however, had no doubt that Rashba had denounced Jacob Anatoli and his *Malmad ha-Talmidim*. In Montpellier, outraged scholars, to protest, convened weekly readings of Anatoli's work in the synagogue on Sabbath afternoons.[119]

Rashba attacks Levi ben Ḥayyim

Support in Languedoc for Jewish philosophic interpretation was overwhelming. Rashba most likely thought it unwise to censure it publicly on his authority alone; even his discreet, private note condemning Anatoli's

Malmad had caused a furor. Instead, Rashba chose to make an example of a single prominent Languedocian exegete, Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche-de-Conflent, the author of a didactic poem on the sciences, "Batte ha-Nefesh veha-Laḥashim" (1276),[120] as well as a voluminous encyclopedia of science, philosophy, and Jewish interpretation, *Livyat Ḥen* (1295).[121]Abba Mari was not initially aware of Rashba's strategy and appears to have despaired of any further help from him: "I thought that the master [Rashba], may his Rock guard him, had withdrawn his hand from involvement in this matter."[122] Without any noticeable delay, however, Rashba wrote to Crescas Vidal, a Catalonian Jew living in Perpignan, whom he thought would help to punish Levi. Apparently, Rashba was sufficiently well informed regarding the character of Levi's exegesis, as he condemns it in the harshest of terms. He deems Levi's allegoresis to be more extensive and destructive to Judaism than Christian interpretation of the Law. "The penalty of this man [Levi] and his colleagues is more severe than that of the gentiles. While the gentiles dissent [from us] and allegorically interpret two or three verses according to their views, this man and his colleagues do not leave even a letter of the Torah [in its literal sense]."[123] In fact, Rashba was convinced that Levi was the leader of a Languedocian Jewish group who repudiated the historicity of the biblical narrative, the possibility of miracles, and the very existence of revelation from God. As such, Christians would violently obliterate this group were its views to become known generally.

> For these people deny all religions and their excision is engraved on the tablets of the books of the [gentile] nations. Were [their heresy] now known among the gentiles, those [people], their homes—[their] silver and gold—would not escape on account of their depravity.[124]

Evoking the possibility of a Christian crusade against the Jewish heretics, Rashba must have sent shivers down Crescas's spine, as the basic facts of the terrifying Catholic crusade against the Albigensians in Languedoc in the previous century were widely known.[125] Of course, Levi had made extensive use of allegory, but Rashba's hyperbolic description of his work and leadership is more a statement of how Rashba felt about Jewish philosophic interpretation in Languedoc than an accurate description of anything that Levi actually had written or done. A learned and pious Jew, Levi was an itinerant scholar who had found residence in the home of Samuel Sulami (L'Escaleta), a wealthy Narbonnese moneylender and philosophically oriented Talmudist.[126] Meiri would later speak of Samuel as one of the reknowned halakhists of Languedoc who were "completely familiar with the science of the Talmud—being its perpetual students, contributing new insights and interpretations—and in addition, were expert in the sciences, whether all of them, most of them, or some of them."[127] Samuel's significant land holdings, while not unheard-of for a Languedocian Jew, are surely an indication of his lofty status in the Jewish community. Crescas Vidal's son

Astruc had married Samuel's daughter Dulcia, who brought with her a handsome dowry of six thousand solidi.[128] Crecas himself had taken instruction from Samuel in philosphy as well as in Talmud.[129] In his letter to Crescas, Rashba inquired about the presence of any heretical individuals or writings in Languedoc.[130] Apparently having grasped more than a bit of Rashba's agenda, Crescas opens his response in a tone of rhetorical argumentation.

> What have "the agitators" seen just now? What novelty is now in their land, in the camp of the Hebrews, that has not long been, that they now bring their case before [you, Rashba] the judge? What do those who slander this country say such that [their countrymen] might be called the first to study philosophy and non-Jewish works? From long ago until now they have grown up with a mixture of [holy books and] the books of the Greeks. Would that their inner hearts were devoted to the sincere love of God, but they certainly appear most pious despite the fact that the searing brand [philosophy] has left its scars upon their hearts.[131]

In a frustrated voice, Crescas wonders out loud why Rashba seems to have forgotten that Languedocian Jewry had incorporated philosophic study and interpretation in its curriculum for generations. As he had been informed of Rashba's correspondence with Abba Mari—although he insists that he had yet to see it—Crescas seems to have known all too well the precise object of Rashba's interest. "I have heard the scholar Astruc of Lunel [Abba Mari] has brought this matter to your attention, and our lord [Rashba] only knows how he responded to him on the matter, as I have seen neither his query nor your responsum."[132] His lack of access to the correspondence notwithstanding, Crescas suggests that "the agitators" had targeted Samuel and Levi, and feels compelled to defend them both.[133] In regard to Levi, Crescas does confess to being a bit uncertain as to his character as a scholar and a Jew.

> Now, I shall relate before your honor [Rashba] that which I know and have heard regarding the man, Levi, whom I have mentioned. Behold, I encountered him in Provence; his mind is a broad as the sea, knowing the Talmud and recalling it, for he studied it from his youth.
>
> However he is wily; no one can penetrate to the depth of his intention and intellect except for those who are his familiars, men who are of his ilk. If he speaks to someone whom he knows that the Torah of his God is within him and the words of our holy rabbis are strong and powerful in his heart, he deceives them and they do not recognize him, what his nature is, whether he is one of the rebellious or his teaching is the teaching of the pious. I grappled with him at length to get him to show me his book [*Livyat Ḥen*], but he repelled me saying that it was not with him in his home town; but others have said to me that this Levi destroys the Covenant, and makes *figurae* of the Genesis narrative.

> When I rehearsed this before the scholar Sulami, he said,'This is nothing but slander. I have observed him scrupulously following all of the strictures of the Scribes, staying up late at night and getting up early in the morning, walking in the ways of the good and in the paths of the righteous. If, perchance, I found him guilty of transgressing even one matter, there would be no place for him in my home and no recollection of him within my walls.'[134]

Levi appears to have been rather cautious in revealing his views to traditional scholars. Try though he might, Crescas could not gain access to Levi's *Livyat Ḥen*; at the very least, Levi must have been uncertain as to whether Crescas would be receptive to it. Although he had not read *Livyat Ḥen*, Crescas was inclined to accept Samuel's assurances as to Levi's piety as well as to the soundness of his exegesis, rather than the local rumors to the contrary. To Rashba, Crescas suggests that the only fault of Levi's that he can detect is that, as Levi was in financial need, he would teach philosophy to whoever paid him, regardless of their qualifications.[135] In general, Crescas maintains that he can find no evidence to substantiate Rashba's concerns regarding Languedocian Jewry.[136] Regarding those who would share their philosophic interpretations publicly, Crescas testifies, "Let our lord [Rashba] know that I have neither seen nor heard this [inappropriate philosophic allegory] in this city [Perpignan] to which I have moved. Two or three times, those who make themselves wise with philosophy spoke in the synagogue whilst I was there, yet no transgression or guilty thing exited their mouths."[137] As a result, Crescas rejects out of hand Rashba's call for him to act as an inquisitor and whistleblower in Languedoc.

> Let our lord [Rashba] return and investigate matters by means of "the agitators." If the cry that has come up to you [is substantiated], wreak havoc, destroy them until nothing is left. If you summon your God there, He will support your actions, and all the [Jewish] people [of Languedoc] will sign in favor [of your action against philosophic learning].[138]

In Crescas's opinion, Rashba should return to "the agitators" to investigate and ferret out the suspected heresy. Crescas expresses confidence that if such heresy is substantiated the Jews of Languedoc would support a merciless assault upon it from Rashba. Nevertheless, Crescas concludes his letter to Rashba with a suggestion that is rather at odds with the tenor of the rest of his report. He suggests that Rashba formally prohibit the study of Greco-Arabic scientific and philosophic works (with the exception of medicine) before the age of thirty in Languedoc.[139] Crescas argues that such a prohibition would force Languedocian Jews to delve deeply into the Talmud as youths, and only later, after they matured and their religious commitments were established, could they turn to philosophy. Crescas closes his letter to Rashba with a final, disturbing cri de coeur, "At the moment there is reason

to fear that the philosophically inspired youths, who have not seen the light of Torah, will—heaven forbid—turn the whole country to heresy."[140] Rashba turned to Crescas once again, in even stronger terms, regarding the urgency of censuring Levi as well as any other transgressive interpreters in Languedoc.[141] In this letter, Rashba informs Crescas that he supports a prohibition on the study of non-Jewish philosophic works before the age of thirty in Languedoc, but insists that the initiative for any such prohibition had to come from local scholars.[142] This time, Crescas made no response to Rashba. As far as we know, Crescas did not write to him again. Apparently unimpressed by Crescas's assurances, Rashba continued to condemn Levi and to seek his removal from Samuel's home. As he had no word from Crescas, Rashba turned directly to Samuel Sulami. In an especially moving and forceful letter, Rashba expresses his affection and admiration for Samuel and urges him to abandon philosophic study and to expel Levi from his home.

> You, honored one, Israel has recognized you. You are sought out for gifts among the needy. You distribute your bread to the hungry, and you redeem those who poverty holds captive. Therefore, I loved you from the day that I met you and engraved [your name] on the [inner] quarters of my heart; for I select good people, but I have no desire for silver and gold. I know of your conduct, choosing the Torah and taking up guard on its watch. You have made your covenant [with it] on every festival, new moon, and Sabbath [beyond that which is required]. On the day that you abandoned it to study mathematics, your intentions were good; but your soul on those days walked as if among "the creatures." [Not the creatures of the divine Chariot of Ezekiel's vision, but] wild beasts that secretly consume the bone [of the allegorical sense] with the flesh [of the literal meaning] and bring those souls that would live into bondage. Your experience follows upon the statement of [Judah ha-Levi's] Khazar king, "Your intentions are desirable, but your deeds are not." Are the pious of Israel who have not studied philosophy worthy of immortality? . . . Do you not know the famous scholars of Narbonne whose work was the hidden [Kabbalah]? Do they and the other great scholars travel like slaves upon the earth while you the philosophers stand at the top of the ladder [i.e., *sulam* of heaven]? Truly, one who thinks thus ought to be cursed with every form of curse.[143]

Throughout the controversy over philosophic study, Rashba's discretion regarding his kabbalistic commitments is extraordinary. Only at this single point, in addressing Samuel, does Rashba make explicit reference to his conviction that Kabbalah, and not philosophy, is the Account of the Chariot. As its historical origins, just a little more than a century ago, were so closely connected to Jewish scholars in Narbonne, Rashba apparently wished to persuade Samuel to acknowledge Kabbalah and reject philosophy as the

Torah's authentic esoteric teaching.[144] Rashba's image of philosophic allegory figuratively consuming Scripture is gripping. Of course, cursing one's addressee is not generally a successful strategy in attracting them to your position. Not surprisingly, Samuel did not respond to Rashba's letter. As Levi now wrote directly to Rashba on his own, however, Samuel may in fact have asked him to respond in Samuel's stead. Abba Mari chose not to include Levi's letter to Rashba in *Minḥat Qena'ot*, although he does inform us of its existence; as a result, Levi's letter is almost certainly lost to us. Of course, it might eventually be discovered independently, like Meiri's letter to Abba Mari. Unlike the *Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut* of Yedaya ha-Penini, however, Rashba did not preserve it by inserting it into his responsa. Abba Mari only relates that Levi's letter contained "his apologia that he immersed himself in the Mishnah and Talmud prior to putting his head into books written on other scientific subjects."[145] In response to Levi, Rashba pens a rather dry and condescending reprimand.[146]At this point, Rashba's persecution of Levi took an unexpected turn: Samuel's daughter Dulcia (Crescas's daughter-in-law) died after an unspecified illness.[147] In mourning, Samuel does indeed expel Levi from his home. We learn of these circumstances in Abba Mari's introductory note to Rashba's response to a letter from an anonymous student in Narbonne. Abba Mari excludes the student's letter and gives us only Rashba's reply. Rashba's student apparently had been following his teacher's engagement with Languedocian Jewry with some interest. Seeking to encourage Rashba, as well as to be updated regarding these conflicts, the student asked his teacher three questions: Why had Rashba not publicly congratulated Samuel for expelling Levi? What had Rashba written to his Languedocian correspondents regarding astrological-medical images? And, why had Rashba not responded to the rather harsh personal statements apparently made against him and his teacher Naḥmanides by an unnamed Languedocian apostate from Judaism?[148] In reply, Rashba wrote an affectionate, peacemaking letter. He dismisses any conflict with the apostate out of hand. "With the people of Israel, I will dispute. But I will not turn my face to one who causes [Jews to] stray and who is shunned."[149] Regarding his correspondence on the medical use of astrological images, Rashba wonders how the student could not have seen it already. "I would have thought that that pamphlet had spread throughout the country [of Languedoc], for I did not speak in secret . . .. If my pamphlet is not in the hands of the exalted Rabbi Samuel, may His Rock guard him, I will send it to him. He along with the other sages in that country instructed me and rebuked me [regarding my medical views]."[150] On the question of congratulating Samuel for having dismissed Levi, Rashba explains that Samuel is "in great pain"; were he, Rashba, to write now, Samuel "would justifiably judge me as a jester and speaker of profanity."[151] Rashba concludes this letter by asking the student to greet Samuel and "bless him in my name."[152]

Abba Mari redirects his strategy

Likely having reconsidered the merits of attacking Levi ben Ḥayyim in order to achieve their overall goals, Abba Mari and Rashba refrain from direct assault upon any other Languedocian scholar. Instead, they adopt the suggestion of Crescas Vidal to restrain Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc by restricting access there to Greco-Arabic philosophic works. Inverting his earlier strategy in which he spoke highly of Aristotle and his commentators, Abba Mari now posits: If an age restriction applies to philosophic works written by Jews, it applies even more so to similar works—full of erroneous and dangerous teachings—written by gentiles.[153] In *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, his position paper in favor of the prohibition of Greco-Arabic philosophic works to the young, Abba Mari's argument turns on a passage from *The Guide of the Perplexed* concerning the obstacles that stand in the way of intellectual perfection.[154] In this passage, Maimonides expressed the view that it was not proper to begin philosophic study until an age at which one's sexual drive had diminished.[155] Now Abba Mari emphasizes that the study of Averroes's *Commentaries* had led to the adoption of heretical views, which, in turn, had been incorporated into Jewish exegesis.

> The Rabbi [Maimonides], of blessed memory, warned us several times against the study of the Aristotelian commentaries—so that we might not err through their words. These claim that Aristotle did indeed find a syllogism for the eternity of the world. Now truly most of the scientific works that we today possess are the *Commentaries* of Averroes, who abridged Aristotle's works and incorporated them into his *Commentary*. I have seen the commentary that [Averroes] prepared to Aristotle's *De caelo et mundi*. [Averroes] included in it several impressive syllogisms stating that the Celestial Substance is not subject to generation or corruption. The result of his arguments is the decisive syllogism and absolute proof of the eternity of the world.[156]

Abba Mari makes no attempt to critique Averroes's philosophic argument that the world is eternal. Rather, he insists that Maimonides would not have young Jews study such a dangerous work whose arguments were very difficult to refute. Based on his own study of Averroes, Abba Mari argues that the prerequisites that the Maimonidean tradition had established regarding who might study Jewish philosophic works should be observed even more scrupulously for Greco-Arabic works; indeed, under penalty of excommunication.

> Now, we must expound an argument a fortiori to which there is no refutation: Just as it is necessary to be wary and to increase one's vigilance so that no one might break through the barriers to the Wisdom [תכמה] that is found in the books of Jewish scholars (the works of

> great sages who resemble the Angel of the Lord of Hosts)—save the perfect man possessed of the required virtues, modest and having completed half his life—so very much more so when students have come to gather honey from the beehive [of Greco-Arabic philosophy], to extract precious stones from the heads of cobras, and to make balsam from the flesh of vipers must we be wary of their venomous bite and flee from their poisonous sting! Woe to us on account of their obscure insinuations! Woe to us on account of their quills![157]

Having failed to impugn the Languedocian philosopher–translators directly, Abba Mari, pursuing an alternate path to redirect Jewish culture in Languedoc, now attacks the works of Averroes. He acknowledges that precious things might be learned from the works of the Greco-Arabic philosophers; however, the risk and the potential cost of acquiring them through study of such dangerous works were simply too great for the average Jew and should be reserved for great sages. Several months elapsed before Meiri responded to Abba Mari's arguments. When he later broke his silence in an open letter, Meiri puts forward that those who misused philosophic allegory were thoroughly unaware of Averroes's *Commentaries*, and the problematic public interpretation of Scripture did not draw upon such highly technical materials. To the contrary, the inspiration for the dangerous interpretation came, as Abba Mari himself had argued initially, from venerable Jewish works.

> A decree [prohibiting the study of Greco-Arabic philosophy] would not ameliorate [the troubling situation regarding the abuse of philosophic allegory] at all,[158] because the preacher does not expound upon Aristotle's *Physics*, *De caelo*, *Meteorologica*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *De sensu et sensato*, *De anima*, and *Metaphysics*. Some of them don't even know one page of this literature, but only that which they have read in The Revered Book [*The Guide of the Perplexed*], the *Malmad* [*ha-Talmidim* of Jacob Anatoli], the *Ecclesiastes Commentary* and the treatise "*Let the Waters Be Gathered!*" [of Samuel ibn Tibbon], and other books, new and old. . . .[159]

As is evinced by this list, Languedocian Jewry had access to the entire Aristotelian corpus (with the exception of the *Organon*, *De Animalibus*, and the *Nicomachian Ethics*), in the form of Hebrew translations of Averroes.[160] Indeed, there remained few important Arabic philosophic treatises at the dawn of the fourteenth century that had yet to lower their linguistic barriers before the Languedocian Jewish translators. While this literature was critical to the sophistication of Jewish philosophic discourse, it had little to do, according to Meiri, with the spread of philosophic allegory in the Jewish community; esteemed Jewish works had inspired the dangerous proliferation of allegorical interpretation. Meiri therefore hoped that scholars could be

trained to direct allegorical inquiry toward books like Job and Psalms, and away from the legal and historical parts of Scripture.[161] Meiri also defends the place of Greco-Arabic philosophic writing in Jewish culture by linking it to Jewish philosophic writing that contained the same subject matter and arguments. With the humor of an expert halakhist, he argues that a ban against the study of Greco-Arabic philosophy was incoherent, as these sciences had become integrated into Jewish works.

> Even if you argue, "Our rabbi [Rashba] 'would prohibit only that which is visible, but that which is dissolved into a mixture he has not'"[162]—and that would permit us to negate the presence of prohibited material ab initio!—what benefit is there? There are several works of Jewish scholars that contain books of physics. So the whole affair would become a joke: One ought not study this [non-Jewish] articulation, but one may study a different [Jewish] articulation.[163]

Playing with the specialized terminology of the dietary laws, Meiri claims that a prohibition of Greek philosophy, as such, was absurd. Were one somehow to eliminate the "prohibited" Greco-Arabic discussions of physics and metaphysics cited extensively in "permitted" Jewish texts, then Jewish culture would still possess permitted Jewish discussions of the same topics. For Meiri, no legally valid distinction could be made between the works of the Greco-Arabic philosophers and Jewish philosophical works. A ban on Greco-Arabic philosophy could only turn curious students to Jewish treatments of the same topics.[164] Meiri therefore found the prohibition of Greco-Arabic philosophic works not only incoherent but also futile.

Abba Mari sends his apologies to Perpignan

The Jewish scholars of Perpignan seem to have given Abba Mari's overtures to Rashba a rather cool reception.[165] Not surprisingly, the letters from Rashba and Bonafoux Vidal to Crescas Vidal in Perpignan became known early on to a group of local scholars. While the letters from Barcelona do not reveal the identity of the "agitators," these local scholars nevertheless developed the impression, probably through oral communication, that Abba Mari of Montpellier was the individual who had undertaken to defame Languedocian Jewish philosophic commitments abroad. The Perpignan scholars, in fact, had heard of Abba Mari's correspondence with Barcelona, but could not determine with any degree of certainty what had transpired, as these documents were as yet unavailable to them. One of the members of this Perpignan group was Abba Mari's relative and ally, Moses ben Samuel. Moses had spoken at length with Abba Mari about his correspondence with Rashba, which Abba Mari apparently intended to show him, although the opportunity had not yet arisen. Moses did his best, on the basis of his conversations with Abba Mari, to represent him favorably to the group, which

Meiri had now joined. Abba Mari, nevertheless, seems to have remained rather suspect in their eyes. Moses concludes his report to Abba Mari on his Perpignan conversations with an urgent request that he transmit his entire correspondence with Rashba to Perpignan "in order that they might believe my words."[166] Abba Mari declines to send the letters, however, perhaps sensing a truly hostile audience. "Regarding the matter of letters for which you asked, know that on account of their length, and on account of the grape harvest, I was not able to copy them."[167] Instead, Abba Mari sent a formal apology to the Perpignan scholars for raising the issue of philosophic allegory with Rashba. Abba Mari maintains that his report to Rashba, in any case, was limited to a few outlandish synagogue sermons by individuals he does not know and of whose current whereabouts he is unaware. "By my life, I do not know the names of the [philosophic synagogue] interpreters or the names of their fathers; nor do I know where they are!"[168] In order to show himself still loyal to the philosophic commitments of Languedocian Jewry, Abba Mari put forward the rather surprising claim that he had written to Rashba principally to indict his permissive view of astrological medicine.

> Far be it from me! Far be it! Lest I get the idea to swerve right or left, to condemn with even a word against an individual or a community. If I spoke against a family or tribe, let them pass me under the whip. Behold I am prepared to accept their judgment and 'to appear on the Day of Atonement that falls according to their intercalation.'[169]
>
> However, this is reason that I sent letters to our teacher, Rabbi Solomon [Rashba], may his God be with him: When I heard from one of the scholars that the Rabbi [Rashba] permitted the manufacture of an image of the constellation Leo for kidney disease, and showed me the responsum of the Rabbi [Rashba] on this matter, with his forceful arguments. I sent my letter and the matter of the difficult interpretations [rendered in public] got wrapped up in it.[170]

In his letter to Perpignan, Abba Mari makes no mention of Rashba's dramatic correspondence with Crescas Vidal, Samuel Sulami, or Levi ben Ḥayyim. As Crescas Vidal lived in Perpignan, his suggestion to Rashba to limit philosophic study in Languedoc probably had become known already among local scholars, nonetheless. Jewish scholars in Perpignan, most likely, would have heard, as well, about the death of Samuel Sulami's daughter and Levi ben Ḥayyim's eviction from his home in Narbonne. Levi was likely known to Meiri, as he seems to have been the nephew of Meiri's teacher, Reuven ben Ḥayyim.[171] Levi probably also had some direct connection to Perpignan; his birth place, Villefranche-de-Conflent, is a small town about thirty miles up the Têt from that city. Of course, the scholars of Perpignan could not consider the veracity of Abba Mari's presentation without access to his correspondence with Rashba. Nevertheless, Abba Mari probably soon realized that, beyond Moses ben Samuel, he had few allies in the capital

of Majorca. Indeed, Rashba and Abba Mari had no further contact with the scholars of Perpignan in their quest for a Languedocian prohibition on Greco-Arabic scientific and philosophic study. Undeterred, they continued to pursue the enactment of a prohibition there until an age at which individuals generally have achieved a traditional religious commitment. Despite these initial setbacks, Abba Mari still believed that, with Rashba's help, he could change the course of Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc, and together they took a number of important steps toward this goal. Hoping to sway scholarly opinion throughout Languedoc, Rashba initiated a series of contacts with the sages of Montpellier, the city in which Abba Mari resided. In Montpellier, Abba Mari and Rashba were much more persistent, despite significant opposition, in the pursuit of a prohibition to protect the young from philosophic study and interpretation. As Abba Mari and Rashba continued to press the Jewish community of Montpellier to acknowledge of the merits of their cause, the conflict over the place of science and philosophy in the Jewish curriculum came to a head.

Notes

1 In historiography, our dispute is known by a variety of names. Some have argued that it is not a Maimonidean controversy at all, as all parties to it insist that the Maimonidean legacy is integral to Jewish tradition. Haim Beinart, *Atlas of Medieval Jewish History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 54, for example, terms this controversy the "Fourth Controversy over Philosophy." Others take the question of Maimonides' interpretation of Judaism to be at the root of this controversy. Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict over the Rationalism of Maimonides* (Williamsport, PA: Bayard Press, 1935); and D. J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy (1180–1240)* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1965), for example, refers to it as the "Second Maimonidean Controversy." I refer to our dispute simply as the "controversy over philosophic study," as this avoids the confusion of any numerical order as well as emphasizes the dispute over curricular practices.

2 The Jewish struggle with the philosophic tradition in Languedoc resembles the Christian struggle at the University of Paris and elsewhere during this period. The two conflicts, however, are geographically, chronologically, and linguistically distinct. The Christian controversy occurs in Latin in the thirteenth century, at great distance from the Jewish controversy that occurs in Hebrew in the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, the two conflicts share several fundamental features that are worthy of comparison. While developments in one conflict had no direct bearing upon the other, the problems that each group confronted are similar enough to warrant a careful examination of how these two distinct religious communities confronted many of the same problems. In a separate study, I intend to provide a comparative analysis of the Christian and Jewish reception of the Greco-Arabic heritage of philosophy and science.

3 Bonafoux was a tax farmer and moneylender in the service of the Aragonese Crown. In one royal document, his brother Crescas is mentioned with him. See J. Régné, *Catalogue Les Actes de Jaime I, Pedro III, & Alfonso III, Rois d'Aragon concernant les Juifs (1213–1291)* (Paris: Durlacher, 1911–), no. 1932; and Joseph Shatzmiller, ed., "'Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan' le-Rabi Kalonymus ben Kalonymus," *Tzefunot* 10 (1966): 19–20, and 44.

4 In 1291, Crescas was still in Barcelona. See Yitzḥak Baer, *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Sefarad ha-Notzrit* (Tel Aviv: ʻAm ʻOved, 1965), p. 512, n. 90.
5 Judging from the surviving Perpignan notarial registers, Moses' family—his grandfather Asher of Lunel; his father, Samuel; and his uncle Moses—were among the most active moneylenders in Perpignan. Moses himself is found in four acts as a moneylender. See Richard Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century: An Economic Study Based on Notarial Records* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 28, 30. After the expulsion of 1306, when Abba Mari had fled to Arles in Provence, Moses and his father Samuel petitioned the King of Majorca for permission for Abba Mari to live in Perpignan (see Abba Mari ben Joseph of Lunel, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. [Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990], p. 837).
6 Abba Mari's son Meshullam is signatory to one of his father's letters to Rashba in support of a ban on philosophic study in Montpellier (see Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 430). Meshullam was married to Moses' daughter (see ibid., p. 505). Moses and Abba Mari are also cousins (see ibid., p. 399).
7 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*.
8 Abba Mari's family is from Lunel, and carries the appellation "ha-*Yarḥi*." Hence, he calls his position paper *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, "The Book of the Moon," and asks that Rashba illuminate it with support from "his mighty Sun." The introductory chapters of *Minḥat Qena'ot* (Chapters 1–18) also are not letters, but are programmatic statements of Abba Mari's religious orientation.
9 Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashbah*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik, 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996).
10 Ibid., vol. 1, nos. 414–17.
11 Ibid., no. 418.
12 On Kaufmann, see Éva Apor, ed., *David Kaufmann Memorial Volume: Papers Presented at the David Kaufmann Memorial Conference* (Budapest: Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2002).
13 Among the letters written by Abba Mari's adversaries: the response from Montpellier to Barcelona following Abba Mari's failed attempt, in Ellul, 1304, to inspire the community to declare a ban on philosophic study (*Minḥat Qena'ot*, Chapter 41); Solomon of Lunel's response to Rashba's exhortation to support a ban (ibid., Chapter 52); Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon's apology and rebuke to Rashba (ibid., Chapter 58); and the response of the scholars of Montpellier to the Barcelona excommunication (ibid., Chapter 122).
14 The following communications were either unavailable or displeasing to Abba Mari, as he referenced but did not include them in *Minḥat Qena'ot*: Levi ben Ḥayyim's letter to Rashba (Chapter 32); Isaac de Lattes' letter to Rashba (Chapters 55, 62); the excommunication in Montpellier of those who would obstruct philosophic study (Chapter 92); and Meiri's rebuke of Abba Mari's behavior (Chapter 113). See Adolf Neubauer, "The Lost Letter of Menahem Meiri," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 4 (1892): 698–9. Yedayah he-Penini's letter to Rashba is not mentioned by Abba Mari, but in all likelihood was known to him.
15 For example, Simeon ben Joseph relates the (failed) attempt of Abba Mari's circle to suppress Meiri's letter. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), Hebrew section, p. 151.
16 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, David Kaufmann, ed. (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), Hebrew section, pp. 142–74. See also David Kaufmann's review of the Zunz jubilee volume, including his own contribution (Simeon ben Joseph's "Ḥoshen Mishpat") in "Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz," *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 1 (1885): 456–8.

17 MS Pococke 280b, fols. 107a–133a was purchased in the Middle East by the emissary of Edward Pococke, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford. He died in 1691, and the manuscript was acquired in 1693 by the Bodleian Library of Oxford University.

18 See Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), no. 2218, col. 763; and now also, Malachi Beit-Arié, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda*, ed. R. A. May (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), no. 2218, cols. 413–4. MS Montefiore (Halberstam) 460 is a nineteenth-century copy of MS Pococke.

19 Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études juives* 29 (1894): 214–228.

20 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, ed. Mordecai Loeb Bisliches (Pressburg, Hungary: Anton Elden von Schmid, 1838). The 1990 critical edition by H. Z. Dimitrovsky, based upon all available manuscripts, is one of the finest editions of a medieval Hebrew text yet produced. Dimitrovsky's edition, of course, far surpasses that of Bisliches. Intriguingly, however, Bisliches' edition is based upon a Florentine manuscript now lost (see Dimitrovsky's introduction, p. 17). A peripatetic *maskil* from Brody, Ukraine, Bisliches (d. 1851) was committed to bringing to light medieval Hebrew works reflecting the philosophic interpretation of Judaism. Only the year before, the same printer brought forth his edition of Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Ma'amar Yikkavu ha-Mayyim*, ed. Bisliches (Pressburg, Hungary**:** Antov Edlen von Schmid, 1837).

21 Three classic presentations are: Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den altesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, Oskar Leiner, 1873), 7: 239–63; Sarachek, *Faith and Reason*, pp. 73–127; Yitzḥak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), 1: 289–305.

22 Abraham Halkin, "Yedaiah Bedershi's Apology," *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 165–84; and Halkin, "Why Was Levi ben Ḥayyim Hounded?" *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966): 65–76.

23 Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Ḥerem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History* 1 (1986): 27–38.

24 Ram Ben–Shalom, "Communication and Propaganda between Provence and Spain: The Controversy over Extreme Allegorization (1303–1306)," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World*, ed. Sophia Menache (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1996), pp. 171–225.

25 Charles Touati, "La Controverse de 1303–1306 autour des études philosophiques et scientifiques," *Revue des Études Juives* 127 (1968): 21–37; Ben Zion Dinur, *Yisrael ba-Golah* 10 vols. (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1958–), 2: 139–274 (sect. 4); Joseph Shatzmiller, "Rationalisme at orthodoxie religieuse chez les Juifs provençaux au commencement du XIV^{e} siècle," *Provence historique* 22 (1972): 261–86; and Shatzmiller, "Ben Abba Mari la-Rashba: Ha-Masa u-Matan she-qadam le-ḥerem be-Barṣelona," *Meḥqarim be-Toledot 'Am Yisrael ve-Eretz Yisrael* 3 (1974): 121–37; Ben-Shalom, "The Ban Placed by the Community of Barcelona on the Study of Philosophy and Allegorical Preaching: A New Study," *Revue des Études Juives* 159 (2000): 387–404.

26 Dov Schwartz, "'Ḥokhma Yevanit': Beḥina Meḥudeshet bi-Tequfat ha-Pulmus 'al Limud ha-Filosofia," *Sinai* 104 (1989): 148–53; ibid. "Changing Fronts in the Controversies over Philosophy in Medieval Spain and Provence," *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 7 (1997): 61–82; ibid. *Emunah u-Tevunah: Darkhe ha-Vikuaḥ ba-Hagut ha-Yehudit bi-Yeme-ha-Benayim* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitaḥon, 2001).

27 Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 109–19; Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provence* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 152–180.

28 "נמצט הפשיטו נל פשטי התורה" in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 408.

29 A twelfth-century Andalusian Muslim philosopher, Averroes had succeeded in peeling away from Aristotle much of the neo-Platonic interpretive accretion that was often much more conducive to many religious thinkers. On the importance of Averroes in the history of philosophy, see Jean Jolivet, ed., *Multiple Averroes: Actes du Colloque international organise al'occasion du 850e anniversaire de la naissance d'Averroes* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1978); and Gerhard Endress and Jan Aertsen, eds., *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution, and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999).

30 An exception is the Hebrew version of Aristotle's *Meteorology*, which is nonetheless significantly indebted to Averroes' commentaries. See Aristotle, *Otot ha-Shamayim: Samuel ibn Tibbon's Hebrew Version of Aristotle's* Meteorology; *A Critical Edition, with Introduction, Translation, and Index*, ed. and trans. Resianne Fontaine (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1995); and see Aviezer Ravitsky, "Sefer ha-Metorologica le-Aristo u-Darke ha-Parshanut ha-Maimonit le-Ma'ase Bereshit," *Meḥqere Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 9 (1990): 225–50.

31 See, for example, Averroes, *De substantia orbis*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Arthur Hyman (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1986); Averroes, *Epitome of Parva Naturalia*, trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Harry Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1961); and Averroes, *De generatione et corruptione: Middle Commentary and Epitome*, trans. Kalonymous ben Kalonymous, Moses ibn Tibbon, and Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben Sheatiel Ḥen, ed. Samuel Kurland (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1958). On Moses' thought, see Colette Sirat, "La Pensée Philosophique de Moïse ibn Tibbon," *Revue des Études Juives* 138 (1979): 505–15; and Moses ibn Tibbon, *Moses Ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm* ed. and trans. Otfried Fraisse (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

32 Ruth Glasner, in "Levi ben Gershom and the Study of Ibn Rushd in the Fourteenth Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 86 (1995): 51–90, has taken great care to demonstrate that the Hebrew supercommentarial tradition to Averroes' works does not begin before the 1320s. The keen interest for the works of Averroes described here by Abba Mari therefore represents an earlier, more preliminary stage in the European Jewish encounter with this important Arabic philosopher.

33 Abba Mari nevertheless is generally taken to have intended Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche-de-Conflent.

34 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 225. For the creative suggestion that Abba Mari's concerns may be understood through an anthropological lens, see Gad Freudenthal, "Holiness and Defilement: The Ambivalent Perception of Philosophy by Its Opponents in the Early Fourteenth Century." *Micrologus* 9 (2001): 169–93.

35 See, for example, ibid.

36 See, for example, ibid.

37 Examples are collected in David Kaufmann, "Simeon b. Josefs Sendschreiben," pp. 143–4 [German section]; see also, Gregg Stern, "The Crisis of Philosophic Allegory in Languedocian-Jewish Culture (1304–6)," in *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), pp. 187–207.

38 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 316. Rashba later described recent Languedocian Jewish philosophic interpretation as more extensive in its misappropriation of the biblical text than Christian allegoresis. See ibid., p. 381. Simeon ben Joseph describes the new Jewish interpretation as Christian in method. See his "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 151.
39 Languedocian scholars for the most part denied this accusation; see, for example, Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 365–72 (Crescas Vidal in defense of Samuel ha-Sulami); ibid., pp. 506–13 (Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon to Rashba); and *Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut* (Yedayah ha-Penini to Rashba) in Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik. 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 1: 418, p. 157a.
40 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 167. Cf. *Ḥullin* 91b, like the angels who are created to perform only one specific function, the preachers, as it were, stem from some perpetual source.
41 Ibid., p. 166.
42 Levi ben Ḥayyim of Villefranche-de-Conflent gives this Mishnaic idiom the same sense as Meiri does. See above, p. 54.
43 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 575, and Rashba, in *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 345.
44 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 150.
45 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 425.
46 Proverbs 22: 17.
47 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 659–60 (*Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 14).
48 Ibid., p. 317. Abba Mari is responding to a passage in Rashba's letter to him. See ibid., p. 278.
49 See ibid., p. 257.
50 See ibid., p. 258.
51 Ibid., p. 317.
52 Despite this harsh rejection of the rationalist claim that philosophy is part of Judaism, Rashba's relationship to rationalist teachings and sensibilities is actually quite complex. See, for example, his responsum concerning the "Prophet from Avila," in Rashba, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. Dimitrovsky (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), no. 34, pp. 100–7.
53 This refers, most likely, to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture along philosophic lines.
54 This refers, most likely, to excessive allegorical interpretation.
55 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 272.
56 Ibid., p. 273. Cf. ibid., p. 316–18.
57 "גפן אדרת" (cf. Ezekiel 17: 8).
58 Meiri, "Introduction to *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, '*Avot*," p. 142. For the extent of the correspondence between Meiri and Rashba, see ibid., note 634. See also, Samuel Mirsky, "Toldot R. Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Sefarav," in Meiri, *Ḥibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. Abraham Schreiber (NY: Talpiyot, 1950), pp. 17–20.
59 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 277.
60 Cf. *Nahum* 3: 2; as opposed to the Divine Chariot.
61 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 278.
62 Ibid., p. 345.
63 See Rashba, "Teshuvah le-Ḥakhme Provence" in *Seder Rav 'Amram Ga'on*, ed. A. L. Frumkin (Jerusalem: Zuckerman, 1912), 39b–40b (I owe this reference to Moshe Idel); and in Jacob ibn Habib, *'En Ya'aqov* (Vina: Rom, 1926), 46a–47a. The precise historical circumstances of the responsum, however, are unclear.
64 BT *Sukkah* 28a.

65 Cf. Judah ha-Levi, *Ha-Kuzari*, trans. Yehudah Even Shemuel (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1972) I: 79.

66 Rashba uses the term, "המורכב [the pharmacodynamics]," a play on the word "המרכבה [the Chariot]."

67 Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Hilkhot Yesode ha-Torah* 4: 12; and Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 493–4.

68 Cf. the comment of Rashba's student Yom Tov ben Abraham Ishbilli (Ritva), *Ḥidushe ha-Riṭva: Masekhet Sukah*, ed. Eliyahu Lichtenstein (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook 1975) *Sukkah* 28a, "[The 'Account of the Chariot'] refers to The Holy Supernal Chariot which the prophets never saw, whose secret is known to the masters of Truth."

69 The critique of astrological medicine was only an appendage to Abba Mari's first letter to Rashba. To an audience of Languedocian scholars, however, Abba Mari claimed that he wrote to Rashba principally concerning astrological images and only secondarily about outlandish philosophic interpretation. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 407, Abba Mari's letter to Moses ben Samuel; cf. ibid., p. 316, Abba Mari's letter to Rashba. According to Abba Mari's loyal student Simeon ben Joseph, as well, his teacher wrote to Rashba to address the issue of images. Simeon insists "there was simply no time to send" his teacher's letter before the issue of problematic sermons became urgent. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Hoshen Mishpat," p. 147.

70 Bruno Delmas and, more recently, Joseph Shatzmiller discuss the use of astrological medicine in Montpellier and attempt to identify the literary sources of astrological practice there. See B. Delmas, "Médailles astrologiques et talismanniques dans le Midi de la France (XIII^{e}–XIV^{e} siècle)," in *Archéologie Occitane*, *Actes du 96^{e} Congrès national des sociétés savantes archéologiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1976), pp. 437–54; and Joseph Shatzmiller, "In Search of the 'Book of Figures': Medicine and Astrology in Montpellier at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century," *AJSreview* 7–8 (1982–1983): 383–407; and Shatzmiller, "Tzurat 'Arye li-Khlayot, veha-Makhloket 'al Limude he-Ḥakhmot be-Reshit ha-Me'a ha-14," *Meḥkre Yerushalayim be-Mada'e ha-Yahadut* 9 (1990): 397–408. See, also, David Horwitz, "Rashba's Attitude Toward Science and Its Limits." *Torah u-Madda Journal* 3 (1991–2): 52–81. For a broad preliminary survey of important unexamined material, and a rough categorization of the spectrum of views expressed therein, see Dov Schwartz, "Ha-Vikkuaḥ 'al ha-Magia ha-'Astrologit be-Provence be-Me'a ha-14," *Siyyon* 58 (1993): 141–74; Schwartz, "La magie astrale dans la pensée juive rationaliste en Provence au XIV^{e} siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 61 (1994): 31–55; Schwartz, *Astrologyah u-Magyah ba-Hagut ha-Yehudit bi-Yeme ha-Benayim* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999) and Schwartz, *Keme'ot, Segulot u-Sekhaltanut: Ba-Hagut ha-Yehudit bi-Yeme ha-Benayim* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar–Ilan University Press, 2004); but see the careful, sensitive and insightful, Sara Klein–Braslavy, "The Concept of Magic in R. Solomon ben Abraham Adret (Rashba) and R. Nissim Gerondi (Ran)," in *"Encuentros" and "Desencuentros"; Spanish Jewish Cultural Interaction throughout History*, ed. Carlos Carrete Parrondo (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 2000), pp. 105–29.

71 Arnald of Villanova—a prominent member of the university medical faculty at Montpellier—employed such an image in the treatment of the Avignon Pope, Boniface VIII. Robert E. Lerner, "The Pope and the Doctor," *Yale Review* 78 (1988): 62–79; and Michael McVaugh, *Medicine before the Plague: Practitioners and Their Patients in the Crown of Aragon: 1285–1345* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 162–4. Rashba himself seems to have used such a medallion, in addition to supporting its use. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp.,

Minḥat Qena'ot, p. 282, and Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik, 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 1: 61, no. 167, and 1: 280, no. 825.

72 See Delmas, "Médailles astrologiques et talismanniques," p. 438, for the photograph of a contemporary example preserved in the French National Library in Paris. See also the report of the Aragonese ambassador concerning Arnald's treatment of Boniface VIII, in which the image is described as a "*denarius*." Heinrich Finke, *Aus den Tagen Bonifaz VIII* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1902), p. 205.

73 See David Pingree, "The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe," in *La Diffusione delle Scienze Islamiche nel Medio Evo Europeo* (Rome: Accademia dei Lincei, 1987), pp. 68, 97–8.

74 Cf. BT *Shabbat*, 65b.

75 Cf. BT *Sanhedrin*, 23a.

76 Leviticus 19: 26.

77 BT *Sanhedrin* 65b.

78 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 273–4 (Abba Mari, letter to Rashaba).

79 Ibid., pp. 281–2 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari). The sage with whom Rashba corresponded appears to have been Isaac de Lattes, a Montpellier physician whose words Abba Mari quoted in his second letter to Barcelona: "'It is true that I [Isaac de Lattes] prescribed this image which, to my understanding, should be prohibited. But I could do nothing else! I must believe the great rabbi [Rashba] even if he says that left is right [and right is left].'" Ibid., p. 319–20 (as quoted by Abba Mari, letter to Rashba); cf. Deut. 17: 11 and *Sifre*, ed. Saul Horovitz and Louis Finkelstein (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969), *Shoftim*, no. 154. De Lattes, it seems, was intellectually opposed to astrological cures but professionally tempted to use them. Abba Mari later wrote, "[Isaac ben Judah de Lattes] was a factor in [my] query [to Rashba] concerning the medallion of Leo, as he used it regularly and created it for those afflicted with kidney disease." Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 492. Perhaps there was a demand for such treatment in Languedoc, and therefore the financial incentive to provide it. Under such circumstances, de Lattes might well have turned to Rashba, thinking that this esteemed halakhist would provide him with the permission he required. Isaac was the grandfather of Isaac de Lattes, *Sha'are Tziyon*, printed in Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet 'Avot*, introduction, ed. Shelomo Zalman Havlin, Cleveland, Ohio: Makhon 'Ofeq, 1992. In the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, there are two short medical works by de Lattes, the physician: Marsh. 347 [Neubauer 2133], and Laud. 113 [Neubauer 2142].

80 This text makes the same points as Rashba's recapitulation of his responsum to "the sage" in *Minḥat Qena'ot*. From Rashba's summary of de Lattes' question, it is clear that de Lattes brought Maimonidean concerns to the issue. The questioner feared that the use of a medallion of Leo to ease kidney stones would involve the practice of illicit "Amorite ways"—as "natural philosophy does not concur with it." Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 1: 61 and 1: 280.

81 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat*, ed. Yitzḥaq Lange (Jerusalem: Daf Ḥen, 1976), 65a, p. 239.

82 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 308–10 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari).

83 In Hebrew, "*segulah*"; in Arabic, "*khassa*"; in Latin, "*proprietas*." For the origins and development of the term "*segulah*," see Menaḥem Z. Kaddari, *Mi-Yerushat Leshon Yeme ha-Benayim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1970), pp. 42–56, esp. pp. 50–1.

84 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 298 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari).

But, cf. Rashba's responsum to Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon against the *kapparot* ritual for the eve of the Day of Atonement, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, I: 395.

85 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 309–10 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari).

86 Arnald of Villanova provides a theoretical account of the transfer of "special" properties to naturally-occurring substances and man-made objects by means of astrological influence. See Arnald of Villanova, "De parte operativa," *Opera Omnia*, ed. Nicolai Tavrelli (Basel, Switzerland: Conradvm Waldkirch, 1585), pp. 273ff.

87 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 302–3, and cf. p. 283 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari).

88 Rashba's student Nissim ben Reuben of Gerona presents a fully elaborated theoretical justification of this view, with the practitioner intentionally establishing the difference between astral worship and the sophisticated medical deployment of celestial influence. See Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi, *Derashot ha-Ran*, ed. Leon Feldman (Jerusalem: Mekhon Shalem, 1974), pp. 58–60 and 217–22.

89 "After [I responded to the first Languedocian questioner], inquiries on this subject reached me from 'dissenting sages' [anonymous plural] arguing that an astrological image is prohibited. They pushed away the proof that I adduced on the basis of [the ruling concerning], 'the *sela*' placed over the callus.' And although they pushed it away in a manner which is not at all persuasive, I did not respond, lest I intrude upon their dispute. For if they are doing battle against one another, who am I to fall between them?" Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 282–3 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari); cf. BT *Bava Metzi'a*, 59b. Rashba speaks as though he is the proverbial "walls of the Study House."

90 Moses ben Samuel, letter to Abba Mari, in ibid., pp. 403–4. Moses ben Samuel continues, "[A]nd we posses a *précis* of the view of the Master." Perhaps Moses had a copy of the responsum from Rashba to an anonymous rationalist correspondent. Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, 1: 61 and 1: 280. If this document is the one Rashba referred to as his first responsum to Montpellier on images, it is especially likely that it was "the *précis*."

91 "תעתועים עם אמונה," Rasha, letter to unnamed former student, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 397 (cf. Jeremiah 10: 15 and 51: 18). The student had written to Rashba to request a copy of his teacher's correspondence with Abba Mari (see ibid., p. 395). Rashba goes on to explain to his student that he chose to respond to Abba Mari's inquiry "due to his stature."

92 Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Shabbat* 64b, p. 238; cf. the parallel text, Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Sanhedrin*, Yitzḥaq Ralbag, ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1970), 68a, pp. 194b–5b.

93 When Meiri explains that "[The Talmudic term 'engraved image'] refers to a folk remedy for which there is no wariness that one might come to err in using them," Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah*, *Sanhedrin*, 68a, p. 195a, he calls to mind Abba Mari's argument that, "the Torah only warns against something which has some attraction and which might lead to error," Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 274. Perhaps these formulations reflect a Languedocian commonplace, growing out of Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Idolatry* 1: 1, for explaining the presence of superstitions in the Talmud.

94 For a perceptive reconstruction and analysis of Maimonides' thought on this issue see, Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Maimonides' Repudiation of Astrology," in *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 2, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1991), pp. 123–58.

95 The four rounds of the exchange between Abba Mari and Rashba can be found in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, Chapters 19 (pp. 273ff); 21 (pp. 281ff); 23 (pp. 319ff); and 25 (pp. 347ff).

96 Shatzmiller, "In Search of the 'Book of Figures,'" speculates on the matter. He argues that, since the most prominent Jewish students of philosophy in Montpellier, such as Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, were associated with the university medical community of the city (which dallied with astrological images at this time), Abba Mari may have seen the accusation of astral worship as a potentially effective barb to impugn the piety of the group most involved with non-Jewish learning. This construction strikes me as entirely unlikely. Rashba was deeply supportive of astrological medicine, and Abba Mari most likely knew this even before his addressee's response. But it is especially difficult to imagine that, after Rashba had explicated his views at length, Abba Mari would continue his anti-image line with the goal of impugning Ibn Tibbon in Barcelona. Shatzmiller does not consider that a Languedocian audience of Maimonidean sensibilities might be moved positively by Abba Mari's continued critique.

97 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 399–404 (Moses ben Samuel, letter to Abba Mari). In this letter, Moses refers to Meiri as "the sage, our teacher, Rabbi Menaḥem" (p. 403). On the basis of this reference, Gross claims that Moses was Meiri's student. See Heinrich Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), p. 466.

98 Moses ben Samuel cites the letters of Crescas and Bonafoux Vidal (see Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 402).

99 See ibid., p. 403.

100 Ibid., pp. 407–8.

101 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 152. Meiri's pride as a Languedocian halakhist and his desire to defend the ritual traditions of his community are manifest most clearly in his *Magen 'Avot*, ed. Y. Kohen (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1988). This work is a collection of halakhic essays written to refute the claim of some Catalonian scholars, recently arrived in Languedoc, that a variety of practices peculiar to the Jewish communities of Languedoc were at variance with Talmudic law. Not unlike "Ḥoshen Mishpat," these frequently piquant essays are redolent with pride for the ways of an authentic and ancient community. See above, pp. 29–33.

102 Initially, de Lattes supported Rashba's suggestion for a ban on philosophic study in Montpellier (for his signature, see Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 430). Later, de Lattes joined the opposite camp (for Abba Mari's account, see ibid., p. 492).

103 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 150. I do not believe that the message to which Meiri refers survives. In a letter to Rashba, Abba Mari's adversaries in Montpellier argue that his account of the religious circumstances there should immediately have been suspect, as he was a sole reporter who went outside the community for the condemnation of transgressions. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 849.

104 Cf. Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," pp. 150–1.

105 Ibid. (cf. Ecclesiastes 2: 8, BT *Gittin* 68a).

106 Abba Mari's student, Simeon ben Joseph, tells of the (failed) attempt of Abba Mari's Montpellier group to conceal the entire letter on account of this passage, and of their embarrassment when it was read publicly by their opposition in synagogues throughout Languedoc. See Simeon's comment about this point, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 151. Even with this most revelatory utterance, Meiri in no way suggests that the integrity of European Jewry is at risk on account of the esoteric divide between kabbalists and philosophers. See, in contrast, Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 149–155.

107 Rashba, letter to Abba Mari, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 280.
108 Ibid.
109 Rashba refers, one other time, to the kabbalists of Narbonne, in a letter to a Narbonnese scholar, Samuel Sulami; see *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 388 (Rashba, letter to Sulami).
110 See ibid., p. 358 (Rashba, note to Abba Mari). I thank Professor Malachie Beit-Arié for his assistance in deciphering this description of Rashba's manuscript.
111 Anatoli's translations of Averroes' *Middle Commentary to Porphry's Isagoge* and *Aristotle's Categories and Analytics*, completed in Naples in 1232, are dedicated to Frederick II. See Ernest Renan, "Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzième siècle," *Histoire littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27: 586–7; and Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1861), p. 188. On Anatoli at the court of Frederick II, see above, p. 15. For a translation of a small section of Anatoli's *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, see Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800: An Anthology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 111–23. On the *Malmad* as a source for Christian–Jewish contacts in Languedoc, see Collette Sirat, "Les traducteurs juifs à la cour des rois de Sicile et de Naples," *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Age: Actes du colloque international du C.N.R.S. organisé à Paris, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, les 26–28 mai 1986*, ed. Geneviève Contamine (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), pp. 169–191; Saperstein, "Christians and Christianity in the Sermons of Jacob Anatoli," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 225–42. Large sections of the *Malmad* have now been translated into Italian, with extensive commentary; see Anatoli, *Il pungolo dei discepoli: Malmad ha-talmidim*, ed. Luciana Pepi (Palermo: Officina di studi medievali: Fondazione Federico II, 2004).
112 Jacob Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, ed. L. Silbermann (Lyck, Prussia: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1866), p. 32b.
113 Cf. Isaiah 51: 13, and Psalms 11: 2.
114 Cf. Meiri, *Bet ha-Beḥirah 'al Masekhet Bava Metzi'a*, ed. Kalman Schlesinger (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1959), 83b.
115 Rashba, note to Abba Mari, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 358–9. Dimitrovsky, p. 359 interprets the final line of the note as an allusive signature: Both Abraham Rashba (i.e., Rashba's father), and Abraham the Patriarch will rejoice with their progeny. That Solomon of Lunel refers to the penultimate line as the end of the letter seems to support this interpretation. See ibid., p. 472.
116 Ecclesiastes 4: 13, "Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king," is the verse that Rashba wished to invoke against this venerated Languedocian scholar. The insult is magnified by the midrash that identifies the "old king" with the "evil inclination." See *Qohelet Rabbah*, ad locum.
117 There is no indication in the sources as to circumstances of this note's release.
118 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 358 (Abba Mari, letter). Abba Mari protects Rashba and refuses to identify the "old king." See ibid., p. 692. Simeon ben Joseph states that the accusation that Rashba denounced Anatoli is a fabrication. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): p. 221.
119 See Solomon ben Isaac of Lunel's letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 472, and Abba Mari's report, ibid., p. 692.
120 See Levi ben Abraham ben Ḥayyim, "Ha-Ma'amar ha-Rishon min Sefer Batte ha-Nefesh veha-Laḥashim," ed. Israel Davidson, *Yedi'ot ha-Makhon le-Ḥeqer ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit be-Yerushalayim* 5 (1939): 3–42; Davidson, "Levi ben Abra-

ham ben Ḥayyim: A Mathematician of the XIIIth Century," *Scripta Mathematica* 4 (1936): 57–65.

121 See Levi ben Ḥayyim, *Livyat Ḥen: Ha-Ḥeleq ha-Shelishi min ha-Ma'amar ha-Shishi Ma'aseh Bereshit*, ed. Howard Kreisel (Jerusalem: World Union for Jewish Studies, 2004); and Levi ben Ḥayyim, *Livyat Ḥen le-Rabi Levi ben Avraham: Ekhut ha-Nevuah ve-Sodot ha-Torah*, Howard Kreisel, ed. (Ber Sheva, Israel: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2007).

122 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 359 (Abba Mari, letter).

123 Ibid., p. 381 (Rashba, letter to Crescas Vidal).

124 Ibid., p. 383 (Rashba, letter to Crescas Vidal).

125 See Shatzmiller, "Ha-Kefira ha-'Albigenzit be-'Ene ha-Yehudim Bene ha-Zeman," in *Tarbut ve-Ḥevrah bi-Toldot Yisrael bi-Yeme ha-Benayim: Qovetz Ma'amarim le-Zikhro shel Ḥayyim Hillel Ben-Sasson*, ed. R. Bonfil, M. Ben-Sasson, and J. Hacker (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1989), pp. 333–52.

126 See Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIVe siècle* (Paris: A. Picard, 1881), p. 292; Renan, *Les Rabbins Français*, p. 714; Régné, *Etude sur la Condition des Juifs de Narbonne du Ve au XIVe siècle* (Narbonne, France: F. Caillard, 1912), pp. 123, n. 1; 134; 215, n. 10; 236; and Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan*, pp. 17–19, 168, 180–2. Saige and Renan connect these documents to Samuel Sulami despite the fact that they refer to Crescas's son's father-in-law as "Samuel Sekili." Indeed, Rashba equates the two names in a letter to Abba Mari (in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, ed. Bisliches, p. 180). The fact that Rashba wrote specifically to Crescas in Perpignan to ask his opinion about Samuel Sulami of Narbonne seems to imply Rashba's knowledge of some relation between Crescas and Sulami. Of course, it is still possible that Sulami (the object of Rashba's inquiry) and Sekili (Crescas's father-in-law) are two different Narbonesse scholars. Indeed, this is the independant claim of both Henri Gross and David Kaufmann, who did not consider this context of Rashba's inquiry to Crescas about Samuel Sulami. See Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), pp. 431–4.

127 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 163.

128 Coinage in the Crown of Aragon was based upon silver and used the Carolingian ratio of 1 pound *(libra)* to 20 sous *(solidi)* to 240 pennies *(denarii)*. For a discussion of money and prices, see Emery, *The Jews of Perpignan*, pp. 128–30; and above, pp. 70–1.

129 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 369.

130 Ibid., pp. 359–62. Still in Barcelona, Crescas's brother Bonafoux Vidal wrote a letter to support Rashba's. "Full of wrath," Bonafoux wished to know why his brother had not joined Abba Mari's condemnation, if things were indeed as the scholars of Barcelona had heard (ibid., pp. 362–5).

131 Crescas Vidal, letter to Rashba, in ibid., p. 367.

132 Ibid., p. 370.

133 Of his son's father-in-law, Crecas writes glowingly. See ibid., pp. 367–8. On his way to Barcelona, Kalonymus ben Kalonymus of Arles stayed for a short time in Narbonne in the home of Samuel. Kalonymus says of Samuel: "[He] dwells in the Palace of Wisdom and Knowledge, and from him Instruction issues throughout the country . . .. However, his devotion to study is insufficient. This is on account of his great wealth and untold power." Shatzmiller, "'Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan' le-Rabi Kalonymus ben Kalonymus," pp. 27–8, 41.

134 Crescas Vidal, letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 369–70.

135 Ibid., p. 370.

136 Crescas also recounts hearing that an anonymous philosopher had written a

commentary for Todros of Beaucaire on the Torah, "transforming the entire text into allegory." Todros told Crescas that the son of the author recently had ordered that the deteriorating manuscript be copied. Perhaps, Crescas suggests, this might have resulted in its circulation.

137 Ibid., pp. 370–1.
138 Ibid., p. 371.
139 Ibid., pp. 366–72. On the subject of the prohibition of philosophy and kabbalah before a specified age, see Moshe Idel, "Le-toldot ha-'isur lilmod kabbalah lifne gil 'arba'im," *AJSreview* 5 (1980): 1–20.
140 Crescas Vidal, letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 372.
141 Ibid., pp. 374–85; and again with the support of Crescas' brother Bonfait, ibid., pp. 372–3.
142 Ibid., p. 383.
143 Rashba, letter to Samuel Sulami, in ibid., pp. 385–90.
144 See, for example, Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
145 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 390.
146 Ibid., pp. 390–5.
147 Ibid., p. 395. In his letter to Rashba, Crescas alluded to the fact that Dulcia was ill; see ibid., p. 368.
148 Ibid., pp. 395–9.
149 Ibid., p. 398 (Rashba, letter to unnamed student).
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid., p. 397.
152 Ibid., p. 399.
153 See ibid., pp. 652–3 (*Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 5). Simeon ben Joseph echoes this argument (see Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph," pp. 223, 224).
154 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 652 (Mari's *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 4).
155 See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I: 34. Maimonides enumerates many intellectual prerequisites to the study of physics and metaphysics. Cf. *Guide*, III: 51, 54.
156 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 655 (*Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 9). Cf. Maimonides' letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, *'Iggrot ha-Rambam*, ed. Isaac Shilat, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Margaliyot le-yad Yeshivat Maaleh Adumim 1989), 2: 552, "Take care to study the works of Aristotle only with their commentaries, the *Commentary* of Alexander of Aphrodisias, or the *Commentary* of Themistius, or the *Commentary* of Averroes." It seems unlikely that Abba Mari did not know of this letter. Perhaps he saw fit, nevertheless, to argue for what he saw as the thrust of Maimonides' teaching.
157 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 652–3 (*Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, Chapter 5).
158 Cf. BT *Ketubot* 10a, BT *Gittin* 17b, 18a; Meiri, *Bet ha-beḥirah, Bava Metzi'a* 17b.
159 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 166.
160 An outstanding exception is Averroes' commentary to the *Nicomachian Ethics*, which did not exist in Hebrew until 1321, when it was translated by Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles. See Averroes, *Nicomachian Ethics: Middle Commentary*, trans. Samuel ben Judah, ed. Lawrence V. Berman (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1999).
161 See Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 167. In writing the philoso-

phically oriented *Perush Tehilim*, ed. Joseph Cohn (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1936), and *Perush Mishle*, ed. M. M. Meshi-Zahav (Jerusalem: 'Otzar ha-Posqim, 1968), but eschewing a Torah commentary, Meiri followed his own advice.

162 Cf. BT *Pesaḥim*, 30b.

163 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," p. 166. Meiri continues to draw a similar conclusion regarding Jewish writing on logic.

164 E.g., the encyclopedias of Judah ibn Matka, Levi ben Ḥayyim, and Gershon ben Solomon of Arles. One imagines, however, that, to the average reader, Jewish works were less formidable and more inviting. On the encyclopedia of Gershon ben Solomon, see James T. Robinson, "Gershom ben Solomon's *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*: Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedia of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Steven Harvery (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 248–74.

165 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 401–4.

166 Ibid., p. 404 (Moses ben Samuel, letter to Abba Mari).

167 Ibid., p. 408 (Abba Mari, letter to Moses ben Samuel). Abba Mari further suggests that a Rabbi Joseph ben Phineas in Perpignan has copies and will share them. If copies were available locally, however, it seems unlikely that Moses would have had to send for them.

168 Ibid. (Abba Mari, letter to Perpignan scholars).

169 Cf. Mishnah *Rosh ha-Shana* 2: 9.

170 Abba Mari, letter to Perpignan scholars, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 407.

171 See Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, p. 421. In *Livyat Ḥen* (MS Munich 58, 3: 3), Levi cites his "master and uncle, the sage Rabbi Reuven." See Abraham Geiger, "Ma'amar 'al R. Levi ben R. Avraham ben R. Ḥayyim u-Ketzat Bene Doro," *He-Ḥalutz* 2 (1853): 12–27.

7 The controversy peaks (1305–1306)

As Abba Mari continued in Languedoc to pursue his goal of a more hierarchical curriculum with quite limited access to philosophic works, Rashba and his court in Barcelona were drawn further into the religious life of Languedocian Jewry. While the controversy over philosophic study traversed many political boundaries, to some extent it overlapped with the regions in which the parties to the conflict lived. The main divide, of course, was between Catalonia and Languedoc. It was in Barcelona, the ancestral seat of the counts of Catalonia and the capital of the Kingdom of Aragon, that Rashba grew up and was educated. Medieval Catalonian Jewish scholars studied more than one overarching interpretation of Judaism. Some Catalonian Jewish scholars did pursue philosophy, as both a basic inquiry into the nature of things and a guide to the interpretation of Judaism. Many Catalonian Jewish scholars at this time, however, were quite cool, if not outright hostile, to the Maimonidean synthesis of the philosophic tradition with Judaism. Kabbalah, on the other hand, had begun to flourish in Catalonia. Rashba himself was a discreet follower of this emerging theosophy and exegesis, as he had inherited this orientation from his teacher and predecessor, Naḥmanides.[1]

Toledo, the capital of the Kingdom of Castile, attracted a diversity of Jewish sages. While Catalonian kabbalists wrote relatively little by the turn of the century, Castilian kabbalists had published vast treatises, including sections of the Zohar, which later became a canonical work. Representing yet another approach to Jewish tradition was the leading German scholar of the day, Asher ben Yeḥiel, known as Rosh, who had fled the Rhineland and found refuge in Toledo in 1305. Rosh himself found philosophy foreign and, as such, inappropriate for Jews; instead, he embraced the Ashkenazic esoteric traditions that he had received from his Rheinish forebears and teachers (German pietists and Tosafists) and had carried with him to Castile. Many other Catalonian and Castilian Jewish scholars, however, eschewed an overarching interpretation of Judaism of any kind—kabbalistic, pietistic, or philosophical.

The scholars of Occitania possessed a common spirituality formed by Maimonidean commitments, although they resided in five distinct royal

jurisdictions: the Kingdom of Majorca (Roussillon), the Kingdom of France (Languedoc), the City of Montpellier (held jointly by France and Majorca),[2] the Kingdom of Sicily (Provence), and the Holy See (Comtat Venaissin). Closest to Catalonia, yet on the northern side of Pyrenees, Meiri resided in Perpignan, the ancestral seat of the Counts of Roussillon and Cerdagne, and the capital of the Kingdom of Majorca.[3] The Jewish community of Perpignan was relatively new; for example, Meiri's own ancestors came from Carcassonne in the Duchy of Toulouse, itself part of the Languedoc region. The Languedoc region held historical Jewish settlements in cities and towns including Narbonne, Beziérs, Montpellier, Lunel, Nîmes, and Posquières. During the thirteenth century, Languedoc had become a possession of the French Crown, with its court in faraway Paris. Montpellier, Abba Mari's city of residence, was an exceptional *dominium*, a separate jurisdiction ruled jointly by Majorca and France. East of the Rhône, other Languedocian Jewish scholars lived in the cities and towns of Provence, including Marseilles, Arles, Avignon, Aix, and Argentière, as subjects of the Kingdom of Sicily, or in Carpentras and Orange of Comtat Venaissin, as subjects of the Holy See.

Despite its many political jurisdictions and profound cultural tensions, the fundamentally shared religious orientation of the Jewish scholars of Languedoc is an achievement of the thirteenth century. Abba Mari and his adversaries disagreed sharply in their interpretation of the Languedocian vision that they shared. While outside Languedoc an ambivalent relation to the Maimonidean tradition prevailed, within it, disputes concerned the extent, character, and future course of philosophic study and interpretation. Meiri, Yedayah ha-Penini, and the scholars of Montpellier argued that Languedocian Jews would never accept any ban on philosophic study as such a decree impugned their deeply spiritual and productive relationship to the philosophic tradition. Abba Mari and his circle, on the other hand, maintained, as Maimonides' true heirs, that the Languedocian relationship to the philosophic tradition belonged exclusively to those who supported the heightened exclusivity and esotericism that such a ban implied.[4]

Abba Mari announces Rashba's call to the scholars of Montpellier

Operating discreetly, Rashba and Abba Mari set out to rouse the scholars of Languedoc to restrict the study of Greco-Arabic philosophic works to those who had mastered traditional studies. Rashba transmitted to Abba Mari and his colleague Todros of Beaucaire a sealed document, signed by the scholars of Barcelona, that formally asked the scholars of Montpellier to prohibit the study of Greco-Arabic works (medical works excepted) until the age of thirty.[5] If the scholars of Montpellier would proclaim such a ban, the scholars of Barcelona would follow suit, the letter promised.

Surely, Rashba knew that Abba Mari and Todros were working against the

climate of opinion in Languedoc. The Jewish scholars of Perpignan and Montpellier had already declined once before to follow his lead with regard to Jewish philosophic works. His "little note" about the *Malmad ha-Talmidim* had caused a furor in Languedoc, to the point of sparking public protest. Sensibly, Rashba instructed the two men to test the potential reaction to his proposal before making the letter public. Over a period of a month or two, Todros and Abba Mari quietly consulted a few leading scholars in Montpellier and became convinced that they could win the approval of the majority of the community's elders with a public reading of Rashba's request. Montpellier would know that Rashba would back up his formal request for their ban with his own ban on philosophic study. Abba Mari planned, therefore, to read Rashba's letter publicly on a Sabbath in Ellul 5064 (1304).

On the Friday before that Sabbath, the physician, astronomer, and philosophic translator Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon approached Abba Mari.[6] Jacob ben Makhir expressed his absolute objection to a ban on scientific study and asked Abba Mari to terminate his efforts toward this end. A dispute ensued and neither man was able to convince the other to relent. For Jacob ben Makhir, it was patent that the Barcelona community was reaching into the jurisdiction of his community and violating its local autonomy. In a report to Rashba, Abba Mari quoted Jacob ben Makhir as saying, "What do [the Catalonian rabbis] have to do with us? God placed a boundary between them and us. We shall not obey or submit to them."[7] Intriguingly, Abba Mari claimed in this report that Jacob had supported his efforts until an obscure relative, Judah ben Moses ibn Tibbon, persuaded him to oppose them.[8]

On 29 Ellul 5064,[9] with the community gathered in the synagogue for the Sabbath morning services, Abba Mari read the letter from Barcelona aloud, hoping that its authority might create a consensus in favor of a ban that Rashba could then back up. As Abba Mari proclaimed before the Montpellier Jewish community that Sabbath, Rashba and the scholars of Barcelona believed the philosophic allegory current among Languedocian Jews to have far-reaching antinomian intentions.

> They falsify the whole Torah, and he is considered wise who plots to discover an antinomian interpretation of a commandment. They allegorize [יעמידון], even in writing, as one who burrows under [the Law]. Their intention is clearly recognizable: to say that the commandments are not to be taken literally. "For why should God care whether an animal is slaughtered by the neck or the throat?"[10]

The Barcelona scholars point to the activity of Levi ben Ḥayyim as the central figure behind the problematic allegoresis. Although they do not mention Levi by name, but only as "this one," the repetition here of arguments against Levi presented earlier to Crescas Vidal in Perpignan and later to Samuel ben Reuven of Beziérs allows us to be reasonably certain that

Levi is intended in this letter as well. In all of these contexts, the Barcelona scholars maintain that Levi's teachings involve a profound departure not only from Judaism, but also from a religious tradition held in common with Christians and Muslims. Subtly evoking the shared knowledge of royal France's obliteration of the Albigensians of Languedoc in the previous century, the scholars of Barcelona argue to their Languedocian audience that Levi ben Ḥayyim and his group deserved similar treatment.

> Just consider the other nations![11] They would punish [such individuals] as heretics for just one of the things—the corrupt teaching—that they write in their books! If any [Christian or Muslim] would say that Abraham and Sarah represent Form and Matter, they would put him on the pyre and burn him to lime! All nations claim descent from [Abraham and Sarah], and this one [Levi ben Ḥayyim] says that they are but *figurae* [**ציורים**], they and their descendants.[12]

Those listening to this letter in the synagogue in Montpellier could have had little doubt as to the precise nature of the suggestions from Barcelona: the Languedocian scholars ought to eliminate the teachings emanating from around Levi, just as the Christians had eliminated the teachings of the Cathars.

After Abba Mari had concluded reading the letter, Jacob ben Makhir came forward and raised his voice against the promulgation of the ban that the letter proposed for Languedoc. As it turned out, the community took no action and the gathering ended in confusion.[13] Apparently, Abba Mari had not paved the way for the letter's reading as well as he had thought. Upon hearing the news of this setback, Rashba temporarily retreated. To the protests[14] of the group in Montpellier that stood against the proposed ban he responded, "Great ones of judgment and council, act as your intellect sees fit. We have no more involvement in this matter."[15] Abba Mari, on the other hand, asked Rashba to increase his involvement. In addition to the formal request that Rashba already had sent to the elders of Montpellier, Abba Mari asked him to pronounce a ban over philosophic study in Catalonia to serve as a model for the communities of Languedoc. In this fashion, Abba Mari hoped to put further pressure on the Languedocian community to enact a ban.

> Enact in your land the prohibition of which you have spoken to forbid the study of philosophy out of the books of the Greeks. Until one reaches the age of thirty, it shall not be permitted. Surely, [philosophy] should be treated as the "Account of the Chariot,"[16] of which R. Elazar said, "I am not yet old enough."[17]
>
> Supplement this prohibition with an excommunication of anyone who presents, in his sermons or writings—from now and henceforth—biblical narratives and commandments out of their simple meaning in order to uproot the intention and interpretation of our Rabbis.

> If all the elders of your congregation do not agree to this, let the Rabbi and his court act alone, to return the Torah to its proper place. Send the decree to us, written on parchment and sealed by the elders of your congregation, and we will strive to act following your example.[18]

Abba Mari insisted—and did not fail to remind his audience on both sides of the Pyrénées—that philosophy should be prohibited on the basis of the traditional restrictions placed upon the study of Jewish esoteric teaching.

In a letter to Abba Mari, Rashba declined to grant his requests, at least for the time being, and encouraged him to continue the struggle toward the proclamation of a ban in Languedoc without the help of an excommunication in Barcelona.[19]

Abba Mari's adversaries in Montpellier, on the other hand, equated a prohibition on the study of physics and metaphysics with a prohibition of the activity through which immortality is achieved.[20]

One attains immortality and fulfills the commandment to love God through the study of physics and metaphysics.[21] These adversaries of any restraint on philosophic study in Montpellier would excommunicate anyone who would prohibit this study; both Maimonides' *Guide* and Greek philosophy must remain accessible to all those whom it might benefit.[22]

An exchange with Solomon of Lunel

At the time of this refusal by the Languedocian Jewish community to enact a ban, Rashba initiated a correspondence with Solomon of Lunel in an attempt to persuade him of the merits of Abba Mari's cause.[23] Abba Mari reports that he was unable to obtain the first phase of this correspondence. Nevertheless, he "was told" that Solomon of Lunel had taken exception to Abba Mari and his project in the strongest possible terms.[24] Abba Mari had been informed, as well, that Rashba replied to Solomon with a request to reconsider the merits of Abba Mari's approach. In response to which, Solomon sent back a relatively brief and rather frank reply in which he informed Rashba that he regarded the current intercommunal activity against philosophic study as nothing but a rehearsal of the intercommunal action against Maimonides three-quarters of a century earlier.[25]

Rashba rejected as absurd any connection between his current activity against philosophic study and the now thoroughly discredited intercommunal action against Maimonides. He protested, "Who honors the Master [Maimonides] and his words more than I?"[26] Of course, Rashba, like his teacher Ramban, was trying to drive a wedge between Maimonides and the philosophic tradition in Jewish scholarship. In addition, Rashba countered that he did not intend to involve the scholars of Ashkenaz and northern France (who had been heavily involved in the dispute of the 1230s), because their communities required no warning. Instead, he restricted his activity to the Jewish communities of Aragon, Navarre, and Castile, which, he claimed,

no longer maintained their earlier involvement with philosophic study because of his intervention.

Upon completing this letter, Rashba wrote to Abba Mari both expressing his respect for Solomon and warning Abba Mari to stay out of Solomon's crosshairs.[27] Abba Mari replied that he had been scrupulous to avoid any conflict with Solomon and advised Rashba that letters of support from other Languedocian Jewish communities for the prohibition would be received in Barcelona shortly.[28] Rashba thanked Abba Mari for his letter and promised to continue to work together with him toward their common goals.[29]

In the wake of this setback, Moses ben Asher of Perpignan, Abba Mari's relative and defender, tried to coordinate a rapprochement between Solomon of Lunel and Abba Mari.[30] Moses wrote to Profait Gracian of Barcelona, asking him to intercede with Rashba to attempt to restore relations between the two men. Rashba, in turn, asked Isaac de Lattes to serve as an intermediary between Solomon and Abba Mari. As a physician, Isaac had been the beneficiary of Rashba's permissive attitude toward the medical use of astrological images. On account of this earlier connection, Rashba apparently assumed that Isaac would be allied with him and Abba Mari, and would agree to approach Solomon on their behalf. Apparently, Isaac was a halakhic pragmatist, willing expediently to accept a much-needed leniency from a great scholar with whom he was ideologically at odds, as he seems to have informed Rashba that he absolutely opposed any prohibition on philosophic study. Abba Mari related his "great surprise" at this development, "because he thought [Isaac] to be one of [Rashba's] admirers and supporters. Now he too has become one of our adversaries."[31] Unfortunately, Abba Mari only described—and apparently chose not to include—de Lattes's reply to Rashba in *Minḥat Qena'ot*, and it is not known to have survived. Instead, Abba Mari wrote to Moses ben Asher to inform him of these setbacks as well as to seek his continued support in Perpignan and beyond.[32] In turn, ben Asher wrote back to inform Profait Gracian and, through him, Rashba of the failure of their efforts to win back the friendship of Solomon of Lunel.[33]

An exchange with Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon

The astronomer, physician, and translator Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon was one of Abba Mari's principal adversaries in Montpellier. Jacob successfully thwarted any influence Abba Mari might have gained in Montpellier by making public Rashba's call to the city's Jewish scholars to limit philosophic study and interpretation in Languedoc. Having observed that Rashba still had not abandoned his activity to promote such a proclamation, ben Makhir determined to write to Rashba to put forward his objections to any prohibition of philosophic study. Jacob ben Makhir began this public rejoinder by citing the recent letter in which Rashba officially withdrew his concern

over any dangerous philosophic interpretations and opinions in Languedoc, "Behold, you have written in the letter you sent to us, 'We have no more involvement in this matter . . .'."[34] Jacob clearly believed that Rashba's withdrawal was in order, if not overdue, both on account of the impeccable piety of Languedocian Jewry, and its well-established and distinctive integration of philosophic study into the traditional curriculum.

Jacob ben Makhir categorically denied the existence of any attempt in Languedoc to undermine the literal meaning of the Bible through allegory. "There is no one in this country [Languedoc] who would allegorize the Torah narrative such that any one of us would not believe in the literal meaning." He insisted as well on the conviction and resolve of Languedocian Jewry to restrain any interpreter that might get out of hand. "So there be no one who uproots the boundaries—and if, heaven forbid [a transgressor emerges]—all Israel would gather against him and bind him with ropes."[35] Were there any question about the propriety of philosophic material in their community, ben Makhir argued, their most revered leaders would have addressed it more than one hundred and fifty years before, when scholars versed in Greco-Arabic learning first arrived in Languedoc after the Andalusian expulsion of 1147. How could anyone have the arrogance to attempt to reverse their decree at this time?

> The scholar [Abba Mari] who has aroused you [Rashba] concerning [philosophic study and interpretation in Languedoc] should recall that his ancestors and mine—our elder and lord, the great Rabbi Meshullam [ben Jacob of Lunel], his sons and sons-in-law—were among the nobles of this land and the pillars of the world. The sage, my lord and elder, [Samuel ibn Tibbon] and his father, [Judah ibn Tibbon] flourished among them.[36] [Judah and Samuel] translated much from the books of philosophy at their biding, and, at the beginning of these translations, dedicated them in their name.[37]
>
> Once they have permitted [philosophy] to enter the Jewish community [in Languedoc], who shall prohibit it before their very eyes? If they declare "Pure!" who shall say "Impure!" and contradict their words? Even the great rabbi, our master, Moses ben Maimon, of blessed memory, honored [Samuel ibn Tibbon] thrice with his correspondence,[38] and praised him and his translations extensively.[39]

Jacob ben Makhir stressed to Rashba, and to his audience at large, the local prominence of those who approved and supported the transmission of philosophic knowledge from the Arabic world to Languedoc—members of ben Makhir's and Abba Mari's families.[40] This venerable welcome, as ben Makhir would have it, was the unimpeachable foundation of Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc. As an astronomer and philosophic translator, however, ben Makhir may have felt that some Jewish scholars suspected him personally. He put forward to Rashba that as both a thinker and a biblical

exegete he never erred on account of his involvement with the philosophic tradition.

> The whole Jewish community knows that I am not accustomed to mix the views of the Torah with the view of the Greeks and their teachings. I have placed a boundary between the holy books and their works. No one, even if his zeal burned like fire, could claim that I have removed even a single verse from its [proper] enclosure.[41]

In an oblique reference to Abba Mari as a man whose "zeal burns like fire," ben Makhir claims that, even under the greatest scrutiny, he would be found innocent of even the slightest wrongdoing on account of his extensive philosophic study. Perhaps ben Makhir was aware of a local attempt to impugn his views as a way of blunting the force of his opposition to Abba Mari's designs. Jacob ben Makhir acknowledges that non-Jewish philosophic works, at times, do contain theologically problematic arguments or opinions contrary to the teachings of the Torah. Nevertheless, he argues that it is possible, with very careful selection, to derive benefit from non-Jewish philosophic works as well. Indeed, ben Makhir maintains that it is *necessary* for the Jewish scholars to engage in the selective study of these potentially dangerous works in order to avoid being deemed utterly ignorant by the gentiles.

> If there are matters in the works of the Greeks that incline toward heretical views, we have taken from [those works] that which is good as we would extract the balm from the head of the python. In the eyes of the nations, as well, our knowledge of [these works] constitutes our wisdom and understanding. Lest one say, "[O]ur hearts are empty of all understanding and wisdom." We should learn from the policies of the gentiles, those [rules] which are proper: They have translated works on the sciences, each according to their own languages, even if their discussions and arguments contradict their religion and faith. "Honor wisdom and those who know it, and do not inquire as to their religion."[42]

Jacob ben Makhir was impressed by the intellectual openness exhibited by contemporary Christians in their translation activity and philosophic study, and suggests that Jews ought to follow their example. In this passage, he maintains that the unfamiliar views and foreign religious identity of newly translated philosophic works did not prevent Christians from engaging intensively and productively with them. He tells the Jewish community in Catalonia, as well as Languedoc, to recognize that scientific and philosophic activity transcends religious boundaries and requires the ability to critically examine views from outside Jewish tradition. Jacob ben Makhir passed away not long after penning this letter. After his death, rumors surfaced that Abba Mari's supporters had begun to malign him.[43]

An exchange with Samuel ben Ḥayyim

Rashba found it useful to divide the world into followers of scriptural religion and philosophic heretics.[45] While there were philosophers among the followers of scriptural religion, "including the great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle," the philosophic heretics stood on the other side of a great divide by denying the very possibility of revelation and miracles.

> Before beginning, I shall provide an introduction that is [as necessary] for the investigation of the Truth as precise units of measure [are to accurate measurement]: It is that the people and the tongues [of the world] are divided into two groups regarding beliefs. One group denies all Scripture. This is the group of some of the philosophizers who declare in their decrepit views that there is no basis [to anything] beyond human inquiry. They join to this [belief] that they consider theoretically impossible anything that their philosophic inquiry has not confirmed. Therefore they consider theoretically impossible that portion of religion handed down to humankind from prophets that they have received from the mouth of the Lord, may He be praised, to command all humans or a people among peoples. They deny all the signs and wonders written in the books of religion—anything that they determine to be contrary to Nature. These [people] have no religion, only *nomoi* that men have taught them in order to put states in order as well as to set right the conduct of humans, one to the other. As regards the interpretation of Scripture and its intentions, we have no discourse with this [first] group, because they destroy all the foundations and build ruins. . . . The second group is all those who confess a religion given from the mouth of the Lord, may He be praised, by means of His prophet [Moses]. This religion includes the three peoples known to us, who are the Hebrews, the Ishmaelites, and the Nazarenes, and possibly others. . . .[45]

In this context, Rashba emphasizes that most of the earth's peoples believe that "the religion given to us at Mount Sinai by Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him, the lord of the prophets is True." Only certain philosophic heretics "produce false arguments so as willfully to deceive themselves to deny the well-known Truth."[46] In his attempt to crush Levi ben Ḥayyim, Rashba uses language to the effect that Levi was one of these philosophic heretics, denying the very possibility of scriptural religion and intending to undermine the same through allegory.

Rashba's harsh condemnations of that which he had heard of Levi's teachings appear at several points over the eighteen-month period of the controversy: in his correspondence with Crescas Vidal[47] and with Levi himself,[48] at the controversy's beginning; in his call to the scholars of Montpellier to take action against the use of philosophic allegory in Languedoc;[49] in his correspondence to Abba Mari announcing his decision to promulgate a

prohibition on philosophic study in Barcelona;[50] and in the two documents appended to the Barcelona excommunication—the first, calling upon the scholars of Languedoc to follow suit with an excommunication of their own,[51] and the second, calling upon Jews everywhere to persecute teachers of antinomian allegory and to destroy their writings.[52] Rashba's most articulate condemnation of Levi, however, occurred in response to a clemency request made by Levi's first cousin, Samuel ben Reuven ben Ḥayyim of Beziérs.[53] Samuel's request, which appears in the midst of a conciliatory letter asking that Rashba reconsider his position regarding Languedocian Jewish culture in general, is rather more than usually humble and ingratiating.

> Oh master, our lord, the teacher of righteousness and king, [your] throne is established with loving-kindness in the heavens on High; the earth and all its inhabitants [array themselves] at your footstool. I bid [you] spread your canopy of peace over [Levi]. Please accept his apology and show mercy unto him. If the king sees fit—and I, [your] servant am fit before [you]—grant [Levi] his life with his request. Do not empty his heart by slashing it with the iron of [your] rebuke and the sword of [your] tongue so as to degrade the rank of a pious man who vests himself with the Urim and Thummim. He is pure, without sin, free of any guilt.[54]

As family friend, Levi may have approached Samuel with a special request to make this plea before Rashba. One might even imagine that Levi oversaw the writing of the request. Saying that Levi "vests himself in the Urim and Thummim" is a way for Samuel to give metaphorical expression to Levi's allegiance to the literal meaning of Scripture. In response to Samuel, Rashba acknowledges the apparent cruelty of his stance, but maintains that Levi's current transgressions against Judaism require this enmity.

> How then can I maintain enmity and hold a grudge against a respectable elderly man? Far be it from me to do such a thing! However, I am not at liberty to make my own decisions [in this regard], as I am a servant to the faith of my fathers, and to their teachings I have pierced by ear [in eternal servitude]. Regarding that sage [Levi], what can I do now? For some time now, the public has filled our ears [with the report] that he had been a scholar of Torah but departed, and is now engaged in non-Jewish sciences as a man who was born with little Torah knowledge. Would that he now keep his [non-Jewish learning] to himself, but others already have begun "to use his plow." I have heard with my own ears and seen with my own eyes that one of the great men of the country [Languedoc] and its elite had to "threaten the life" of a certain unique individual among his relatives on account of the teachings of that sage [Levi] saying: Why do you act thus to study with that sage so as to lose your soul and not to benefit your end?

> That honorable man is a scholar and a man of truth. Other men too, many of them, Torah scholars who travel here [Catalonia] from there [Languedoc], and men of faith, speak against [Levi] in public. Strange things, like scorpions, were done in front of everyone.[55]

Rashba acknowledges that Levi is learned in the Torah, but reports continue to reach him regarding Levi's instruction of the Jewish youth of Languedoc in science and philosophy, as if he had little knowledge of the Torah. Even if Levi ceased teaching science and philosophy to Languedocian Jews, Rashba claims, the debilitating effects of his extensive instruction in these topics would continue to harm others.

> Even the revered sage Rabbi Samuel [Sulami], who carries the shield before [Levi], is his friend, and defends him locally, says that [Levi] has "a number of blemishes"—as [Samuel] has found only one unique instance in all of his written compositions of the possible [divine suspension of

Figure 3 The likely journey of Asher ben Yeḥiel (Rosh) from his former home in the Holy Roman Empire to his new home in Castile.

> the natural order]. [Levi] has written regarding the Rabbis' statement that the *mem* and the *samekh* in [Moses'] tablets stood miraculously [without any support from the tablets themselves]—that this is not possible, but some small internal mechanism must have suspended them. If he has written after this fashion, do you see this as an individual transgression or [a transgression] that may be called a large network of errors? [With such an interpretation], he does not let stand even, "And this is the blessing" [the last section of the Torah]—neither miracles that stand outside of nature, or the creation of the world, only the view of Aristotle. Of all the Torah, he has not left even a line of dust. If his sin were a sin against me, I would erase it from my heart a thousand times [if necessary], and I would tear up the decree [written against him] with both hands [wholeheartedly] . . .. But is it in my power to forgive [an offense against] the honor of heaven?[56]

Levi's crime, in Rashba's view, is his extreme avoidance of a miraculous interpretation of Scripture and rabbinic literature. Rashba believes that this avoidance indicates Levi's culpability for "a large network of errors" associated with a heretical commitment to the views of Aristotle.

An exchange with Asher ben Yeḥiel of Worms (Rosh)

In the fall of 1304, Rashba was hosting Asher ben Yeḥiel (Rosh) in Barcelona. The great German-Jewish scholar had paused in Barcelona on a journey that would conclude in Toledo, the capital of Castile, where he would reside as the head of its Jewish community.[57] Rosh was heir to the pietistic and mystical traditions of the Ḥaside Ashkenaz through his father, Yeḥiel, as well as to the legal and exegetical traditions of the Tosafists through his teacher Meir of Rothenberg, known as Maharam. In short, the living embodiment of the spiritual achievements of German Jewry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was visiting with Rashba in Barcelona.

Rosh had fled his home in Worms, leaving all of his assets behind, in order to avoid likely imprisonment. For decades, the Jews of Germany had been involved in a taxation dispute with the Holy Roman Emperor.[58] Rather than submit to the emperor and pay the new taxes due to the emperor, thousands of Jews left Germany in 1286. Among the émigrés was Rosh's teacher, Germany's then regnant Jewish scholar, Maharam. Unfortunately, Maharam was discovered by local authorities in Lombardy, who arrested him and deported him back to Germany, where he was imprisoned. As German Jews continued to refuse to acknowledge the emperor's authority over them, Maharam remained imprisoned until his death in 1293.[59] In fact, Maharam's body was not released for burial until 1307. As Maharam's successor, Rosh believed that he would suffer a similar fate and resolved to reestablish himself and his family in a new land.

Leaving Germany in 1298, Rosh sojourned for some time, first among

the Jews of the Duchy of Savoy and then among the Jews of Provence and Languedoc, before making his way to Rashba in Catalonia. While staying with Rashba, Rosh recounted his experience of living among the Jews of Languedoc to one of Abba Mari's Languedocian supporters.

> I left [Savoy] and I entered the Land of Provence. I observed a good and spacious land. The people there were men of excellent virtues, as it seemed to me, because I found them skilled in [Hebrew] language, with clear minds and possessed of intelligence. I gave praise to the God of my life who had brought me there. However, when I entered the chambers of their hearts, although I expected to find them white, I found them black. I found only two or three men whose hearts God had touched to strengthen in His Torah and separate themselves from the multitude that turn to the arrogant and followers of falsehood . . .. When I arrived in Montpellier, I found there a diadem of Torah, its radiance and brilliance, Torah and greatness, broad and exalted, a fortified city, a mother in Israel, from which Torah and teaching emanate to any who ask. In her, one may say to Jacob and Israel, "What hath God wrought? Its ministers are like rams, yet they hide their heads from removing stumbling blocks. Everyone does what is right in his own eyes, and no one tells him what to do."[60]

Economic and political realities in Germany led a scholar whose vision of the world was defined by the elite pietistic and legalistic traditions of Ashkenaz to a direct encounter with Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc. As Rosh traveled southward, he was at first overjoyed, praising God at having reached his hosts of the county of Provence (east of the Rhône). In cities like Aix, Arles, and Marseilles, Rosh—like other travelers before him—found scholars "skilled in [Hebrew] language, with clear minds and possessed of intelligence."

Upon becoming better acquainted with Provençal Jewry, however, Rosh was astounded at their religious orientation. He entered their "hearts" expecting to find the "chambers white" with the pure spiritual devotion that he knew from Ashkenaz. Instead, he encountered an unfamiliar philosophic orientation that he could only describe as "black." After some time, Rosh continued his journey westward. In Languedoc, he stopped in the city of Montpellier. There he found a great center of Torah study, "a diadem of Torah . . . a mother in Israel, from which Torah and teaching emanate to any who ask."[61] Yet, as in Provence, no great scholar was willing to reprove those who interpreted the Torah along philosophic lines.[62] Rosh expressed concern that on account of Abba Mari's activity, Languedocian Jewry might experience a schism. In order to maintain a unified community, Rosh suggested to Abba Mari that he convene Languedocian scholars from Perpignan to Marseilles in a communal council, to which Rashba would send a Catalonian delegation. Rosh believed that under such circumstances an

agreement might be reached in which philosophy would have the status of "handmaiden," but the Torah would be the community's "wife."[63]

An incident instigated by Abba Mari while Rosh was with Rashba tells much about the chasm between the Languedocian and the German Jewish traditions. In a letter to Rosh, Abba Mari recounted that, on the previous Sabbath, he was in the synagogue in Montpellier to hear the weekly Torah reading. As the Torah reader recited the verse, "The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian set out with divination in their hands,"[64] Abba Mari interrupted with the claim that the Moabite and Midianite elders literally were holding an astrolabe, an instrument for observing the stars, which had both permitted astronomical uses and prohibited astrological uses, in Abba Mari's view.[65] As he explained in his letter, Abba Mari put forward to the community that these Moabite and Midianite elders intended to use their astrolabe for prohibited purposes. In recounting these events to Rosh, Abba Mari hoped to learn whether he agreed with his interpretation that the verse in question literally referred to an astrolabe. Through this interpretation, Abba Mari may have sought to intimidate the Jewish astronomer-astrologers of Montpellier by associating one of the principal tools of their craft with the Moabite and Midianite diviners of that week's pericope. Indeed, Rashba had heard,[66] and Abba Mari was able to confirm,[67] that some Languedocian Jewish scholars had connected the astrolabe, used in their heavenly observations, with the Urim and Thummim used by the High Priest in ancient Israel to divine God's will. If the great German-Jewish scholar Rosh could confirm Abba Mari's interpretation, he would have used this fact against his adversaries as well.

Aware of Rosh's background and commitments, perhaps Abba Mari felt assured of Rosh's support and wondered why it was not forthcoming. After repeated inquiries, Rosh finally replied that, unfortunately, he could express no view regarding the question, as he had never seen an astrolabe.[68] While Languedocian Jewish scholars were well acquainted with the astrolabe and its uses—in fact, Jacob ben Makhir had developed an improved version of this instrument and his treatise on it recently had been translated into Latin—Jewish scholars from Rosh's German pietistic and Tosafistic background would have had little knowledge of astronomy and its instruments.[69a]

Departing Barcelona and Rashba's company, Rosh traveled from Catalonia to Castile. There he was welcomed as the head of the Jewish community of Toledo and successfully took up the challenge of integrating Spanish and German Jewish law and custom to the benefit of both traditions.[69b] Just a few decades earlier, the court of Alfonso the Wise at Toledo had been a great center of philosophic translation in which Jews participated. By the dawn of the fourteenth century, however, Rashba described the Jewish community of Toledo over which Rosh was to preside as "pure flour"[70]—free of any involvement with the philosophic tradition.

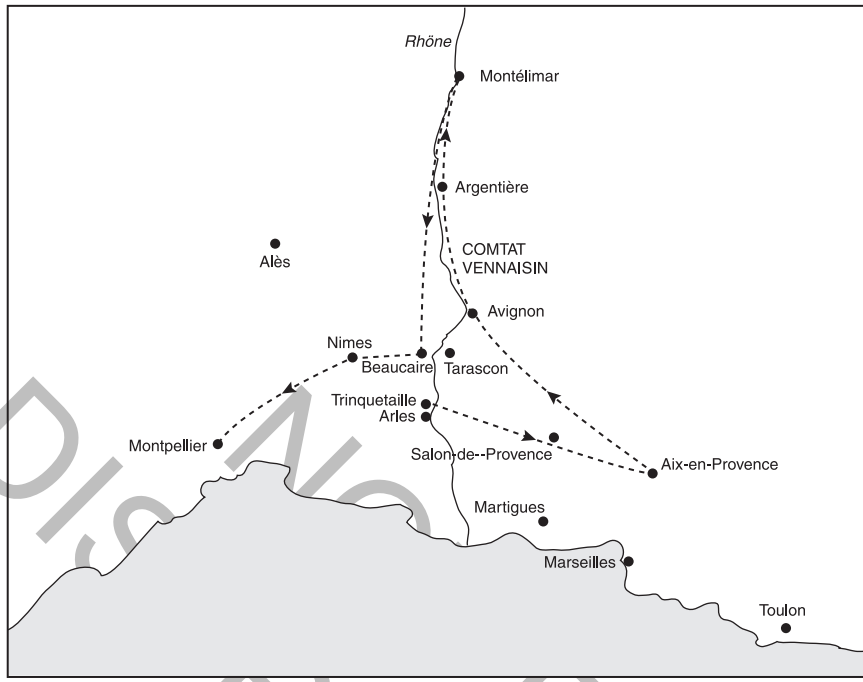


Figure 4 The proposed itinerary of Todros of Beaucaire to advocate for a prohibition on philosophic study.

Jacob of Beaucaire gathers support in Provence

Abba Mari found a friend and supporter in Jacob of Beaucaire. Beaucaire lies inland along the Rhône, just west of Tarascon. At the time he was drawn into Abba Mari's orbit, Jacob was living just a few miles south of Beaucaire, in a nearby village, Trinquetaille, which also lies along the Rhône. In a letter to Rashba, Jacob provided a vivid description of his residence and its connection to Arles, the city on the eastern side of the bridge.

> I reside at the seigniorial château of Trinquetaille, conjoined to the city of Arles; adjacent, visible, and judged together with it for [the community] *eruv* and [reading of] the *megillah*. There is no difference between [the two places] save the government [the Counts of Baux, on one side, and the Kings of Sicily, on the other]. Between the two locations there are but seventy-five paces, the width of the bridge over the river. My feet are found [in Arles] frequently, at night time or during the day, during the week or on Shabbat, during the festivals or on the day of the new moon. I go [to Arles] as one goes from house to house, from corner to corner, or from neighborhood to neighborhood.[71]

Although Trinquetaille and Arles lie on opposite sides of the river and had different rulers, Jacob moved freely and frequently between the two, and in matters touching upon Jewish law, their Jewish residents regarded them as a single, unified locale.

Jacob's recently deceased brother, Todros of Beaucaire, had become involved in soliciting support for Abba Mari's cause among Montpellier Jewry.[72] Rashba had included Todros as an addressee, along with Abba Mari, on the sealed letter to the Montpellier community that Abba Mari eventually read aloud in the synagogue against the protests of Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon. This letter, in fact, was Rashba's first call to the scholars of Montpellier to prohibit non-Jewish philosophic study. The events in which Todros participated culminated in August 1304. After Todros's death, Abba Mari showed Jacob of Beaucaire the correspondence, in which Rashba expressed high regard for his recently departed brother, and Jacob immediately became converted to the cause.[73] In January 1305, Jacob wrote to Rashba to communicate his allegiance as well as to express his desire to travel east of the Rhône, throughout Provence and Comtat Venaissin, with a letter from Rashba to enlist the support of local Jewish communities for this struggle.[74]

> When your words reach me, I will travel to every location in Provence with a Jewish community. First to the city of water called Aix, for therein long ago were holy men, men of lineage and importance dwell there today as well . . . A man who has no obstacle can cross Provence in five days. But, as I must converse in each location, I must pause until my objective is complete. I do not hesitate. From [Aix, at the eastern border of] Provence onward, on one side [to the southeast], there is no Jewish settlement until Rome. [Therefore], by the will of God, I will return to Avignon, as there are also scholars of the Mishnah there. [From Avignon], I will walk to the border of [Comtat] Venaissin. Uninterrupted travelers can make this journey in two days. From there, I will travel to Argentière, it is the place of silver mines; [from there], Montèlimar is a day's journey. From there [northward] is the border of France. [The scholars of France] do not require admonition [regarding philosophic study] for they are most careful. From there, I will return [southward] to Tarascon and I will travel until Montpellier, [stopping at] the two or three places in between in which a Jewish community is found.[75]

Jacob proposed to walk from his home in Trinquetaille, at Provence's western border, to the village of Aix, Provence's easternmost Jewish settlement. From Aix, he planned to travel northward, through Avignon and Argentière, to Montèlimar, the northernmost Jewish settlement of Provence. Jacob believed that Jewish scholars in France had no need to be warned against philosophic study of any kind. Therefore he planned to turn around upon reaching Provence's border with France, and walk southward until he reached

Abba Mari in Montpellier, stopping at Tarascon and a few other Jewish communities along the way, attempting in each locale to acquire support for a prohibition of philosophic study.

Whether Jacob actually made this journey is uncertain. At about the time that he might have done so, however, the elders of Aix,[76] Avignon,[77] and Argentière[78] did, indeed, write to Rashba to express their unequivocal support for Abba Mari and his desire to prohibit philosophic study among the Jewish youth of Languedoc. Their letters are striking for their strong Maimonidean language as well as for their apparent ignorance of a substantial opposition to their views in Languedoc and Roussillon.

Rashba welcomed this outpouring of support from the Jewish scholars of Provence, but informed them that the opposition to their views among the leading Jewish scholars of Languedoc was, unfortunately, substantial indeed.[79] With regret, Rashba firmly restated his position that any proclamation regarding philosophic study in the Jewish communities of Languedoc had to originate there. He also strongly encouraged the Jewish scholars residing in Aix, Avignon, and Argentière to attempt to sway the leaders of Languedocian Jewry. An exchange between the Jewish scholars of Lunel and Rashba, also from the early months of 1305, follows a pattern similar to that of this correspondence with the Jewish scholars of Provence.[80] The Lunel scholars expressed their unwavering support for Abba Mari's efforts in forceful Maimonidean terms, and Rashba directed them, with encouragement and praise, to attempt to change the prevailing climate of opinion in Languedoc. Clearly, Abba Mari enjoyed solid backing from the scholars of Provence; however, he had the support of only a handful of scholars in the great Jewish centers west of the Rhône, in Languedoc and Roussillon, which, not surprisingly, included a block of scholars in his family home, Lunel.

Abba Mari seemed to be at an impasse. Unable to alter the climate of opinion in Languedoc among the leading scholars who might pronounce a ban, Rashba would do no more to help him.

A new Languedocian ally: Kalonymus, the Nasi of Narbonne

The participation and support of Abba Mari's uncle, Kalonymus ben Todros, the Nasi of Narbonne,[81] appears to have been decisive in securing deeper involvement from Rashba.[82] Initially, Abba Mari addresses his uncle rather tentatively. Apparently, Abba Mari had reason to believe the Nasi might be ill-disposed to his moderate Maimonidean polemical activity and that he would have to sway him. Specifically, Abba Mari seems to have been concerned that his uncle regarded the turn to Barcelona for help as a betrayal of the Languedocian Jewish community, as had the scholars of Perpignan. In fact, in contacting his uncle, Abba Mari produces the same explanation for his behavior as he had in his letter to his son's father-in-law, Moses ben Samuel in Perpignan.

> Behold, I apologize before you and anyone who sees my handwritten letter—just as I apologized before you and before the venerable [men] of the congregation of Perpignan. God already knows—and [all] Israel should know that I did not intend to cast any word of aspersion against any individual or community. If, indeed, I have spoken against any family or tribe, let them cause me to pass under the rod. Behold, I am prepared to accept their judgment, [and appear before them] "on the Day of Atonement as it falls according to their intercalation."
>
> However, the cause that aroused me to send letters to our teacher, the master, Rabbi Solomon, may God be with him—was when I heard from one of the scholars that the master permitted the manufacture of the astrological image Leo [as therapy] for kidney disease. [This scholar] showed me the responsum of the master on [this issue] along with its forceful proofs. Thus, I sent my letter [to inquire about Rashba's permission of this questionable practice] and the matter of the [outlandish philosophic] interpretations, new and old, which we have heard in our land, got wrapped up in it. . . .[83]

Abba Mari presents himself to Kalonymus as a defender of the values of Languedocian Jewish culture. He says, in effect: Rashba permitted an astrological practice to Isaac de Lattes, a Montpellier physician, which constitutes a serious transgression according to our Languedocian Maimonidean understanding, and I wrote to Rashba to challenge his permission of the practice. The long-standing problem of heretical philosophic allegory—of which we, as it were, are all aware—entered my correspondence as a matter of course, almost unintentionally. My principal intention was, in fact, to establish that applying a medallion engraved with the image of the constellation of Leo over the kidney to ease the passage of stones is a prohibited form of divination, according to Jewish law.

Abba Mari hoped that Kalonymus would recognize him as loyal to their shared Maimonidean commitments because of his intensive critique of Rashba's position regarding astrological medicine—despite his engagement of Rashba's support in his critique of Languedocian Jewish culture. Having done his best to establish his loyalty to Languedocian Jewish culture, Abba Mari sets the problem of heretical philosophic allegory in Languedoc before his uncle Kalonymus.

> Insanity seized one of the erroneous rationalistic interpreters. He said out loud that one who believes that the sun stood still for Joshua is only mistaken, and he is a fool who believes anything that is logically impossible. Regarding the voice that [Scripture relates] was heard at Mount Sinai, we have heard perverted speech about which one who hears it must rend his garment [in mourning] and one who utters it must seek atonement. We have heard many things such as these from those who break through the gates and thrust down the walls. They have stripped

> away almost all the literal meanings of the Torah and set it up naked. I do not know the names of the interpreters or who their fathers are; or where they are now.[84]

Abba Mari rehearses his accusation that he has heard unspeakable philosophic interpretations from those who would deny the possibility of miracles, the historicity of biblical narrative, and the continued validity of the Commandments. Intriguingly, he forestalls Kalonymus's inevitable question as a prominent local figure: Who were the Jews from whom you heard these terrible things? Abba Mari tells Kalonymus that he does not know who they are or where they are now. Nevertheless, he asks Kalonymus to join hands with Rashba and himself to protect the Languedocian Jewish community from this scourge.

> Regarding this [problem] I aroused the master [Rashba] so that his hand—along with the hands of the scholars of this land—might be stretched out, so that they might together form a union, so as to create a large fence that a spear cannot pierce [to protect] against this matter. . . . Having done this, the Lord will benefit us and enlarge our borders without measure. Now, if this idea finds favor in your eyes, please inform me. . . .[85]

With the help of the Nasi, Abba Mari urges, he would prevent the spread of philosophic allegory in Languedoc by erecting "a large fence that a spear cannot pierce" in the form of a ban on the study of physics and metaphysics by young Jews. Although the reasons for Kalonymus's newfound position remain unclear, he did assent to support the ban. In December of 1304, Abba Mari was able to publish his position paper on the controversy, *Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*, with the approbation of the Nasi.[86]

Catalonia reluctantly leads

After eight months of silence, Rashba wrote to Abba Mari and to Kalonymus ha-Nasi in July 1305 that he had reconsidered and was willing to promulgate a model Spanish ban.

> Let [the scholars of Languedoc] give honor to God, and begin to punish and rebuke as they see fit, and I will organize several communities to support them. But if [these scholars] say, "Let others begin before [us]." Let them draft what seems fitting to them to prohibit for the correction of this generation, and I shall cause several [Catalonian] communities to support that writ of conduct.[87]

Rashba here agrees to assist Abba Mari by promulgating a model Spanish excommunication, but insists that the initiative for the ban must begin, at

least formally, in Languedoc. Upon receipt of Rashba's letter, Abba Mari wrote to him to request that the Catalonian ban prohibit philosophic study until the age of twenty-five only, five years less than originally proposed. Abba Mari suggests that this more moderate limit would reduce any objections to a similar ban in Languedoc.[88] After Rashba's numerous expressions of reluctance and irritation,[89]Abba Mari and Kalonymus ha-Nasi send their formal request to Barcelona and promise to follow suit with a Languedocian ban after the Catalonian version is promulgated.[90]

With the Torah scroll in hand, the elders of the Barcelonan Jewish community proclaimed the following ban on the Ninth of Av (July 29) 1305, in an assembly of the entire community on the Sabbath in synagogue.

> We have decreed and accepted upon ourselves and our progeny and those who are joined to us [in fellowship], with the force of a ban, that no individual from among the members of our community should study the works of the Greeks that they composed on natural science [physics] and divine science [metaphysics]—whether they were written in their [own] language, whether they were translated to another language, from this day forward for the next fifty years—until he has reached twenty-five years of age; and no member of our community should teach one of the children of Israel these sciences until they are twenty-five years old; lest those sciences entice him to follow them and cause him to depart from behind the Torah of Israel, which is above all of those sciences.[91]

The force of the decree is delimited by jurisdiction and duration; exclusively for their community, and for a fifty-year period only, they banned the study of Greco-Arabic works on physics and metaphysics before the age of twenty-five. An examination of the excommunication documents shows that Rashba did not intend for his proclamation to have legal force outside of Catalonia.[92] In so doing, Rashba, not unlike his teacher Naḥmanides,[93] strove to distinguish between an acknowledgment of Maimonides' greatness, his even unique stature, and the endorsement of his interpretation of Judaism as philosophical system.[94] Rashba's ban on philosophic study thus implied that Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* might be separated from the Greco-Arabic tradition upon which it depended. Indeed, Rashba cited *The Guide of the Perplexed* as a supporting authority in the text of the ban.[95]

As far as we know, no one in Catalonia had felt the need for a ban on philosophic study before the age of twenty-five. Although Rashba did not say as much, he apparently intended his decree to serve as a model for the Jewish scholars of Languedoc to enact in their territory. As Abba Mari was unable to sway his community locally, perhaps Rashba thought that his considerable prestige and authority would tip the balance in favor of a Languedocian ban. In fact, Rashba attached two documents to his ban on philosophic study.

In the first document, he implores the scholars of Languedoc in the most forceful and urgent terms to enact a parallel decree.

> You mighty ones of righteousness [in Languedoc]! If the matter is fitting in your eyes, write for yourselves as we [in Barcelona have written]. Raise your hands in holiness to sanctify the Lord. Write for yourselves as you see fit. For that which they [the philosophic allegorical interpreters in Languedoc] are doing is not good . . .. Lest—far be it!—the [Jewish] people are split in two, and at their hand—heaven forefend—the Name of Heaven is profaned.[96]

In this first appended document, Rashba argues that a ban on philosophic study is the only way to halt the abuse of philosophic allegory in Languedoc. While implicitly acknowledging the independence of the Languedocian scholars, Rashba suggests that, were they to refrain from enacting a ban on philosophic study, the Languedocian scholars would risk responsibility for a schism between traditionalists and allegorists, as well as the continued heresy of the allegorists.

In the second appended document, Rashba directly excommunicated the Languedocian allegorists and their interpretations, without regard for the jurisdiction of the Jewish scholars of Languedoc.

Rashba's knowledge of Jewish allegorical interpretation in Languedoc, as he informs us, derived from oral reports. Interestingly, Rashba never claimed to have examined any textual evidence of allegorical heresy. As no suggestion, much less evidence, exists to the contrary, we also may exclude the possibility that Rashba himself undertook the journey across the Pyrénées. Instead, individuals from Barcelona, frequently Rashba's former students, had occasion to travel to Languedoc, among many other places. When these travelers returned from their journeys, they visited Rashba and conveyed any information that they might have acquired on their travels. A horrifying variety of reification allegory, which discarded the literal, surface meaning of Scripture, as if it were a shell, in favor of the philosophic nut that it might have contained, is what Rashba heard told was being promulgated in Languedoc.

> They inscribe wicked inscriptions in their books and fill their homes with empty vessels saying: Every narrative from Creation to Revelation has an exclusively allegorical meaning. Abraham and Sarah are Form and Matter, the twelve sons of Jacob are the twelve constellations, and the four kings who battled the five kings are the four elements and the five senses. We have heard that they even extended their hands against the Commandments [through allegory] saying: the Urim and Thummim are the mechanism of the astrolabe. They have rendered the phylacteries and prayer unimportant. They have not feared to speak against Moses himself saying, heaven forbid, that [the Torah] is a *nomos*; saying the Torah is not from heaven, rather norms and customs that Moses decreed.[97]

According to reports that Rashba received from Languedoc, the inner meaning of Torah's narratives was being interpreted in an exclusively philosophic manner, without historical reality. In addition to reports of such heretical allegory, Rashba's informants delivered news from Languedoc of the teaching of a naturalistic understanding of Moses' prophecy, according to which Moses himself founded and authored the Law, which did not come directly and without mediation from God. The same Languedocian interpreters, they say, likewise understood many Commandments to have an exclusively utilitarian function, such that they might easily question their continued validity and perhaps even reject them.

> [This went] so far that one of them said, speaking publicly in the synagogue, in wonderment: Why did Moses see fit to prohibit the swine? If it is on account of its poor quality [as food], the scholars have not found it to be of such poor quality. One of them said: the intention of the phylacteries is not literally to wear them on the head and arm, because the intention of this commandment is solely to understand and remember the Lord. [This is the case] because the legislated place of the phylacteries—the head apposite the brain and the arm apposite the heart—as they are the instruments of understanding and memory—to intimate that one ought to understand and remember, and nothing more. . . .[98]

Concerning philosophic allegory in Languedoc, the critical matter was, of course, whether the interpreters intended to vitiate the surface meaning of the text, or simply, as is usual in the practice of philosophic allegory, to reveal the text's inner meaning. Since Antiquity, philosophical allegorists have been accused of the former, while they merely intended the latter. In the absence of some corroborating evidence, one might imagine these oral reports to be the result of misunderstanding or even hearsay passed along from a third or fourth party. The oral reports of Abba Mari also bear a similar character of uncertainty. Rashba and Abba Mari both said that the heretics had written down their interpretations, but neither claimed to have examined any of this writing himself. Crescas Vidal of Barcelona, a student of Rashba, intriguingly reported that Levi ben Ḥayyim was unable to make his *Livyat Ḥen* available to him for examination. In at least one instance, we may say that Rashba was informed accurately about the contents of Levi's writing. Perhaps significantly, it is an instance that impresses one as rather typically Maimonidean, and not particularly dangerous or potentially harmful.

> The leader of these [heretical allegorists] wrote of [the Rabbis'] statement, "the *mem* and *samekh* of [Moses'] tablets stood in the stone miraculously [without some hidden support]" is an impossibity—as anything possessed of a body cannot stand save by some subterfuge. [There must have been] some internal mechanism that supported [the letters].[99]

In his excommunication of the Languedocian allegorists, Rashba once again cites Levi's interpretation—which, indeed, is found in his *Livyat Ḥen*—that the *mem* and *samekh* of Moses' tablets must have been suspended by some hidden mechanism when they appeared to float without support. Rashba draws the dubious conclusion that Levi's desire to provide an interpretation that obviates the need for a miraculous suspension of these letters constitutes an implicit rejection of all miracles on philosophic grounds. Rashba, of course, would have recognized Levi's interpretation as typically Maimonidean; nevertheless, he appears convinced that the Languedocian allegorists rejected the possibility of miracles as well as the divinity and enduring validity of the Commandments. Hence, he promulgates his excommunication against them, their writings, and anyone who continues to preserve these writings.

> All Israel is required to excommunicate these sinners. Until their death, they shall not atone for this transgression. The fire of Gehinom will be extinguished, but the bodies of these [sinners] will not be consumed. Upon [their bodies] the flame will go never go out . . . Regarding the books that any one of those among them wrote, we judge its owner a heretic and the books as the books of the magicians. They and anyone who owns them stand in excommunication until they burn them completely and no longer mention their name [contents]. Following the commandment of the Torah regarding the statues of their gods, to burn with fire and erase their name [memory]. But one who repents and regrets will receive mercy from heaven. . . .[100]

Rashba commands anyone who owns the writings of Levi ben Ḥayyim, or any other heretical allegorist in Languedoc, to burn them, on pain of excommunication. Rashba decrees that such writings may not be held at all without suffering the very same penalties he has placed upon the allegorists themselves. Indeed, Rashba warns that anyone in Languedoc, or elsewhere, who does not repent his or her involvement in the heretical use of allegory, may expect an eternal fiery punishment, and, until they repent and recant their views, all pious Jews must shun them.

The scholars of Montpellier enraged

Reaction in Languedoc and Catalonia to Rashba's two excommunications is complex and requires some explanation. First, no record exists of even the slightest response to Rashba's second excommunication of heretical allegory in Languedoc. In contrast to the prohibition of philosophic study, Languedocian scholars simply treated this document as if it did not exist. This extraordinary rejection of Rashba's authority has led one historian to the rather unlikely hypothesis that Rashba's second excommunication was never available in Languedoc.[101] In fact, in the extensive correspondence

following the excommunications, the scholars of Catalonia made no mention of this second excommunication either. A much more likely possibility—as the second excommunication is found in two separate collections, Abba Mari's *Minḥat Qena'ot* and Rashba's collected responsa—is that this decree, demanding the expulsion of allegorists from the Jewish community and the burning of their writings, was perceived as such an utter blunder that all those involved, including the Catalonian scholars, thought it better to pretend that it simply did not exist.

In similar fashion, the scholars of Languedoc did not comply with Rashba's urgent request for his first decree, prohibiting the study of physics and metaphysics, to serve as a model for a similar decree of their own design. Despite the fact that Rashba had so decorously implored the Jewish scholars of Languedoc, no parallel documents in support of the Catalonian ban were forthcoming. In fact, immediately following the two pronouncements in Barcelona, Rashba needed more than once to demand the fulfillment of his Languedocian colleagues' promise to support the ban.[102] In an especially urgent short note to Kalonymus ben Todros, Rashba wrote that he would send copies of the excommunication documents signed in Barcelona only when he received the promised formal approval of the excommunication from Kalonymus.[103] As if to obviate any further delay, Rashba requested that Kalonymus send this promised document twice, "in order to insure its arrival."

Despite Rashba's extraordinary support, Abba Mari had failed to overcome Languedocian opposition. Quite to the contrary, having rejected the idea of a ban, Languedocian scholars were outraged that Catalonian scholars had presumed to take action. As word of the Barcelona decree reached Montpellier, Abba Mari's adversaries in the city of his residence acted expeditiously to counter any potential effect of the Barcelona decree in Languedoc: they obtained the necessary permission from the King's representatives and excommunicated Abba Mari. First, they bribed the local *seigneur* to obtain the royal permission necessary to promulgate an excommunication in France.[104] (No document survives from either the Christian authorities or the scholars of Montpellier concerning any transaction with the local *seigneur*.)[105] Upon receiving a qualified royal permission, the scholars of Montpellier took action. Despite Abba Mari's best efforts, they pronounced a ban upon anyone who would prevent any pupil, regardless of age, from the study of philosophy.[106] Abba Mari was now under excommunication and could have no contact of any type with those under the sway of the Montpellier scholars. He tried to dissuade his adversaries from declaring their excommunication, with the argument that they did not possess a legally binding consensus.[107] He spoke of having the sanction of "the five selectmen, the majority of the revered scholars of our city."[108] Rashba seems to have heard that the group in favor of a Languedocian excommunication was more numerous than that against it; while the largest number was at neither extreme.[109] Somewhat later, Simeon ben Joseph claimed that the majority had shifted.[110] Meiri implied that Abba Mari was unable to gather all of

his supporters in time to protest properly at the assembly at which the excommunication was declared.[111]

At the same time, the Montpellier scholars issued an angry communiqué to Rashba stating that the Catalonian attempt to influence the course of Jewish life in Languedoc constituted a violation of local communal sovereignty.[112] "One kingdom should not infringe upon its neighbor even so much as a hair's breadth," [113] they maintained. In their evaluation, Rashba should never have entertained such "treachery."[114] The astronomer Yedayah ha-Penini was most disturbed by the letters that Rashba had sent throughout Aragon, Castile, and Navarre to solicit support for his recommendations in Languedoc,[115] thereby tarnishing the reputation of the community internationally.[116]

The scholars of Montpellier sensed the fundamental challenge that the distinction between Greco-Arabic learning and Maimonidean thought posed to Jewish philosophic culture in Languedoc. In response, they attempted to link Rashba and Abba Mari's rejection of philosophic study to the discredited or even scandalous rejection of Maimonides. In their official response to Barcelona, the Montpellier scholars equated Rashba's ban on non-Jewish philosophic works with previous attacks upon the works of Maimonides. In this context, they recalled a little-known Maimonidean controversy that took place in the Middle East (1285–1291). In a case of implicit interaction between philosophic and kabbalistic worldviews, the kabbalist Solomon ben Samuel Petit of Acre banned Maimonides' works, with the support of rabbis in Ashkenaz, northern France, and Italy. The Exilarch of Damascus responded by excommunicating all those who would attack Maimonides' *Guide*. The Montpellier scholars sent Rashba a copy of the decree of the Exilarch, which survives nowhere else save their letter, claiming that it governed this dispute as well:

> [The Exilarch of Damascus] our rabbi, the Nasi Jesse son of the Nasi, our rabbi Hezekiah, whose ban the whole Exile is obliged to obey, has already preceded your decree; as has the excommunication that he and his entire entourage have declared. Behold, enclosed is a copy of that excommunication, which we have consented to, reaffirmed, and upheld. We have seen fit to expel and excommunicate anyone who attempts to prevent the study of any of the books of the Master, our Rabbi Moses, of blessed memory, especially the *Guide*.
>
> If anyone who a Spirit from Above stirs to understand the words of that book, is not enlightened by those learned in the sciences of physics and logic—if you have locked the doors of philosophy which stand in front of that book—then you have closed its gates [from entry].[117]

In the view of Abba Mari's adversaries in Montpellier, no distinction could be made between a ban on the study of physics and metaphysics and a ban on the study of *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Physics and metaphysics, of course,

are the subject of the *Guide*. According to the scholars of Montpellier, the supporters of the Barcelona ban had violated the ban of the Exilarch and now stood under his excommunication. Thus, in excommunicating Abba Mari and his followers for attempting to prevent philosophic study, the scholars of Montpellier reaffirmed the decree of the Exilarch.

Menaḥem ha-Meiri also took this strategy in response to Abba Mari's attempt to disengage Maimonides from the philosophic tradition and equated Rashba's ban to Solomon of Montpellier's thoroughly discredited ban in 1232 of the *Guide* and of *Sefer ha-Madda*' (Book of Knowledge).

> It is appropriate at this time to mention the circumstances of the First Controversy—of which I know, and have heard—when the books of the Master, the Guide of Righteousness arrived here. Who can measure the "damage, the pain, and the embarrassment" which resulted?![118]

A similar approach is taken by Solomon of Lunel,[119] a five-member group from Montpellier,[120] and Yedayah ha-Penini.[121] The letter of Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, who died before the excommunications, shares much with these later letters.[122] Side by side with these scholars, Meiri objected; insisting that because the subjects prohibited in Barcelona were prerequisites to understanding Maimonides, a Catalonian-style ban would effectively block any study of the *Guide*:

> I am aware that [the scholars of Barcelona] permit all books, whether of Jewish or Gentile authorship, save the books of physics and metaphysics of the Greeks. By your grace, our leader [Abba Mari]!! How shall we understand the twenty-five propositions of [the introduction to the second part of] *Guide of the Perplexed*—upon which the fundaments of the Torah depend—without the books of physics and metaphysics from which all [those propositions] are taken? And how shall we know any of the wondrous secrets [of natural science] alluded to in "the seventeenth chapter of the first part" of that book [the *Guide*] without understanding the first principles [mentioned there]? And how shall we understand those first principles without the books of physics? And as the *Categories* are in need of basic clarification from the books of physics, how shall we succeed in logic [which you permit]?[123]

Truly, no one could hope to understand Maimonides' twenty-five propositions for the proofs of God's existence, unity, and incorporeality—in the introduction to the *Guide*'s second part—without some philosophic training.[124] In *Guide* I: 17, Maimonides explained that not only metaphysics but also physics must be presented allegorically due to the requirement of esotericism. Maimonides addressed his reader, informing him of the prerequisites for the discussion.

> [The Ancient Philosophers] concealed what they said about first principles and presented it in riddles. Thus Plato and his predecessors designated Matter as the female and Form as the male. Now you know that the principles of the existents subject to generation and corruption are three: Matter, Form, and Particularized Privation that is always conjoined with Matter.[125]

According to Maimonides, the requirement of esotericism, which results from the need to protect the masses who otherwise could be harmed by such knowledge, falls upon religious communities even more than upon the ancient philosophers. In physics as in metaphysics, it would be foolish to think that one might understand the *Guide* without the books that Rashba and Abba Mari wished to prohibit. And the same situation pertained, in Meiri's argument, to logic—indeed, all of the philosophic disciplines were hopelessly interrelated. In sum, any attempt to separate the study of the universally esteemed *Guide of the Perplexed* from any of these Greco-Arabic studies would not stand to reason and would disable Languedocian-Jewish philosophic culture.

Simeon ben Joseph responded angrily to Meiri: "What correlation have you made to that period of wrath, that you have visited upon us the sin of the First Controversy?! Have you equated our behavior with those who speak against God and Moses [Maimonides], his servant?! . . . What blemish have you seen in us and in our deeds?! . . . What relevance has the First Controversy, that you mention it here?!"[126] Abba Mari, however, made no direct response to these arguments. Instead, he assembled declarations, six in all, from Catalonian scholars arguing, yet again, that the ban promulgated in Barcelona did not include the books of Maimonides.[127] In one of these letters, Bonafoux Vidal appears to reinterpret Rashba's excommunication in response to Meiri's argument. Instead of a blanket prohibition on non-Jewish physics and metaphysics in Catalonia for the next fifty years, Bonafoux maintains the Barcelona proclamation proscribed only regular, formal study of these subjects; whereas occasional study in order to understand the works of Maimonides was, of course, entirely permitted.[128]

In the heat of their opposition to Abba Mari's efforts, the Montpellier scholars threw caution to the winds and boldly articulated their understanding that Rashba's prohibition of the study of physics and metaphysics was, in fact, a prohibition upon the activity through which immortality might be achieved. In their view, not only was the validity of the Maimonidean legacy at stake, as Meiri had argued, but the foreclosure of philosophic study was to be equated with barring access to immortality itself.

> Who would obey you on this matter, closing off the Kingdom of Heaven, even for one moment? Why should one not be permitted to satisfy his soul, to please his Creator, to gaze at his Maker and to see His works—which He created each according to its kind? Is it good that the Truths

> concerning The Great Commandment, upon which all the commandments depend [i.e., the love of God], be annulled for even a number of years? Behold, man has a limited term on the earth and only a measure of days.[129] The soul cannot be sated by knowledge of the Tradition alone; but with the syllogistic knowledge [of God] it will merit—as its portion in the End of Days—to see pleasant things.[130]

In the view of these Languedocian scholars, of all of the human soul, only the "acquired intellect" that develops from the "material intellect" through philosophic comprehension survives after death. Therefore, one might fulfill the commandment to love God and attain immortality only through the study of physics and metaphysics;[131] thus, philosophic study must doubtless remain accessible to all those whom it might benefit. That these scholars would make an unequivocal public affirmation to the effect that immortality was directly dependent upon philosophic comprehension, and dependent only instrumentally upon the observance of the Commandments, indicates how very much the philosophic interpretation of Judaism had enveloped Languedocian Jewry.

In Rashba's collected responsa, immediately following the texts of excommunication is a lengthy defense of the religious ideals of Languedocian Jewry: the *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut* of Yedayah ha-Penini. The only Languedocian letter regarding the controversy to be included in Rashba's anthology, Yedayah's letter has the air of the Languedocian community's official reply. Though perhaps not as swift to act as the scholars of Montpellier, Yedayah must have set to work on *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut* almost immediately after word of Rashba's proclamation of 29 July 1305 reached Languedoc. A man in his twenties at the time, Yedayah later became an important astronomer and mathematician.[132] In *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, he simply assumed that the Catalonian decree was an attack upon the Maimonidean path taken in Languedoc. He did not even acknowledge that Abba Mari and Rashba sought to contest this interpretation by separating Maimonidean teaching from the larger Greco-Arabic philosophic tradition from which it emerged. Yedayah concluded his letter to Rashba with a plea for the Catalonian leader to revoke his prohibition of physics and metaphysics.

> The holy mouth that has prohibited [philosophic study], given censure, and multiplied rebuke, has the authority to permit it and bequeath blessing.[133] May your lips pour forth love and affection like rivers and brooks of honey and cream, lest you, our lord, witness the strife that would—Heaven forbid!—overtake your people, who pray for your well-being and love your teaching. [This you must do] as the heart of the people—so long as there is life in their bodies—shall not turn away from the love of Wisdom [חכמה] and its books. (At the same time, they shall be perfect in the study of the Torah and in their deeds.) Even if Joshua ben Nun [as opposed to Moses] were to command them [to abandon philosophy],

> they would not obey; for they intend to do battle for the honor of the great Rabbi [Maimonides] and his books. So long as life's breath is in their nostrils, they will sacrifice their wealth, their offspring, and their very lives for the sanctification of his teaching; and in this manner shall they instruct their children throughout the generations.[134]

In Yedayah's view, the Jews of Languedoc would hold fast to these disciplines, the very heart of the Maimonidean legacy, with their very lives, and no ban from another authority could dissuade them. Rashba needed to realize that his prohibition of philosophic study had to be withdrawn, as it would place Languedocian Jews' profound respect for him at odds with their most basic commitments. The inseparability of the Greco-Arabic philosophic tradition from the Maimonidean legacy was fundamental to Languedocian thinking, Yedayah argued, and could not be altered by Rashba's decree.

Abba Mari's counter-ban

Abba Mari was not empowered to excommunicate unilaterally those he thought were abusing philosophy. Months earlier, Abba Mari had argued before Rashba and Rosh that they ought to ban transgressive interpretation in Spain precisely because he did not possess—and apparently had no hope of obtaining—the royal permission required of Jews in France in order to pronounce a ban.[135] Nevertheless, he did stand up to defend himself against those scholars who had excommunicated him. "Quite to the contrary!" Abba Mari exclaimed, and counter-excommunicated his adversaries, "if they were Jews." By invoking the Talmudic rule that "anyone who excommunicates unjustly, himself stands under a ban,"[136] Abba Mari claimed the authority to excommunicate the scholars who had excommunicated him. He may well have been shocked by his excommunication by the sages of Montpellier for attempting to prevent philosophic study; indeed, he had hoped that these sages might support his cause and excommunicate those he thought were abusing philosophy. The practical consequences of this flurry of excommunications most likely were minimal, but the psychological and rhetorical consequences of which group had excommunicated legitimately could be great. Abba Mari probably still hoped for victory in his struggle for a more moderate approach to the philosophic tradition among Languedocian Jews. Immediately following this exchange, he wrote to Rashba to inform him of all that had occurred and to seek his continued support.

In turning once again to Rashba, as opposed to a great Languedocian scholar like Meiri, Abba Mari hoped to ensure that his adversaries' decree would be considered invalid, while his own counter-excommunication would stand. With Rashba's legal authority behind his decree, Abba Mari might be able to marginalize his adversaries and finally achieve the ban on philosophic study in Languedoc that was his goal. Not until about three months later, on 12 Kislev (8 December) 1305, did Abba Mari receive Rashba's reply.[137]

Although he was slow to respond, Rashba did find in favor of Abba Mari by ruling that the decree against him in Montpellier was erroneous and without precedent—thereby conferring validity upon Abba Mari's counter-excommunication. In addressing Abba Mari, Rashba nonetheless asked him to put an end to the Languedocian controversy by revoking the decree against his adversaries.[138]

A year and a half earlier, in Ellul (September) 1304, Rashba's letter to the scholars of Montpellier, read in the synagogue by Abba Mari, called upon them to prohibit philosophic study in Languedoc. When that letter was poorly received, Rashba chose to retreat and to avoid any direct confrontation with the Montpellier scholars over the character of philosophic interpretation in their domain. Now that the Barcelona excommunication was poorly received, Rashba once again publically withdrew from his apparent involvement in the affairs of Languedocian Jewry.

> Everything that we have decreed and achieved consensus upon, we have decreed for our own needs alone. Far be it from us to spread our net, to double our reins and our oaths. Even the cities that surround us, we have not included in our decrees. Only our own vineyard have we closed in, and only ourselves have we sanctified with these things. It rests upon our brethren whether to follow our lead or to desist. Since one kingdom does not infringe upon its neighbor, each one signs its own name and seals with its own ring. One [kingdom] does not overpower another, dragging it in a net, setting its neck in a rope. Thus we never thought to include within the scope of our ruling anyone but ourselves and our land.[139]

In a conclusion not unlike that of his previous encounter, Rashba acknowledges the absolute spiritual sovereignty of the Languedocian Jewish community and the authority of the Languedocian scholars to set aside his model ban.

The nature of Jewish public opinion east of the Rhône may have differed considerably from that of the Jewish communities of Languedoc and Roussillon. In Comtat Venaissin, for example, Mordecai ben Isaac of Carpentras, an otherwise unknown moderate Maimonidean scholar, claimed, seemingly without irony, that the concern of the scholars of Languedoc regarding Abba Mari's activity was confused and misplaced. In Mordecai's view, Rashba's ban was entirely unobjectionable, as it bore no resemblance to the decrees against Maimonides' writings in the 1230s and did not impugn Languedocian Jewish culture in any way.

> In truth, I was young and now I am old, I have never seen in this country such profound confusion regarding an inessential matter such as this one. Behold, in earlier days, when the fire of controversy consumed this entire region, the great fire burned regarding a matter whose transgression was clear and whose wickedness was well known . . . The remaining pillars

> from our region arose, our masters, the great ones of the generation, and struck the Rabbis of France with the whip of the tongue. Every man who [held] the Breastplate of Truth in his hand descended and responded to their imprecation, as far as the celebrated Toledo, that exile from Jerusalem which is in Spain.
>
> But now, what have they seen here? How can there be a curse and an imprecation against Montpellier, the holy stag, with whom the Lord has dwelt forever, like Mount Sinai in holiness? . . . Regarding all that has been done in Barcelona—may the Glory of Israel establish it on High—there is nothing on account of which it is appropriate to protest against the princes and their consensus. [They] have made their goal the honor of the God of Israel and the honor of his Torah. They have not gone too far and they have not exaggerated their deeds, for they are acting faithfully. . . .
>
> Every subject of which it is said there is some benefit in preparation for Wisdom—such as knowledge of the books of rhetoric and the books of mathematics and astronomy—all this and anything like it does not enter into [the category] of their prohibition. Would that in this quantity of [twenty-five] years a man might attain by means of these subjects the instructions which are the keys which open the gates of the First and Second Philosophy [metaphysics and physics]—along with that which a man requires, as he has a religion, of the prohibited and the permitted, the guilty and the innocent, in abbreviated form, for one who would know the halakha.[140]

Mordecai argues that Rashba's ban matches the Maimonidean curriculum perfectly. Until the age of twenty-five, a man ought to study rhetoric, mathematics, and astronomy, along with the traditional rabbinic subjects relating to Jewish law and ritual practice, in preparation for entering into the study of physics and metaphysics. Mordecai opines, quite correctly, that the proper completion of such a course of study by the age of twenty-five would be an achievement well beyond the average student. Surely, Abba Mari has done no harm, in Mordecai's view, by supporting a ban similar to Rashba's in Languedoc.

Meiri breaks his silence

Meiri publicly entered the controversy at the point of the excommunication and counter-excommunication in Montpellier and established his own position among the controversy's leading figures. Although Meiri had participated in the controversy as an interlocutor among colleagues in Perpignan and followed Abba Mari's correspondence with Rashba from the very outset,[141] he had refrained from writing publicly until this point. As Meiri was the greatest living Talmudist in Languedoc, it would have been natural for Abba Mari to seek his opinion and guidance. Since Abba Mari never publicly

sought out Meiri's opinion, we can only guess that he must have known that he would not find it welcome. Of course, Meiri might have written to Rashba in order to express his views publicly at any time during the controversy, even after Rashba's dramatic prohibition of philosophic study. That such a letter was ever written seems unlikely; certainly no record of Meiri's writing to Rashba survives. As we have seen, Meiri respected Rashba greatly as a Talmudist, but was convinced that as a kabbalist, and therefore necessarily unsympathetic to the Maimonidean synthesis, Rashba had no role in the controversy. One imagines that Meiri wished that Rashba would, of his own accord, eschew involvement in the Jewish philosophic culture of Languedoc.

When Meiri finally wrote to Abba Mari publicly regarding the controversy, the latter attempted to suppress this letter. Abba Mari failed to respond to the charges in Meiri's letter, even after the letter was (curiously) leaked to the public through unknown sources.[142] Instead, he asked a member of his inner circle, Simeon ben Joseph, to pen a public, line-by-line response to Meiri.[143] Abba Mari did not include Meiri's letter or Simeon's response in his anthology of letters from the affair, *Minḥat Qena'ot*, although he does mention there that he received a letter from Meiri "who took his own path through the controversy."[144] After Meiri's letter was leaked, Simeon ben Joseph acknowledged the sensation that it caused throughout Languedoc.[145]

Meiri viewed Abba Mari's call to Barcelona as contributing not only to the slander of prominent Languedocian Jewish scholars, but also to the defamation of their generations-old cultural ideal of commitment to traditional Jewish and Greco-Arabic learning.[146] Meiri tried to stop Abba Mari's activity, not only because of the restrictions of the proposed ban—in fact, any potential practical consequences of the proposed ban on philosophic study appear to have been negligible[147]—but also, more importantly, because of its effect on the image of Languedocian-Jewish culture.

> They [in Barcelona] have added transgression to their words saying, "Once philosophy spread out over that country [Languedoc], piety and fear of sin ceased. There is no one who knows [philosophy] from his youth who fears God." But God is indeed in this place![148] You [Abba Mari] know well that there is [fear of Him] here. Put out your hand [and let us persuade you to join us]![149]

In this way, Meiri tried to appeal to Abba Mari to recognize the community of philosophically educated Jews as God-fearing. Meiri upheld the stature of the tradition of Languedocian philosophic translators, encyclopedists, and philosophic exegetes that began with Samuel ibn Tibbon, and insisted that their sometimes-radical works should be accepted and studied.

> In regard to those who did not devote their time to the study of Talmud but were perfect in the sciences: we have observed many of them to be

> god-fearing trustworthy men who spurn [material] gain.[151] They are most numerous, both in the past and the present.[151]

According to Meiri, "many" of the philosopher-translators were scrupulously pious, and their existence constituted a basic feature of Languedocian-Jewish culture. Meiri's positions on fundamental issues differed significantly from those of Samuel ibn Tibbon and other Languedocian Jewish scholars who took up his project of the Hebrew translation of Arabic philosophy and the philosophic interpretation of Scripture. Yet, Meiri went to great lengths to deflect any suspicion that their teachings represented a philosophically sophisticated heresy. Unlike Abba Mari, Meiri trusted the Jewish scientific elite, as integral members of a larger philosophically sophisticated and devout community, to handle works like the *Commentaries* of Averroes in a fashion that was ultimately compatible with Jewish tradition. He argued that scientific works by these esteemed Languedocian Jewish scholars should be judged as a whole, while any apparently problematic individual teaching should not be overly scrutinized.

> Indeed, philosophy [חכמה] is precious in my eyes, and of great value—everything that the scholars of Israel wrote about it—its general principles and its details. And if, upon occasion, I discover in some work something that, perhaps, is in need of correction, I attribute this to the weakness of my intellect, and I set it aside for one who knows more than myself. "Let that one enter 'within' to wander in [esoteric] gardens, and gather a rose among thorns."[152] I will not abandon a book full of several gems on account of one, two, or three questionable items. At times, I reread a passage repeatedly so that I might—as much as is appropriate in relation to the author's stature—judge it meritoriously. So much the more so, if we recall the Talmudic statement [concerning the canonization of the theologically problematic book of Ecclesiastes, "Yet why did they not hide it?"] "Because its beginning and end are Torah teachings."[153]

If a problematic passage was discovered in the writing of a scholar of the highest stature, Meiri first questioned his own comprehension, saying to himself, "I must have misunderstood due to my insufficient philosophic knowledge." On other occasions, Meiri used forceful reinterpretation—pushing the limits of the text's consensual meaning—in order to produce a more acceptable reading. He used the metaphor that the books of the Tibbons "are full of thorns," but with careful reading it was possible "to pick the rose." Meiri justified the preservation of books with troubling passages written by Languedocian philosopher-translators with an analogy to the rabbis' preservation of the frequently troubling book of Ecclesiastes.[154]

In writing to Abba Mari publicly, Meiri hoped to use his spiritual authority to impede conservative forces within Languedoc as well as to protect local

Jewish culture from antirationalist forces outside it. Therefore, Meiri argued further that bans against philosophic study were not effective and should not be promulgated because their inevitable violation diminished rabbinic authority. Meiri recalled to Abba Mari that, to his knowledge, the northern French prohibition against the study of Maimonides' works, promulgated during the "First Controversy," had never been repealed. Nevertheless, more than seventy years later, Maimonides continued to attract students among the scholars of northern France.

> In seven or ten years, or more, every [individual] nature, according to its education, will seek that which is most suitable for it. The [present] actions will grow old, and almost forgotten; especially since they occurred [in the context of] a dispute. Even the children of those who now accept this consensus [not to study philosophy before age twenty-five]—as a result of their great yearning and desire for that which is most suitable for them according to their [individual] natures—will decide for themselves, "This-and-that happened. It was a dispute. Rabbi So-and-so prohibited, and sage So-and-so permitted." They will not restrain themselves from satisfying their desires, and [the decree] will prove merely a stumbling block.
>
> Behold, I have heard from my teachers, of blessed memory, that during the "First Controversy" some of the revered [scholars] of your locale [for example, Solomon of Montpellier] sent letters to the rabbis of France, may they rest in Eden. They raised their voices to the point that [the French rabbis] prohibited on pain of excommunication that anyone read any of Maimonides' works, ever.
>
> Now, after the passage of time, I have observed that they make distinctions; some of his works they esteem today. If, perhaps, you should say that they have loosed the ban; it is possible, but this is not known to me.[155]

In this passage, Meiri views a scholar's attitude toward philosophic study to be a result of his education and personal inclination. The permissibility of such study, he claims, should not be the subject of legislation. Although the rabbis of France had not repealed their ban on Maimonides, that earlier excommunication had proven fruitless. So, too, Meiri argues, the current attack upon the sciences was destined for failure. In matters touching upon cultural commitments, Meiri believed, each coherent community had to legislate for itself and, without anger or offense, restrain itself from interfering in the affairs of others. In Meiri's view, both the excommunication and counter-excommunication in Montpellier were equally inappropriate. Meiri in essence said to Abba Mari: Experience has shown that excommunications do no good. Let us put them all away, and allow each group within Languedoc to act as it sees fit.

Although Meiri held similar positions to Abba Mari regarding the deepest philosophic questions and was aware of the danger posed to traditional views

by inappropriate exposure to philosophy, he believed that Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* had established the identity of Languedocian Jewish culture and that it was technically impossible to understand the *Guide* without an understanding of the Greco-Arabic philosophic tradition upon which it depended. In order to fulfill the cultural ideal that he had inherited, Meiri felt required to foster a broader philosophic discourse; he believed that the sort of enlightened Jewish community that the Torah itself required was dependant upon the clear accessibility of distinguished philosophic achievement. As a public statement to the Jews of Languedoc and Catalonia, Meiri's letter to Abba Mari, were it summarized in our own language, conveys roughly the following message.

> Greco-Arabic learning is no longer foreign material that might be banned; it is part of Jewish culture. There are Jewish tracts on the sciences, and the sciences have been incorporated into non-philosophic works as well. The sciences are necessary in order to approach the central book on the meaning of Jewish tradition, *Guide of the Perplexed*. Let us not go back to the days when the validity of the Maimonidean legacy was in dispute! Rashba is a kabbalist, and his commitments make him ill-disposed to ours. Despite his universal authority on legal matters, his anti-rationalism takes him out of our realm of discourse, and renders his opinion concerning the course of Languedocian Jewish culture of little relevance. The religious problems raised by philosophic study are inconsiderable in relation to its benefits. Our distinguished specialists in the sciences should be allowed to pursue their work unhindered, and their writings—however troubling—should not be suspected of heresy. To restrict access to the sciences—even from a few people for a short time—would almost certainly be to their detriment and the detriment of our community. Experience has shown that excommunications do no good. Let us put them all away, and allow each group within Languedoc to act as it sees fit.

Concerning the incorporation of the Greco-Arabic legacy within Languedocian-Jewish culture and the impropriety of any attempt to reverse it, the community's leading halakhist was unequivocal.

The controversy's conclusion

Throughout the controversy over philosophic study, Abba Mari and his circle evinced great clarity of purpose, persistent energy, and significant skill in a variety of ways: in their efforts to persuade their colleagues that philosophic interpretation in Languedoc had, indeed, broken all appropriate bounds; in obtaining the consent of Rashba and his court to take significant risks on their behalf; and in gathering, editing, and publishing much of the controversy's correspondence in *Minḥat Qena'ot*. The activity of the philosophic

translators and commentators, including their extensive use of allegory as an interpretive lens and their strong commitment to the Hebrew translation of Averroes along with a significant portion of the rest of Greco-Arabic learning, deeply discomfited Abba Mari. To his mind, Maimonides had wrestled successfully and conclusively with the great philosophic dilemmas affecting Judaism, and *The Guide of the Perplexed* was therefore a monumental work. In his view, the continued inquiry into fundamental questions by lesser minds as well as widening the scope of philosophic interpretation could breed only confusion and heresy. Indeed, thought Abba Mari, had Maimonides himself not warned of the grave dangers involved in the careless transmission of philosophic teaching? Beyond his concern for the requirements of esotericism, Abba Mari also seemed to have sensed something new and extraordinarily powerful in the works of Averroes that added greatly to his unease. Upon reading Averroes's *Commentary* to Aristotle's *De Caelo*, Abba Mari almost wonders aloud: were Maimonides' demonstrations reconciling Judaism with the philosophic tradition, in fact, all conclusive? Might not someone return to these ponderous and arcane matters to adjudicate them? The way simply must be closed off.

When local support was not forthcoming, Abba Mari daringly found a strong ally in Rashba and the scholars of Barcelona who, unlike the Jewish scholars of Languedoc, were deeply ambivalent about the religious value of the philosophic tradition. Without doubt, the Catalonian scholars would have been pleased to see Abba Mari succeed against those Languedocian scholars who sought an expansive role for philosophy within Judaism. To Rashba, the Languedocian Jewish notions that there was a religious imperative to study physics and metaphysics and that immortality depended directly upon intellectual comprehension were patently absurd. Over the course of the controversy, Abba Mari and his supporters managed to convince Rashba to provide ever-greater backing for their cause, culminating with his promulgation of a model prohibition against Greco-Arabic learning in Catalonia. When even this dramatic action failed to produce the desired results in Languedoc, the possibilities for Rashba's involvement clearly had been exhausted.[156] At that point, Rashba made it patent that, despite his intense concern for Abba Mari's cause, he would not attempt to impose his will directly upon the leaders of Languedocian Jewry. In any case, such an action almost certainly would have done no good. Abba Mari's powerful adversaries deemed even the promulgation of Rashba's model Catalonian decree as a hostile overreaching of foreign jurisdiction; and they made it quite clear how strongly they disapproved of Rashba's consort with Abba Mari.[157]

At every stage of the conflict, Abba Mari refused to give up his struggle, writing intensively to garner support for his objectives. He wrote throughout Roussillon, Languedoc, and Provence to seek local supporters in favor of the excommunication.[158] While visiting Rashba in Barcelona, Rosh earlier had written that he could not support the position of Abba Mari, because such support would imply, incorrectly, that philosophic study was permitted to

those older than twenty-five. Now settled in Castile, Rosh expressed the view to Abba Mari that philosophic study is entirely prohibited "in our days."[159] At this point, the work of the controversy appears to have run its course, both conceptually and politically. In July, 1306, there seems little more that Abba Mari might have done to further his cause. At the same time, however, Philip the Fair, the King of France, decreed an expulsion of all the Jews of his realm, which included Languedoc, and seized their property.[160] In distant Paris, the circumstances of the expulsion relate to the expanding political and economic powers of the French crown. Abba Mari, however, attributed the expulsion to Divine retribution for the sins of his adversaries.[161] Although Abba Mari failed in his great effort to turn the Jews of Languedoc away from involvement in Greco-Arabic learning and the overtly philosophic interpretation of Jewish tradition, his struggle elicited and preserved a wonderful correspondence that gives us extraordinarily access to the ambiguities and concerns of Jewish culture in Languedoc at the dawn of the fourteenth century.

Notes

1 Naḥmanides revealed only snippets of the teaching that he had received from his teacher, Isaac the Blind, the son of Rabad of Posquiéres. For the claim that Jewish philosophic and kabbalistic interpretation experience parallel movements from esotericism to exotericism, see Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*: *Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 136.

2 On the development of competing French and Aragonese authorities in Montpellier, see William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last of the Capetians* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 195–7.

3 Majorca is closely related to Aragon, both in language and history. In 1276, the Aragonese Crown bestowed Majorca to its second son as a separate kingdom, but in 1344 it returned to its parent.

4 Moshe Halbertal's view—that the controversy engendered a split in the rabbinic leadership in Languedoc, with one side joining the conservative Catalonian rabbis and the other joining the radical Languedocian philosophers—though resulting from his penetrating conceptual analysis, seems to be without historical basis. His analogy of a debate among thirteenth-century Languedocian scholars as to the nature of the Maimonidean tradition to negotiations between political parties in twenty-first-century Israel appears quite far off the mark; but see Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provence* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), p. 179. Similarly, Halbertal's claim that the controversy is a political and communal expression of the tension and instability inherent in esotericism seems a strangely harsh and simplistic historical reification of his deep insights regarding the nature of medieval Jewish interpretation. See Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 134.

5 See Abba Mari ben Joseph of Lunel, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 409–14.

6 On the scientific activity of Jacob ben Makhir, see Joseph Shatzmiller, "Contacts et Échanges entre Savants Juifs et Chrétiens a Montpellier vers 1300," in *Juifs et Judaïsme de Languedoc*, ed. Marie-Humbert Vicare and Bernhard Blumenkranz (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1977), pp. 337–44; and Shatzmiller, "In Search of the 'Book of Figures': Medicine and Astrology in Montpellier at the Turn of the Fourteenth Century," *AJS Review* 7–8 (1982–1983): 383–407.

7 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 418 (Abba Mari, report to Rashba). Although Jacob ben Makhir passed away before the promulgation of the ban in Barcelona, Abba Mari's adversaries in Montpellier use similar language and argument in their response to Rashba at that time. See ibid., chap. 122.

8 See ibid., pp. 416, 445 (Abba Mari, report to Rashba). There is no known mention of the son of Moses ibn Tibbon outside of this context.

9 September 8, 1304.

10 Ibid., pp. 411–2. cf. *Bereshit Rabbah*, ed. J. Theodor and Ḥ. Albeck, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965), 44:1, p. 424. This text, expressing doubt over God's concern for the details of ritual slaughter, became a *locus classicus* for the medieval discussion of "reasons for the Commandments."

11 Literally, "the Isles of Kittim which belong to the Phoenicians [*kena'anim*]." Compare Jeremiah 2:10 and Obadiah 1:20. On the medieval Hebrew use of the term "*kena'anim*" to designate the peoples of Europe, see Samuel Krauss, "Die Hebräischen Benennungen der Modernen Völker," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kohut*, ed. Salo W. Baron and Alexander Marx (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1935), pp. 379–400.

12 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 412–3. cf. Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. Aaron Zaleznik, 7 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Or ha-Mizraḥ, 1996), 37:2, pp. 161–6.

13 Abba Mari describes these events in *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 414–9.

14 See ibid., pp. 431–40.

15 Ibid., p. 452. Jacob ben Makhir begins his important response to Rashba in defense of Languedocian cultural commitments, "Behold, you have written in the letter you sent to us, 'We have no more involvement in this matter . . ..'" See ibid., p. 512.

16 "כי לא טובה היא ממעשה מרכבה" (cf. Rashba's rejection of the Maimonidean identification of philosophy with the "Account of the Chariot," above, pp. 144–5).

17 Cf. BT *Ḥaggigah* 16a.

18 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 442.

19 See ibid., p. 461.

20 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 852.

21 Cf. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Yesode ha-Torah* 2:1; *Teshuvah* 10:2–6.

22 In his letter to Rashba, Solomon ben Isaac of Lunel links the comprehension of the *Guide* with the accessibility of the palace of the king (*Guide* III:51): "How might one study the book of the Great Rabbi known as the *Guide*, which teaches all the physics and metaphysics of philosophy? The paths of his proofs of God's existence, and unity, and the Creation of the world are among the fruits of philosophy. How shall one enter the habitation of the King built in the midst of the country, utterly enclosed by walls?" (In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat*

Qena'ot, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 473–4).

23 See ibid., pp. 461–6. Little is known of Solomon outside of this correspondence. See Heinrich Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), p. 288; and Ernest Renan, 'Les Rabbins français du commencement du quatorzème siècle,' in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, ed. B. Hauréau (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), 27: 667–70.

24 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 470.

25 Ibid., pp. 470–5.

26 Ibid., p. 479.

27 See ibid., pp. 485–7.

28 Ibid., pp. 487–90.

29 Ibid., pp. 490–1.

30 Ibid., p. 492.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., pp. 492–4.

33 Ibid., pp. 495–501.

34 Ibid., p. 452.

35 Ibid., p. 511.

36 Jacob was a grandson of Samuel. See Gross, *Gallia Judaica: Dictionnaire géographique de la France d'après les sources rabbiniques*, trans. Moïse Bloch (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), p. 332.

37 See Baḥyah ibn Paquda, *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, trans. Judah ibn Tibbon, ed. Abraham Zifroni (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-sifrut, 1959), pp. 57, 163, for the translator's acknowledgment of Meshullam ben Jacob and Rabad of Posquières; and Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Samuel ibn Tibbon (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1981), p. cxviii, for the translator's acknowledgment of Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel.

38 See Maimonides, '*Iggrot ha-Rambam*, ed. Isaac Shilat (Jerusalem: Ma'aliyot le-yad Yeshivat Ma'aleh Adumim, 1989), 2:511 ff.

39 Jacob ibn Tibbon, letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 509–10. Yedayah ha-Penini also presents a version of this argument. See his *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, in Rashba, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashbah*, 1 vol. no. 418, pp. 166–7a. For a provisional assessment of this letter see, A.S. Halkin, "Yedaiah Bedershi's Apology," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 165–84.

40 Jacob ben Makhir allows no distinction between the Jewish works permitted by R. Meshullam and non-Jewish philosophic works.

41 Jacob ibn Tibbon, letter to Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 511.

42 Ibid., p. 510.

43 As their defense against this charge appears sometime in the summer of 1305, Jacob must have passed away at about that time. Meiri inquires solicitously concerning rumors that, in one of his letters to Rashba, Abba Mari had maligned Jacob ben Makhir. As ben Makhir was a chief adversary to Abba Mari in Montpellier, there would have been adequate motive. But Simeon ben Joseph, Abba Mari's student, praises Jacob and vociferously denies the charge. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), pp. 153–4.

44 Rashba, *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, no. 37, pp. 159–221, considering the problem of Christian Scriptural allegory.
45 Ibid., pp. 161–2.
46 Ibid., p. 162.
47 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 379–83.
48 Ibid., pp. 390–5.
49 See, especially, ibid., pp. 411–13.
50 See, especially, ibid., pp. 671–3.
51 See, especially, ibid., pp. 727–9.
52 See, especially, ibid., pp. 734–5.
53 See ibid., pp. 545–7. Reuven ben Ḥayyim, whose philosophically inflected commentary on the *siddur* survives in fragments, is the only scholar whom Meiri calls "his teacher." On Reuven, see above, pp. 28–9, and 104n 111, 106n 131.
54 Ibid., p. 532.
55 Ibid., p. 532.
56 Ibid., pp. 545–6.
57 See ibid., pp. 580–1; Abba Mari refers to them as being together in the same place.
58 After an interregnum during which German Jews had paid taxes to regional nobles, the newly enthroned emperor, Rudolph I, asserted his right to tax and protect German Jews as "serfs of [his] royal treasury" (*servi camerae Regis*).
59 Although German Jews tried to ransom Meir with very large sums, they would not acknowledge their emperor's newly claimed authority. In similar fashion, the emperor persisted in his claim over the Jews, and would not release Meir.
60 Ibid., pp. 596–7; cited in Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 110.
61 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 597.
62 On his way to Barcelona, Rosh surely passed through Perpignan. One can only wonder whether he stopped to visit Meiri. The is no record of any encounter between these two scholars.
63 Ibid., p. 591.
64 Numbers 22:7.
65 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 582.
66 Ibid., p. 578.
67 Ibid., p. 580.
68 Ibid., p. 598.
69a In Toledo, however, Rosh did grant his formal approval to *Yesod 'Olam*, the work of local Jewish astronomer Isaac Israeli, as is printed in the introduction to that work (Berlin: Sumtibus Editorum, 1846), p. 2.
69b See Judah D. Galinsky, "Ha-Rosh ha-'Ashkenazi bi-Sfarad: 'Tosafot ha-Rosh,' 'Pisqu ha-Rosh,' Yeshivat ha-Rosh," *Tarbitz* 74 (2005): 389–413; Galinsky, "Ashkenazim in Sefarad: The Rosh and the Tur on the Codification of Jewish Law," *Jewish Law Annual* 16 (2006): 3–23; and Galinsky, "Halakha, Kalkala, ve-Ideologia be-Vet Midrasho shel ha-Rosh be-Toledo," *Zion* 72 (2007): 387–419."
70 Rashba, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 479.
71 Ibid., pp. 615–16 (Jacob of Beaucaire, letter to Rashba).
72 See ibid., pp. 409–14.
73 See ibid., p. 613. In addition, Jacob's son's father-in-law was Abba Mari's uncle, Kalonymous, the Nasi of Narboone. See ibid., p. 612. Kalonymous would also become a major proponent of Abba Mari's cause.
74 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed.

H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 599–616 (Jacob of Beaucaire, letter to Rashba).

75 Ibid., pp. 614–15.

76 See ibid., pp. 551–7 (elders of Aix, to Rashba).

77 See ibid., pp. 557–9 (elders of Avignon, to Rashba).

78 See ibid., pp. 564–70 (elders of Argentière, to Rashba).

79 See ibid., pp. 559–63; 570–5 (Rashba).

80 Ibid., pp. 616–32 (correspondence between Rashba and scholars of Lunel).

81 Rashba attaches importance to Kalonymus' participation as a "descendant of the House of David." He does not assume, however, that Kalonymus has universal authority to promulgate an excommunication in Languedoc. Indeed, the authority and influence of the Nasi during this period is uncertain. For speculation regarding the internal Jewish political interest of Kalonymus in aligning himself with Rashba, see Shlomo H. Pick, "The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306," PhD diss. (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1996), pp. 157–160. Regarding the office of the Nasi of Narbonne, and documentation of its stature in the twelfth century, see Aryeh Graboïs, "Ha-Ḥevra ha-Yehudit ba-Tzarfat ha-Dromit ba-Me'ot ha-11 veha-12 'al pi ha-Kroniqa shel 'Almoni mi-Narbonna," *Ha-Qongres ha-'Olami le-Mada'e ha-Yahdut* 6 (1976): 75–86; Graboïs, "Mi-Nesi'ut le-Hanhagat ha-Parnassim: Ha-Temurot be-Mishtar shel Qehilot Narbonna be-Me'a ha-13," in *Umma ve-Toldoteha*: *Qovetz Ma'amarim*, vol. 1, ed. Menahem Stern (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Institute, 1983), pp. 233–43; and Shatzmiller, "Ben Abba Mari la-Rashba: Ha-masa u-M'atan she-qadam le-Ḥerem be-Barcelona," *Meḥqarim be-Toledot 'Am Yisrael ve-Eretz Yisrael* 3 (1974): 135–6. On the role of Jewish aristocratic leaders in Languedoc, see Shlomo Pick, "The Jewish Communities of Provence before the Expulsion in 1306," PhD diss. (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1996), pp. 148–57; Pick, "Jewish Aristocracy in Southern France," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 161 (2002): 97–121, and Arnold Franklin, "Cultivating Roots: The Promotion of Exilarchal Ties to David in the Middle Ages," *AJS Review* 29 (2005): 91–110.

82 Abba Mari heard incorrectly that the Nasi had written to Montpellier to criticize him and to disrupt his activity there. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 632. Abba Mari writes to the Nasi to explain his behavior and to ask for the Nasi's support (ibid., pp. 632–4). The Nasi responds that he supports Abba Mari entirely, and that he only had written to a friend to ask Abba Mari to refrain from responding to a small point in one of Rashba's letters (ibid., pp. 635–6).

83 Ibid., pp. 633 (Abba Mari, letter to Kalonymus ben Todros).

84 Ibid., pp. 634.

85 Ibid.

86 See ibid., pp. 637–62 (*Sefer ha-Yareaḥ*). For the Nasi's formal approval, see ibid., p. 662.

87 Ibid., p. 673 (Rashba, letter to Abba Mari and to ha-Nasi). See ibid., pp. 665, 667. Rashba's delay may have been due, in part, to illness.

88 See ibid., pp. 674–6 (Abba Mari, letter to Rashba).

89 Kalonymus ben Todros appears reluctant to commit to the plan in writing. Abba Mari asks Kalonymus to send a formal text to Barcelona to be used for the Spanish ban; see ibid., pp. 682–5. Despite this reminder, Rashba still feels the need to inquire after the text, and adds that it need not be signed; see ibid., pp. 685–7. Sasson ben Meir, Rashba's student in Toledo who is traveling throughout Castile to gather support for the ban, asks for the text a third time; see ibid., pp. 688–9. In his response to Sasson ben Meir, Abba Mari states abruptly that, while he is sending a formal request, Rashba should write the text of the ban himself; see

ibid., p. 695. In his letter that introduces the request, Abba Mari seems irritated that it even has been required; see ibid., p. 691.

90 See ibid., pp. 696–7 (formal request, from Abba Mari and ha-Nasi).
91 Ibid., p. 723.
92 See ibid., chaps. 99–101. For a most learned speculation to the contrary, see Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Ḥerem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History* I (1986): 27–38.
93 See, for example, Naḥmanides, *Kitve Rabenu Moshe ben Naḥman*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1964), 1: 333–51.
94 See, for example, Rashba to Solomon of Lunel, in Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 479, and to the scholars of Montpellier, ibid., p. 857. Abba Mari gathered six letters from the scholars of Barcelona, written to clarify that their prohibition of philosophic study did not refer to the books of Maimonides. See ibid., chaps. 102, 105–10. In his letters to Rashba and Meiri, Simeon ben Joseph insists upon this distinction. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 223, and Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 153.
95 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 721, 736.
96 Ibid., p. 730.
97 Ibid., pp.734–7.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ram Ben-Shalom, "The Ban Placed by the Community of Barcelona on the Study of Philosophy and Allegorical Preaching: A New Study," *Revue des Études Juives* 159 (2000): 387–404.
102 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 699.
103 See ibid., p. 700.
104 On the identity of the royal official, see Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Ḥerem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History 1–2* (1986): 27–38. See, also, Shatzmiller, "L'Excommunication, la Communauté Juive et les autorités temporelles au Moyen-Age," in *Les Juifs dans L'Histoire de France* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1980), pp. 61–9; and Shatzmiller, *Recherches sur la Communauté Juive de Manosque au Moyen Age* (Paris: Mouton, 1973), pp. 52–3, n. 1.
105 According to Abba Mari's report, those working against him had planned to promulgate a threefold excommunication; the third proposed decree, prohibiting the observance of the Barcelona ban in Montpellier, was the only one to be enacted. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 701.
106 Both Abba Mari (ibid., pp. 716–7) and Simeon ben Joseph ("Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 222) cite the first few words of this excommunication.
107 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 701–2.
108 See ibid., p. 716.
109 Ibid., pp. 750–1.
110 See, Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 224.

111 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 172.
112 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 845–3. cf. the letters of Solomon of Lunel, ibid., pp. 470–5, and of Yedayah ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*. The letter of Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon, who died before the excommunications, also shares much with these letters of protest. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 506–13.
113 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 849.
114 Ibid.
115 See ibid., pp. 687–9.
116 See Yedayah ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, p. 157b.
117 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 851–2 (Montpellier scholars, letter to Rashba). The Montpellier scholars' promotion of the Exilarch's universal authority, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, is bemusing.
118 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 153.
119 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 470–5.
120 Ibid., pp. 845–3.
121 See Yedayah ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnaṣlut*, p. 174a.
122 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 506–13.
123 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 166.
124 See H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1926) which is devoted to these propositions.
125 Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Shlomo Pines, trans. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I: 17.
126 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 153. For a similar claim, see Simeon ben Joseph's letter to Rashba in "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 223.
127 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 739, 752–85.
128 See ibid., pp. 778.
129 Compare Meiri's argument, Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 165.
130 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 852. cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ḥatam Sofer, 1965), *Yesode ha-Torah*, 2: 1; *Teshuvah*, 10: 2–6.
131 Meiri, however, separates himself from those who make philosophic study a prerequisite for immortality. "I hold the simple believer to be on a par with the philosophically informed, 'The share of those who remain with the baggage shall

be the same as the share of those who go down to battle; they shall share alike.'" See Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 155; and cf. I Samuel 30:24. For a similar view expressed outside of this apologetic context, see Meiri, *Perush Mishle*, 17:5; the philosophically innocent man is "poor," but he who mocks him "affronts his Maker."

132 See Ruth Glasner, ed., *Vikuaḥ Madai Filosofi ba-Meah ha-14: Ha-Maamar be-Hafkhe ha-Mahalakh u-Ktav ha-Hitatzmut li-Yedayah ha-Penini* (Jerusalem: World Union for Jewish Studies, 1998); Shlomo Pines, *Scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and the Teachings of Ḥasdai Crescas and his Predecessors*, trans. Alfred Ivry (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings, 1967), and in *Proceedings of the International Israel Academy of Sciences* 11 (1965): 1–73 [in Hebrew].

133 "פה קדוש שאסר וזרק מרה והרבה בנזיפות, הוא הפה שיתיר וברכה ישאיר."

134 Yedayah ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, p. 174a. Yedayah's insistence that Languedocian Jewry uniformly adopt Maimonides' exoteric pronouncements (see, for example, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, pp. 171b–72a) makes his letter to Rashba the most conservative of the prophilosophic protests against the Barcelona ban.

135 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 581.

136 Ibid., pp. 701–2. Based upon *Mo'ed Qatan* 17a, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Talmud Torah* 6:14. Simeon ben Joseph reiterates these arguments (see, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 222, 224–5).

137 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 739.

138 See ibid., pp. 740–51. Simeon ben Joseph had written to Rashba (see "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], ed. David Kaufmann, *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 223) specifically to convince him to support the counterexcommunication. Rashba's instruction to Abba Mari, however, fulfills Yedayah ha-Penini's request that Rashba seek the reconciliation of conflicting factions in Montpellier. See Yedayah ha-Penini, *Ketav ha-Hitnatzlut*, p. 174a.

139 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 856. For an interpretation of this passage that downplays the cultural tensions between the Jews of Catalonia and Languedoc, see Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Ḥerem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History* 1–2 (1986): 28–9, 34.

140 In Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), pp. 790–6.

141 See ibid., pp. 403–4, and above pp. 148–9.

142 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 151.

143 Ibid., p. 145.

144 Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 804.

145 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 151.

146 See ibid., pp. 153–4. For the interpretation that revelation of Languedoc's secret teachings was harmful to its communal autonomy, see Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Jackie Feldman, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 136–7.

147 Joseph ibn Kaspi of Argentière (d. 1340), an aggressive proponent of the philosophic interpretation of Judaism, advises his son not to study *Guide of the Perplexed* before the age of twenty. As the *Guide* was specifically excluded from the bans, Kaspi's son would need to wait only five years before he might move on to Averroes. See Joseph Kaspi, '*Iggeret Musar*, in *Jewish Ethical Wills*, ed. Israel Abrahams (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1926), 1:145.

148 Cf. Genesis 28:16.

149 "תנה את רדי," Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 157 (cf. 2 Kings 10:15).

150 Cf. Exodus 18:21; and the comment of Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon in the introduction to the Hebrew version of his astronomical tables: "אמר יעקב בן מכיר ההררי בן תבון נ"ע, לפי שרבו האנשים החפצים בחכמת התכונה והחושקים בה ומעטו מעיינים בה והיה זה לשתי סבות. האחת לקשיה ועמקה ... והשנית שבזאת החכמה לא יוכל אדם להרויח בה כמו בחכמת הרפואה ובחכמת הדינים ורוב בני אדם רודפים אחר הממון ..." Neubauer MS 2041, as cited in Renan, *Les Rabbins français*, pp. 616–7.

151 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 163. Meiri acknowledges by implication that a "few" of the Languedocian scholars were not God-fearing.

152 Cf. Song of Songs 6:2.

153 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), pp.157–8 (cf. BT *Shabbat* 30b).

154 Meiri found in the "Solomonic Corpus"—Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Song of Songs—three distinct stages in Solomon's spiritual development or, perhaps, three modes of spiritual expression. See Meiri, *Proverbs Commentary*, introduction, pp. 3–4. This exegetical strategy is also the basis of Samuel ibn Tibbon's *Perush Qohelet* (*Ecclesiastes Commentary*, edited with translation and introduction by James T. Robinson. 2 vols. PhD diss. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); his son Moses' *Perush 'al Shir ha-Shirim* (*Moses ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm*, edited with translation and analysis by Otfried Fraisse (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004)); and Jacob Anatoli's *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, ed. L. Silbermann (Lyck, Prussia: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 1866).

155 Simeon ben Joseph, "Ḥoshen Mishpat," in *Jubelschrift zum neunzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. L. Zunz*, ed. David Kaufmann (Berlin: L. Gershel, 1884), p. 166.

156 Promulgated at the same time as the first excommunication against philosophic study, Rashba's second excommunication against transgressive Jewish philosophic allegory, wherever it may be, including Languedoc, was dead upon arrival and had no known impact of any kind. See above, pp. 198–99.

157 The hypothesis put forward by Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's *Ḥerem* on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective." *Jewish History* 1 (1986): 27–38 is not supported by the evidence. The writings of Abba Mari, Meiri and Yedayah ha-Penini, among others, do not even hint that local Christian authorities were concerned about foreign interference.

158 In his anthology of correspondence, Abba Mari displays nine Languedocian letters of support. See Aba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), chaps. 111–9.

159 See ibid., pp. 832–5; and see Israel Ta-Shema, "Shiqqulim Filosofiyyim be-Hakhra'at ha-Halakhah bi-Sefarad," *Tzefunot* 3 (1985): 99–110.

160 See W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the*

Last of the Capetians (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 214–15.

161 See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 835. Abba Mari gives Friday, 10 Av (30 July) 1306, as the date of the king's decree. Another Montpellier exile, Estori ha-Parḥi, confirms this date. See ha-Parḥi. *Kaftor va-Feraḥ*. 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Ḥavre Bet ha-midrash le-Halakhah ba-Hityashvut, 1994–1999), chap. 51. Rosh also views the expulsion as divine punishment for philosophical entanglement. See Abba Mari, ed. and comp., *Minḥat Qena'ot*, in *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1990), p. 832.

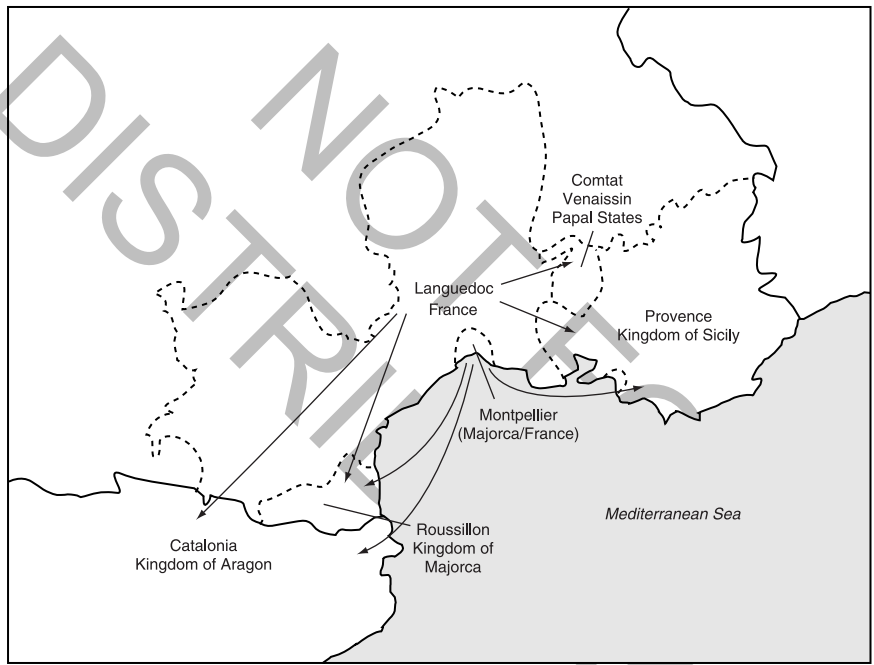


Figure 5 The expulsion of Jews from Languedoc: They traveled to Roussillon, Catalonia and beyond, as well as to Provence and Comtat Venaissin.

8 Effects of the expulsion: Jewish philosophic culture in Roussillon and Provence

In July, 1306, King Philip the Fair asserted his royal authority over the entire realm of France by expelling all Jews from the territories of his vassals.[1] In the resulting appropriation of Jewish property, the French crown is estimated to have accrued the extraordinary sum of over one million *livres*—more than twice its entire annual income—with additional money flowing to local baronial authorities.[2] At the royal court, the circumstances of Philip's expulsion relate to the expanding political and economic powers of royal France. In the Languedocian Jewish community, however, Abba Mari attributes the expulsion to divine retribution for excessive allegorical interpretation.[3] King Philip's expulsion forced Jews to leave any territory subservient to the French crown. At the time of this decree, the city of Montpellier was a *dominium* of the Crown of Majorca. The Jews of Montpellier, therefore, presumably were expelled only after the assent of James II of Majorca, who would have received the lion's share of the booty. Indeed, not more than ten weeks after King Philip's promulgation in Paris, the Jews of Montpellier left their homes for territories outside of royal France.[4] Most Languedocian Jews—including, of course, scholars living in the cities of Narbonne, Béziers, Montpellier, and Lunel—sought refuge immediately beyond the realm of the French king. East of the Rhône, Jews were permitted to resettle in Comtat Venaissin, held by the Papacy, and in Provence, held by the Kingdom of Sicily. In fact, Jews were never expelled from the Comtat, but lived there into the modern period; and in Provence, Jews were able to remain until the first years of the sixteenth century. To the west of Languedoc, lay Roussillon, of the Kingdom of Majorca. In Roussillon, Perpignan was the capital of James II of Majorca, who received his Kingdom in 1276 out of the will of his father James I of Aragon. Given their sense of shared cultural patrimony, Languedocian Jews' resettlement of in Roussillon and Provence must have seemed quite natural. In Roussillon, Meiri observed the arrival of Languedocian refuges to Perpignan,[5] and in Provence, Kalonymus ben Kalonymus witnessed their arrival to Arles.[6] Both record the expulsion of Jews from the territories of the French crown as a personal and communal tragedy. Obviously, Meiri's receptivity to Christian critique of Jewish spirituality and tolerance of Christians as "constrained by religious laws" was not

developed in an environment in which Christians had ceased to be oppressors of Jews: Quite to the contrary, the generally deteriorating standard for Jews in Western Europe was a fact of life since the second half of the thirteenth century. Indeed, Meiri's vocation as a moneylender, while a profitable occupation essential to the local economy, nevertheless, may bespeak exclusion from other forms of economic activity.[7] Shortly after King Philip's expulsion, Perpignan Jewry seems to have approached James II formally and received a promise from him to the effect that he would never expel the Jews from Majorca.[8]Abba Mari himself is exiled from Montpellier to Arles (Provence). Four months later, he attempted to resettle in Perpignan, but the agents of King James II, at the behest of local Jews, refused his entry.[9] As there is no evidence that Abba Mari ever revoked his excommunication, perhaps his adversaries in Perpignan also retained their enmity against him. Perhaps he returned to Arles; but the place of Abba Mari's eventual resettlement is unclear. We do know, however, that Abba Mari sent his eulogy to Barcelona upon the death of Rashba (d. 1310) and his eulogy to Perpignan upon the death of Meiri (d. 1315) from some third city, but he does not say which one.[10] In his eulogy for Meiri, Abba Mari mourns "the perfect sage, Don Vidal Solomon, known in the Holy Tongue as Rabbi Menaḥem ben Solomon [ha-Meiri]."[11] Given Abba Mari's battle with Meiri during the controversy, the following adoration, rhymed in Hebrew, is worthy of note.

> [Meiri] was expert in the Law of Moses and Jewish custom, and from the breasts of philosophy he drank the best part.[12]

In this poignant context, Abba Mari gave expression to his understanding and respect for Meiri's relationship to the philosophic tradition. Abba Mari most likely continued to edit *Minhat Qena'ot* until the second decade of the fourteenth century, as this eulogy dates to that time. Abba Mari's great effort to turn his community away from the path of the Tibbons and to exclude Greco-Arabic learning from their curriculum had failed, but his struggle elicited and preserved a correspondence that gives us extraordinarily direct and colorful access to the ambiguities and concerns of Jewish culture in Languedoc at the turn of the thirteenth century. Needless to say, we do not know the specific paths traveled by the overwhelming number of Jews following the decree of expulsion from royal France in 1306.[13] In one rare and vivid example, Estori ha-Parḥi, a Montpellier native, found himself in the months following the expulsion in Barcelona. In Barcelona, he encountered Armengaud Blaise, a Christian acquaintance from Languedoc. At that moment, Blaise was in the service of the Aragonese crown. In Montpellier, Blaise had collaborated extensively in medical and astronomical translation with Ha-Parḥi's recently deceased relative, Jacob ben Makhir ibn Tibbon. At their Barcelona meeting, Blaise shared with Ha-Parḥi a copy of his recently completed *Tabula Antidotarii*. Ha-Parḥi immediately translated it from Latin into Hebrew. In the introduction to his Hebrew translation, Ha-Parḥi tells the

story of his expulsion from Languedoc and his Barcelona encounter with Blaise.

> When we went into exile, the ankles of our understanding faltered and our wisdom slipped. A murderer [Philip IV of France] fell upon us, violent and aggressive. [The king] robbed [us] but the owners have not relinquished ownership; and Hebrew servant, who had lived with the [Christian] like a dove with a marten or a sheep with a wolf, still hoped to recover [his goods].
>
> [The king] should not have imposed any ruling there [in Montpellier] for two reasons, because [the city] was not under his authority, and hence [the Jew's property there] does not belong to him, as it was not in his domain. We were compelled to take our belongings with us; [to those] looking after us [as we left], we must have seemed like thieves, although we are children of a just, fearful, and humble father.

Estori ha-Parḥi expresses his anger and frustration over the expulsion decreed by the French monarch as well as his sense that the Crown's seizure of Jewish property in Montpellier was illegitimate and unjust. The meek and obedient Jews, in Ha-Parḥi's description, lived peacefully within the realms of the French king, and his expropriation of Jewish property in the wake of the expulsion represented the shameful deployment of brute force. Ha-Parḥi adds the grievance that the special status of Montpellier, as a joint possession of France and Majorca, should have prevented the French crown from acting there. Of course, this fact did delay the expulsion of Jews from Montpellier but did not prevent it. Ha-Parḥi concludes his account of the "exile," as he calls it, from Languedoc with a rare brief description of Jews actually taking leave of their homes with all they could carry of their personal belongings. Ha-Parḥi experienced it as shameful for the Jews to appear before the onlookers, their Christian neighbors, as if they were a group of thieves fleeing swiftly with whatever they could muster; when they, and their parents, were humble, honest people. This is all that Ha-Parḥi tells us of the expulsion before turning to his encounter with the *Tabula Antidotarii* and its author, Armengaud Blaise.

> Then the book came to me, in another language, more precious than gold . . . a treasure belonging to the Christian sage master Armengaud Blaise from Montpellier. He gave it to me here in Barcelona, in the year of my subjugation, at the beginning of my new exile, and there I took it over from his language [Latin] to our blessed tongue [Hebrew].

Unfortunately, Ha-Parḥi does not describe his meeting with Blaise in Barcelona or his precise motives for immediately undertaking the Hebrew translation of Blaise's most recent work. In fact, shortly after his meeting with Ha-Parḥi, Blaise left the service of the Aragonese crown and quit

Barcelona. We cannot know with any degree of certainty, but perhaps Ha-Parḥi wished to ingratiate himself with his well-established Christian acquaintance in a new and precarious Catalonian circumstance. Without doubt, a Hebrew translation of the extensive formulae found in the *Antidotarii* would be invaluable to any practicing Jewish physician, including Ha-Parḥi. Intriguingly, Ha-Parḥi does inform us, however, that the manuscript actually remained unpublished for some time, as well as how he eventually came to publish it. He made his translation of Blaise's *Antidotarii* a gift to the Nasi of Narbonne, Kalonyomus ben Todros, who had appeared in Barcelona, later on, as an exile from his home in Languedoc.

> The book was with me for some time after I had translated it, because I did not wish to publish it. After the arrival of the *nasi* in the community of wise and judicious men, he asked [me] for a book and a story. I offered this trifle to him and presented it to him.[14]

The remainder of Ha-Parḥi's long and substantial translation belongs almost entirely to the history of medicine. Ha-Parḥi did not remain long in Barcelona—he spent the rest of his life in Palestine, where he composed his most famous work, an historical geography of the Land of Israel, *Kaftor va-Feraḥ*—nor did Ha-Parḥi again translate a medical work. Surely, however, it may not be said that the expulsion fundamentally disrupted intellectual life, as no evidence exists to support such an assertion. We may more readily imagine, as in the case of Ha-Parḥi, that the Jews of Languedoc successfully transported their culture to their new homes. Similarly, Ha-Parḥi's account indicates the way in which Languedocian Jews were able to energetically pursue serious intellectual work even while on the move.[15] In assessing the cultural effects of Philip's expulsion, one should be mindful that Jews were not expelled permanently from Languedoc until 1394. Of course, each French king believed that his expulsion of the Jews was final; that with his appropriation of their property and cancelation of their loans to Christians, Jews would never again reside in France. Throughout the fourteenth century, however, each successor to the throne of France reassessed Jewish policy and frequently reversed the position taken by his predecessor. In 1315, in fact, some Jews, perhaps as many as a quarter of those who had lived in France before the expulsion of 1306, took up the invitation of the French crown to return home. Indeed, many of these Jews appear to have chosen to return to the authority of their local lords before the expulsion. As it turned out, however, their post-1315 residence in France would be rather short lived. By 1323, when their invitation from the crown was not renewed, poor conditions seem to have forced almost all Jews out of the kingdom.[16] In 1359, some Jews once again took up an invitation to return. By that time, the Jews of Montpellier were under the direct sovereignty of Charles V of France, as James III of Majorca had sold his seigneury over Montpellier to Phillip VI of France in 1349. In 1374, the Jews of Montpellier were also obliged to participate in

guarding their quarter's gates. In 1387, the construction of a new synagogue in Montpellier gave rise to a lawsuit with the bishop, to whom the Jews were compelled to pay a large sum. At the time of what would be their final expulsion from France in 1394, accusations were pending against the Jews of Montpellier at the municipal court. In short, Jewish communal life continued in Languedoc throughout the fourteenth century.[17]

In the generation following Meiri (d. 1315), the Jews of Roussillon grew more isolated geographically from their Languedocian cultural patrimony, and Jewish culture in Roussillon soon lost its Languedocian character. Of course, Jews from Languedoc had established the Jewish community in Roussillon, and expressed a Languedocian Jewish identity throughout the thirteenth century. As a result of the 1306 expulsion, however, long-standing Languedocian connections were disrupted, and Jewish cultural production quickly aligned with Catalonia, to which Roussillon had belonged administratively all along; whether under the crown of Majorca or Aragon. The philosophic translator and exegete Moses Narboni (d. 1362), for example, expresses a Catalonian Jewish identity. Born in Perpignan (Roussillon), in about 1300, Narboni, as indicated by his family name, viewed Narbonne (Languedoc) as his family's ancestral home. Narboni spent his early life and working years in Perpignan; until 1344, when he departed for Catalonia. Despite this departure, Narboni maintained personal and scholarly connections in Perpignan throughout his life. Indeed, Narboni's intellectual interests overlap significantly with those of Jewish philosophers in Provence. Nevertheless, his cultural ambit is contained by Catalonia, without any known Provençal connections.[18] By the second half of the fourteenth century, a fully Catalonian Jewish culture is evident in Roussillon. Profait Duran (d. 1414), the grammarian, astronomer, and philosophic exegete, known in Jewish literature as Efodi, for example, spent most of his life in Perpignan. The political, social and cultural realities of Efodi's Perpignan, however, are exclusively Catalonian.[19] The prior ties of the Jews of Perpignan, and Roussillon, to the Jewish culture of Languedoc, once intense, are no longer in evidence.

In Provence, on the other hand, Jewish philosophic culture continued to develop over the first half of the fourteenth century with growing sophistication; no longer, of course, in the ancient centers of Languedoc, where the French King would invite Jews to return periodically throughout the fourteenth century only to expel them again a few years later; nor, in Roussillon, which came increasingly under the influence of the Crown of Aragon and by the second half of the fourteenth century largely lost its Languedocian character; but, especially, in Provence, in the regions of Avignon, Orange, and Comtat Venaissin, where Jews were the subjects of either the Pope or the King of Sicily at Naples. In Provence, one has little sense that the French expulsions disrupted Jewish life. One might even speculate that the Languedocian immigration to Provence led to an intensification of Jewish philosophic culture there, where it flourished to an extent greater than before until the turn of the fourteenth century. Abba Mari's failure to change the course of

Languedocian Jewish philosophic culture is especially noteworthy in this context. Indeed, there is no evidence that might lead us to believe that the controversy over philosophic study divided or suppressed Jewish philosophic culture in Provence in any way. Of course, we can never know what might have unfolded in Montpellier and Narbonne had Jewish culture continued to be well-rooted there. From our great distance of seven centuries, however, a disruption of intellectual life is not perceptible; either from the direct testimonies of contemporary scholars or their extraordinary ongoing output.

A momentary consideration of the work of Jewish scholars active in Provence in the first half of the fourteenth century leads immediately to the conclusion that they produced some of the most philosophically and scientifically advanced translations and commentaries, as well as most spiritually radical interpretations of traditional texts in the history of Jewish thought.[20] At this time in Provence, Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles,[21] translated into Hebrew two of Averroes' most important commentaries: the *Commentary to Aristotle's Nichomachian Ethics*[22] *and the Commentary to Plato's Republic*.[23] Kalonymus ben Kalonymus of Arles (d. 1328) produced voluminous Hebrew translations of major Muslim philosophers, including al-Farabi, al-Kindi, and Averroes from the Arabic[24]—some while serving as a scholar to the Court of Robert of Anjou at Naples.[25] During this period, Todros ben Meshullam Todrosi of Arles also made significant contributions in bringing the thought of the great Islamic philosophers into Hebrew in Provence.[26] As they began to write commentaries upon important Greco-Arabic philosophic works in the first decades of the fourteenth century, Provençal Jewish scholars pushed the boundaries of their philosophic inquiry even further than translation.[27] Yedayah ha-Penini, as one will recall, wrote a treatise-length open letter, entitled *Ktav ha-Hitnatzlut*, to Rashba, in which he proudly explained and defended the Languedocian Jewish philosophic orientation against the perceived attack leveled against it by virtue of the Catalonian ban in 1305 on philosophic study. Following the 1306 expulsion from Languedoc, Yedayah, whose family had its roots in Béziers, also relocated to Provence. There Yedayah contributed to the ongoing Jewish project of deepening scientific and philosophic inquiry. In the ensuing decades, Yedayah engaged in a highly technical astronomical argument with another Jewish scholar regarding the meaning of Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's *De Caelo*.[28] Out of this Provençal Jewish context of Greco-Arabic learning in Hebrew translation, one of the greatest mathematicians,[29] astronomers,[30] philosophers[31] and bible commentators[32] of the medieval period emerged: Levi ben Gershom of Orange, Comtat Venaissin (d. 1344), known both as Gersonides and Ralbag.[33] If one adds to these achievements in the study mathematics, astronomy, physics and metaphysics, the work of David ben Samuel Kokhavi of Étoile (d. 1330)[34] in the interpretation of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and the philosophic spiritualization of the commandments;[35] the work of Joseph ibn Kaspi of Argentière (d. 1340)[36] in the philosophic interpretation of the Bible[37] and the interpretation of

Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*;[38] and the work of Nissim ben Moses of Marseilles in a philosophically inspired allegorical and political interpretation of the Torah,[39a] one realizes that Provence in the first half of the fourteenth century constitutes the apex of medieval Jewish philosophic culture in Hebrew.

After 1350, however, one encounters a precipitous decline in Jewish philosophic and rabbinic writing in Provence. One can only speculate as to its cause. Of course, persecutions and depredations of Jews had been mounting in Europe from the thirteenth century onwards, but initially, at least, these did not take their toll. One encounters a precipitous decline, however, in Jewish philosophic and rabbinic writing in Provence in the second half of the fourteenth century. One can only speculate as to the cause of this relatively sudden turn. Of course, persecutions and depredations of Jews had been mounting in Europe from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, and the Black Death exacted its heavy toll on all, including Jews,[39b] from 1347 to-1349, but these difficulties, however severe, did not derail Jewish cultural creativity elsewhere in Western Europe.[39c] Certainly, we find no interference into Jewish life in Provence after 1350 that could explain this decline. Significant and, indeed, impressive philosophic work continues among Jews in Spain and Italy in the fifteenth century and beyond.[40] In regard to the decline of Provençal Jewish scientific and philosophic study, perhaps their essentially private nature, with only occasional royal patronage, imposed fundamental limitations to inquiry that only the institutional framework of the emergent university, from which Jews were excluded, could overcome.[41] To be sure, some significant aspects of Jewish philosophic culture are still to be found in Provence in the late fourteenth and even the early fifteenth centuries,[42] including the astrologically oriented study of the biblical commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra and the Neo-Platonically oriented study of the Kuzari of Judah ha-Levi.[43] Nevertheless, Provence by the fifteenth century is no longer a place where Jews continue to examine scientific and philosophic issues at a high level and incorporate their insights into innovative and challenging understandings of the ancient sources of Judaism.[44] As Jewish circumstances wax and wane in a variety of locations, the Jewish engagement with the philosophic tradition continues, as near to Languedoc and Provence as Spain and Italy, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and as far away as Poland and Prussia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[45] Remarkable, nonetheless, is the moment in the cultural history of the West, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when European Jews in Languedoc, Provence and Roussillon—at about the same time as European Christians, in Paris, Oxford, and Bologna—undertake the appropriation of the Greco-Arabic tradition of science and philosophy and thereby remake their worlds. Had the Languedocian and Provençal Jewish engagement with the philosophic tradition continued its robust development for a substantially longer period of time than it, in fact, did—along the lines of the Christian engagement with science and philosophy—the history of Judaism most likely

would have taken a rather different course. What, more precisely, that other course might have been, one cannot say.[46]

Notes

1 See William Chester Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last of the Capetians* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 214-38.
2 Jordan, pp. 211–12. The estimate of annual royal income, roughly 450,000 *livres* is based on Borrelli de Serre's estimate as revised by Joseph Strayer, "The Costs and Profits of War: The Anglo-French Conflict of 1294–1303," *The Medieval City*, Harry A. Miskimin, David Herlihy, and A.L. Udovitch, eds. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 273. For a fuller discussion of the complex calculations behind such estimates, see Joseph Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 146–151.
3 See *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 835.
4 See Gustave Saige, *Les Juifs du Languedoc antérieurement au XIV^e^ siècle* (Paris: A. Picard, 1881), pp. 308–19. On the development of competing French and Aragonese authorities in Montpellier, see Jordan, *The French Monarchy*, pp. 195–7.
5 See Meiri, *Qiryat Sefer*, Moshe Hershler, ed. (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1956), introduction; and see Yom Tov Assis, "Juifs de France réfugiés en Aragon (XIII^e^–XIV^e^ Siècles)," *Revue des Études Juives* 142 (1983): 305.
6 See Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, *'Even Boḥan*, Abraham Meir Habermann, ed. (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1956), pp. 113–15.
7 See R.W. Emery, *The Jews in Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), and above, pp. 70–1.
8 See Alfred Morel-Fatio, "Notes et Documents sur les Juifs de Baléares," *Revue des Études Juives* 4 (1882): 36, doc. 14; and M. N. Zobel, "Qetzat Peratim le-Toldot ha-Rav ha-Meiri," *'Eder ha-Yaqar: Divre Sifrut u-Meḥqar Muqdashim le-S. A. Horodetski bi-Melot lo Shiv'im va-Ḥamesh Shanah*, Emanuel Ben-Gurion, ed. (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1947), pp. 94–5.
9 See *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 836–7. Abba Mari is related by marriage to Moses ben Samuel, a member of the most active family of moneylenders in Perpignan. Moses and his father petition the King of Majorca, without success, for permission for Abba Mari to live in Perpignan. Simeon ben Joseph was exiled to Aix-en-Provence. From Aix, Simeon writes to relatives in Perpignan, and asks them to seek the favor of the King to permit his residence in the capital of Majorca. See Simeon ben Joseph, "Deux Lettres de Siméon ben Joseph" [in Hebrew], David Kaufmann, ed. *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 228. Perhaps Simeon was also excluded on account of his activity in the controversy and close relationship to Abba Mari.
10 See *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 875. Historians commonly place Abba Mari in Perpignan during the final period of his life. However, the evidence does not permit this description.
11 *Minḥat Qena'ot*, pp. 877–9.
12 Abba Mari, *Minḥat Qena'ot*, p. 878.
13 For the suggestion that the gloomy and despondent thoughts of Yedayah Penini in his *Beḥinat 'Olam* (see, for example chapter 17, beginning) are in reaction to his experiences during the expulsion, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit bi-Sefarad ha-Notzrit uvi-Derom Tzarfat*, Ezra Fleischer, ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes/Ben-Zvi, 1997), p. 512–13.
14 Michael McVaugh and Lola Ferre, "The 'Tabula Antidotarii' of Armengaud

Blaise and Its Hebrew Translation," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 90 (2000): 168–69. A fragment of the Hebrew text with a preliminary translation is also available in Luis Garcia-Ballester, Lola Ferre, and Eduard Feliu, "Jewish Appreciation of 14th Century Scholastic Medicine," *Osiris* 6 (1990): 102–03.

15 Israel ben Joseph Halevi Caslari, known as Crescas Caslari, a Jewish physician in Avignon in 1327 translated Arnold of Villenova's *De Regimine Sanitatis* into Hebrew, dedicating it to James II of Aragon. See Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle" in *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893) 31: 647–50.

16 William C. Jordan, "Home Again: The Jews in the Kingdom of France," *The Stranger in Medieval Society* F.R.P. Akehurst and Stephanie Cain Van D'Elden, eds., Medieval Cultures, volume 12 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 27–45.

17 In 1492, Aragon and Castile expelled their Jews, as is well known. Some Jews fled to Roussillon, and Perpignan its chief city, from which they were expelled in 1493. In 1497, Portugal forcibly converted the Jews residing in its territory, many of whom had arrived there as a result of the expulsion of Jews from the Spanish realms. Other forced conversions and expulsions ensued in the first years of the sixteenth century, including the expulsion of Jews from the county of Provence, which was effected definitively in 1501.

18 On Narboni see, Gitit Holzman, "Torat ha-Nefesh veha-Sekhel be-Haguto shel Rabi Moshe Narboni: 'al pi Be'urav le-Khitve Ibn Rushd, Ibn Tufil, Ibn Bag'ah ve-Algazali," Ph.D. dissertation (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1996); and Maurice R. Hayoun, *La Philosophie et la Théologie de Moïse de Narbonne (1300–1362)* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989); and Hayoun, *Moshe Narboni* (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986).

19 On Efodi, see Maud Natasha Kozodoy, "A Study of the Life and Works of Profiat Duran," Ph.D. dissertation (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2006).

20 For a learned overview of the breadth and depth of this Jewish scientific project as well as theoretically rich speculation regarding its limitations, see Gad Freudenthal, "Science in Medieval Jewish Culture." *History of Science* 33 (1995): 23–58; and Freudenthal, "Les sciences dan les communautés juives médiévales de Provence: leur appropriation, leur role." *Revue des Études Juives* 152 (1993): 29–136. Clearly, such a vast project of appropriation of the Greco-Arabic legacy is not operating simply with a theological agenda along Maimonidean lines. Such a description is not sufficient to explain the Jewish scientific and philosophic work in post-expulsion Provence especially.

21 On Samuel ben Judah, see Lawrence V. Berman, "Greek into Hebrew: Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, Fourteenth-Century Philosopher and Translator," Alexander Altmann, editor, *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 289–320.

22 See Averroes, *Nicomachian Ethics: Middle Commentary*, Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, trans., Lawrence V. Berman, ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1999). On Averroes, see Noah R. Feldman, "Reading the *Nicomachian Ethics* with Ibn Rushd," D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford: Oxford University, 1994).

23 See Averroes, *Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic*, Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, trans., E. I. J. Rosenthal, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); and Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, Ralph Lerner, trans. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1974).

24 More than thirty translations survive, but only a few have been published. See Jakob Klatzkin and Ismar Elbogen, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: *Das Judentum in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 10 vols. (Berlin: Eschkol, 1928) 9: 841–3; and

Ernest Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle," in *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893) 31: 417–60. Kalonymus studied, perhaps in Arles, with Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier, for whom he has elaborate praise. See J. Shatzmiller, "'Megillat ha-Hitnatzlut ha-Qatan' le-Rabi Kalonymus ben Kalonymus," *Tzefunot* 10 (1966): 16–7, and 39–40. Kalonymus also critiqued exotericism and philosophic positions of his contemporary, Joseph ibn Kaspi, as crass and shallow. See Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, *Sendschreiben an Joseph Kaspi*, J. Perles, ed. (Munich: Peretz ben Barukh, 1879).

25 For Kalonymus' association with the court of Robert of Anjou at Naples and the Jewish community of Rome, see Moritz Steinschneider, "Robert von Anjou und sein Verhältnis zu einigen gelehrten Juden," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 48 (1903): 713–7. Kalonymus' parody of rabbinic argumentation, *Masekhet Purim* was first published as part of a satiric collection, *Ḥabaqbuq ha-Navi 'al ha-Shigyonot* (Pesaro: [s.n.], 1513). His critique of contemporary moral and religious failings in rhymed prose, '*Even Boḥan* (Naples: Joseph ben Jacob Ashkenazi, 1489), has also merited wide diffusion and readership. See Tova Rosen, "Circumcised Cinderella: The Fantasies of a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Author," *Prooftexts* 20 (2000): 87–110; and Rosen, *Unveiling Eve: Reading Gender in Medieval Hebrew Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 168–186, who reveals much with a close reading Kalonymus' poetic satire of himself as woman. For general orientation, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit bi-Sefarad ha-Notzrit uvi-Derom Tzarfat*, pp. 514–41.

26 See Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), pp. 62–3 and 294.

27 See Lawrence V. Berman, "Ketav Yad ha-Mekune 'Shoshan Limudim' ve-Yaḥso li-'Kehal ha-Me'ayanim' ha-Provansali," *Kiryat Sefer* 53 (1978): 368–72; and Ruth Glasner, "Levi ben Gershom and the Study of Ibn Rushd in the Fourteenth Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 86 (1995): 51–90.

28 Yedayah ha-Penini, *Vikuaḥ Madai Filosofi ba-Meah ha-14: Ha-Maamar be-Hafkhe ha-Mahalakh u-Ketav ha-Hitatzmut li-Yedayah ha-Penini*, Ruth Glasner, ed. (Jerusalem: World Union for Jewish Studies, 1998). Furthermore, Yedayah's metaphysics may reflect a serious engagement with the new contemporary Scholasticism of Scotus and Ockham. See Shlomo Pines, "Ha-Tzurot ha-Ishiyot be-Mishnato shel Yedayah Bedersi," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Ocassion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Saul Lieberman, ed., Hebrew volume (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), pp. 187–201; and Pines, "Scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and the Teachings of Ḥasdai Crescas and his Predecessors," *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings* 1, 10 (Jerusalem, 1967). But see Isadore Twersky, "Rabi Yedayah ha-Penini u-Ferusho la-'Aggadah", in R. Loewe and S. Stein, eds., *Alexander Altmann Jubilee Volume* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1979), p. 76, n. 11. Yedayah also wrote *Behinat 'Olam*, an essay on philosophic ethics in rhymed verse—this remarkably popular work has had over eighty editions, including translations into Latin, French, German, English and Yiddish—and '*Ohav Nashim*, a rhymed story in praise of women. On these works and Yedayah in general, see Jefim Schirmann, *Toldot ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit bi-Sefarad ha-Notzrit uvi-Derom Tzarfat*, pp. 499–513.

29 See, for example, Joseph Carlebach, *Lewi ben Gerson als Mathematiker* (Berlin: Pinkowitz, 1910); and Charles H. Manekin, *The Logic of Gersonides: An Analysis of Selected Doctrines* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1992).

30 See, for example, Bernard R. Goldstein, *The Astronomical Tables of Rabbi Levi Ben Gerson* (Hamden, CT: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences,

1974); Goldstein, "The Status of Models in Ancient and Medieval Astronomy," *Centaurus* 24 (1980): 132–47; Goldstein, *The Astronomy of Levi Ben Gerson 1288–1344: A Critical Edition of Chapters 1–20* (New York: Springer Verlag, 1985); and Bernard R. Goldstein and David Pingree, *Levi Ben Gerson's Prognostication for the Conjunction of 1345* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1990).

31 See, for example, Charles Touati, *La Pensèe Philosophique et Théologique de Gersonide* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1973). Gersonides' central philosophic work is *Milḥamot 'Adonai*. See Levi ben Gershom, *The Wars of the Lord*, Seymour Feldman, trans., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1984–1999).

32 See, for example, Robert Eisen, *Gersonides on Providence, Covenant, and the Jewish People* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995); and Gersonides, *Commentary on Song of Songs*, Menachem Kellner, trans. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

33 For this assessment, see Gilbert Dahan, ed., *Gersonide en Son Temps* (Louvain, Belgium: E. Peeters, 1991); and Gad Freudenthal, ed., *Studies on Gersonides: A Fourteenth-Century Jewish Philosopher-Scientist* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1992).

34 In his Introduction (p. 74), Kokhavi reports that he is writing in Comtat Venaissin. His family roots, however, like those of Gersonides, were across the Rhône, in Bagnols-sur-Cèze, Languedoc. The place name "Estelle, Les Estelles, Étoile, L'Étoile" is found throughout France. See Ernest Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle" in *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893) 31: 471.

35 See David ben Samuel Kokhavi, *Sefer ha-Battim*, Moshe Hershler, ed., 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Shalem—Tzefunot Qadmonim, 1983); and the previous edition, David ben Samuel Kokhavi, *Sefer ha-Battim*, M.J. Blau, ed., 2 vols. (Jerusalem: [s.n.], 1978-1979). *Sefer ha-Battim*'s first section, entitled *Migdal David*, is devoted to a thoroughgoing philosophic interpretation of many commandments, along Maimonidean lines. See Moshe Halbertal, *Ben Torah le-Ḥokhmah*: *Rabi Menaḥem ha-Meiri u-Ba'ale he-Halakhah ha-Maimonim be-Provans* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), pp. 181–216. On Kokhavi, see also S. Z. Havlin, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2nd edn, Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik eds., 22 vols (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), s.v. Kokhavi (Estella), David ben Samuel; and Adolf Neubauer, "Documents Inédits: XIV. David Kokhabi," *Revue des Études Juives* 9 (1884): 214-30.

36 On Kaspi and his work, see Barry Mesch, *Studies in Joseph ibn Caspi*: *Fourteenth-Century Philosopher and Exegete* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1975); Isaiah Dimant, "Exegesis, Philosophy and Language in the Writing of Joseph Ibn Caspi," Ph.D. dissertation (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, 1979); and Ḥannah Kasher, "Yosef ibn Kaspi ke-Farshan Filosofi," Ph.D. Dissertation (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1982); Ernest Renan, "Les Écrivains juifs français du quatorzième siècle," in *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, B. Hauréau, ed. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893) 31: 131–201 remains important. Kaspi's ethical will to his son, '*Iggeret Mussar*, reveals an aggressive proponent of the philosophic interpretation of Judaism and of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* as the canonical replacement for the Babylonian Talmud. See Kaspi, '*Iggeret ha-Mussar*, Israel Abrahams, ed. and trans., *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1926) 1: 127–61. On Kaspi's opposition to Talmud study, see I. Twersky, "Joseph ibn Kaspi, Portrait of a Medieval Jewish Intellectual," in his *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 231–57. For Kaspi's adumbration of a prescient passage at the end of the third chapter of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, see Shlomo Pines, "Histaberut ha-Tequmah me-Ḥadash shel Medinah Yehudit lefi Ibn Kaspi u-lefi Spinoza," *Iyyun* 14 (1963): 289–317.

37 Regarding the biblical exegesis of Ibn Kaspi, see Wilhelm Bacher, "Joseph Ibn Kaspi als Bibelerklärer", *Festschrift zu Herman Cohens siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1912), pp. 119–35; H. Stroudze, "Les deux commentaires d'ibn Kaspi sur les Proverbs," *Revue des Études Juives* 52 (1962): 71–6; Ḥannah Kasher, "Perush 'Aristoteli u-Fersush Fundamentalisti le-'Iyov 'etzel Ibn Kaspi," *Daat* 20 (1988): 117–26; Shalom Rosenberg, "Logic, Language and Exegesis of the Bible in the Works of Joseph Ibn Kaspi," *Dat ve-Safah: Ma'amarim be-Filosofyah Kelalit vi-Yehudit*, Moshe Halamish and Asa Kasher eds. (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1981), pp. 104–13; Ḥannah Kasher, "Linguistic Solutions to Theological Problems in the Works of Joseph ibn Kaspi," *Dat ve-Safah*, pp. 91–6; R. Goetschel, "Le Sacrifice d'Isaak dans le 'Gebia Kesef' de Joseph Ibn Kaspi," *Pardes* 22 (1996): 69–82; Robert Eisen, "Joseph Ibn Kaspi on the Secret Meaning of the Scroll of Esther," *Revue des Études Juives* 160 (2001): 379–408; Ḥannah Kasher, "On the Book of Esther as an Allegory in the Works of Joseph Ibn Kaspi: A Response to R. Eisen," *Revue des Études Juives* 161 (2002): 459–64.

38 Joseph Kaspi, '*Amude Kesef u-Maskiyyot Kesef* (Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany: Salomo Werbluner, 1848); and see Barry Mesch, "Principles of Judaism in Maimonides and Joseph Ibn Kaspi," in *Mystics*, *Philosophers*, *and Politicians: Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, Jehuda Reinharz, Daniel Swetschinski, and Kalman P. Bland, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), pp. 85–98.

39a Nissim ben Moses of Marseilles, *Ma'aseh Nisim: Perush la-Torah*, Howard T Kreisel, ed. (Jerusalem: Ḥevrat Meqitze Nirdamim, 2000); and see Colette Sirat, "Ra'yonot Politiyim shel Nisim ben Mosheh mi-Marse," *Meḥqere Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 9 (1990): 53–76; Kreisel, "Some observations on Ma'aseh Nissim by R. Nissim of Marseilles," in *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism Dedicated to the Memory of Alexander Altmann*, Alfred L. Ivry, Elliot R. Wolfson and Allan Arkush, eds. (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Harwood Academic, 1998). pp. 201–22; Kreisel, "Ha-Parshanut ha-Filosofit ha-Alegorit le-Torah bi-Yeme ha-Benayim: *Sefer Ma'ase Nissim* le-Rabi Nissim mi-Marse," in *Me'ah She'arim: 'Iyyunim be-'Olamam ha-Ruḥani shel Yisra'el bi-Yeme ha-Benayim*: *le-Zekher Yitzḥaq Twersky*, Ezra Fleisher, Jacob Blidstein, Carmi Horowitz, and Bernard Septimus, eds. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), pp. 297–216[AQ4]; Kreisel, "The Writing and Rewriting of *Ma'ase Nissim* of R. Nissim of Marseilles," in *Ecriture et réécriture des textes philosophiques médiévaux*, J. Hamesse and O. Weijers, eds. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), pp. 311–28.

39b Anna Foa, *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

39c The Black Death did significant harm in Provence and to Provençal Jewry in particular. The Jews of Provence suffered on account of disease as well as on account of brief outbursts of horrific anti-Jewish violence in several locals. A precise estimate of the long-term damage to the community is difficult to determine. The surviving documentation relating to the Jewish experience of the Black Death in Provence has been collected and judiciously interpreted in Joseph Shatzmiller, "Les Juifs de Provence pendant la Peste Noire," *Revue des Études Juives* 133 (1974): 457–80.

40 See Collette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 345–412.

41 On the alleged formation of a persecuting society in thirteenth-century Europe as described by R.I. Moore, see, most recently, Jonathan M. Elukin, *Living Together*, *Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

42 A massive philosophically oriented Talmudic work by Joseph ben Saul, *Mezoqaq*

Shiv'atayyim, written in 1380 and now in the private Klagsbald Collection, Jerusalem remains unstudied.

43 A late-fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Provençal group, gathered around Solomon Prat Maimon, devoted itself to the interpretation of Ha-Levi's *Kuzari* and ibn Ezra's Bible commentaries with substantial philosophic creativity and sophistication. See Dov Schwartz, "Eretz, Maqom, ve-Kokhav: Ma'amada shel Eretz Yisrael bi-Tfisat ha-Ḥug ha-Neoplatoni ba-Me'ah ha-14," *Eretz Yisrael ba-Ḥagut ha-Yehudit bi-Yeme ha-Benayim*, Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, eds. (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991), pp. 138–50; Schwartz, "Le-Ḥeqer ha-Ḥugim ha-Filosofiyim bi-Sefarad uvi-Provans lefne ha-Gerush," *Pe'amim* 49 (1992): 5–23; Schwartz, "Ketavav shel-Rabi Shlomo ben Menaḥem (Prat Maimon): Pereq be-Toldot ha-Sakhletanut be-Provans be-Me'ah ha-14," *Asufot* 9 (1995): 291–331; Schwartz, "Ha-Teḥiyyah shel-Sefer ha-Kuzari ba-Filosofia ha-Yehudit (Haguto shel Hug Parshane ha-Kuzari ba-Provans be-Reshit ha-Meah ha-15)," in Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris, editors, *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, volume 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Jewish Studies, 2000), Hebrew Section, pp. 1–40; Schwartz, "Toward Research into Philosophical Circles in Pre-expulsion Spain and Provence." *Trumah* 12 (2002): 113–32; Solomon ben Judah of Lunel, *Perush Qadmon la-Sefer ha-Kuzari 'Ḥesheq Shelomo' le-Rabi Shelomoh Ben Yehudah mi-Lunel*, Dov Schwartz, ed. (Ramat Gan, Israel: Universiṭat Bar-Ilan, 2007).

44 For the final period of Jewish life in medieval Provence, see Danièle Iancu, *Les Juifs en Provence: 1475–1501, de l'insertion à l'expulsion* (Marseille, France: Institut historique de Provence, 1981); D. Iancu, *Etre Juif en Provence: au temps du roi René* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998); Danièle Iancu-Agou, ed., *L'expulsion des Juifs de Provence et de l'Europe méditerranéenne (XVe-XVIe siècles: exils et conversions* (Paris: Peeters, 2005). The expulsion of Jews from Provence was carried out in September, 1501. In Comtat Venaissin, Jews were never expelled.

45 See, for example, Joseph M. Davis, *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004); and Edward Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*: *Jews*, *Germans*, *and the Eighteenth-Century Study of Scripture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Jewish Studies, 1996).

46 On this question, see, most recently, Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).

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