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[ENGLISH SECTION]

Maimonides on the Fall of Man

LAWRENCE V. BERMAN 1

The forms of interpreting sacred texts are many, and, of course, the concept of sacred text is fluid and part of a process depending on the attitudes of society which change over time. For Maimonides, an important method of interpretation was the philosophical mode. In order to get a better understanding of what Maimonides understood by that method of interpretation, Chapter Two of the First Part of his *Guide of the Perplexed* on the fall of man is examined in terms of structure and content. Then, the principle underlying the possibility of the philosophic mode of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible according to Maimonides is discussed. Finally, the general place of the philosophic mode of interpretation within the general theory of the interpretation of literature is touched on briefly.

Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in Early Kabbalah

JOSEPH DAN 17

The description of the divine world as a mythical struggle between good and evil is one of the basic symbols of the kabbalah, and a detailed mythology based on it is found in the Zohar late in the thirteenth century. The main source of the Zohar on this subject is a treatise by Rabbi Isaac ha-Kohen, called "On the Emanation on the Left," written in Spain at the beginning of the second half of the thirteenth century, a generation before the Zohar. The problem studied here is: What were the sources of Rabbi Isaac's myth of evil?

Rabbi Isaac described Samael and Lilith as a pair, being the central powers in the Emanation on the Left. It seems that the literary development which brought forth this formula began with the myth of Lilith as presented in the satirical Pseudo-Ben Sira (tenth century?) and later revisions of that work which were known in Europe in the eleventh century and included a description of a sexual relationship between Lilith and a "Great Demon," who was later identified as Samael. Both Lilith and Samael in these stories are not principles of evil; this transformation probably occurred only in the work of Rabbi Isaac.

When describing the levels of the spiritual world, Rabbi Isaac discussed a sphere he called "third air" which is the source of both prophetic visions and "use" of demons. This concept seems to be derived from the writings of Rabbi Judah the

Pious and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, the Ashkenazi Hasidim, early in the thirteenth century. In their works, however, there are no dualistic or mythical elements; these were probably added by Rabbi Isaac.

Rabbi Isaac formulated the myth of the evil worlds which were destroyed before this world was created, a myth which became a central motif in the kabbalah. It seems that this too is derived from the works of the Ashkenazi Hasidim, though it was Rabbi Isaac who added the mythology and the dualism. It should be noted that among such additions and elaborations by Rabbi Isaac we also find a detailed messianic myth which was rare if not absent among previous kabbalists.

The First Pair (Yose ben Yoezer and Yose Ben Yohanan) or the Home of a Pharisee

JUDAH GOLDIN 41

In *Pirquei 'Avot* sayings attributed to the First Pair (*zug*) of Pharisaic Sages, Yose ben Yoezer and Yose ben Yohanan, three things are to be noted:

First, that like the sayings attributed to teachers before and during the period of the five *zugot* and afterward to the five famous disciples of Yohanan ben Zakkai, the sayings of the two Yoses are presented in stylized form, in three clauses or phrases or items—which suggests that they are components of essentially one chief emphasis, rather than three separate, independent exhortations. Second, that beginning with the First Pair down through Yohanan ben Zakkai's disciples, all (with one puzzling exception) formulate their statements as address in terms of second person singular—suggestive of a master's address to his disciples or to those who are his followers. Third, that to both members of the First Pair there is attributed a concern with the home, the kind of home their disciples or followers should create; but the home advocated by the former Yose differs from the home advocated by the latter Yose. Thus different expectations are reflected by the respective authors of the two sayings. The insistence that the home of those accepting rabbinic authority must combine the features of home *both* Yoses plead for, comes to us from the tannaite period, from the days of Simeon ben Yohai, though it may be a bit earlier too.

The analysis presented in the paper here is intended as continuation of the studies of PA teachings in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 27, *Studies and Texts III*, ed. A. Altmann, and the *Harry A. Wolfson Jubilee* [Hebrew] *Volume*.

The Description of Formative Judaism: The Social Perspective of the Mishnah's System of Civil Law and Government

JACOB NEUSNER 63

Mishnah's division of Damages presents a complete and systematic account of a theory of Israelite civil law and government. While drawing on diverse materials of earlier ages, beginning, of course, with the diverse Mosaic codes themselves, Mishnah's system came to closure after the Bar Kokhba War. Like its account of the Temple and its cult, Mishnah here speaks of nonexistent institutions and prohibited activities. There being no Israelite government, Mishnah's legislation for a high

priest and Temple, a king and an army, speaks of a world which may have been in times past (this is dubious) but did not exist at the time of the Mishnaic discourse on the subject. The division of damages is composed of two subsystems which fit together logically, one on the conduct of civil society—commerce, trade, real estate, the other on the institutions of civil society—courts, administration. The main point of the former subsystem is that the task of society is to maintain perfect stasis, to preserve the status quo, and to secure the stability of all transactions. In the interchange of buying and selling, giving and taking, torts and damages, there must be an essential equality of exchange. No one should come out with more than he had at the outset. There should be no sizable shift in fortune or circumstance. The stable and unchanging economy of society must be preserved. The aim of the law is to restore the antecedent status of a person who has been injured. When we ask whose perspective is represented in a system of such a character and such emphases, we turn to examine the recurrent subject-matter of the division's cases. The subject of all predicates, in fact, is the householder, the small landholder. The definition of the problems for Mishnah's attention accords with the matters of concrete concern to the proprietary class: responsible, undercapitalized, overextended, committed to a barter economy (in a world of specie and currency), above all, aching for a stable and reliable world in which to do its work.

A Reevaluation of a Medieval Polemical Manuscript

JOEL E. REMBAUM 81

Fragment A2 of MS Or. 53 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome, though only five folios in length, provides the student of medieval Jewish history with fresh insights into the development of Jewish anti-Christian polemics. The manuscript appears to have been written in response to heightened anti-Jewish propaganda that emerged in Northern France as a result of the visit to that area by Paul Christian in 1269. The work is a compilation of arguments against Christianity drawn from the polemical traditions of Northern France, Germany and Provence. It also contains excerpts from the so-called *Vikkuaḥ ha-RaMBaN*, the Hebrew account of the debate on the Talmud held in Barcelona in 1263. Analysis of the material indicates that the manuscript does not contain the record of a face-to-face disputation between Paul Christian and a Jew named Menahem, as has been suggested. Arguments assumed to be related to such a meeting can be traced back to extant literary sources that predate the 1260s. Of particular interest are the passages from fragment A2 that were adapted from the *Sefer ha-berit* of Joseph Kimḥi, written about 1170, and the so-called *Vikkuaḥ ha-RaDaQ*, written in the early thirteenth century. MS 53 A2, written in the last third of the thirteenth century, represents the earliest extant evidence for use of the Kimḥi and the pseudo-Kimḥi material in later polemical literature. The appearance of the Provençal Kimḥi arguments in this Northern French manuscript also points to the movement of traditions from the south into the north and sheds new light on the geographic patterns of cultural development in thirteenth century France. Fragment A2 also contains almost verbatim parallels to anti-Christian criticism found in *Nizzachon vetus*, including traces of German linguistic influence.

The Freethinker, the Jews, and the Missionaries:
George Houston and the Mystery of *Israel Vindicated*

JONATHAN D. SARNA 101

In 1820, a volume entitled *Israel Vindicated*, written by "An Israelite," was published in New York City. It was the first Jewish polemic composed in response to the founding of a missionary society, the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, and it remained influential throughout the nineteenth century. The author of this work, however, has never been identified. Nor has the volume itself received the attention it deserves. This article attempts to fill both of these lacunae.

Section one describes and analyzes *Israel Vindicated*. It places the work within the context of its times, and compares it to other, more traditional anti-Christian polemics. Section two outlines the postpublication history of *Israel Vindicated*. Soon after it appeared, some New Yorkers attempted to have the work banned, and its author exposed and punished. Later, the work was variously invoked by Jews and Judeophobes alike, though, of course, for different purposes. In section three, the author of *Israel Vindicated* assumes center stage. A review of old and new evidence leads to the conclusion that the work flowed from the pen of freethinker George Houston, assisted probably by his Jewish printer, Abraham Collins. Finally, section four analyzes the motivations of George Houston and his Jewish supporters. As is shown, this was far from the first time that Jews joined forces temporarily with other, sometimes hostile minority groups in pursuit of self-interest. Adversity makes strange bedfellows.

[HEBREW SECTION]

On the History of the Interdiction against the Study of
Kabbalah before the Age of Forty

[לתולדות האיסור ללמוד קבלה לפני גיל ארבעים]

MOSHE IDEL X

The paper reviews briefly the relevant views on the age of forty as found in the Talmud and in the Arab tradition, views which are the background of the later development in the Middle Ages. Afterwards the philosophical discussions on the age of forty found in the writings of Moses ibn Ezra, Jehuda ibn Abbas, Shem Tov Falaquera, Levi ben Abraham, Nissim of Marseilles, Prat Maimon and Isaac Aboab are analyzed. The views of authors like Falaquera and ibn Abbas might have influenced the first kabbalistic restrictions against divulging secrets to students who had not yet reached the age of forty. Such restrictions occur in a work of R. Moses ben Simeon of Burgos and in the school of Abraham Abulafia. Special emphasis on the interdiction against revealing certain kabbalistic secrets can be found in the works of R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon who related it to his teacher R. Solomon ibn Adret. A number of kabbalists of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries knew about this interdiction and it was influential also among pupils of R. Isaac Luria. Two last important occurrences of the subject discussed above appear in a document

dictated by a court of the rabbis of Frankfurt to R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto and signed by him, during the polemics against the Frankists.

The appendix deals with some kabbalistic commentaries on the talmudic dictum "Restrain your children from *higgayon*" (Berakhot 28b).

A Fragment of a Secular Poem of Judah Hallevi

[שריף משיר חול לרבי יהודה הלוי]

DAN PAGIS כא

Among Yehudah Hallevi's poems which have come to light since H. Brody's edition of the *Diwan* (1894–1930), the great majority are liturgical and only very few are secular poems. Here a new fragment of an unknown secular poem by Hallevi is published according to two Genizah manuscripts, T-S NS 96.18 and MC IV 136^a. The T-S manuscript, our main source, is a single torn sheet, which contains the first three lines (written as six hemistichs) and traces of the fourth. It explicitly attributes the poem to Yehudah Hallevi. The *verso* contains the end of a known *piyyuṭ* by Abraham Ibn Ezra and two anonymous poems (one of them homonymic) whose unusual meter and awkward phrasing seem to point to a later period.

Hallevi's poem, "Shalom lekha shemesh be-'et hillo" (Peace upon you, radiant sun) is a panegyric addressed to a patron or friend. It starts *in medias res* with high-flown eulogies, dispensing with the introduction often found in other poems of this genre. With regard to style and meter the fragment is adroitly written; however, its imagery and attitude are largely conventional. The patron or friend is extolled as a sun, a star, a mast and a cedar tree—all of which are conventional materials in panegyrics. Moreover the images are linked only by their common subject and not at all on the metaphorical level, and the formulation is impersonal. These traits were very common to contemporary panegyrics, one of the more conventional genres of the school, but Yehudah Hallevi usually took care to interweave the images in various subtle ways. Of course, he may also have done this here, in the lines that did not survive—probably the greater part of the poem. The text is printed with a commentary that includes parallels from Hallevi's and Moses Ibn Ezra's poetry illustrating the more conventional imagery.

Simeon Bar Megas: A Jewish Poet in Byzantine Palestine

[שמעון ברבי מגס — הפייטן ויצירתו]

JOSEPH YAHALOM כה

No hint of the existence of this poet was evident until Menahem Zulay discovered his poetry some forty years ago among remnants of the Cairo Geniza MSS. Because his work consists of weekly liturgical compositions written in accordance with the triennial cycle followed in Palestine in ancient times and because Byzantium is the ruling government mentioned in his poetry, Zulay considered him to be Yannai's "mate." As shown in this study Simeon must indeed have known Yannai's work and even followed his example. However, Simeon himself introduced some structural developments in the form of the *'Amidah* composition known as *Qedushta*. Most interesting is the fifth poem in his *Qedushta* to Gen. 44:18 on the theme of Joseph and his

brothers. In his dramatic exposition he even outdoes that of Yannai, his master, intended for the same week. A full critical edition of Simeon's poetry based on about fifty Geniza MSS which is now in print (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities) will be of importance for a better understanding of ancient Palestinian poetry and spiritual life. His poems are of great significance also in that they contain the oldest known parallels to ancient Palestinian midrash literature.