

T H E   I G G E R E T   T E M A N

A TRANSLATION WITH NOTES

AND A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### Existing Texts

The letter, known as the Iggeret Teman, was written by Moses ben Maimon to Jacob ben Nathanael ben al-Fayyumi.<sup>1</sup> Maimonides wrote the preface to that letter in Hebrew and the main body of it in Arabic.<sup>1a</sup> A Fifteenth Century Arabic manuscript, presumably a copy of the original, recently turned up in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Professor Israel Friedlander had hoped<sup>1b</sup> to publish it.<sup>2</sup>

Three Hebrew versions of the Iggeret Teman are extant:

A. Samuel ibn Tibbon's is the first: David Holub published it. The title page of that edition reads: "kritisch beleuchtet mit Anmerkungen nebst Einleitung, Wien, 1875, Separat Abdruck aus dem Haschachar V, 1874, P. 66.<sup>3</sup> In his preface, he suggests that it was translated around 1210, six years after Maimonides' death; he gives no proof, however, for this surmise. The Hebrew of the text discussed is characteristic Tibbonese; it is quite difficult to read it intelligently.

B. Abraham ibn Chisdai's, we may assume is second,  
 in point of time. In a letter written to a friend  
 he said that he translated it as a temporary help  
 until he could secure Ibn Tibbon's translation.  
 The fragments of ibn Chisdai's text which I read  
 have been written in a more intelligible Hebrew  
 than the corresponding Tibbon sections. However,  
 I am unable to judge the relative merits of the  
 two versions, as a whole.

C. Nahum of Maghreb's version which, I believe  
 to be the latest is printed in Lichtenberg's Kobez  
 published in Leipzig in 1859. He may be identical  
 with Nahum who was a liturgical poet. Steinschneider  
 gives his date as 1240 but offers no evidence. His  
 version has been known since 1629 as <sup>9</sup>ד'ק'ר' א'ר'ב'. The  
 passage concerning Jesus was omitted in the later ed-  
 itions of his text. Nahum's version is much clearer  
 and much more intelligible than that of Tibbon.

The use of the word <sup>10</sup>ג'ר'א in Kobez <sup>11</sup>Ed might  
 argue for the European origin of this Nahum, although,  
 conceivably, the many publishers might have changed the  
 reading from Latin to <sup>12</sup>ג'ר'א.



## II

Occasion of Writing

In 1171, the Sunnite Saladin who had been <sup>✓</sup>Wezir in Cairo since 1169, quietly deposed the last Fatimid Caliph, Al-Adid. (1160-71) Thus did the reign of this Shiite dynasty come to an end after enduring for two centuries.<sup>11</sup> When the news that a Shiite monarch was unseated by a Sunnite reached Yemen there was considerable turmoil in that most rigorous of Shiite lands. Soon the turmoil broke out in open rebellion. The aroused religious fervor of the populace expressed itself in the demand that all unbelievers whether found on the coast of Aden or in the mountains of the North profess Islam. The Jews, as usual, were the immediate victims of this fanaticism. Matters were made worse for them by the renewal of the old cry that they had falsified their Bible with the purpose of eliding allusions to the coming of Mohammed. Such passages as Genesis 17:2, Deuteronomy 18:15, and Deuteronomy 33:2<sup>12</sup> were cited as instances. It seems likely that these accusations had been renewed in consequence of the spread of the apostate Samu'el ibn Abbas' Ifham al-Jahud, [Silencing of the Jews], which utilized, among

others, the verses mentioned. The work must have become popular in and out of the medresas, and even street urchins shouted its slogans. <sup>14</sup> As if the misery of these Jews were not enough they were afflicted with a pseudo-Messiah who proclaimed the coming of the End of Marvels. Perhaps the immediate inspiration of this Messiah was the appearance of a Mahdi in Yemen--

M. Simmons makes the generalization that a Mahdi is ~~always~~ <sup>generally</sup> followed by a Messiah. Then, too, David el-Roy who had stirred up Bagdad with his Messianic dreams might have served as the model of this Yemenite enthusiast. But the most important factor in inflaming the imagination of this Yemenite dreamer was, no doubt the news of the gigantic struggle between Christianity and Islam--he interpreted those wars <sup>16</sup> as the Wars of Gog and Magog, and regarded the wave of persecution as the Pangs of the Messiah. Now since the forces that affected him, affected his fellow Jews as well, a Messianic movement that included even the learned was, <sup>17</sup> within a short time, on foot.

Nonetheless Jacob ben Nathanael ben al-Fayyumi, though conceding that a Messiah may be in their midst, still had his doubts. And upon hearing from Solomon Ha-Kohen of Maimonides' great wisdom and learning he sent a letter of inquiry to the latter. Communication <sup>18</sup> between Yemen and Egypt seems to have been frequent.

In his Essay on Resurrection and in his Epistle to the

Learned of Marseilles, Maimonides alludes to dispatches from Yemen. Hence Rabbi Jacob's inquiry need not be regarded as an extraordinary measure.

## II

Year of Writing

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In the *Israelitische Annalen*, Carmoly gives 1189 as the date of Maimonides' reply to Rabbi Jacob. But he gives no ground for his surmise.

20

Geiger set the date of the *Iggeret Teman* as 1172. He went about proving it in this manner: In his Letter to the Learned of Marseilles, Maimonides refers to the Messianic incident of Yemen as having taken place twenty-  
21  
two years ago. Now the Letter to Marseilles was, according to the definite date of the Vienna Manuscript written on the Eleventh of Tishri, 1506 Seleucidan Era, namely, October, 1194. Even without this dating it would be fairly certain that the letter in question was written not much later than the above date. For in that letter he says that his *Mishne Torah* had not yet reached them, but that he hopes it will soon be in their hands as it is already  
22  
found in Sicily. At the same time the queries from the scholars of Lunel headed by Jonathan Ha-Kohen concerning the *Mishne Torah*, after a perusal thereof, must have been written shortly after 1194; and the Letter to Marseilles which speaks of the *Mishne Torah* as being in Sicily necessarily preceded it. That the queries from

Lunel were written shortly after 1194 is evident from Maimonides' answer to Samuel ibn Tibbon concerning the difficult passages in the Moreh written the Eighth of Tishri, 1511, S. E., namely, October, 1199. This answer must have been written after the correspondence with the learned of Tibbon's city--Lunel, for these, at the time they sent their queries had asked for a copy of the Moreh, and it was for them that Tibbon had translated that work. Since the Talmudical correspondence must  
<sup>23</sup>  
 needs have preceded the philosophical, Maimonides' answer to Jonathan at Lunel could not have been written after 1198. But in that letter he excuses himself for having delayed the reply for several years. Hence the queries from Lunel must have reached him before 1195. It follows from the above, then, that his Letter to Marseill~~es~~ was written in 1194. Other circumstances in Maimonides' life tally with this date. Thus, in his answer to the Talmudic queries he gives as the reason for his delay a drawn-out sickness. <sup>To</sup> ~~xxxx~~ this sick-  
<sup>24</sup>  
 ness both Samuel ibn Tibbon and he himself in his letter  
<sup>25</sup>  
 to Jepheth allude.

The Letter to Yemen, therefore, which was written about twenty-two years before the one to Marseilles

must have been dispatched in 1172. From that letter it also appears that the completion of the Mishne Torah had not yet taken place, for in it he refers to the Siraj but not once does he allude to the Mishne Torah as a forthcoming work. This, notwithstanding the many opportunities for such allusions. Thus, his <sup>general</sup> remarks on prophecy, his theory of Moses' reliability not on the ground of the miracles he performed but rather because the Israelites had witnessed the Revelation on Mount Sinai, <sup>26</sup> his interpretation of *פרשת שמות* agree with Mishne Torah, Jesode Hatorah c. 7 until the end, especially 8:1 and 9:2, and a reference to that would have been much more to the point than a reference to the Siraj which does not contain discussions of these matters in detail. It is quite likely that later in writing the Mishne Torah he transferred passages from the Iggeret Teman to the latter.

Finally the use of the phrase *על שם שאל* argues for a short stay in Egypt at the time of the writing of the Iggeret Teman.

Geiger's date remained unchallenged till 1926 when Fritz Baer in an article in the *Monatsschrift* disputed it and set <sup>it</sup> as falling several years before



1186. This scholar shows that in 1186 the whole world, Christian and Jewish was held breathless in Messianic expectation. It had its origin in a prophecy that emanated from Abraham ben Chiyya and was broadcast in 1179. On the ground of extraordinary planetary conjunctions it predicted that seven years later great natural calamities climaxed by fundamental changes in the lives of nations would take place. In the wake of this prophecy there were Messianic stirrings all over the world.<sup>27</sup>

They comprehended also the Orient, Baer declares. He bases this assertion on the Letter of the Toledo Merchant.<sup>28</sup> That letter which purports to narrate the incidents of a journey that began in July, 1186 must have actually been written about that time, inasmuch as it makes Messianic predictions that are based on Saladin's campaign in Palestine--a campaign which began in July, 1187. Obviously no one would have written such a letter after the Messiah had not appeared following the success of the campaign. Hence, it may be argued that the Abu Said ben Daud, referred to in the letter, did really announce himself in Ispahan as the

commander of the Messiah's forces in 1179.

Under the circumstances, Baer reasons, a Messiah such as the one in Yemen, might have appeared sometime around 1185. Such an appearance would tally with the expectations of the times and would account for the wide audience which he gained in Yemen. Maimonides' Letter to Yemen would thus have been written around 1185.

Incidentally, this later dating of the Iggeret Teman would account, says Baer, for the inexplicable likeness of several passages to corresponding ones in the Mishne Torah. <sup>29</sup> Baer contends that in his Iggeret Teman, Maimonides really quotes the Mishne Torah, and that the citation of "in the beginning of our great the work, the Commentary on the Mishne", <sup>30</sup> is a copyist's error. As for the dating of the Yemenite incident by Maimonides himself as having occurred twenty-two years before 1194, the time of the Marseilles Letter, Baer argues that the number twenty-two need not be accepted as the reading is based on a single manuscript.

To my mind, Baer's theory is wrong. The difficulty <sup>verbal</sup> of similarity between the Mishne Torah and the Iggeret Teman can be dismissed on the following grounds: In

1172, Maimonides had already written sections of the Mishne Torah, but the work was still far in the offing. Hence, he could not have alluded to it as a forthcoming book. At the same time the subjects dealt with in the Iggeret Teman have also been dealt with in the Siraj. Hence, the allusion to it. In any event, Baer notwithstanding, some verbal similarities with the Siraj can be found in the Iggeret Teman, e. g.,

וּנְדַבְרָה עַל פִּי מַיְמוֹנִידֵס בֶּן מִיכָאֵל הַיְיָ הַיְיָ  
 עַל פִּי מַיְמוֹנִידֵס בֶּן מִיכָאֵל הַיְיָ הַיְיָ  
 עַל פִּי מַיְמוֹנִידֵס בֶּן מִיכָאֵל הַיְיָ הַיְיָ  
 עַל פִּי מַיְמוֹנִידֵס בֶּן מִיכָאֵל הַיְיָ הַיְיָ

Then, too, how, according to Baer, can we explain the *וְנִדְבַרְתִּי עַל פִּי מַיְמוֹנִידֵס*? Maimonides came to Egypt in 1166. In 1172 such a description of his stay there is plausible. But it is hardly so in 1185 or 1186.

Finally, it would be difficult to account for the conditions in Yemen, as narrated in the Letter to Yemen, as taking place at any time other than 1172. According to Arabic sources it marked the year of the rising of the Shiite Mahdi. Turan Shah went to suppress that rebellion in 1174. He subdued the land within a year and it remained under Ayyubid suzerainty for fifty-five years. From all accounts we know that the Jews fared well under the rule of Saladin and his officials. How then could we suppose that the repressive measures mentioned in the Iggeret Teman occurred later than 1172, inasmuch as after



1174 the province was already under Ayyubid rule?

We must therefore conclude that Geiger's date of 1172 as the year of the Iggeret Teman still stands.

### Contents of Letter

He begins by complimenting Jacob ben Nathanael's wisdom and attainments and Yemen's hospitality and learning. He assures his correspondent that he is unworthy of Solomon Ha-Kohen's high opinion of him, that he is only the least of the scholars of Spain. After this brief introduction in Hebrew he changes to Arabic that all may understand him.

All were mortified to read of the ruler in Yemen who decreed persecution against the Jews. But such events were predicted by the prophets and the rabbis as preliminary to the coming of the Messiah. These persecutions have the one merit of purging our people from sin. For only the good and the strong will remain loyal unto the glorious end.

Maimonides deftly assures Rabbi Jacob that these persecutions are the products of jealousy. The nations are envious of the distinction that God gave us in granting the Torah. And thus they strive with God when they persecute us. Through the centuries they resorted to three

methods of attack: with the sword, as did Titus and Nebuchadrezzar, with logic, as did the Greeks and the Persians, and with dissimulation as do the Christians and the Mohammedans. The last is the most dangerous. The followers of Jesus and Mohammed concede the fact of Revelation on Mount Sinai but they argue that it has been superseded by the prophecies of their pretenders. Be not deceived by these sophistries. Do not exchange a living body of flesh and blood for an inert statue lacking soul and mind. Only fools would be guilty of such folly. Wise men see that the pretensions of Christianity and Islam are like the antics of an ape seeking to imitate a human being.

The rise of the dissemblers has been foreseen, and their destruction, you may be sure has been ordained. Israel may be attacked, but can never be destroyed. In the meantime be strong and courageous and let not the strength of the enemy affright you. For remember that persecution<sup>is</sup> a trial of faith and love. "Therefore, O our brethren of the house of Israel, who are scattered to the extremities of the earth, it is your duty to strengthen each other, the great the small, the few the many, and to raise your voice in a faithfulness

which shall never fail, and which shall make known publicly that God is a Unity, unlike all other unities; that Moses is His prophet, who spoke with Him; that he is the Master of all the prophets and the most perfect of all of them; that the Law from the first word to the last was spoken by the Creator to Moses; that nothing was to be abrogated in it, nothing to be changed, nothing to be added thereto nor taken therefrom, and that no other Law than his will ever come from the Creator."<sup>32</sup>

Should you find it impossible to adhere to the Jewish faith then leave as you would if you could not earn your living. Surely your faith is as important as earning a living. Do not suppose that you can throw off the yoke of the Torah. For no Jew, his children, or his children can ever free himself from the Law.

This ends the first section.<sup>33</sup>

You mentioned the arguments drawn by the apostate from *אשר אלהים אחד*, *הושיע אהרן עבדך*, and the promise to Ishmael *והיה שמו יצחק*. And you also spoke of the outrageous accusation that we falsified the text of the Bible to elide references to Mohammed. The last accusation is palpably absurd for in the texts as well as in the various translations of the Bible there does

not exist the least difference. And now I will show you the pointlessness of the specific proofs. An examination of the text will show that *אני גדול מאלה* means numerical and not spiritual greatness. The numerical value of *אני גדול מאלה* does not correspond to that of *אני גדול מאלה* which is the real name of the prophet of Islam. The use of the preterit in *אני גדול מאלה* shows that it refers to a past event, specifically, God's gradual approach to Mount Sinai, and, emphatically, does not imply a future revelation. Finally, *אני גדול מאלה*, as interpreted by the apostate is a plain distortion achieved by tearing words out of the context. The passage where the verse in question occurs tells us that we Jews will not have to resort to divination, that we will know future events from prognosticators who will arise in our midst. They will be Israelites — to make it more convenient. And the word *אני גדול מאלה* does not imply "like me", that is, Moses, in prophetic rank, but rather "like me" that is, Moses, in Jewish origin.

The criterion for the authenticity of a prophet is not racial origin. For, behold Job, a non-Jew, held the rank of prophet, while Hananiah ben Azur, a Jew, did not. Nor is the criterion the miracles that he performs. The true test is whether the utterances of the prophet

agree with the teaching of Moses. If they do, he is a bona fide prophet; if they do not he is a false prophet. We, of course, never doubt the teaching of Moses, inasmuch as we were eye-witnesses to the Revelation of Mount Sinai.

34

This ends the second section.

You mentioned the calculations of the Advent, and, especially, Saadiah's calculation. Know, then, that it is impossible to find out the day of his arrival. Even the end of the Egyptian Exile which was foretold in the Bible could not be determined with certainty, let alone, the end of this long Exile which frightened even the greatest of prophets. Because of this uncertainty, calculations on the subject are prohibited, at best, ill-advised. Saadia did what he did because the times demanded it. In no event, however, may you rely on astological calculations. Such are abominations. And what is more they are fallacious, as may be seen from the predictions made concerning Moses and the patriarchs. Were one to have trusted astrology one would have supposed these great ones to be the worst of men. Do not be misled by these calculations for the reason that they are written in books.



For falsehoods may be uttered by pen as well as with the tongue. Rely on prophets as the blind rely on their guides and the sick on the doctor. That is the best policy. If you rely on stars then will God, who is Providence, wreak His vengeance on you. Put your faith in Him and you may be sure that He will not desert you. All that we can know is that the Messiah will come when Edom and Arabia will grow very strong and their rule will extend over the face of the earth. The exact time of the Advent, however, is unknown.

Still I have a tradition as to when Prophecy will return to Israel. It is based on the word ~~MY~~ in Deuteronomy 23:23. According to that reckoning prophecy should be restored to Israel in 1212. This reckoning is very likely truer than the others. But again let me warn you: By no means rely on signs or oracles.

35

This ends the section.

You also mentioned the pretender to Messiahship. I do not wonder at him; he is probably insane. Nor do I wonder at those who believe in him; they have grown impatient under the yoke of the Galuth. But I do marvel at you who have studied and who knows the greatness of the Messiah. You know that the Messiah is greater

than all prophets except Moses; you know that he is to be learned in the Law, strong of will, and rich in mind. And yet you have come to believe in this ignoramus. That he is an ignoramus is evident from his advice to distribute all property to the poor. Surely you know that the prophet will make his first appearance in Palestine and that no one will know of his origin. Surely you know that all kings will stand in awe of him. Do you not see that this man has none of the virtues of which I have spoken.

The best advice that I can give you is to incarcerate the man as a demented person until the Moslems will stop suspecting you of rebellious designs. Then you may release him quietly. Otherwise you will run great danger.

For you know very well that the Holy One Blessed be He put us in the midst of this most wicked people. But we must bear our burden silently. Even when we seek to live peacefully as their neighbors they wage war against us. Imagine then our lot if we stir up in their hearts suspicions concerning our loyalty.

How dangerous it is to stir up the government with Messianic aspirations you may infer from the incidents of which I will now speak.

Years ago, at the beginning of the Omeyyad dynasty, a Jew, followed by thousands, invaded the region of Bagdad and threatened the conquest of the land. At the instance

of the king the Jewish leaders of the Iraq came out to induce him to go back. He finally left after receiving a heavy bribe. But after he had gone the king imposed the fine on his Jews and made them wear a badge with the inscription "Accursed!" Since that day the communities of Chorosan and Ispahan are in dire straits.

About 1122 Moses Drei announced himself as the harbinger of the Messiah, and predicted that his Advent would take place Passover. But Passover came and nothing happened. Had he not fled, he would have been murdered. <sup>36</sup>

Between 1102 and 1107 the Jews of Cordova selected ibn Aryeh, a pious and respected townsman, as the Messiah. Had not the leaders of the community acted promptly and sternly the Jews of that city would have involved themselves in great difficulties. [Possibly this Messianic movement was aroused by the conquest of Jerusalem in the <sup>37</sup> First Crusade.]

Some forty years before the Cordovan Messiahship, namely between 1070 and 1060, a man arose in Leon, France, and declared himself as the Redeemer. He managed to fly from tree-top to tree-top and thus convinced the multitudes. That time the Frenchmen were aroused and killed and robbed the Jewish community. [Possibly this movement had its inspiration in the pilgrimage of a large group of priests



and prominent citizens, headed by the arch-bishop of Magenza to Palestine in 1064.]<sup>38</sup>

The incidents that I cited and their tragic consequences are fulfillments of the prophecies of the Bible. For in the days of the true Messiah there will be many pretenders, and they and those who believe in them will perish. Wait patiently then until God will take mercy on us.

I ask you to send this letter to all communities in Yemen, and make sure that it is read to them. At the same time take care that no Ishmaelite get hold of it. I dared write in the manner that I did because I was sure that messengers of a good deed are not injured, but primarily because I felt it to be my duty.

#### Discussion of Contents

Ordinarily we think of Moses Maimonides as a restrained, logical thinker who follows a cool, consistent line of reasoning. But in the Iggeret Teman we see Maimonides in a new light. We see him as the impassioned pleader. He is interested in delivering a message to his suffering brethren, a message that will keep them in the fold; hence he does not take care to avoid logical pitfalls and apparent contradictions--contradictions that

will be uncovered only after some scrutiny. He plunges into an exhortation, a defence, a plea, a denunciation without caring for his own safety, and even less for the rules of logic and consistency.

There are three glaring contradictions in the Iggeret Teman: in exegetical method, in his opinions regarding Christianity and Islam, and in the Calculations of the Advent.

In discussing "A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me," (Dt. 18:15) he says: "Know that no one should take a word from a unified and integrated passus to use it as proof, basing oneself upon; <sup>39</sup> but one should examine what precedes and follows..." <sup>it</sup>

All well and good. But he himself does it almost in the same breath. Thus he tears out of the context <sup>40</sup> Canticles 4:7, <sup>41</sup> Canticles 4:1, <sup>42</sup> Ps. 78:9, <sup>43</sup> Isaiah 24:22, <sup>44</sup> Isaiah 21:7 and other passages. If it be argued as Israel Friedlander does in another connection that "Maimonides declines to be an exegete of the outer meaning of the Bible, but he regards it as the highest achievement <sup>45</sup> to be an exegete of the inner meaning of scripture," then, may the writer of the Ifham argue in the same manner

and there will be no end to the matter. In that event, he, i. e. Samuel ibn Abbas, does not deserve the scathing rebuke that Maimonides administers to him. Be that as it may, the only way of accounting for Maimonides' curious inconsistency in such fundamentals is that ~~that~~ he was writing, not a reasoned treatise, but a polemic.

In the Iggeret Teman he speaks of Christianity and Islam as "apish imitations of human beings," and as "inert, soulless statues." Compare, however, what he says of ~~them~~ in a celebrated passage of the Mishne Torah at the end of the Hilchoth Melochim, where he writes thus of the mission of these two religions: "The teachings of him of Nazareth (Jesus) and of the man of Ishmael (Mohammed), who arose after him, help to bring to perfection all mankind, so that they may serve God with one consent. For in that <sup>way</sup> the whole world is full of the words of Holy Writ and the Commandments--these words have spread to the ends of the earth, even if many deny the binding character of them at the present day. And when the Messiah comes all will return from their errors."

There are two alternatives in explaining the opposite opinions of the Hilchoth Melochim and the Iggeret Teman: Either the opinion in the Iggeret Teman was his real opinion, and the one in the Code was ~~merely~~ merely for

*Reference*

the consumption of the Gentiles; or he simply contradicted himself in the fury of defence of his maltreated brethren. Now we know Maimonides to have been an honest man. Hence, we cannot accuse him of catering to the Gentiles. The only alternative left is that in the heat of the argument he simply contradicted himself.

And now we come to the third contradiction: After quoting with approval the Talmudic dictum of "May the Calculators of the Advent perish" he gives a family tradition that sets the return of prophecy as a preliminary to the Advent of the Messiah for the year 1212. How explain it? To a considerable extent the explanation looms from Maimonides' defence of Saadia's calculation: He defended Saadia on the ground that the times demanded it; similarly Maimonides would have defended himself--if challenged--on the ground that the occasion justified it. And just as Saadia took care not to mislead the people by being unclear,<sup>46</sup> so Maimonides took care from doing the same by being indefinite. He predicted that in 1212 prophecy would return, that after that the Messiah would come, but he took care not to delimit the interval between the return of Prophecy and the Advent of the<sup>47</sup> Messiah. As seen from other passages, he himself no doubt

believed that the Messianic Era was about to be ushered in. Upon lesser justification from the trend of events Rabbi Jair Chayim Bacharach believed in Sabbatai Zevi<sup>48</sup> as the Messiah.

Still this discrepancy was so great that it stirred<sup>49</sup> up a miniature war among scholars. I, for one, am inclined to agree with Bacher who holds the passage authentic, especially since Dr. Mann, who examined the Arabic manuscript in the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, believes that the Arabic contains the passage in question.

In discussing the Iggeret Teman, M. Friedländer<sup>50</sup> says: "The character and style of Maimonides' reply appear to have been adapted to the intellectual condition of the Jews in Yemen, for whom it was written. These probably read the Bible with Midrashic commentaries, and preferred the easy and attractive Agadah to the more earnest study of the Halakah. It is therefore not surprising that the letter contains remarks and interpretations which cannot be reconciled with the philosophical and logical method by which all the other works of Maimonides are distinguished." In my opinion, while Friedländer is correct in his estimate of the Iggeret as not being a masterpiece, he errs in the reason that he assigns for its not being that. He is still under the influence of the theory that the Jews of Yemen were great ignoramuses. But now as a result of Neubauer's, Bacher's and<sup>51</sup> Mann's researches we have revised our opinion concerning



them. And we must say that the key for the flaws and inconsistencies of the Iggeret Teman is to be sought in the critical moment and in Maimonides' aroused emotional state.

Spite that, Maimonides' lucid presentation, pungent style, mastery of Jewish literature, and indomitable courage lend the Iggeret Teman punch, character, and life.

Was Maimonides a Crypto-Moslem?

52

In the Iggeret Teman, Maimonides says that people "should enter wildernesses and places where there is no settlement; that they should not grieve over the separation from their intimates; neither should they pity their loss of money, for all of this is small and trifling compared to the king, the king of kings..." In other words, he is quite emphatic in denouncing Maranism in any form. Yet Geiger says that while in Cordova Maimonides outwardly accepted Islam.

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Was Maimonides a crypto-Moslem? Professor A.

54

Berliner devotes an article to this question. In this article he quotes Lebrecht who published in the *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes*, 1844, No. 45 a study dealing with Maimonides' supposed trading in jewels, and in No. 62 one dealing with his alleged

conversion to Islam. The following is a summary of his remarks on the second subject:

Djemal al-din el-Kofti, wezir of Aleppo, friend of Joseph ben Yehuda al Sabti (Akmin) wrote in his Geschichte der Gelehrten that "When Abdalmumen ben Ali Alkumi was ruler over Africa and Spain and made known that Christians and Jews should either accept Islam or, at pain of death and confiscation, should leave his provinces it grieved Maimon to give up his family and his property and he therefore accepted outwardly the faith of Mohammed while secretly he remained infidel. So he maintained himself until he found an opportunity to leave Andalusia and he went with his family." "Later," we are told by the same writer, "towards the end of Maimonides' life he was prosecuted by a certain Abul-Arab ben Moisha. That person, upon coming from Andalusia to Egypt, accused him of having been a Moslem in Spain and demanded that he be punished. But Abdel-Rahim ben Ali Alfadel interceded for Maimonides and said that since he had been forced into Islam he was not compelled to adhere to it."

Unfortunately, for those who wish to follow Al-Kofti's evidence, that gentleman in his story of Maimonides is guilty of so many inaccuracies and mis-

statements that he can hardly be trusted.

But, some will argue, since he was a personal friend of Joseph ibn Aknin, ~~he~~ could not the latter have supplied him with the information? The argument is not as convincing as it might at first seem. For several reasons: (1) Al Kofti wrote his book a good many years after Ibn Aknin's death and could not have quoted his friend very reliably. (2) If he did draw his information from Ibn Aknin he would not have been guilty of the many absurdities which he writes concerning Maimonides. (3) If Ibn Aknin had told this of his master and put him in danger of death he himself would not be reliable. (4) Since Ibn Aknin was at one time a crypte-Moslem he might have invented this tale about Maimonides to justify his own action.

Against Abul-Arab's supposed evidence ~~three~~ irrefutable arguments may be cited: (1) In his Mishne Torah, Maimonides declares that in a time of general persecution a Jew must accept martyrdom.<sup>55</sup> Would he have had the cheek to pen these words ~~if~~ <sup>if</sup> in a crisis he himself had been guilty of their violation? Maimonides was not a hypocrite. Even his worst enemies pay tribute to his character. (2) If Maimonides



had been guilty of Crypto-Mohammedanism it is hardly conceivable <sup>why</sup> ~~that~~, in the bitter fight about the Moreh, no one alluded to his apostasy. (3) Abdallatif, upon reading the Moreh, declared it a dangerous work, intended to destroy religious dogmas. Now Abdallatif who lived in Cairo since 1191 in all likelihood knew Maimonides. Abul-Arab must have made his charge against Maimonides sometime after 1190. It is hard to understand why, under the circumstances, in condemning the Moreh, Abdallatif did not refer to Maimonides' change of faith. So much for Lebrecht.

Geiger bases his argument for Maimonides' conversion chiefly on a mistranslation of the Iggeret Ha-Shemad. He mistranslates those passages wherein Maimonides excuses his brethren who have been driven into verbal profession of Islam; instead of translating them in the first person plural he renders them in the first person singular. But M. Friedländer, in his introduction to the Guide for the Perplexed, disproves the authenticity of the Iggeret Ha-Shemad. In this way, however correct Geiger's translation might have been, his chief prop falls.

Berliner's theses, despite the acumen shown by him and Lebrecht, can not altogether set aside al-

Kofti's evidence. Still it seems the more likely hypothesis.

#### Further Developments in Yemen

Two years after the dispatch of the Iggeret Teman, Turan Shah, Saladin's gallant brother organized an expedition which left Egypt on the Sixth of February, 1174, for Mecca, on its march to the Yemen. There he was joined by a powerful Arab chief and the two made short work of the resistance of the Yemenites. Zebid, Jenéd, Aden, Sana, and the other strongholds fell one after the other, in May to August, and Turan Shah established his seat of government at Taizz and ruled Arabia Felix until his return to his brother early in 1176. The province remained under the authority of the Ayyubid dynasty for  
56  
fifty-five years.

In all likelihood the oppressive measures alluded to in the Iggeret Teman were rescinded after Turan Shah's conquest. For we know that in 1500 S. E. (1188 C. E. ) word reached Maimonides that there were Jews in Yemen who, basing themselves on his supposed views, denied resurrection. Two years later, in 1190 word reached Maimonides from Mesopotamia that inquiries came to Bagdad from Yemen concerning resurrection and im-  
57  
mortality. That the Jews of Yemen were occupied with

these problems at about this time is confirmed in a letter of Maimonides to his disciple Joseph ibn Aknin.<sup>58</sup> It seems fairly certain that if they were concerned with these problems sufficiently to write to Maimonides and to Samuel ben Ali in Bagdad, their political difficulties were allayed.

In his Letter to Marseilles, written in 1194, Maimonides tell what finally happened to the "Messiah" from Yemen. Apparently he only pretended to be the harbinger of the Messiah. He gathered about him many Jews and Arabs, and invited them all to go into the mountains with him and greet the Messiah. Maimonides concluded from the account which his Yemenite correspondent gave him that the Messiah was a misguided fool. Whereupon he wrote them concerning Messiah the King, concerning his signs and the signs of his time, fearing that the antics of the fool may bring calamity to his fellow-Jews in Yemen. In the meantime the Yemenite Messenger was apprehended and brought before one of the provincial governors. To prove that he was really the messenger of God he challenged the governor to decapitate him, asserting that he would come back to life. Despite the failure of the experiment there were many who retained their belief in him. But the king, satisfied that there was no danger in the offing, imposed a heavy fine on the Jews of Yemen.

Honors Paid to Maimonides in Yemen

The Iggeret Teman made a remarkable impression on the Jews of Yemen. The name of Maimonides became the most revered name in the land. They even included a complimentary allusion to him in the Kaddish, thus bestowing upon him an honor ordinarily reserved for the Exilarch on the day of his accession to office.<sup>59</sup>

In such great esteem was Maimonides held that the only philosophical work which seems current in Yemen,<sup>60</sup> according to Jacob Sappir, is the Moreh. His Mishne Torah was not set aside to any considerable extent<sup>61</sup> by Joseph Karo's Shulhan Aruch. And only the Yemenite Siddur preserved Maimonides' original readings as given in his Mishne Torah.

It seems hard to conceive that such great and extensive honors would be paid to a man for merely writing a letter of encouragement. Under the circumstances, it may be surmised that the Jews of Yemen supposed, or had reason to suppose, that Maimonides inspired Turan Shah's expedition of delivery. After all, Maimonides and al-Fadhel, Saladin's grand wezir and actual ruler of Egypt, were fast friends. And Maimonides might have induced him to send <sup>such</sup> ~~xxxx~~ an expedition. Hence the possible surmise of the Yemenite Jews was not as wild as it may seem at first glance.

### Notes on Introduction

1. This is the reading given in Nahum. Tibbon reads: ben Fayyumi.
- 2a. Nahum 1c; Tibbon 15.
- 1b. See Monatsschrift, 1926, P. 159, Note 4
2. Hatekufah, Vol. 24, P. 354.
3. Tibbon, P. 11.
4. Found in manuscript, Munchen 57 and 315. The section concerning Jesus and Mohammed is reproduced in Hebraische Bibliographie, XV, 62.
5. Tibbon, P. 12.
6. In the Jewish Encyclopedia under Moses ben Maimon he is called, for some reason Nathan Hamaarabi.
7. The Revue des Etudes Juives 24, P. 116 gives his father's name as Jacob; the Revue des Etudes Juives 33, P. 145 gives his father's name as Joseph.
8. Steinschneider in Polemische und apologetische Literatur, P. 354.
9. The title is taken from Hosea 2:17 <sup>הק"ו</sup> <sup>א</sup> וְהָיָה שְׁמִי כְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
10. See Catalog Bodleiana, 1911, Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arab. Sprache, Leipzig, 1877, P. 354, and die hebräische Übersetzungen des Mittelalters, Berlin, 1893, P. 929.



11. See Stanley Lane-Poole's History of Egypt in the Middle Ages, second edition, 1914; Wüstenfeld, 'Geschichte der Fatimiden-Chalifen' in Abhandlungen der Königlichan Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, quoted in The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs by Jacob Mann, Oxford 1920, I:229.
12. See Pp. 27-28 of the Translation.
13. See Schreiner's summary in Monatsschrift, 1898, P. 123 ff.
14. See Eppenstein in Moses ben Maimon, Leipzig, 1914, P. 46, Note 4. But see Geiger's Moses ben Maimon, P. 39 and P. 62, Note 48 who argues that Samuel ibn Abbas himself came to Yemen.
15. Maimonides and Islam by M. Simmons in Jewish Chronicle Office, Quoted by Yellin and Abrahams in Maimonides, P. 99.
16. Hopes ran high in the 12th Century. On this subject see Mann in Hatekufah 24, P. 349ff. See also Maimonides' Maamar Kiddush Ha-Shem, Kobez 15b.
17. See Translation, P. 62.
18. See Mann's The Jews in Egypt and in Palestin, etc. II:366 and Mann in Hebrew Union College Annual, III;301-3.
19. 1840, No. 29, P. 248.
20. Moses ben Maimon, P. 90, Note 47.

21. Kobez, 26c.

22. Kobez, 24d.

23. Jonathan's questions were based on the Mishne Torah:

ואי גמ המלכות ואלו רגילו יהוה מן הכהן מלכות... אהקא  
 מן הכהן מן הכהן מלכות מלכות

See רמב"ם, No. 17, Amsterdam, 1765.

24. Kobez 26c.

25. Kobez 37d.

26. See Translation, P. 37ff.

27. See Monatsschrift, Vol. 70, 1926, Pp. 113-122. — —

28. Published by Neubauer in the Revue des Etudes Juives,  
 P. 173f.

29. Completed in 1180.

30. See Translation, P. 41.

31. See Translation, Middle of P. 4.

32. See Maimonides by Yellin and Abrahams, Pp. 102-103.

33. See Translation, Pp. 4-27; Nahum 1c-3c.

34. See Translation, Pp. 27-41; Nahum 3c-5a.

35. See Translation, Pp. 41-62; Nahum 5a-6c.

36. See Mann in Hatekufah, Vol. 24, P. 357.

37. Ibid

38. Ibid, Pp. 357-8.

39. See Translation, P. 34; Nahum 4b

40. See Nahum 3b

41. See Nahum 4b and 4d

42. See Nahum 5a

43. Nahum 5b
44. Nahum 6b
45. Past and Present by Israel Friedlander, P. 220.
46. See S. Posnanski in Monatsschrift, Vol. 44, P. 415  
and Henry Malter in Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy,  
I, Pp. 45-59.
47. See Nahum 1c and 7c
48. See David Kaufman in the Jewish Quarterly Review,  
Old Series, Vol. III, Pp. 307-309.
49. See David Kaufmann in the REJ, Vol 24, Pp. 112-117  
and Israel Levi in REJ, Vol. 33, Pp. 144-146 on the side  
that the passage is spurious; and Wilhelm Bacher in REJ,  
Vol 34, Pp. 101-105 on the side of authenticity. See  
also Israel Levi's rejoinder to Bacher in REJ, Vol. 34,  
Pp. 105-106.
50. See The Guide for the Perplexed, London, 1910, P. xx
51. See Neubauer in the J. Q. R. III, Old Series, P.  
604ff; Bacher in Einleitung zu: Die hebraische und  
arabische Poesie der Juden Jemens, Jahresbericht, Buda-  
pest, 1910; and Mann in the H. U. C. Annual, Vol. III,  
Pp. 301-303.
52. See Translation, P. 26; Nahum 3c.
53. Moses ben Maimon, PP. 42-3.
54. See Berliner's article "Zur Ehrenrettung des Mai-  
to  
monides" in Moses ben Maimon II, Pp 104 ~~xxx~~ 130.
55. Hilchoth Yesode Hatora, V, 4



56. See Stanley Lane-Poole's *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Putnam's, 1906 Pp. 125-6

57. See Kobez 8d

58. See Kobez 31b

II:

59. See Kobez 8d-9a and Simon Eppenstein in *Moses ben Maimon II:50*, Leipzig, 1914. But the manuscripts of the Yemenite Siddur do not contain the words *לְכָל יְהוּדָא*

*לְכָל יְהוּדָא* . See the J. Q. R. III, Old Series, P. 610, Note 2.

60. See J. Q. R. III, Old Series, P. 618.

61. See *Die hebräische und arabische Poesie der Juden* Jemens, Bacher, Wilhelm, P. 7, Strassburg, 1910.

62. See I. Elbogen in *Moses ben Maimon I:320-321*, Leipzig, 1908.

From me, [Rabbi] Moses son of Rabbi Maimon the Dayyan, son  
of Rabbi Joseph the sage, son of Rabbi Isaac the rabbi, son  
of Rabbi Obadiah the Dayyan, may their memory be for blessing.

Strengthen weak hands and brace faltering knees!

To the honor of the great and holy Rabbi Jacob, wise,  
beloved, invaluable and esteemed, the son of the honored  
Rabbi Nathanaël,<sup>1</sup> may his memory be for blessing, son of  
al-Fayyumi,<sup>2</sup> and to all our teachers and brethren, to all  
scholars of the communities in the land of Yemen, may their  
Rock protect them and shelter them, Amen Selah.

Trunks testify to sturdy roots and streams bespeak  
mighty headwaters. Verily in Yemen there sprouted a healthy  
shoot from a sturdy root and there sprang a great river  
from generous headwaters, to water gardens and make blossoms  
grow.<sup>3</sup> It guides leisurely all who are weary and thirsty in  
the wilderness; therein find sustenance and plenty all  
farers of lands and isles. Therefore they herald its fame  
in Spain and Sipphara,<sup>4</sup> from one end of heaven to the other;  
Whoever is thirsty go to water! (Is. 55:1)

All merchants answer their questioners that they dis-  
covered in the inhabitants of Yemen, a beautiful and pleas-  
ant plant, a goodly pasture where the lean grow fat, a faith-

ful pasture for those who feed thereon; that they provide bread for  
the poor, shelter for the rich, and extend welcome to all. "The  
caravans of Sheba look forward to them," for their hand is out<sup>6</sup>  
stretched to all wayfarers, their houses are wide open; with them  
all find rest, escape sorrow and sighing.

At all times they meditate in the Law of Moses, follow the  
path shown by Rabbi Ashi, pursue right, repair the breach, (II  
Ki. 12:8) place the principles of the Torah on their mound,<sup>8</sup>  
gather the scattered of the Lord with their speech, fulfill<sup>9</sup>  
all the commandments with their minutiae in their congregations,<sup>10</sup>  
"with no breach, and no going forth, and no outcry in their  
broad places." (Ps. 144:14)

Blessed is the Lord who has not put an end to fulfillers  
of the Law and observers of ordinances in distant isles, as He  
has promised us in His goodness and His lovingkindness through  
His servant Isaiah--you are indeed proof of that which He told  
us: "From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard  
songs." (Is. 24:16)

May the Lord help you to establish the laws and ordin-  
ances, to observe justice and righteousness, to guard His  
commandments and Law, to adhere to His Covenant, Amen Selah.

When your precious writing reached us in Egypt all were  
pleased since it is a "delight to the eyes". (Gen. 3:6)  
It bore witness that you are of the servants of the Lord who

stand in His Temple, who encamp at His standard, of the Torah,  
of the lovers of its laws, who "guard its gates". (Prov. 8:34)  
May the Lord open to thee "its hidden places", (Ob. 6) and fill<sup>11</sup>  
thy heart with its treasures; may its words be a lamp for thy  
feet and a light in thy path.

Regarding that which you, our friend, said in your letter<sup>12</sup>  
that you heard from some of our brethren, our countrymen, may  
their Rock protect them, that they praise me, make me great,  
<sup>13</sup>  
extol me, and esteem me among the greatest of the great;  
these spoke out of their love, spoke and exaggerated in their  
goodness and kindness; but for "a word fitly spoken" (Prov. 25:  
11) listen to me, and turn not to another man: I am the least  
of the wise men of Spain, whose ornaments were brought down  
in exile; though I have always been sleepless in the watches  
of the night, yet did I not attain the wisdom of my ancestors,  
<sup>14</sup>  
for hard and evil days smote us, in safety we did not dwell,  
<sup>15</sup>  
"we labor and have no rest". (Lam. 5:5) Nevertheless, I raced<sup>16</sup>  
after the harvesters in all swaths, and gathered the ears of  
corn; I gather the fat and the full, nor do I spurn the lean  
<sup>17</sup>  
and the empty. Only recently have I settled down. "If it  
had not been the Lord who was for us," (Ps. 124:2) and "our  
ancestors who told us" (Ps. 44:2) I had not attained the little<sup>18</sup>  
that I stored up; that which I always dispense.

Regarding our friend and disciple, Solomon, chief of the priests, the wise and sagacious, who, you said in your letter, "opens his mouth wide" (Ps. 81:11) in praise of us and extends his tongue in commendation of us--that one spoke extravagantly in his affection, and told much in his love and gentleness, may his Rock protect him, and may he be like a flourishing garden, and may He return him sound and cheerful unto us.

I deemed it wise to reply to the other questions in your letter--which you asked me to answer--in the language of Kedar  
20 21  
and Nebo, that the reader may read it rapidly--everyone, man, woman and child--for the one answer to the questions should be  
22  
understood by all your communities.

23  
That which you mentioned concerning the ruler in the land of Yemen who decreed Persecution upon Israel and compelled all places in which he wields authority to leave their religion  
24  
as did the Semites in the lands of the Maghreb--that news removed pride from our countenance, all our communities quaked and trembled. For in truth, we must say, that it is evil news "which whosoever hears it his ears tingle," (Jer. 19:3) which sored our hearts, and confounded our councils. In the wake of these great calamities there trails Persecution in the ends of the earth from east to west; and the children of

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Israel are hemmed in on one side and the other. <sup>25</sup>

Concerning this evil time which the prophet saw in a vision he prayed and pleaded for our sakes as is written: "Then said I: O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee; How shall Jacob stand? for he is small!" (Am. 7:5) <sup>But</sup> And the man of faith will not worry over this situation, nor will he who believes in Moses cast aside his belief. For there is no doubt that these are the "Pangs of the Messiah", during which period <sup>26</sup> the sages asked of the Creator not to live. The prophets also shuddered when they envisaged these pangs as is said: "My heart is bewildered, terror hath overwhelmed me; the twilight that I longed for hath been turned for me into trembling." <sup>27</sup> (Is. 21:4) Even so, in the Righteous Book, the Creator says; <sup>28</sup> Woe to him who is found at that time "after God hath appointed him." <sup>29</sup> (Nu. 24:23)

That which you say that understanding in some of our people fell low and was confused, that their hearts changed, doubts were born, and convictions grew weak; and that others did not budge from their faith, did not grow faint nor <sup>af</sup> frightened—that state of affairs was foreseen by Daniel, peace upon him, when the Creator made it known to us that, as the years in exile will increase and as travails will come upon us, many will leave the faith and go astray. The reason for this [apostasy] is that they see our poverty and the might

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of our rulers who prevail over us. Still there will be others who will entertain no doubts and will have no confused opinions, as is said: "Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white and be refined; but the wicked shall do so wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand." (Dan. 12:10) He proceeded to explain that they who are wise and have insight, over whom travails had passed, who withstood them and remained in their faith in the Lord and in Moses His servant, will endure evils greater and less bearable than the former, which they withstood, till doubts will be born in them, too, and they will err and stray, so that [the  
31  
mystery] will become evident to very few, as he put it: "And some of them that are wise shall stumble to refine among them, and to purify, and to make white, even to the time of the end  
32  
for it is yet for the appointed time." (Dan. 11:35)

And now our brethren, incline your ears and listen to that which I expound that you may teach it to the children and women, in order that that in their faith which was shaken by doubt may be well established, that the truth from which one may not budge be strengthened, and that the Creator may deliver us and deliver you from unfaithfulness.

Know ye that this is the true Torah of the Lord given

to us through the greatest of the prophets--former or latter--<sup>33</sup>  
that by means of this Torah he set us apart from the others  
in the world as is said: "Only the Lord had a delight in thy  
fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even  
you, above all peoples, as it is to this day." (Dt. 10:15)

This did not occur because we were worthy of the honor but mere-  
ly because of the mercy and goodness of the Creator who was mer-  
ciful and good to us, because our Fathers came first in good deeds,

<sup>34</sup>  
in the knowledge of the Creator and in His worship, as is said:  
"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because  
you were more in number than any people--for ye were the fewest  
of all peoples--but because the Lord loved you, and because

He would keep the oath which He ~~w~~wore unto your fathers." (Dt.  
7:7-8) And for the reason that the Creator singled us out

with His commandments and His ordinances and our excellence  
over others became manifest through His ordinances and stat-  
tues, as is said: "And what great nation is there that hath

statutes and ordinances so righteous and all this law, which  
<sup>35</sup>  
I set before you this day?" (Dt. 4:8) all the idolaters

envied us our religion greatly and on account of it forced  
<sup>36</sup>  
their rulers to beset us with hatred and enmity. Thus their  
desire is to strive with God and engage in contention with

Him--But He is God and who can contend with Him? <sup>37</sup>

Nonetheless, ever since the Torah was given to us, every king of the idolaters, dominated by one aim and purpose, seeks and labors to overturn our religion by force, conquest, or the sword--e. g., Amalek, Sisera, Sennacherib, Nebuchadrezzar, Titus, Hadrian, and many others like unto them. This is the <sup>38</sup> first of the two types that sought to overcome the divine will.

The second type is made up of the sharp<sup>39</sup> minded of other kingdoms, the wise of other languages, like the Romans, ~~Brasils~~ <sup>40</sup> and Christians. These also made it their aim to destroy our religion and to demolish our Torah by the arguments which they level at it and the questions which they compose. The one end of their labors is to demolish the Torah and wipe out its traces--the identical end of the violent group in their wars. But neither this means nor the other will succeed, since the Holy One Blessed be He announced to us through Isaiah that the Creator will shatter the weapons--that they be of no avail--of the violent and the conquerors who would seek to to destroy our Torah and to make as naught our religion through weapons of war. This is figurative. But it im<sup>d</sup>plies that their plans will never be fulfilled. Similarly

*לפי הכח והעוצמה  
של כל המלכות*

*prsh*

any pleader who would seek to make as naught that which we have will find his plea reversed and come out of court adjudged guilty--His plea will not endure; it will be set aside. <sup>41</sup> As it is said: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their due reward from Me, saith the Lord."

(Is. 54:17) The idolaters bent on fulfilling these two goals realised full well that this structure cannot be demolished easily; nonetheless they allied themselves to destroy a religion whose foundations have been laid in great depth, and increase their toil and labor while the building endures in all its strength. In the meantime Truth ridicules them, laughs at them, that is to say, the Holy One Blessed be He, Who is <sup>42</sup> the Truth, ridicules them, laughs at them forasmuch as they in <sup>43</sup> the weakness of their intelligence aim at that which has no possibility of fulfillment.

When David perceived their plan to destroy the true religion, when he saw the Holy One Blessed be He laugh at them, <sup>44</sup> he, while inspired by the Holy Spirit, said: "Let us break <sup>45</sup> their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 'He that sitteth in heaven laugheth, the Lord hath them in derision.'" (Ps. 2:3-4)



By these two groups have we been tested and tried in the days of our independence and during part of our exile.

46

Later a new group arose--one that boasts of greatness--one that embittered our life more than the others, that is to say more than the violent and the argumentative. It conceived the possibility of destroying this nation in a new way, namely, by slyly declaring itself as possessed of a Mission to create a new religion--different than the Torah of Moses--and to announce abroad that both religions come from the Lord. Its real intent, however, was to create doubt and introduce confusion in our hearts: since both religions are dedicated to one God and still are contradictory--that would provide an entrance and gateway to destroy the Torah. This is indeed a marvelous device which this very wicked man uses.

47

For he seeks to slay an enemy by existing and when he (the enemy) grows weary he seeks to bring about his own as well as his enemy's death.

The first to devise this manoeuvre was Jesus of Nazareth, may his bones be ground. He was an Israelite; for although his father was a gentile and only his mother was a Jewess, we have the principle that if a gentile or a slave cohabit with a Jewess the child born of the union is a full-fledged Jew;

48

but we will fall him that (Nazarene, with the implication of, "Gentile") to emphasize his shame. He made people think that he was sent by God to explain the doubts in the Torah and that he was the Messiah predicted for us by every prophet and he interpreted the Torah in such manner as to invalidate the whole teaching and its commandments, and to permit all its prohibitions--a license which was his real goal. The sages, may their memory be for blessing, sensed his intention before his fame in the nation became established, and they did that which was proper for him. God had anticipated this through Daniel, namely, that a breaker and denier of the law will attempt to injure the Torah by boasting of the gift of prophecy, by introducing himself into weighty matters and saying that he is the Messiah, but that the Lord will make him stumble as he made Him to stumble. His words are: "also the children of the violent among the people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision." (Dan. 11:14)

Much later there arose a people descended from Esau a religion attributed to him who had never intended it, nor did it arise in his mind. That religion did not injure Israel in the least, neither did it beget doubts in the group nor among individuals, for its deficiencies became

apparent to them and it was cut off and perished through  
us until that happened to him which he merited.<sup>53</sup>

After him there arose a demented person and he followed  
the custom of changing our religion since he (i. e. Jesus)<sup>54</sup> made the breach. But he added another intention forasmuch  
as he pursued power and wished that peoples subject them-  
selves to him. In any event he innomated[a religion] which  
is now widely-known. *He breach made*

All the above wish naught but that their falsehoods  
should resemble the religion of God. But the divine work  
would resemble the human creation only in the eyes of a child  
who has no conception of either. And the difference bet-  
ween our religion and the other religions which desire to model  
themselves after us is like the difference between a living  
man who feels and the image which the artist carved from  
wood or poured from molten metal such as silver or gold or  
which he whiselled from rough stone such as marble and sim-  
ilar stone till he shaped and fashioned it in the image  
of a man. Only the fool who is ignorant of divine wisdom  
and of human artifice, upon seeing the image in its ex-  
ternal view--alike in structure and appearance, would sup-  
pose that it was made as man was made for he (the fool)  
knows not the interior of either. But the wise man who  
knows the interior of both knows that there is no per-  
fection of work in the interior of the image. He will  
also know that in the interior of men there are true won-

ders and devices which point to the wisdom of the Creator, may He be Blessed. [He will-conclude this] when he sees his nerves covered by flesh which is the cause of the voluntary movement of the limbs--called **فجر** in Arabic and **فجر** in the vernacular--of the body and their control, and the drawing of the tendons and their place of attachment, and the envelopes surrounding them, the quality of his growth, the structure of his members and limbs and the exit of his sinews that move sinews that do not move and their branchings and the arrangement of the respective parts, both external and internal, every single item in its respective measure, structure and place.

This obtains of a fool who does not know the secrets of Holy Scripture and the inner reasons of commandments: When such a one wishes to compare our religion to one that is forged or fabricated he supposes that there is similarity, even, identity between them: Since he finds prohibitions and permissions in the religion of God and finds them also in the forged or fabricated religion; since he finds various rites in the religion of God and finds sundry rites in the fabricated one; [since] the religion of the Lord has many positive and negative commands

and punishments and rewards as has the forged or fabricated one. But if he knew their implications he would know that the true, divine religion contains wisdom in itself, that it has no positive or negative commandment which has not within itself that which avails to bring the perfection of man and to remove flaws which prevent that perfection, that through them he may attain to heights in ethics and speculation,--the masses in accordance of their ability and the elite in accordance of their capacity-- and that, finally, through them there will come into being the divine community excellent and majestic which rests on these two kinds of perfection, that is to say, the first perfection, which, is man's continued existence in this world in the manner most becoming to him, and, the second, which, is the attainment of concepts as they are according to the power of man. It is also well-known that those religions which resemble our religion have no inwardness except stories and fancies which the imitator intended for his own glory that people may say about him that he is like this great man or the other. His errancy is patent to the wise; yea, it has become the object of laughter and ridicule-- like the antics of an ape who imitates the deeds of a man. The Creator has already pronounced this through Daniel, peace upon him, that this thing is destined to happen, and that in the latter days a man will arise and disclose a



religion which will resemble the true one, he will utter high-sounding words, he will say that the spirit of prophecy has descended upon him, that a book was given to him, that the Creator spoke with him and that he spoke with the Creator, and similar nonsense--in his garrulousness.<sup>58</sup>

These things Daniel predicted when he narrated the rise of the king of Edom. He (Daniel) compared the advent of the Demented One and his victories over the kings of Edom, Greece and Persia to a growing horn which grew long and big, as is evident to all from Scripture which was actually corroborated. These verses have no interpretation other than their simple meaning. For so he said: "I considered the horns and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots, and, behold, in this horn were eyes <sup>59</sup> like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." (Dan. 7:8) Now consider the wisdom of this allegory and you will perceive marvels. He said that he looked upon the young, growing horn, and while still wondering at its length and its having displaced three horns he noticed that the horn had eyes like <sup>60</sup> the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke great things. In other words this upstart will imagine a religion that

undant

that would resemble the divine religion, he will say that he is a prophet and utter much nonsense. Daniel made it clear that he will make it his aim to nullify and destroy the Torah which is in our hands, and that he will seek to replace it with another one. These are his words: "And he shall think to change the seasons and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and <sup>61</sup> times and half a time." (Dan. 7:25) At the same time the Creator, may He be Blessed, explained to Daniel that He will surely destroy him after his greatness and long reign--him, together with all that remained of the nations that preceded him.

These three opponents, namely, the Violent, the Argumentative, and the Imitative will all perish. If you see them at any time endowed with strength and might, you may be sure that that strength will not endure nor will that power last. For thus did the Creator may He be Blessed decree and promise us for all eternity that He will <sup>62</sup> remove and take away whatever Persecution of Wrath visits us. Of this, David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, assured us, while speaking in the language of the people which complains of the strength of the idolaters pitted against us, and the extension of their dominion over us since the beginning of our history. Despite all they cannot destroy us and wipe out our name, even though they pursue us and burden us with persecutions and dis-

criminatory decrees. For thus said David, peace upon him:  
 "Much have they afflicted me from my youth up", Let Israel now  
 say; much have they afflicted me from my youth up; but they  
 have not prevailed against me." (Ps. 129:1-2)

And now, ye, my brethren, know ye not that in the days  
 of the wicked Nebuchadrezzar they compelled Israel to wor-  
 ship idols and of those present only Daniel, Hananyah, Misha<sup>63</sup>el,  
 and Azariah were saved. But that in the end the Creator,  
 may He be Glorified, destroyed him, made his law perish and  
 truth return to its place? This also happened during the  
 days of the Second Temple when the wicked Greek kingdom  
 grew mighty and decreed the profanation of the Sabbath, the  
 cessation of the Covenant of circumcision, the inscription  
 on Israelites' garments of the legend that they have no share  
 in the Lord God of Israel<sup>64</sup>, and a similar legend on the horns<sup>65</sup>  
 of the ox, and compulsory plowing therewith.<sup>66</sup> They withstood  
 this decree for about fifty-two years.<sup>67</sup> After that the Holy  
 One, Blessed be He, made their dominion and laws perish al-  
 together. Similarly you will find our teachers saying in many  
 places that the wicked Greek kingdom once decreed destruction<sup>68</sup>  
 upon Israel, yet there was peace in Israel; thus and thus  
 did they decree upon them but afterward the Creator, Blessed  
 be He, invalidated that decree and made it as naught, and,  
 simultaneously destroyed and made as naught the decreer. They,  
 may their memory be for blessing, put it thus: A [discriminat-

69  
ory]decree is made to be invalidated. Long ago did the Holy One Blessed be He promised Jacob our Father, peace upon him, that though the nations subdue his progeny, afflict and overpower them they will remain and endure while they who enslave them will pass away and perish, as is said: "And ~~they~~ seed shall be as the dust of the earth." (Gen. 28:14) In other word<sup>s</sup>, though they are subject to treading and trampling like dust which all tread upon they will in the end grow strong and conquer. This holds true allegorically: The dust will in the end come upon those that tread it--it will endure  
70  
while those who trample it will not. Isaiah, peace upon him, made it clear and proclaimed it in the name of the Holy One Blessed be He that as long as this people is in exile anyone who wishes to overpower it and violate it  
so  
may do and succeed, but in the end the Holy One Blessed be He will send a deliverer and will remove its ills and pains, for thus he said: "A grievous vision is declared unto me; 'The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Edom! besiege, O  
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Media! All the sighing thereof have I made to cease.'  
(Is. 21:2) Likewise did the Creator assure us through His prophets that we will not perish, that He will not ex-

p/r

terminate us, and that we will always continue as a pious nation.

Just as the Holy One Blessed be He cannot cease to be so it is impossible that we perish and disappear from the world.

For thus He said: "For I the Lord change not; and ye, O Sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6) The Holy One

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Blessed be He also told and confided to us that it is impossible for him to spurn us entirely even though we anger Him and transgress His commandments. For thus is it written:

"If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:37) Exactly the same promise He made in the Torah through our Teacher Moses, peace upon him, for thus is it written: "And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them for I am the Lord their God." (Lev. 26:44)

Ye, our brethren, be strong and valiant and rely on these truthful scriptures, let not these Persecutions, though frequent frighten you, neither let the might of the enemy and the weakness of our nation terrify you. For the trials constitute a test to show your faith and love to the world; in times like these only the wise, who fear the Lord, they who are <sup>of</sup> the seed of Jacob, the pure, clean



seed of whom is said: "And among the remnant those whom<sup>74</sup> the Lord shall call" (Joel 3:5)---only those will adhere to the true religion. He explained that they were few, and that they are the ones whose ancestors stood on Mount Sinai, and heard the utterance from God ~~and~~ pledged themselves to the covenant, took upon themselves the commands and traditions and said: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do and hear," (Ex. 24:7) and assumed this duty for themselves as well as those who followed them for thus it is written: "unto us and to our children forever." (Dt. 29:28) Long ago did the Creator Blessed be He promise<sup>a</sup> us as ~~one~~ man stands surety for another--and His pledge is sufficient. He proclaimed that all who stood on Mount Sinai believe in the prophecies of our Teacher Moses, in everything that was revealed through him--they, their children, and children's children forever, for thus said the Holy One Blessed be He: "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever." (Ex. 19:19) Therefore, it is obvious that he who departed from the religion given at that Stand is not of the seed of those men. And thus said our teachers, may their memory be for blessing,-concerning him who doubts Prophecy--that his ancestors did not stand<sup>75</sup> at Mount Sinai. May the Lord deliver us and deliver you

from doubt and remove from us and from you the thoughts that lead to doubt and stumbling.

Therefore, brethren in Israel who are scattered at the ends of the earth, you should strengthen one another; let the adults fortify and stimulate the young<sup>7</sup>, the elite--the masses that your people may be united in a true cause which will never change or be frustrated, and to affirm boldly a faith that will never fail or be destroyed. You are to proclaim abroad that the Holy One Blessed be He is one and unlike other unities, to proclaim that Moses is His prophet<sup>76</sup> who spoke with him, that he is master of all prophets more perfect than all others, that he attained from the Holy One Blessed be He that which no other prophet, former or latter had attained, that the book of the Torah from "In the beginning" to "in the sight of all Israel" was spoken by the Creator may He be Blessed to our teacher Moses, as is said,<sup>77</sup> "with him do I speak mouth to mouth", (Nu. 12:8) that it can never be frustrated, changed, or diminished, that no other Torah will come from the Lord, nay, not even a positive or<sup>78</sup> negative commandment. Also remember your Stand at Mount Sinai where the Holy One Blessed be He enjoined us always to remember Him, warned us not to forget Him, and commanded us to teach Him to our children that they may grow up on

His instruction. As is said: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but make them known unto thy children and thy children's children; the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb." (Dt. 4:9-10) It is proper, brethren, that you rear your children on that Great Stand, that you relate in gatherings and meetings its greatness and majesty for that is the pillar upon which Faith is based, and the argument that leads to truth, and that you magnify this Stand over every greatness as the Holy One Blessed be He magnified it, as is said: "For ask now of the days past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon earth.... Did ever a people hear the voice of God?..... (Dt. 4:32-34)  
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Realize O, brethren, this Covenant and this Faith, for this astounding phenomenon was actually seen and attested by the best of witness--realize that nothing like it preceded it, and that nothing like it will follow it, namely, that an entire nation should hear the word of the Holy One Blessed be He, and should see His glory eye to eye. This event took place that our Faith should be so fortified that no vicissitudes will affect it, that through it truth should reach us, that our  
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feet may be firmly planted so that we will not falter in our steps in times like these when Wrath and Persecution are renewed upon Jews, when the hands of the violent grow mighty, for thus it is written: "Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not." (Ex. 20:20) That is to say, that He revealed Himself to them in this manner that ye may endure all the trials that may come upon you in later days, that your hearts will not move and ye will not sin. And you, brethren, be firm in your Covenant, adhere to your religion, and conduct yourselves, according to, and remain in, your faith.

King Solomon, peace upon him, compared us to a most beautiful woman, without blemish, as is said: "Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee." (Cant. 4:7) He compared other faiths and speculations that wish to draw her to themselves and turn her to their beliefs to wicked men addicted to lewdness who seduce virtuous women to their ugly desires. So it happened to us with those who delude us and lure us to their religions in the hope that we get caught and entangled in the thickets of their wantonness and the branches of their falsehoods. Then in His wisdom he continued, and gave the substance of the nation's reply, as if she were arguing with those who wish to seduce her and to show

them that her reasoning is superior to theirs: "Wherefore, do ye take hold of me? Can you show me a dance of two companies?" (Cant. 7:1) In other words, the nation argues with them, saying: Show me something proximate to the Stand on Mount Sinai where the camp of God and the camp of Israel faced each other, that I might take your counsel! This incident is allegorized in the verse, "Return, return O Shulamith; Return, return that we may look upon thee. What will you see in the Shulamith? As it were a dance of two companies?" (Cant. 7:1) The interpretation of Shulamit is "perfect, pious," and the "dance of two companies" is the rejoicing at the Stand at Mount Sinai. For there stood the Camp of Israel, as is said: "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount;" (Ex. 19:17) and the camp of God, as is said: "The chariots of God are myriads, even thousands upon thousands, the Lord is among them, as in Sinai in holiness." (Ps. 68:18)

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Observe the wisdom of the allegory and its secret, for it repeats the word, "Return" four times in one verse to indicate that we will be pressed four times to leave our religion by each one of the four kingdoms in the last of which we are now situate. The Holy One Blessed be He promised us in His Torah and told us that they will compel us to adhere to

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their opinion as is said: "And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell." (Dt. 4:28) Nevertheless this will not obtain in the whole world and the Torah will never be destroyed. He promised and said: "for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed." (Dt. 31:21) He explained to us through the Bringer of Glad Tidings, Isaiah, the token between ourselves and Him, may He be Blessed, and the proof positive that we will not perish is the existence of the Torah of the Lord and His word among us, as is said: "And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord from henceforth and forever." (Is. 59:21) Nay more, our people boasted before the Holy One Blessed be He in that she endures the distress of Persecutions and bears the troubles that are come trooping upon her, as is written: "Nay, but for Thy sake are we killed all the day." (Ps. 44:23) That refers to a generation in Persecution.

Truly we are to rejoice in that we suffer and bear the troubles, loss of money, exile, and damage of property for all that is as an ornament to us and a great honor before

our Creator. Whoever falls victim in such persecutions is regarded as a perfect offering upon the altar, as He said to us: "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord (for every man hath been against his son and against his brother) <sup>85</sup> that He may also bestow upon you a blessing this day." (Ex. 32:29)

It is, therefore, proper that they flee and pursue the Lord, that they enter wildernesses and places where there is no settlement; that they should not grieve over the separation from their intimates; neither should they pity their <sup>86</sup> loss of money, for all of this is a small and trifling compared to the king, the king of kings, the Holy One Blessed be He who rules all, this revered and awful God, who is faithful in compensating well in this world and in the other.

Indeed we find the pure saints pursuing the truth and attaining it in this manner: They flee to the religion of God from the distant ends of the earth and they strive to go to the places of the pious that they might increase the light of the Torah, that they might receive reward from the Holy One Blessed be He for this effort.

How is it possible that a man spurn not and abhor not the land of his birth and the members of his family for the Torah which is complete in its perfection? For observe

when the average man cannot earn a living in one place so that it becomes impossible for him to live there he goes elsewhere. How much the more reason is there for him to go to another place when he can find no room for his Torah and his Faith in God. Let not him, who mayhap is in no position to leave, transgress and openly violate the Sabbath, eat forbidden foods and unconcernedly regard himself as free from the yoke of the Torah; for no one of Jacob's seed can ever deliver or rid himself of the Torah--neither he nor his children nor his children's children~~whether~~ whether it meet with his wishes or not. Moreover, he is punished for every positive commandment he failed to perform; and he is also punished for every negative commandment he transgressed. Let him, who breaks serious commandments, not suppose that he will go scot-free for violating lesser ones and, hence, give himself up to them. For Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, may his bones be ground, is punished for the Calves with which he sinned and made Israel sin as well as for violating the commandment of the Succah on Succoth. This principle is fundamental in Torah and religion: Learn it and draw analogies therefrom!

Regarding that which you mentioned concerning the  
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transgressor, who introduced into the hearts of the people

the notion that ~~אֱלֹהִים~~ <sup>אֱלֹהִים</sup>, (Gen. 17:20) "He shined forth from Paran", (Dt. 33:2) "A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me", <sup>89</sup> (Dt. 18:15) and, finally, His promise to Ishmael: "And I will make him a great nation" <sup>90</sup> (Gn. 17:20) refer to the Demented One--let me say--that these notions, despite their frequent use, had been set aside and refuted by many. It is generally agreed that not only are they weak, but that <sup>laughable</sup> ~~this~~ is even absurd to draw inferences from them--in fact, they are <sup>that</sup> notions/bring doubt to no one--not even to the unlettered populace. Nay more, the very transgressors who toy with them do not believe in them--give them no credence whatever. Their one purpose in spreading these notions is to prove themselves to <sup>the</sup> gentiles, to prove to them that they are believers. Nevertheless, his assertion, that the Demented One is alluded to in the <sup>Bible</sup> ~~Talmud~~, is disgraceful. <sup>90a</sup> Especially since the Ishmaelites themselves, who do not believe in these evidences, do not acknowledge them, and do not credit them as proof, were compelled, — because even with the wildest of interpretations they could not attach themselves to a single verse, were compelled to argue that we altered readings in the Torah to drag the name of that person ~~out~~ out of it. They could find no more likely argument to resort to, even though that argument is the height of presumption, and

its invalidity is apparent to the unlettered populace, let alone, the educated. For the Torah was translated into  
91 92 93  
Aramean, Persian, Greek, and Latin many centuries before that empty individual arose. Moreover, it was transmitted from generation to generation, from east to west; yet not change was discovered in it, not even in minutiae--not even  
94 95  
between a Kamez hatuf and a Kubuz was there found a variant. They had to resort to this weak argument, however, because they found no ambiguity in the Bible.

expression  
The ~~interpretation~~ of "I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 17:20) does not imply greatness in Torah or Prophecy; it may refer to numerical greatness since the words, "great and mighty nations" have been used to denominate  
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idolaters.

Likewise, with regard to  $\text{וְאֶת בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ}$ , if the meaning were that a certain individual will come forth from him he would have said: "I will bless him  $\text{וְאֶת בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ}$ "; then it might have been possible for the contender to depend on this strand of cobweb and say that its meaning is: "I will bless him by making that person or individual spring from his seed." But since he said  $\text{וְאֶת בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ}$  after he said "and I will increase" it is clear that it merely implies numerical increase.



For, behold, the Holy One Blessed be He, explained in the Torah to Abraham, our Father, peace upon him, that all the blessings which He promised, and that all the distinctions which he conferred by the endowment of commandments and the separation of his progeny were intended solely for the descendants of Isaac--and not for those of the other, [namely, Ishmael.] He, [Ishmael], is subordinate to, and dependent upon, the blessing of Isaac, as is said: "And also the son of the hand-woman I will make a nation because he is thy seed." (Gen. 21:13) It is clear from this that Isaac was primary and the other--accessory. Especially since he stated explicitly: "for in Isaac shall seed be called to thee." (Gen. 21:12) Even if we agree that Ishmael's descendants will be numerous, [we must submit] that they will not be virtuous, nor will they be endowed with that grace of human perfection through which you, [Abraham,] will become known and famous. Your virtue, indeed, will become known through your virtuous seed, namely, the seed that comes from Isaac. That is the meaning of *לְךָ*, as is said: "And my name and the name of my ancestors will be mentioned through them," (Gen. 48:16) that is to say, become known and famous [through them.]

After that He announced ~~that~~ the promise to establish the covenant and law of the Creator--as He <sup>told Isaac</sup> ~~intended~~, indeed, concerning <sup>h</sup> said ~~to~~ his children: "And I will be their God." (Gen. 17:8; Jer. 31:32) Then he singled out Isaac and set him

aside from Ishmael by all these blessings as we had explained and singled him out in a covenant, as is said: "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac." (Gen. 17:21) After He had announced to Isaac with regard to Ishmael: "behold, I have blessed him!" (Gen. 17:20) He added that in all these blessings He set Jacob apart from Esau. That, indeed, is the significance of Isaac's remark, "and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee." (Gen. 28:3) It thus becomes clear that Isaac is singled out, and after him is Jacob, in that most excellent Torah which the Holy One Blessed be He promised Abraham will endure among his descendants. Similarly, we find the prophet, peace upon him, give thanks to the Holy One Blessed be He for this great good, for thus it is written: "The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac and He established it unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant." (Ps. 105:9-10)

And now I will discuss *זהו שם* from which the Ishmaelites derive that the name Mohammed is mentioned in the Torah--a derivation which the transgressor<sup>98</sup> utilizes for his own ends, declaring that this is the meaning of the statement in the Torah. His name, however, is not Mohammed but<sup>99</sup> Ahmed, as is shown by the Writ of the falsifiers (which is

called Evangelion.) And the numerical value of  $\text{א/א א/א א}$  does not tally with  $\text{א נ נ/כ}$  which, they suppose is written in the Torah.

And now I will discuss his interpretation of "He shined forth from Mount Paran." (Dt. 33:2) The verb in that sentence is obviously preterit. Had the text read "He will shine forth", then might the contender have seized upon it, and, incidentally, exposed himself to ridicule. But the reading "He shined forth" shows it to refer to a matter that has happened. Here is the real meaning of the passage: It relates the Stand at Mount Sinai and explains that when He, [the Lord], revealed Himself he did not come upon Sinai directly from the heavens as do the meteorites; instead, He appeared, stage by stage, moving over the mountains from hill-top to hill-top till he descended on Mount Sinai. Hence it says: "The Lord came from Sinai, And rose from Seir unto them; He stirred forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads holy, at His right hand was a fiery law unto them." (Dt. 33: 2) It is clear that, in the passage, He favors Israel. Observe how well He arranged it: Concerning Paran which is farthest away He said: "shined forth"; concerning

Seir which is closer--"rose"; but concerning Sinai whither He went and where the Glory rested as is proved by "And the Glory of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai," (Ex. 24:16)--"from Sinai He came." <sup>102</sup> This manner of gradual, mount-by-mountain Revelation is confirmed by Deborah's account of the Stand at Mount Sinai: "Lord when Thou didst go forth out of Seir, when Thou didst march out of the field of Edom, the Earth trembled, the heavens also dropped, yea, the clouds dropped water." (Jg. 5:4) Our interpretation of the verse also agrees with that of the sages, may their memory be for blessing, who said that--before He sent our teacher Moses--the Holy One Blessed be He sent a prophet to Edom to teach them the Torah but they did not wish to receive it; He also sent [one] to Ishmael and showed it, [i. e. the Torah], but they did not receive it; whereupon He sent our teacher Moses to us and we did receive it, saying: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do and obey." (Ex. 24:7) In any event the events [referred to in the verse under discussion] occurred before the Giving of the Torah. Consequently the words [of that verse] refer to past event; "He came, He rose, He shined forth" do not allude to the future. <sup>103</sup>

And now I come to the proof brought from "A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken,"

(Dt. 18:15)--a proof which, you have given me to understand has caused some to doubt, and that only the use of the words, "from the midst of thee" has held back others from doubting. You have given me to understand that were it not for the phrase "from the midst of thee" all would have been satisfied with this last proof. With regard to the above please give careful heed to what I am about to say: Know that no one should take a word from a unified and integrated passus to use it as proof, basing oneself upon it; but one should examine what precedes and follows that passus. In other words, one should examine that which preceded the word from the beginning, through the length of the passage, until the end, before one may venture to use the given word. Only thus could one ascertain the intended meaning of the writer and draw evidence therefrom. For it is not proper to deduce evidence from a word cut off from the preceding and the following. If this were permissible it might be argued that the Holy One Blessed be He warned us that we should not hearken to the prophet since it is written; "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet." (Dt. 13:4) We might also say that the Holy One Blessed be He commanded us to worship idols, God forbid, for it is written "...serve other Gods and worship them," (Dt. 11:16) and many other similar examples could. The futility of such a procedure is



obvious. For under no circumstances may we draw proof from  
and character  
any verse until the meaning/of the entire passage be under-  
stood. Now in coming to this verse, "a prophet...from the  
midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me", (Dt. 18:15)  
that, pertaining to the idea, which precedes and follows  
must be examined and grasped, and [then, let me assure you],  
all doubts will disappear. Here is the explanation of the  
passus: At the beginning of the section we were admonished  
not to engage in divination, in soothsaying, in astrology,  
in sorcery, in charms, and similar pursuits by means of which  
the nations suppose they can predict events which have not  
yet occurred, and act accordingly. When[He,] may He be Blessed,  
admonished us against these practices, he told us that all  
the nations suppose that they know what will happen by means  
of these devices--all, excepting us, who will not need to  
resort to them. You, he told us, will know it through a  
prophet that I will bring forth to apprise you of the future,  
you will believe his words, he will err in naught he says,  
and thus you will know the future without divinations, charms,  
consultations of stars, or similar practices. Then he explained  
to us that this privilege will be granted to us without any  
special effort on our part. He said that the prophet He will  
send us will come "from your midst" that it should not be nec-  
essary for us to run to and fro after him--from city to city,  
for long distances. This, then, is the meaning of "from the

midst of thee." After that he promised us something else: Since he will be nigh unto you and from the midst of you he will also be from Israel, that this virtue, namely, foreknowledge, be solely yours. With this in mind he added to the above the words "like unto me," lest it occur to you, that since it is written "of thy brethren," the prophet might conceivably be from Esau or Ishmael, for we find written concerning Esau, "Thus saith thy brother, Israel." (Nu. 20:14) Because of that he had to say "like unto me", that is from the sons of Jacob.

106

In this passage, "like unto me" does not mean like him in prophetic rank, for he had already said: "And there hath arisen no prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." (Dt. 34:10) This last verse occurs in the passage under discussion, where we read: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, a soothsayer, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that consulteth a ghost or a familiar spirit, or a necromancer...Thou shalt be whole hearted with the Lord thy God...the Lord thy God has not suffered thee so to do....A prophet from the midst of thee, of thy

brethren, like unto me. (Dt. 18:10-11,13-15) It thus becomes clear that this prophet which he promised is not one who will give a new Torah or new commandments, but one who will help us dispense with diviners and soothsayers--with the whole of astrology; we will ask of him what will happen to us as the nations of the earth are wont to ask their soothsayers and diviners. Thus, [to cite an example of Jewish practice,] we find Saul inquiring of Samuel about his loss. (1 Sam. 9:6)

And now, [let me say] that the reason we do not believe in the prophecies of <sup>107</sup>Zaid and <sup>108</sup>Omar is not that they are non-Israelites, as the unlettered populace supposes--compelling us to emphasize the words, "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren"--for, behold, <sup>109</sup>Job, <sup>110</sup>Zophar, <sup>111</sup>Bildad, <sup>112</sup>Eliphaz, and <sup>113</sup>Elihu are regarded <sup>114</sup>by us as prophets even though they are not Israelites. At the same time, Hananiah the son of Azur is a false <sup>115</sup>prophet, though he is an Israelite. <sup>116</sup>No; we believe in a prophet not because the accident of descent, but, rather, because of his prophecy. Here is the essence of the whole matter: Our teacher Moses, the master of all prophets, with whom we heard God speak, in whom and whose prophecy we believed, and to whom we said: "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord

our God may say; and thou shalt speak unto us all the Lord our God may speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it," (Dt. 5:24)--told us that no commandments remained in heaven, that there is no faith or law other than the one that was to be given, as is said: It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say: 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?'<sup>117</sup> (Dt. 30:12) And he admonished us to add or to diminish naught in this Torah, as is said: "thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it," (Dt. 13:1) and he obligated us, our children, and children's children to believe in this Torah till the end of all generations as is written: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Dt. 29:28) Therefore, a prophet, --be he priest, Levite or Amalekite/-who arises and declares that the validity of any one commandment of the Torah has ceased, does, by virtue of this act, deny and give the lie to the prophecy of our master Moses, who said: "unto us and to our children forever;" and therefore, we will deny him and slay him if we can, and will not heed his miracles as we would

not heed those of a prophet who suggests the worship of idols, for thus we read: "If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet...and he give thee a sign or a wonder... thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet... [he] shall be put to death." (Dt. 13:2-6) For our teacher Moses, peace upon him, told us, "you shall never worship idols;" hence, we know that this token which the pseudo-prophet produced in the name of the idol, he produced with the aid of secret arts and witchcraft. Likewise, Moses, peace upon him, said<sup>118</sup> that the Torah will endure forever. We may therefore infer that that prophecy which declares the Torah to have been given for a limited time was uttered by a false prophet, inasmuch as it presumes to contradict the teaching of Moses. We will therefore not ask him for a sign or wonder, and if he did perform one we will not heed it, though we suppose it to be a veritable wonder. For our faith in Moses did not spring from the performance of miracles that we should on that account be obligated to compare the miracle of this prophet to the miracle of our teacher Moses. But we believed in him, [that is, in Moses,] because we heard the Command as he heard it; and on that account we came to place in him a perfect, enduring faith, as is said: "and may also believe thee for ever." (Ex. 19:9)



In the case of Moses our teacher<sup>h</sup> we are like two witnesses who testified that they saw a certain incident,--each of them knows definitely that what the other testifies is true, and they need not adduce evidence for their testimony before the mass of the people. Similarly, we, the community of Israel, know the truthfulness of Moses our teacher because we saw him at the Stand at Mount Sinai and not because of the miracles[which he performed.] [ This does not mean that he did not perform many miracles;] but those that he performed, he performed as the exigencies of the time demanded--as is explained in the Torah. And because of this great principle--one that is often  
119  
forgotten by our people-- we do not believe in miracles as we believe in our teacher Moses, yea, our faith in the two is not at all equal. For this reason, Solomon, peace upon him, speaking as if he were the people of Israel, said: "Can you show the Shulammitte aught like the dance of two companies?" (Cant. 7:1); this is in the nature of a challenge: can you arrange aught that would resemble the Stand at Mount Sinai?<sup>120</sup> Consequently, if a prophet arise in Israel or other nations, summon men to the religion of our teacher Moses, taking care neither to add thereto or diminish thereof, and resembling in this respect Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, we will ask for a miracle; if he produce one we will believe in him and give him prophet-

ic rank; but if he be found wanting in that any one of his predictions will fail, we will execute him. Now <sup>c</sup>since a prophet may lie, why, then, do we believe him after he produces a miracle? Because of God's command: He told us through Moses that two witnesses testifying to anything should be regarded as probably honest, though, conceivably, they might be in collusion, and judgment should be given on the basis of their testimony; similarly, He enjoined us to heed a prophet who <sup>121</sup>performs a sign or a miracle, and whose acts fit his utterances--though his declarations may be false. But He added that there are matters which we should not accept through the medium of prophecy; these are declarations which contradict the prophecy of our teacher, Moses, peace upon him.

At the beginning of ~~our~~ <sup>my</sup> great work--the Commentary <sup>122</sup>on the Mishnah--I discuss Prophetic Procedure at some length. There you may also learn those great principles which serve as the foundation of the Torah and the pillars of faith. And you are to know that as no additions or diminutions are permissible in the Torah of Moses, namely, the Scriptures, no additions or diminutions are permissible in its accepted interpretation, namely, the Oral Law, which has been transmitted through the generations by the sages.

And now I will turn to the discussion of the Calculation of the End and Rabbi Saadiah's contribution to the subject:

First of all, know, that it is impossible for any man ever to know the End, as Daniel put it: "for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end." (Dan. 12:9) Long ago did the prophet anticipate its numerous representations by sages and their belief that they had ascertained it; he said: "many shall come to and fro, knowledge shall be increased, " (Dan. 12:4) meaning that opinions and notions concerning it [will increase]. Thus did the Holy One Blessed be He inform us through His prophets that some will calculate the year of the Messiah, nonetheless, will the years pass, and naught will happen. But He also told us not to be concerned because of it, nor to be downcast if their calculations do not prove to be right; nay, the longer the delay, the stronger should wax our hopes: "for the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it declareth of the end, and doth not lie; though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay." (Hab. 2:3) Know that even the Appointed Time which the Holy One Blessed be He set definitely, namely, the length of the Egyptian Exile, as is said: "and [they] shall serve; and they shall afflict them four hundred years," (Gen. 15:13) [was

<sup>123</sup>  
uncertain.] Some supposed that the four hundred years began when our father Jacob came down to Egypt; others supposed that they began with the year of subjection, namely, seventy years after the death of Jacob; <sup>124</sup> still others supposed that they began at the moment the prophecy was transmitted to our father Abraham at the Stand of Division. (Gen. 16:10) Indeed, upon the arrival of the four hundredth year after the Stand of Division some Israelites ventured to leave Egypt thirty years before our teacher Moses arose, supposing that the Appointed time had come; but the Egyptians slew them and increased the burdens of the <sup>125</sup> rest. Of this incident we are informed by our Sages. Concerning these men who erred in their calculations, supposed that Redemption has come, and left, David said: "The children of Ephraim were as archers handling the bow, that turned back in the day of battle." <sup>126</sup>  
(Ps. 78:9) But the real Appointed Time came four hundred years after Isaac, the seed of Abraham, was born, as is said: "for in Isaac shall seed be called to thee." <sup>127</sup> (Gen. 21:12) And He, may He be Blessed, also said: "thy seed shall be a stranger in a land

that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." (Gen. 15:13); and during the exile they will lord it over them and weary them. The four hundred years of the verse refer, then, not to subjugation but to sojourning. But this did not become clear until the great prophet arose, and it was discovered that from the day of Isaac's birth till the departure from Egypt there were exactly four hundred  
128 years. From the uncertainty of this Appointed Time you may draw an *ad majorem* for the long Appointed Time, the length of which frightened, terrified the prophets, so that one asked anxiously: "Wilt Thou be angry with us forever? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?" (Ps. 85:6) When Isaiah was describing this  
129 Exile he said: "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the dungeon, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they  
130 be punished." (Is. 24:22) Daniel also told us of the secret and hidden character of this Appointed Time. Hence, did the sages, may their memory be for blessing, forbid the calculation of Qetzim for the coming of the Messiah, lest the untutored masses stumble on account of it and go astray--after seeing that the Appointed Times have come, but he [the Messiah] has not. With that in mind



the sages, may their memory be for blessing, said: "May  
the calculators of Ends <sup>131</sup>perish for they prove a stumbling-  
block to the people. For that reason, the sages prayed  
concerning them that their opinions be blown away and  
their calculations be confused. <sup>132</sup>

Nevertheless, we judge Saadiah in the scale of merit  
because of the motive which led him to these calculations.  
He knew well enough that the Torah had forbidden these  
calculations. <sup>133</sup> But his contemporaries had many corrupt  
notions, and he feared that the Torah was in ~~xx~~ danger  
of perishing unless drastic measures were taken. <sup>134</sup> He felt  
that he might raise the morale of the populace--encourage  
them and raise their hopes--through a calculation of the  
Appointed Time. Needless to say that in all his deeds  
he meant well; <sup>may</sup> nor we murmur at him for having erred in  
his calculations since his purpose was what I indicated. <sup>135</sup>

I note that you anticipate his coming on the basis  
of astrological computations and astral conjunctions--  
past and future. Remove all of that from your heart,  
clean your mind of it, wash your understanding thereof  
as people are wont to scour dirt from garments. For these  
bear a species of testimony that carries no weight among

wise men--even those who have not received the Torah; let  
136  
137 alone those who have. The dangers lurking in such fan-  
138 cles can be made clear by rational arguments. But this is  
not the place to go into them. You may listen, however,  
to something which has been written concerning this  
139 matter.

Know that when our teacher Mosès, peace upon him,  
arose, all astrologers unanimously declared that this  
nation will never attain to any standing, and that it  
140 will never be relieved of the yoke of slavery. Yet,  
in that moment when they, [that is, the astrologers]  
supposed that they, [that is, the people of Israel]  
were on the very lowest rung [of the ladder,] the  
brightest splendor began to shine upon them and the  
choicest of the human species was born unto them. At  
the very moment that they, [that is, the astrologers,]  
were all united in believing that the climate of Egypt  
is invigorating and fattening, and its inhabitants regard-  
themselves as living in the utmost security, the plagues  
141 came upon them. As Isaiah put it when he was relating  
142 this incident: "Where are they, then, thy wise men?  
And let them tell thee now; and let them know what the

what the Lord of hosts hath purposed concerning  
Egypt.<sup>143</sup> \*

This also happened to the kingdom of Nebuchadrezzar: At the very time that all its astrologers, wise men, and those who deemed themselves wise proclaimed unanimously that it [i. e. Babylon] then stood at the beginning of its greatness and that its power would grow stronger daily, at that very time the kingdom perished as the Holy One Blessed be He predicted. Indeed, Isaiah ridiculed those who deemed themselves wise and boasted of their wisdom and the people which supposed that in their midst there dwelt wise men whose wisdom availed them. He said: "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; let now the astrologers, the star gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee." (Is. 47:13)

A similarly unexpected turn of events will take place in the days of the Messiah, may he soon reveal himself. For at that time will the idolaters suppose that this

people, [namely, Israel,] will never have dominion, never be redeemed from their slavery; nay more all wise men and all diviners will be unanimous in this opinion; yet, at that very time will the Messiah reveal himself. For thus said Isaiah in discussing this matter: "That frustrateth the tokens of the impostors and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers; that saith of Jerusalem:<sup>145</sup> 'She shall be inhabited.'" (Is. 44:25-26) And of the cities of Judah: 'they shall be built and I will raise up the waste places thereof.'" (Ibid)

This is the true faith which the community of Israel holds.<sup>146</sup> Give no heed, therefore to utterances concerning major and minor conjunctions.<sup>147</sup>

I understood you to say that in your land wisdom has decreased, nay, disappeared altogether, and that you attribute its disappearance to a conjunction in the earthy trigon.<sup>148</sup>

Know, then, that the lessening of wisdom and the diminution of understanding is not unique to your land but is general in Israel. It is something which the prophet predicted in the name of the Holy One Blessed be He: "Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvellous work among <sup>i</sup>ths people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the prudence of their prudent men shall be hid."

(Is. 29:14) Yet neither the earthy nor the fiery trigon account for this state of affairs. For Solomon, king of Israel, concerning whom it has been said: "For he was wiser than all men," (1Ki:5:11) lived in the midst of an earth<sup>y</sup>~~ly~~ trigon. Likewise, our father Abraham, peace upon him, who was the Pillar of the world, who discovered and taught the First Cause to the wise, and who laid the foundation for the unity of all mankind; also Isaac and Jacob, who, [together with Abraham] carried the throne of glory in their hearts, for concerning them the rabbis said: The Patriarchs are the Chariot, as is said: "And God went up from him." <sup>149</sup>--lived



in the midst of an earthy triad.

The above becomes evident after the folloing<sup>W</sup>  
explanation: A minor<sup>i</sup> conjunction, that is, the  
conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter<sup>150</sup> at any given  
point recurs at intervals of approximately  
twenty years.<sup>151</sup> In other words, [Saturn and Jupit-  
er] make twelve conjunctions in a given trigon  
during two hundred and forty years. After  
that their conjunction will take place in  
another trigon; and this conjunction of Re-  
moval [from one trigon to another] which<sup>152</sup>  
occurs every two hundred and forty years  
is called the intermediate conjunction. Ac-  
cording to this reckoning, nine hundred  
and sixty years will elapse from the time  
Saturn and Jupiter join in, let us say,  
the first part of the Ram until they re-  
join in the identic place. That rejoining  
is denominated the major conjunction. Now  
if you will take the trouble to calculate  
the chronology you will see that Abraham, Isaac,  
and Jacob, and David and Solomon lived under the  
earthy trigon.

I discussed this subject at some length in order that you remove from your heart that [fallacious] notion that the trigon wields power.

You have also said that certain persons calculated the coming conjunction and discovered that the seven planets will join under one sign of the zodiac. But this is erroneous. For a seven-fold junction is impossible in the next and all the following conjunctions. Obviously it is a statement made by one who cannot reckon correctly; this becomes even more evident from the assertion that the Flood resulted from air and dust.

Know, then, that these and similar utterances are totally false. Do not regard them as true because you find them written in books. For the liar who lies with his tongue can do so with his pen and there is nothing to prevent him. They are stupid fools who regard that which is written as, ipso facto, valid evidence. For on grounds other than these are we to give credence to opinions.

Know, then, that as the sightless saves

himself by leaning upon the seeing and following him, since he knows that he has no eyes that would show him the right way; and as the sick who does not know the art of healing, delivers himself [from his plight] by obeying the advice of the physician who guides and directs, forasmuch as he, [i. e. the patient] cannot distinguish between the medicines that kill and the medicines that heal he listens to his <sup>[the physician's]</sup> advice; so is it proper for the unlettered populace to rely upon the prophets who are endowed with keen eyes. Their teaching that the one opinion is false and the other true should suffice for them, [i. e. for the populace]. Next in rank to the prophets come the sages who <sup>day and night</sup> examine and investigate opinions and views to distinguish between the true and the false. After these prefatory remarks you can understand that all statements of the type you mentioned contain no truth whatever. He who <sup>utters</sup> ~~says~~ them is a fool or a scoffer or one who seeks to destroy the Torah and undermine its walls. Indeed, their

assertion that the Flood came from the air, from the dust, is a fine example of their impudence. Soon they might say that it came from fire. The supposition that the Flood did not come from the truthful Judge, as punishment to the inhabitants of the earth for their many sins, as He told us in His Upright Book which delivers from error but from the Watery conjunction<sup>154a</sup> is merely dissembling and deception calculated to lead believers astray. Proceeding from their hypothesis, Sodom and its suburbs were not destroyed because of their rebellion and treachery as Scripture explained: "I will go <sup>now</sup> down, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me." (Gen. 18:21) Similarly any visible act that emanates from the Creator may He be Blessed is with them a necessary consequence of the conjunctions of planets. These notions are only preliminaries, in that they aim first to destroy therewith the principles of religion that thereafter they may surrender to the desires and longings of their animal spirits like unto

beasts or female ostriches.

Because of these notions, the Holy One Blessed be He warned us in the Torah and told us that if you will provoke Me, calamities will befall you on account of your sin. If you suppose that these come upon you accidentally, and that your blasphemy is not the cause of the calamities, I will increase the 'accidents', yea, double them. For thus is written in the Admonition: "And if ye walk contrary unto Me and will not hearken unto Me; I will bring seven times more<sup>155</sup> plagues upon you according to your sins." "ק" means that which is unintentional. Thus He means to say that if you regard calamities as accidental He will increase these 'accidents' seven-fold.

From what I said you will know that the coming of the Messiah is not at all dependent upon the signs in the stars.

Sometime ago one of the clever Spaniards composed a book concerning the End, based on the courses of the stars. In it he predicted that the Messiah would reveal himself in a certain year. All of our pious sages ridiculed



his prediction and put him in the category of the mentally defective. But reality dealt with him even more severely, mocked him more than we did; for at the very time that he predicted that the Messiah would reveal himself the intruder and  
156 157  
rebel rose in the lands of Maghreb. This incident makes matters very unpleasant for the  
158  
professors of that 'science.'

Does exile drive us to such extremities? 159  
popular  
(He refers to the success that these messianic calculators have.) But, of course, a drown-  
160  
ing person clutches at a straw.

Brethren, be strong and courageous and hearten all who wait for the Lord. Uphold one another and root yourselves in the faith that the Redeemer, may he soon appear, is sure to come. Strengthen weak hands and brace tottering knees!

Know that the Holy One Blessed be He told us through Isaiah, Israel's announcer of glad tidings, that many, on account of the length and bitterness of the exile, will suppose that He had deserted us, turned,--God forbid--His gracious countenance from us. With this in

mind, He assured us that He will not leave us, nor forget us although "Zion said: 'the Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me.' (Is. 49:14) He asked: "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Is. 49:15) Through the first prophet, peace upon him, God told us this: "For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not fail thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them..." (Dt. 4:31) "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whithersoever the Lord thy God hath scattered thee." (Dt. 30:3)

161

One of the great principles of the faith of Israel is that a descendant of Solomon who will gather our dispersion, take away our reproach and exile, ~~and~~ reveal the true faith and destroy all who rebel at His word, will surely arise. This did the Holy One Blessed be He promise us

in His Torah: "I see him, but not now; I behold him but not nigh; there shall step forth a star out of Judah and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite through the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Seth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also, even his enemies, shall be a possession; <sup>h</sup> while Israel doeth valiantly." (Nu. 24:17, 18) Great ills will befall Jews at the time of his appearance as is said: "[For the Lord will judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants;] when He seeth that their stay is gone, and there is none remaining, shut up or left at large." (Dt. 32:36) Only then will God <sup>e</sup> reval him and complete that which He has promised. The prophet, upon viewing the time when the Redeemer will appear, is amazed: "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap... (Mal. 3:2) The foregoing is the truth concerning this matter in which we believe.

The character of the antecedents of that time was explained by Daniel, Isaiah, and other teachers: <sup>162</sup> Before he will come the power of Edom and Arabia will grow mighty, their dominion will

spread to the ends of the world--as it indeed does to-day. There can be no doubt concerning the above, and the Lord is not one to change His promises.

Daniel juxtaposed the coming of the Redeemer to the kingdom of Ishmael and the rise of <sup>163</sup> Mohammed. <sup>earnest</sup> Isaiah also declared the ~~the earnest~~ for the coming of the Messiah is the appearance of the Demented One. For thus he said: "And when he sees a troop, horsemen by pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels, he shall hearken diligently with much heed." (Is. 21:7) <sup>164</sup> ~~denotes~~ denotes the Messiah, concerning whom it has been said: ["Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, he is triumphant and victorious,] lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass." (Zech. 9:9) The "rise of a rider upon a camel," which follows immediately, refers to the king of Arabia. "The pair of horsemen" are Edom and Ishmael joined in battle. In a similar manner are to be explained the dream <sup>165</sup> of the Image and the dream of the Beasts--which <sup>166</sup> are mentioned in Daniel. These matters, mentioned above, are evident from the simple meaning of Scripture.

Nevertheless, [all the signs notwithstanding] the true time is not definitely known. But we do have a great and marvelous tradition.<sup>167</sup> I received it from my father who received it from his father and from his father's father, who received this tradition--a true one--from the beginning of the exile from Jerusalem. As is said: "And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, that are 'among the Canaanites, even unto Zorephath, and the captivity<sup>168</sup> of Jerusalem, that is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South." (Ob. 20) The tradition is that in Balaam's prophecy there is a hint when Prophecy, after ceasing, will return to Israel. For, [you should know], that there are verses in the Torah which though intended to convey one certain meaning, contain nonetheless hints<sup>169</sup> of an altogether different meaning. Thus we find an example in our father Jacob's--peace upon him--command to his sons, "Get you down thither." אֵלֶּךְ יִצְחָק (Gen. 42:2); they tarried<sup>170</sup> in Egypt, according to the number of יָרֵךְ -- which totals two hundred and ten years. ~~The~~ A statement of our teacher Moses, peace upon him,





the departure from Egypt) two thousand four hundred and eighty-eight years have elapsed--The mnemonic is פ'תח א"תא . On the basis of this analogy and interpretation, we may say, that prophecy will be restored to Israel in 4976 (A. M. 1216 A. D.).<sup>174</sup> And, of course, you know that the return of prophecy is preliminary to the coming of the Messiah.<sup>175</sup> As Scripture has it: "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions...." (Joel 3:1)

Now the calculation that I have given you is the most reliable. We have been assured that it was the true year, but admonished not to reveal it let it strike the people as being of too distant date.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless I transmitted it to you, and may he who learns it be blessed.<sup>177</sup>

You also said that ours is the time predicted by Jeremiah: "And it is a time of trouble unto Jacob, but out of it shall he be saved."<sup>178</sup> (Jer. 30:7) I must disagree with you. For the verse refers necessarily to the Wars of Gog and

Magog which will take place some time after the  
179  
appearance of the Messiah. I regard the Gate  
180  
of Girun and similar oracles as flimsy proofs--  
proofs completely disregarded by reputable  
scholars. Some of the others you mention are  
allegories and parables which you may discount.

And now I will discuss that man in Yemen  
who proclaims himself Messiah. Know that I am  
not angered by him (nor by those who believe in  
181  
him ) for he is insane, no doubt, and, ~~am~~ surely,  
the sick who cannot control his sickness cannot  
182  
be held at fault. Nor am I angered by those who  
believe in him: Because of their impatience,  
ignorance of the place of the Messiah, and his  
high position, they came to accept this individ-  
ual. If I am angered by anyone it is by you.  
Know you not my brother, you who are a student  
of the Torah, who pondered in the books of the  
183  
wise, know you not that the Messiah is an ex-  
ceedingly great prophet, greater than all, ex-  
cept our teacher Moses? Know you not that he  
who professes himself a prophet is subject to  
the death penalty in the event that his proph-  
184  
ecy is proved false? To return to our pretender:

מגוג

He, forasmuch as he appropriated this high position, is to be dealt with as one who prophesies in the name of idols. For thus it is written: "But the prophet that shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." (Dt. 18:20) Indeed, what greater proof of his being a liar could there be than the attribution of of messiahship to himself!

How strange is your statement that he is well-to-do! That he is endowed with wisdom! Do you suppose for a moment that by virtue of these qualities he can be the Messiah? I can only explain your [strange] suppositions on the ground that you did not note the station of the Messiah, what his attributes would be, how his rise would take place, where he would arise, what signs will be unique to him. His station, you should know, will be higher and more to be revered than the prophets'--except of course than that of our teacher Moses, peace upon him. Concerning him (i. e., the Messiah) is said: "And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the

sight of his eyes, neither decide after the sight of his ears; (Is. 11:3) and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord; (Is. 11:2) and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. (Is. 11:5) The Holy One Blessed be He gave him six names: "For a child is born unto us, a son is given unto us; and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name is called: <sup>186</sup> Pele, Jozx, El, Gibbor, Abi-ad, Sar-sholom." (Is. 9:5) [He even called him El, in hyperbole, to make known that his greatness is loftier than <sup>187</sup> that of any man.] [Nay He did not cease to elaborate upon his till He said: "Thou art My son, <sup>188</sup> <sup>189</sup> this day have I begotten thee." ]

One of the well-known sine quae non for a prophet is great knowledge: only then will the Holy One Blessed be He make one a prophet. It is a fundamental principle that prophecy rests <sup>190</sup> only on one who is wise, strong, and rich. "Strong" is explained to mean "able to conquer <sup>191</sup> desire"; and "rich", as "rich in character."



Hence, if a man, [wise,] but not renowned for his wisdom arise and proclaim himself a prophet, we do not believe him. How much the less so, if an ignoramus assume--of all things--the Messiahship.

One of the evidences of his ignorance is his command to squander fortunes by distributing them to the poor. [They did well who did not listen  
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to him; while he sinned.] Those who hearkened to him were fools, for he went against the Torah inasmuch as it prescribes that only part of one's fortune be given to charity. For thus it is written: "Notwithstanding, no devoted thing, that a man may devote unto the Lord of all that  
193  
he hath", (Lev. 27:28) but not "all that he hath." Indeed, the receivers of the Tradition emphasized "of all that he hath" and not "all that he hath." They set bounds and limits to gifts of charity: a fifth. They said: "He who wishes to give to  
194  
charity should give no more than a fifth." There is no doubt, in my mind that the sense and reason which induced him to proclaim himself Messiah also induced him to command men to give up their entire possessions to the poor, that they become poor and

and the poor become rich. This procedure will lead to the absurd situation where the poor will be obligated to return the money. Thus will the money go to and fro between the rich and the poor. This is patent folly.

We shall now discuss the character and the place of the Messiah's appearance: He will first appear in the Land of Israel, as is said: "And the Lord whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 3:1) Now we shall proceed to the manner of his appearance: He will be unknown until his appearance, so that people could not point to him as the son of this man or the member of that family. The signs and miracles that will abound because of him will act as proofs for the truth of his claim. For thus said the Holy One Blessed be He when he told us of this matter: "Behold a man whose name is the Shoot, and he shall shoot up out of his place." (Zech. 6:12) Isaiah agreed that when

he will appear, no father, mother, or family will be linked to him: "For he shot up right forth as a sapling, and as a root out of a dry ground."

<sup>196</sup>  
(Isaiah 53:2) After he will reveal himself in the beautiful land and gather Israel therein the nation will branch out east and west till it reach the Land of Yemen and those beyond in India. <sup>196a</sup>

For thus it is written in Isaiah: "That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters! Go ye swift messengers to a nation tall and of glossy skin, to a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that is sturdy and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide....to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount of Zion." (Is. 18:2,7) <sup>196b</sup> But indeed the sum of his virtues is described by all the prophets from our teacher Moses to Malachi <sup>197</sup> the last of them; in their twenty-four books you may glean them. (i. e., the descriptions.)

A unique characteristic of the Messiah is that at the time he appears all the kings of the earth will be frightened at the rumor and their domain will be in abject terror; they

will seek devices to withstand ~~them~~ in one way  
198 or another. In other words, they will not  
be able to argue against or criticize him,  
nor will they be able to deny him. Instead,  
terrified by the miracles that they will be-  
hold they will be stricken dumb. Isaiah  
described the time when kings will hear of  
him: "So shall he startle many nations, kings  
shall shut their mouth because of him; for that  
which had not been told them shall they see,  
and that which they had not heard shall they  
perceive." (Is. 52:15) He added that he  
by word of mouth  
will slay, whomsoever he pleases, and that  
no one will flee or be delivered from him:  
"And he shall smite the land with the rod  
of his mouth, and with the breath of his  
lips shall he slay the wicked." (Is. 11:4)  
Nevertheless war and strife will not cease  
on the earth at the beginning of his appearance,  
but only after the wars of Gog and Magog will  
have been fought, as Ezekiel, peace upon him,  
~~Isa~~  
told us.

Now I do not see that he who arose in your  
land has any of these attributes.

You know that that man [Jesus], spite all the  
great things which [Christians] ascribe to him,  
such as the resurrection of the dead--fancy the  
impudence--and other miracles which they con-  
coct, could not establish with us his claim  
to messiahship, even if--for argument's sake--we  
were to agree to their fairy tales. For by a  
thousand verses we could prove to them that he  
was not. Moreover, even on the basis of their  
arguments one would endow him with such (i. e.,  
Messianic) rank only in a spirit of mockery and  
ridicule.

Now if <sup>the</sup> that man had said what he did in a  
spirit of pride or levity I would have deemed  
him worthy of death. But it seems more likely  
to me that he is deranged, that his understanding  
is impaired.

And now I will venture to suggest fit coun-  
sel for yourselves as well as for him: imprison  
him for sometime until it become known among the  
gentiles that he is mentally deficient. [Be sure]  
to make this rumor widely-known; broadcast it in  
the world. Then release him. In this wise you  
can save him. For when the gentiles will hear  
that he declared himself Messiah after you had

Reference 6 to  
Yomutit Mice



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treated him thusly they will hold him in contempt,  
as people are accustomed to regard one <sup>like him who is</sup> mentally  
deranged. Thus you can save yourselves from  
the wickedness of the gentiles. But if you neg-  
lect this matter until it become known to the  
gentiles, he is a dead man, and, may God for-  
bid it, disaster will befall you.

Ye brethren, know that the Holy One Blessed  
204  
be He, on account of our many sins, threw us in-  
to this nation, the nation of Ishmael, whose ill-  
will is strong against us, who are clever in in-  
flicting evil and heaping ridicule upon--in ac-  
cordance of the decrees of Him, may He be Blessed;  
moreover, our enemies themselves are our judges.  
(Dt. 32:31) [You know] that a nation more hostile,  
more ill-willed, more intent in abusing us, will  
nevermore arise. Behold, King David, peace upon  
him, upon seeing by the Holy Spirit all the  
troubles destined for Israel, cried out and  
lamented in the name of his people only at the  
wickedness of the Ishmaelites: "Woe is me that  
I sojourn with Meshech, that I dwell beside the

tents of Kedar." (Ps. 120:5) [I need hardly add,] that the Demented One, as is clear from his genealogy, is descended from the Kedarites. Moreover, Daniel made mention of our littleness and unworthiness only when he spoke of the kingdom of Ishmael, may it be quickly subdued. For thus he wrote: "And some of the host and of the stars  
206  
it cast down to the ground and trampled them."

(Dan. 8:11) To this day, we suffer, beyond all human endurance, their yoke, lies and falsehoods--it is a burden which no man can bear.

It is literally as David, peace upon him said:

"But I am as a deaf, I hear not; and I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." (Ps. 38:

14) [But all that we can do is to follow the advice] of our teachers who admonished us to  
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bear the lies and falsehoods of Ishmael and be silent. They deduced this advice from the

verse written concerning his children: "And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa." (Gen. 25:14)

which they interpreted: Hearken, be silent and bear. All of us, great and small, agreed ~~to~~

long ago, to bear their yoke, for thus Isaiah put it: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Is. 50:6) In no way can we deliver ourselves from their great wantonness and wickedness. Though we invariably seek their well-being they pursue us with war and strife, as King David, peace upon him, put it: "I am all peace; but when I speak they are for war." (Ps. 120:7) In any event, <sup>when</sup> we rise against them, and proclaim dominion on fallacious and void grounds, we most assuredly endanger our lives.

(The following paragraphs give the accounts of Messianic movements in the past. N, T, and M differ in several respects from one another. I translate the account of each movement in the order N, T, and M.)

a.

Know that at the beginning of Ishmael's rule a man arose on the other side of the

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River and said that he was the Messiah; he went forth with ten thousand Israelites. The

proof that he offered [for his pretensions]

was that he went to bed as a leper and awoke clean.  
But his venture did not succeed his plan did not  
endure. He returned; but the Israelites remained  
behin him in Ispahan in the duress of exile;  
and on account of him new decrees were issued  
against Israel (N account)

Know that at the beginning of Ishmael's  
teaching a man arose on the other side of the  
209 River and said that he was the Messiah. His  
proof was that he went to bed as a leper and  
awoke clean. But his venture did not succeed  
210 and they returned. [Some] Israelites, however,  
211 remained in the Land of Esperan in miserable  
exile and evils befell them on account of him.

(T account)

I will now tell you briefly of events that  
transpired after the kingdom of Ishmael arose  
212 and you will learn an object lesson from them.  
Once there appeared from the east from beyond  
Ispahan a great throng of Jews--hundreds and  
thousands of them--and at their head was one  
212 a who proclaimed himself Messiah. They were  
armored and with their unsheathed swords slew

all who rose against them. At last, so it has been told to me, they appeared in the environs of Bagdad. This happened at the beginning of the Ommeyade dynasty. <sup>213</sup> Whereupon the king (the Khalif) said to the Jews of his land: "Let your sages go forth and converse with these men, and if what they say is true and this [really] is the one whom you are expecting, we will make a treaty with them on whatever terms you please. But if it is false then will I fight them." The sages went to meet them as commanded. Said these men: "We hail from the region beyond the River [Sambation.]" The sages asked them: "Why did you rise up [against the authorities]?" To which they answered: "This man yonder is known to us as pious and estimable; he is of Davidic seed. We knew him to be leprous on a certain night when he went to bed, but in the morning he rose clean and healthy. This must needs be one of the signs of the Messiah, for the verse, 'Stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,' (Is. 53:4) refers to him, implying, that he will be leprous." The sages countered



countered that this interpretation is incorrect and that the man in question is lacking in several, if not in all the attributes of the Messiah. They (i. e., the sages) admonished them: "Brethren, you are still near to your land and you have the opportunity of returning; but if you remain much longer in this territory you will all perish and incidentally refute the words of Moses since the populace will suppose that the Messiah had already appeared and was conquered. For the truth is that you have neither prophet nor proofs with you." The men were persuaded by the words of the sages; and were enabled to leave by a gift of many thousand dinarim which the ruler presented them. But after they had gone far away, the ruler stirred himself <sup>up</sup> against ~~them~~ the Jews and fined them the amount that he was compelled to expend on account of them. He also decreed that they wear special marks on their clothes, write "Accursed!" on them, and walk the streets with iron rods placed on their backs and chests. Since that time the communities of Khorasan and Ispahan re-

main in miserable exile. The above incident was transmitted to me by word of mouth.

(M account)

b.

214

Forty five years ago, a man rose in Fez, who gave himself out as the herald of the Messiah, pretending that the latter would appear in the same year; his words, however, were not fulfilled, and the Jews only suffered fresh sorrows.

(N account)

That which I will now relate is known to us as truthful, yea, I have investigated its exactness for it happened recently, only about fifty years ago. A pious and worthy man, one of the sages of Israel, known as Moses of Drea, came  
215  
from Drea to Andalusia to study Torah under Rabbi Joseph Halevi, may his memory be for blessing, Ibn Migash, whose reputation, no doubt, reached you. Later, Moses returned to the capital of the Maghreb, to the city of Fez; there people gathered about him because of his piety, excellence, and learning. He told them that the Messiah appeared and that the Lord apprised him

of it in a dream; but, unlike the insane one  
216 mentioned above, he did not regard himself as  
the Messiah. His only claim was that the Mes-  
siah had already appeared. The people flocked  
after him, and believed his words implicitly.  
Now, my father, peace upon him, sought to en-  
join the people from following him. But only  
a few listened to him; the vast majority went  
with Moses, peace upon him. At that time he  
began to prophesy things which really did come  
to pass. His custom was to announce to the  
crowd: "Gather ye on the morrow and this or  
that will happen." And his predictions ac-  
tually did come to pass. Once he predicted  
a downpour of blood during the current week,  
which is a Messianic sign, as is written in  
Scripture: "And I will show wonders in the heav-  
ens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pil-  
lars of smoke." (Joel 3:3) That was in the  
217 month of Marheshvan. A drenching rain did pour  
down during that week and the waters were red-  
dish and spoilt as if mixed with clay. This  
miracle proved to all that he was, unquestion-  
ably, a prophet. Indeed this incident is not

impossible from ~~the point~~ from the Jewish point of view, as I explained to you~~x~~ regarding the return of prophecy before the coming of the Messiah.<sup>218</sup> When his words were thus established in the eyes of men he told them that the Messiah would appear on Passover eve, and advised them to sell all their possessions and increase debts among the Moslem<sup>s</sup>, to buy from them that which is worth one dinar for ten dinarim and thus to fulfill the prediction of the Torah.<sup>219</sup> For, he assured them, after Passover they will be gone. After Passover nothing happened and his followers starved because they had parted with all of their possessions, and their debts, too, had increased greatly. The entire incident became known to the gentiles and their servants, and this man would have been slain by them had they found him. In any event, the land of Ishmael could no longer bear him; therefore he went to the Land of Israel and died there, may his memory be blessed. I am told by those who saw him before leaving [the Maghreb] he prophesied concerning all that happened afterwards

to the Jews of Maghreb, things great and small. 220

(M account)

c.

About ten years before that a man had arisen in Spain in Cordova, who represented himself as the Messiah, and it wanted but little that this did not produce the ruin of the Jews.

(N account)

My father also told me that about fifteen or twenty years before this incident there were in Cordova, the capital of Andalusia, important men who believed in astrology and agreed that the Messiah will come during the current year. Night after night they made Dream Inquiries to discover whether the Messiah will come from that land. Finally they concluded that Ibn Aryeh, the pious and estimable teacher of the people, was the man. They performed miracles and predicted the future, exactly as Al-Drei did, and thus gained the confidence of the people. But when this matter became known to the elders and sages of our community, they gathered in the synagogue, ~~and~~ summoned Ibn-Aryeh, gave him stripes, fined and excommunicated him because

he permitted these men to use his name without showing them the sin in which they were involving themselves. They did thus also to those who followed him. And only after great effort were they saved from the [wrath of] the gentiles.

(M account)

d.

221

About thirty years before this there arose France in ~~Spain~~ one who said that he was the Messiah, and apparently produced satisfactory evidence. The Frenchmen slew him and many others.

The prophets have anticipated all these things, as I have already pointed out. For nigh to the true Messianic days the pretenders to Messiahship will increase but their claims will not endure or be verified and many will perish with them.

(N account)

About fifty years before the incident of Ibn Aryeh a man arose in the land of France in the great center of Lenon, where there lived some ten thousand Jewish families, and proclaimed himself Messiah. The miracle which he

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performed before them was that on a moonlit night he climbed to the top<sup>a</sup> of tall tree, plunged in the air and climbed to another tree as if flying in mid-air. This, in his opinion, was the meaning of the verse: "And, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man." (Dn. 7:13) Many men saw this miracle and flocked to him. But the Frenchmen~~nt~~ intervened, slew and robbed many of them. Among the slain was this man also. Some suppose unto this day that he is in hiding. These are matters which the prophets prophesied and predicted long ago, as I have pointed out to you. For liars and deceivers will precede the true Messiah. But their lies will not be verified. They will perish and with them many who follow them.

(M account)

(I am now returning to the N text)

Because Solomon, peace upon him, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, knew that our nation, on account of the length of the

exile will move ~~the~~ before the proper time, and that troubles will come upon them because of their impatience, warned us not to do this and directed a parable to the nation: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the <sup>h</sup>inds of the <sup>d</sup>fiel, that ye awaken not, not stir up love, until it please." (Cant. 2:7)

Beloved brethren, hearken unto his adjuration and "stir not love until it please." In His attribute of mercy, the Creator of the universe will remember us all and gather the dispersion of His heritage and possession "to behold the graciousness of the Lord and to visit early His temple," (Ps. 27:4) and will take us out ~~to~~ the valley of the shadow of death wherein He placed us, and will remove darkness from our eyes, and obscurity from our hearts, and will establish in our days and your days the verse: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" (Is. 9:1) in His wrath and anger He will shed darkness upon all who rise against

us, and will <sup>light</sup> ~~light~~ our dark places as He promised us: "For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." (Is. 60:2)

Peace to you, my beloved, my precious master of wisdom and gleaner of science! [Peace] to all disciples, our brethren, and upon all the people of the Lord may peace shine forth  
223  
as a light, "abundance of peace, till the noon be no more." (Ps. 72:7)

<sup>224</sup> to  
I beg of you ~~that you~~ send a copy of this letter to every community, to the wise and to the others, to strengthen their faith and to plant their feet [firmly] that they stumble not; to read it at gatherings and to individuals. Thus you will become an agent of righteousness. Be sure, however, to take precautions that no wicked person procure it and reveal its contents to Ishmaelites, lest persecutions, from which may the Lord in His mercy deliver us, be renewed.

While writing this letter I greatly feared that such a slip might happen. But I felt

that making the many righteous is a task in the performance of which one should not hesitate to face danger. Regardless, [remember] that "the counsel of the Lord is with them that fear Him." (Ps. 25:14) [But I am at ease,] for the sages who received[the Word] from the Prophet, (i. e., Moses) peace upon him, promised us that persons bent on fulfilling a commandment are not injured. And there can be no worthier commandment than this one. "Peace be upon Israel!" (Ps. 125:5; 128:6)

Our teacher Moses, son of the rabbi and Dayyan Maimon, may the memory of the righteous be for blessing, wrote this letter in Arabic. Rabbi Samuel ibn Tibbon translated it into the Holy Tongue. May God be with him that he may prosper. Blessed is the Lord who helped from the beginning till now.

## Notes on Text

1. Harkavy supposes that Jacob had cognizance of Saadia's "Sefer ha-Galui". ("Studien und Mittheilungen" v. 154; cf. "Monatsschrift" XLIV. 508) Jacob's father was known as a philosophical writer, (J. E. VII. 40) who wrote a philosophical work in Judaeo-Arabic called "Bustan al-'Ukul".....but Steinschneider declares this identification doubtful. (See J. E. V. 354) Dr. Jacob Mann agrees with Steinschneider. On the other hand, Simon Epenstein holds that since the time of the composition of the named book corresponds completely with the time of Jacob's father such doubts are not justified. (Moses ben Maimon, Vol. II, P. 45, Note 2, Leipzig, 1914)
2. Jacob's family very likely originated from Egypt
3. Based on Micah 2:12 and Isaiah 5:17. On reading of נאנ see Tibbon, Note 6.
4. "Probably Sipphara situated in Mesopotamia on the Euphrates." (Gesenius, s. v. פ'נננ)
5. Tibbon, P. 14 reads "And its shepherds are faithful shepherds."

6. "Saboea, a nation and region of Arabia Felix, rich in frankincense, spices, gold, and gems." (Gesenius, s. v. סבוא). The expression is lifted from Job 6:19.
7. The Yemenite Jews preserved many literary treasures, e. g. Saadia's commentaries. (See Moses ben Maimon, II, P. 46, and note 1.)
8. "A celebrated Babylonian Amora; born 352; died 427...was the first editor of the Babylonian Talmud." (J. E. II. 187)
9. Derives special force out of Joshua 11:13:
10. " יִשְׁכָּן, a word mostly poetical for the common דַּבָּר, speak." (Gesenius, s. v. יִשְׁכָּן) וְיִשְׁכָּן, perhaps potential participle, and hint that by prayer, יִשְׁכָּן, can they bring the Messiah.
11. Tibbon, P. 14 has יִשְׁכָּן. Probably more correct. Cf. Ps. 17:14.
12. Tibbon, P. 14 reads וְיִשְׁכָּן, meaning co-religionists.
13. Tibbon, P. 14 reads וְיִשְׁכָּן. Holub in Note 17 corrects to וְיִשְׁכָּן "and advance," based on Esther 2:9
14. In 1148 the Maimons were expelled from Cor-



dova when the Almohades captured it, (Maimonides, by David Yellin and Israel Abrahams, Philadelphia, 1903, P. 24) left Port Almeria in 1151, (Ibid, 26) wandered in Fez, (Ibid, 33) in Palestine, (Ibid, 51) and finally into Egypt, late in 1165 or early in 1166. (Ibid, 53-4)

15. Tibbon, P. 15 reads: "How can anything be clear to a wanderer from city to city and from kingdom to kingdom?" Nahum's text does not have it.

16. Tibbon, P. 15 has *קדושים*. Holub in Note 22 says it is wrong; but not necessarily, for *קדושים* is the *קדושים* in Jeremiah 8:15.

17. See Genesis 41:1-37.

18. Tibbon, P. 15 reads *אני אומר ואני אפרש*. It is a better reading. *אני אומר ואפרש* may mean "I tell[the dream] and interpret. See Tibbon, Note 26.

19. "The rabbins call all the Arabians universally by this name; whence *רבין* Rabbins used of the Arabic language. (Gesenius, s. v. *רבין*)

20. *נר נבי*. The planet Mercury worshipped as the celestial scribe by the Chaldeans (Isaiah 46:1) and the ancient Arabians. (Gesenius, s. v. *נר*.)

21. Holub suggests *נר*.

✓ נר

30. Tibbon, P. 16 reads *וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַבָּרָק*.  
 Rashi renders *וְהָיָה* which is a Hapax logomenon in  
 Proverbs 29:21 as *וְהָיָה*. It may also be derived  
 from the root *שָׁלַח*, Arabic, *سَلَحَ*, to receive  
 favors ungratefully.

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. "Only a few will not

be moved.

32. *par 1.35* seems to have the force of cleaning away the dross. Cf. Daniel 12:10 as interpreted by Maimonides. (Tibbon, 16, Nahum, 1c, Translation, 6)

33. Maimonides emphasizes figure of Moses as antidote to Mohammed. (Cf. *מורה נבוכים*, Tibbon, 16, Nahum, loc. Translation, 6.) In this he bases himself on good rabbinic authority. George Foot Moore in speaking of Moses says: "Moses is the fountain head of prophecy in so literal a sense that it is said that he uttered all the words of the prophets besides his own." (Judaism, I, P. 239, See Note 4. Harvard, 1929.

34. Tibbon, P. 17 reads: "because he first gave to our ancestors of His knowledge and love."

35. Tibbon, P. 17 reads  $\Delta \text{IN}^{\text{H}}$ , but Nahum,  
P. 1d is wary of the censor and reads  $\rho \text{IN}^{\text{H}}$ .

36. Maimonides bases himself here on rabbinic

[illegible]

And also: *הנהגה זו (LANT. 5: 8) יורה כנסת. להלן*  
*לפי הקדמה: ולפי כל האילן שהיה נהג, בלתי*  
*לפי אחרת אחרת. מוראש שיר השירים.*  
 QUOTED IN *מוראש שיר השירים* by ISAAC JACOB REINES, P. 43,  
 WILNA, 1904

37. Based on a combination of Job 13:19 and Judges 6:31.

38. Tibbon, P. 17 renders *גון*. *גון* is an Arabic word which means Gattung. (See Geiger, Nachgelassene Schriften, Vol. 3-4, P. 96, Note 57.)

39. Hebrew Graetz, Vol. IV, P. 346 renders *סופיסט* as, *בני מורה ההגלה-הסופיסט*. Obviously wrong, since there were no Sophists in Persia.

40. See Tibbon, P. 17, Holub's Note 54. For *לכריאנין* read *לכריאנין*. *לכריאנין* probably means Christians. (See Hebraische Bibliographie, XV, P. 13.)

*They are referred to later. The Greeks are meant.*

41. Tibbon, P. 18 reads: "...will shatter his argument in the name of God, will make it void and set it aside, and will not persist as we persist in our arguments, says God who predicts glad tidings.

42. Similar expression occurs in Maimonides' preface to Seder Zeraim: *זרעין זרי*. Based on II Kings, 7:46.

43. Based on Jeremiah 10:10. Bacher in his Bibel-

- exegese Moses Maimuni's, P. 152, Note 3 says: "In der Anwendung dieses verses auf das absolute Sein Gottes folgt M. Joseph Ibn Zaddid, seh Die Bibel-exegese d. j. R. d. M., Seite 101; vergleich auch Abraham ibn Daud, ib. Seite 143.  $\text{אלה}$  (= Arabic  $\text{إله}$ ) als Name Gottes, seh M. Hajichud, Seite 6, Zeile 5." Maimonides calls God "The Truth" in his Mishne Torah also. (See Yesode Morah 1, 4.)
44. Tibbon, P. 18 reads  $\text{אלה}$ . Bacher in his Bibelexegese Moses Maimuni's, P. 154, Note 5 emends to  $\text{אלהים}$  like the reading two lines above.
45. Tibbon, P. 18 reads  $\text{אלהים}$ . Sotah 48b would argue for this reading:  $\text{אלהים יי אלהינו ואלהינו יי אלהים}$ .
46. Abraham ben Chisdai's text from  $\text{אלהינו בן מתחלה}$  to  $\text{אלהינו בן מתחלה}$  is reprinted in Hebraische Bibliographie, XV, 62.
47. Passage on Christianity is found only in Tibbon, P. 18. Nahum's passage on Christianity is found in the  $\text{נחום נביא}$ , 94b, line 7 from the bottom. Reprint of passage is found in Hebraische Bibliographie, XV, P. 14.
48. The principle enunciated is based on Jebamot 45b and 23a. I can find no source for Maimonides' account of Jesus' ancestry.

49. 'ילך in Tibbon, P. 19 is probably a typographical error.
50. Nahum resumes text.
51. Again does Maimonides tear words out of context.
52. The Amsterdam (1850) edition of Nahum does not read ילך ופן.
53. Holub in Tibbon, Note 60 (which, incidentally is lifted bodily from David Gans' Zemah Dovid, Vol. II, P. 113 under number 85, Warsaw, 1880) suggests that Maimonides refers here to the Manichaeans who were the followers of Mani. But there is no record that Jews brought about the latter's death. The Britannica<sup>CHAEANS</sup> (s. v. Mani) writes concerning him: "Like Mahomet after him and the founder of the Elkasite<sup>e</sup> before him he gave himself out for the last and highest prophet who was to surpass all previous divine revelation, which only possessed a relative value, and to set up a perfect religion....Zoroastrian Magians were naturally hostile to him....Bahram I abandoned him to the fanaticism of the Magians, and caused him to be executed in the capital in the year 276-7.
54. On Mohammed's being called ילך see Hebraische Bibliographie XIV, 59 and Steinschneider's Polemische und Apologetische Literatur der Juden, Pp. 302-3.



55. Tibbon, P. 20 reads: "sinews that pulsate and that do not." But modern anatomy holds that all sinews move.
56. Maimonides was a student of other religions.  
(See Kobez II, 25b.)
57. Tibbon, P. 21 reads בְּאַתְנַיִת הַיָּמִין. Does Maimonides refer here to the Messianic days? / No.
58. Tibbon, P. 21 reads מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה.
59. "Eyes like the eyes of a man," because Islam was to resemble Judaism. (See Steinschneider's Polem. und Apol. Literatur, P. 308f., where he says that this identification originated among Karaite Polemists.
60. Many commentators tried their hand at Daniel 7:8.
61. Again Maimonides indulges in a far-fetched interpretation. For the fourth beast will be one kingdom  
horns  
and the ten ~~kings~~ seem to be the kings of that kingdom.
62. Hebrew texts are euphemistic.
63. Tibbon, P. 21 omits Daniel. Probably more correct. Consult Dan. 3:1-30. See Sanhedrin 93a: Nebuchadrezzar sent Daniel away because he did not wish to throw an idol (Nebuchadrezzar worshipped Daniel) into the flames.

64. I could find no source for this statement.

65. See Megillat Taanit, 2. Also Midrash Rabbah on פנים וספרים in Genesis for rabbinic sources for this statement.

66. To give it greater publicity.

67. See Holub in Tibbon, Note 81 which follows the chronology of the Seder Olam. He has all his dates wrong. His account of the fifty-two years as extending from the middle of the reign of Antiochus the Great to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes is unsatisfactory as there are no sources for placing the year of Antiochus' the Great change of heart. Even less satisfactory is the period ~~of~~ from Seleucus Philopater to 141 (?) (See J. E. under Simon Maccabeus) when Simon conquered Antiochus Sidetes. It may be that Maimonides merely takes the arbitrary number of fifty-two which Saadia gives (Emunos Ve-Deos 8:4, 178-9, Jesehof, 1885) as the length of the Babylonian Exile and fixes it also as the length of the Syrian persecution.

68. Tibbon, P. 22, probably correctly, omits

69. Ketubot 3b



79. Tibbon, P. 25 reads *וְיִשְׂרָאֵל*.
80. Abbreviation in Nahum 3a stands for *יִשְׂרָאֵל*.
81. Based on Ps. 37:31.
82. Interpretation of verse is partly original with Maimonides.
83. See Midrash Rabbah on Toledoth in Genesis, Parasha 66 and Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah on Canticles 7:1
84. That is Greece, Rome, and Persia. (See Tibbon, P. 21 and Nahum 2b. Translation, P. 15.)
- 84a. Maimonides no doubt alludes to the Jews in the Maghreb, Spain and Yemen.
85. Nahum 3c omits *וְיִשְׂרָאֵל* to emphasize the foregoing words.
86. Compare for similar advice the Maamar Kiddush Hashem, (Kobez 15a) where he bolsters it with Biblical and rabbinic examples. There he is a bit milder.
87. I can find no rabbinic authority for this statement.
88. The "transgressor" was, in all likelihood, Samuel ibn Abbas. See Introduction.
89. See Holub in Tibbon, Note 120.
90. On Islam evidences in the Bible see Geiger's Moses ben Maimon, Note 51.
- 90a. Tibbon, P. 28 has *וְיִשְׂרָאֵל*. See Note 123 by Holub which is not altogether satisfactory as an explanation.

91. It is the Peshitta not the the Targum. (See Bacher's Bibelexegese Moses Maimuni's, P. 175, Note 7.)
92. See Geiger's Moses ben Maimon, Note 50 and Holub, Note 124 in Tibbon.
93. See Holub in Tibbon, Note 124.
94. Not till Elijah Levita was the post-Talmudic origin of vocalization discovered. <sup>95.</sup> Abraham ibn Daud uses a similar argument. (Bacher's Die Bibel-exegese d. j. R. S. 148, especially Note 4.)
96. See e. g., Dt. 4:38; 9:1; 11:23; Josh. 23:9.
97. Should read in Nahum 3d ק' 3' . Tibbon, P. 29 reads ק' 3' .
98. Nahum 4a should read ו' 9' .
99. I cannot find source for Maimonides' statement.
100. See Holub in Tibbon, Note 134. See also J. E., s. v. Gilyonim and Ben Yehuda's Dictionary under ו' 9' , and ו' 9' . The insertion of Evangelion into the must be the translator's unless Maimonides called the Koran ו' 9' or ו' 9' .
101. On translation of ו' 9' in Nahum 4a see Ben Yehuda's Dictionary I:227, s. v. Tibbon, P. 30 reads: ו' 9' .
102. Maimonides' knowledge of geography in this instance is correct.
103. See Avodah Zarah 2b and Mechilta on Jethro, Parsha 5, where no prophet is mentioned. Apparently Maimonides

unconsciously de-anthropomorphizes the two Talmudical passages cited.

103a. Holub in Tibbon, Note 142 gives Saadia's interpretation of the verse in question.

104. See Dt. 18:10-11.

105. Nahum 4b should read *וְיָמִין*.

106. Rashi on Dt. 18:15 writes: *כִּי יִשְׁמַע אֶת הַקּוֹל וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת הַקּוֹל*. Bahja ben Asher has the same explanation of the verse without giving credit to Maimonides. (See Moses ben Maimon, Vol. II, P. 420, Note 2.)

107. Holub in Tibbon, Note 151 wildly suggests that it refers to Ali who gave rise to the Shiite sect.

*just as Ali  
is preferred  
to the Imam  
who is received to  
the Zaid*

108. Tibbon, P. 33 adds *זַיִד*. Note 151 also mentions *זַיִד*. Jacob Mann believes that Zaid and Omar may be used in the sense that we would use Tom Smith and John Jones.

*↑ ?*

109. "An Arab of the Land of Uz." Job 1:1.

110. Job 2:11. Naamah, Zophar's town, is different from the Naamah in Judah. (Josh. 15:41. Gesenius, s. v.)

111. Job 2:11; 18:1; 25:1. *דִּי* is the name of an Arabian tribe according to Harkavy in his Dictionary.

112. Job 2:11; 4:1; 15:1. Teman is "a city, country... eastwards of Idumea," according to Harkavy.

113. Job 32-35. Buz is a "people and region of Arabia



Deserta." (Jeremiah 25:23. See Gesenius, s. v.)

114. See Baba Basra 15b:   
 שבעה נביאים נתגלו לעזרא   
 ביבנים ואלו הן: עזרא ואבין, איוב, חללי פלגתיא, וקארד הלוי   
 ציפי הנצח, ואליהו בן ברקיה הדני.

115. Jeremiah 28.

116. Tibbon, P. 33 does not mention Hananiah ben Azur.

117. See Baba Mezia 59b. See also Mishne Torah, Yesode Hatora, 9:1.

118. In his Mishne Torah 9:3 he writes:   
 עד עזרא אצליו ה'   
 אצת לכל דברי תורה וצוין אלו אצליו עד עזרא.

119. Tibbon, P. 34   
 ולמה הדיקו העצור לאלו אצתו.

120. To modern ears the strength of this argument may be dubious, but it was not so in the Middle Ages. In this connection it is interesting to cite Israel Friedlander: "The heathen king of the Khazars, in spite of his skeptical turn of mind, is converted to Judaism and is fully convinced of its truth, when he is told by the Jewish sage that the religion of Judaism, according to the Biblical account, was revealed before a multitude of six hundred thousand. To doubt this account itself never occurred to the king of the Khazars, any more than it did to the whole of the Middle Ages." (Past and Present, p. 195, Ark Publishing Co., 1919.)

121. Nahum 4d should read נחל .

122. Finished according to Geiger in Moses ben Maimon

Note 41 in Maghreb in 1165 . According to Yellin and Abrahams' Maimonides, P. 32 it was finished in Egypt in 1168. See Hebrew Graetz, IV, 339, Note 2. According to Geiger's calculation of ~~the~~<sup>date of the</sup> Iggeret Teman the year when the Siraj, i. e., the Commentary on the Mishne was completed is the terminus a quo for the Letter to Yemen. (See the Introduction to this thesis.)

122a. Saadia's calculation of the Advent of the Messiah is unclear and has given rise to a small literature. (See Introduction for references to it.)

123. Compare e. g., Saadia's Emunot Ve-Deot, Chapter 8, P. 178, Yosef, 1894.

124. Apparently the year of Joseph's death. (Genesis 50:26) When he appeared before Pharaoh he was thirty, (Gen. 41:46) Seven years of plenty passed (Gen. 41:53). After three years of famine Jacob apparently came, and must have died within<sup>y</sup> the same year, thus allowing seventy years to intervene between his death and the beginning of the Egyptian persecution, according to a harmonized chronology.

125. See Mechilta, Beshallah, Parasha 1, Friedmann Edition, P. 24.

126. I cannot see how proof is deduced from the verse.

127. In this harmonization Maimonides bases himself on Seder Olam Rabbah, Chapter 3; Mechilta, Chapter Bo; Shemos Rabbah, Bo; Tanhuma on Shemos.
128. Maimonides does not consider the contradiction between Genesis 15:13 and Ex. 12:40.
129. Ibn Ezra ad. loc. has a similar interpretation.
130. Joseph Kimchi agrees with this interpretation. (Bacher's Bibelexegese Moses Maimuni's, P. 147, Note 5.)
131. Sanhedrin 97b. See also Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim, 2:2.
132. Tibbon, P. 39 reads *אין אדם יודע* *אין אדם יודע*.
133. See Note 131.
134. See "Saadia Gaon, His Life and Works," by Henry Malter, J. P. S. 1921, P. 279.
135. Whatever the interpretation of Saadia's prediction may have been, the Jews of Yemen, in ~~1172~~ 1172, came to regard it as wrong.
136. Compare his Letter to Marseilles, Kobez II, 25b.
137. See Sotah 12b.
138. Compare his Letter to Marseilles, Kobez II, 25c-d.
139. Tibbon, p. 40 has *אין אדם יודע* *אין אדם יודע*. See on this Holub's Note, Tibbon, 178.
140. Compare Sotah 12b

141. I could find no authority for this statement.
142. Again he tears words out of context.
143. Maimonides explains Isaiah 44:25 in a similar manner. (See Kobez II:5c, Tibbon, 40.)
144. Tibbon, P. 40 reads *מגדל גבולות*.
145. He explains Isaiah 47:13 in the same manner. See Kobez II:5b at bottom and Tibbon, P. 40.
146. Nahum 5c does not have this.
147. See Israel Efros' Studies in Pre-Tibbonian Philosophical Terminology, Philadelphia, 1926 for an explanation of these terms.
148. The earthy trigon is made up of Taurus, Virgo and Capricornus. See Efros sub "Trigon." In Holub, Tibbon, Note 189, he copies verbatim from Azariah de Rossi's Meor Enaim, P. 371, Cassel Ed, who quotes Alkabitus, an Arabic astronomer of the 12th Century (P. 162) and Johannes Moletius who wrote Ephemerides Coelestium Motuum. (Ibid, 169)
149. *אולי ילד אקיל: האמת בן בן האורב בן אהואני "ויל"*  
*האמת בן אהואני "ויל" 35:13 גמ.*
- Midrash Rabbah, Seder Vayishlah, Parasha 82.
150. Nahum 5c has Zedek which means Jupiter. (?)
151. See Efros under *דביר*.
152. Tibbon, Pl 41 reads 260. See Holub, Note 191.
153. See Efros under *כוכבי*.
154. Tibbon, P. 42 reads: *והואיל ואלהי אלהים האלהים*

154a. נִסֵּי in Nahum 5d is derived from נִסֵּי, deceiver, Cf. Malachi 1:14.

155. Leviticus 26:21, and 28 is quoted: "And if you walk contrary unto Me, and will not hearken unto Me...then I will walk contrary you in fury: and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins.

156. Tibbon, P. 43 reads נִסֵּי. On the identification of the נִסֵּי with Abdallah ben Tumart and Abdulmumen see Hatekufah, XXIV, P. 341.

157. Neither Tibbon, P. 43 nor Nahum 6a indicate whether the year refers to the conquest of Spain in 1147, the conquest of Morocco in 1130, or Abdulmumen's successes between 1140 and 1147. Hence we need not say that the year referred to is 1147, although the use of נִסֵּי (in Nahum 6a) might tip the balances in favor 1147.

158. Who is this נִסֵּי בְּיָמָיו ?

a. Azariah de Rossi in his Meor Enaim, P. 371, Cassel Edition, seems to identify him with Abraham bar Hiyya Ha-Nasir who wrote the ספר מלחמת המלכים (Published by Posnansky and Gottesman, חבורת יק"צ לירושלם, 1924.)

b. So does Goldenthal in Zion, 1845 (Holub, in Tibbon, Note 202). But Holub criticizes this identification because Ab. ben Hiyya gives 1358 as year of Messiah. Hence, Maimonides could not mock him. נִסֵּי also criticizes Azariah de Rossi's i-

dentification. (See Hebre Graetz, IV, P. 128, Note 5.)

c. Nevertheless, Geiger contends (Nachgelassene Schriften, Vols. 3-4, Pp. 94-5, Note 53) on the ground of the second chapter of the Megillat Hamegaleh where ben Hiyya sets 1136 to 1148 as possible years of the Messiah that Maimonides does allude to him.

d. Graetz identifies him as Ibn Ezra (Hebrew Graetz VI, P. 347); but Holub in Tibbon, Note 202 contests this on the ground that Ibn Ezra himself mocked calculators.

e. Holub (Tibbon, Note 202) contends that Maimonides refers to Isaac ibn Alfakar. (See Note 202 on Pp. 43-44 and 66.) His evidence is largely circumstantial.

Under the circumstances it is hard determine to whom Maimonides alludes. Mayhap to one who was lost to the chroniclers altogether.

159. See Holub in Tibbon, Note 203.

160. Tibbon, P. 43 reads יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נָחֻם.

161. Nahum 6a should read אֵלֶּיךָ. Cf. Tibbon, P. 44 which reads בְּיָדְךָ.

162. Are the Rabbotenu Prophets or Talmudic sages?

163. See Daniel 7:13-14 which follows Daniel 7:8.

164. Jefet ben Ali interprets יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נָחֻם as referring



to ילן מן הים כדן וירק. (See Posnanski in Zeitschrift für die alt-Testamentliche Wissenschaft, Vol. XVI, P. 248.)

165. See Dan. 2:31-49, especially verse 40. Verse 41 might, in Maimonides' interpretation refer to the Fatimids, Ommeyyades and Abbasides who split up the Mohammedan empire.

166. See Daniel 7, especially verses 19 and 20.

167. Abraham ben Chisdai's text on this tradition is reprinted in the Revue des Etudes Juives, XXIV, P. 116, Note 1 in article by David Kaufmann.

168. Sepharad is understood by the Targum as Spain.

169. The famous allegorical method used in the Moreh Nebukim.

170. See Rashi on Genesis 42:2.

171. Exiled, according to the critical account, in 597 B. C. E.

172. Tibbon, P. 45 reads 846. Kaufmann in Revue des Etudes Juives, XXIV, P. 113, Note 1 reads Nahum 6b as 846. Maimonides does not seem to agree in this passage with the Talmudic sources. See Rashi on Dt. 4:

25 יצאנו ממצרים ונחלנו בים סוף. See also Sanhedrin 38a and Rashi ad loc. and Gittin 88a.

173. Tibbon, P. 45 gives 38. See Holub's Note 212.

174. This family tradition seems to have a clear

Talmudic basis: *בית יאיר אירק... ח"ב אג"ל כ"ה ב"ר' אלעזר, כ"ה ב"ר' אלעזר, כ"ה ב"ר' אלעזר*  
*וענין על צדק הנה אומר ואלך צדק, אג"ל, כ"ה ב"ר' אלעזר, כ"ה ב"ר' אלעזר*  
 Torah Temimah ad loc. cites Yerushalmi. *ואי שכל מה שפירש*

Shabbos *ו"ה*. See also Geiger, Moses ben Maimon, P. 95, Note 54 who directs to En Jacob ad loc.

175. See Note under asterisk in Nahum 6c which attempts the Messiah to explain why ~~Maimonides~~ did not appear on the date indicated by Maimonides. See Holub in Tibbon, Pp. 60-61. On inconsistency see Maimonides by Abrahams and Yellin, P. 225, Note 36, sources given in Bibliography, and Introduction.

176. See Note in Nahum 6c under asterisk.

177. David Kaufmann in REJ, XXIV, P. 116, Note 1 reads *א"ל* in Tibbon, P. 46 instead of *א"ל*.

178. He refers, no doubt, to the Crusades.

179. But see the articles Eschatology and Gog and Magog in the Jewish Encyclopedia. <sup>These</sup> ~~These~~ wars are placed before the Messiah. It may be that Maimonides refers to the Messiah ben Joseph. (See J. E. XIII.511b-512a.) Then, too, this interpretation of the Wars of Gog and Magog may be in line with his rationalistic interpretation of the Messianic Era in Perek Helek and elsewhere.

180. Tibbon, P. 46 reads <sup>more</sup> correctly לְהַגִּיל. Stein-  
schneider in the Zeitschrift der deutsche morgenlandische  
Gesellschaft 28:641-42 writes: "Nach der Vermuthung  
de Sacy's gerieth dieses Gebäude bei dem Brande in  
Dsu'l-Higg 559 (1164) in Verfall. Er meint auch (p. 442)  
dass dieses ursprünglich den Namen Girun erhalten, und  
an das Thor der Mpschee und der Stadt abgegeben habe.  
Fritz Baer writes in the Monatsschrift 70:162: Er (Stein-  
schneider) erwähnt einen Einsturz des Töres vom Jahre  
1164 (ebenso Encyclopädie des Islam I:243) der Anlass  
gegeben haben könnte das alte Orakel wieder in Umlauf  
zu setzen.

may thus have been

The Gate of Girun ~~was~~ thus regarded as an oracle,  
and used in Messianic calculations.

words in parentheses are out of place.

181. The ~~xxxxxx (xx) xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

182. Tibbon, P. 46 reads לְהַגִּיל. Mann in Hatekufah  
XXIV, P. 350 suggests לְהַגִּיל.

183. Tibbon, P. 46 has לְהַגִּיל, quoting  
Jacob ben Nathanael.

184. See Introduction to Seder Zeraim.

185  
~~185~~. See Geiger, Nachelassene Schriften, Vol. ~~III~~ III,

P. 95, Note 55 for translation of לְהַגִּיל. Tibbon,  
P. 47 has לְהַגִּיל.

186. Ibn Ezra regards El-Gibbor as one name and counts

only five titles for the Messiah. Saadia and, after him, Ibn Balaam (REJ XVIII, 80) follow the Targum and regard all but Sar-Shalom as referring to God. (Bacher in his Bibelexegese Moses Maimuni's P. 145, Note 7.)

187. Tibbon, P. 47 does not have the last passus.

189. Nahum 6d does not have the last passage.

188. In the Introduction to the Commentary on Perek Helek Maimonides cites Ps. 2:7 as proof that the Messiah by virtue of his mental and moral greatness will stand very close to God. Ibn Ezra mentions the Messianic bearing of this verse very briefly. Maimonides follows the old tradition enunciated in the Baraitha, Sukka 52a. (Bacher, Bibelexegese, P. 154, Note 6.)

190. Nedarim 38b.

191. Aboth 4.

192. Tibbon, P. 47 has the passage in brackets.

193. Erchin 28a

194. Ketuboth 50a.

195. Does it only seem that he makes miracles a test for the authenticity of a Messiah?

196. The interpretation of the verse is apparently original with Maimonides.

196a. Tibbon, P. 48 reads 'ר. Should read פ'ר'.

Nahum, 7a read מ'3. Should read מ'3.

- 196b. The Messianic interpretation this verse is based on Saadia's Emunoth Ve-Deoth Ch. 8, p. 244, Landauer. (Bacher, Bibelexegeese, 146, Note 7.)
197. This name for the Bible appears only once in Maimonides. (Ibid P. 8 and Note 5.)
198. Tibbon, P. 48 reads: והבנים אשר בניהם  
בשם בני ישראל בחרו לו קדוש
199. Nahum 7a should read אלו . Cf. Tibbon, P. 48
200. For insertion of bracketed words see Geiger, III,  
201. P. 95, Note 56. See also Note Nahum Version, Amsterdam,  
1850. Cf. Holub, Note 230.
202. Nahum, 7a should read היה .
203. Nahum, 7a should read יורדי . Cf. Tibbon, P. 49 which reads וקדוש .
204. What does קדושאית in Tibbon, P. 49 mean?
205. The Moschi were "a barbarous people inhabiting the Moschian mountains between Iberia, Armenia and Calchis." (Gesenius, s. v. Meshech.) Kedar means an Arabian tribe. (Gesenius.) Bacher in his Bibelexegeese suggests that Kedar refers specifically to the Banu Koreish.
206. Again there is the scheme of the four kings. See Daniel 8:22-6.
207. W. Bacher in Moses ben Maimon, Leipzig, 1914,

- Vol II, P. 196, Note for holds that "es--i. e. the quotation--handelt sich um eine in Ländern des Islams üblich gewordene Schriftdeutung.
208. Sambation. See Hatekufah XXIV, P. 355.
209. See Note 208.
210. Nahum 7b reads "and he returned." Perhaps should read "and they returned."
211. Should read Ispahan.
212. This connective introduction is lacking in Tibbon and Nahum.
- 212a. This refers to Abu Issi of Ispahan who lived in the days of the Caliph Abd-almalch (695-705). See Mann in Hatekufah XXIII:250 and Note 3.
213. The Damascene branch began in 681; the Cordovan in 756. Probably refers to the Damascene.
214. Tibbon, P. 50 reads "forty-four years."
215. Drea is a city in Morocco.
216. Does Maimonides refer to Abu Issi or to the Yemenite?
217. I believe it corresponds with the Moroccan rain-season.
218. This statement may indicate the integrity of the Messianic passage.
219. "And they despoiled the Egyptians." Ex. 12:36.



220. Maimonides may allude to the rise of the Almohades in 1140.
221. Tibbon, P. 50 leaves the number of years blank.
222. Jacob Mann suggests Leon. (Hatekufah, XXIV, P. 358.)
223. Nahum, 7d should read *בשנת ג'תתקכ"ה*. Cf. Tibbon, P. 52.
224. Abraham ben Chisdai's translation from *הנהגות אברהם* to *הנהגות אברהם* as found in the Munchen Manuscripts Cod. 57 f. 350b, Cod. 315 f. 13b is reprinted in the Hebraische Bibliographie XV, 63.
225. Pesahim 8b.
226. Conclusion found in Tibbon, at end. See Geiger, Vol. III, Pp. 95-6, Note 57.

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