

בחינת הדת

A BOOK OF INQUIRY OF RELIGION

by

ELIJAH DEL MEDIGO

THESIS

by

JOSHUA LOPE LIEBMAN

Hebrew Union College

1930

Microfilmed 8/14/67

DEDICATED

to my

BELOVED WIFE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Life and work

p. 1

Analysis

3

Evaluation

12

Bhinas Hadas

27

Notes

64

Bibliography

66

ELIJAH DEL MEDIGO

Elijah del Medigo, one of the few outstanding philosophers produced by Italian Judaism, was born in Candia in 1460 and died there in March, 1497. He was a discriminating student, not only of his own religion but of the culture and thought of his environment. And it was this combination of religious and secular interests that early turned his attention to the major problem of his life--the relation of Philosophy to Religion. As a young boy, Del Medigo showed a keen and brilliant talmudic mind, and in his early manhood he was called to Padua to head a talmudic school. Yet his main interest was in the field of Philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle, Averroes and Maimonides. For a time he was an influence not only in Jewish circles but also in the Gentile society of his day. In the Mazref Lehohmo of Joseph Solomon del Medigo we are given some details of his life and work.

We are told how he was appointed by the Venetian Senate as the arbitrator of a dispute that was taking place at the University of Padua about some philosophic subject. He created such a fine impression in his settlement of this argument that he was made a professor of Philosophy at Padua, and taught also at Florence and Venice. He gathered about him a group of disciples, among whom was the young scholar, Count Pico di Mirandola, who became Del Medigo's protector and friend throughout his life. The group of men against whom he had decided the dispute began to persecute him. Furthermore, the Kabbalists, against whom he had written a strong attack in his Behinas Hadas and who were a powerful influence in those days, rose up against him. The Rabbi of Padua, Judah Mintz, a firm adherent of strict orthodoxy, could not tolerate Del Medigo's seeming liberalism in religion. And so, besieged by enemies on all sides, Del Medigo had to leave Italy, and he returned to his native place, Candia, where he was shown great honor and where he taught Philosophy for the next two or three years, just before his death.

His works reveal the profound influence of Averroes upon

him. In fact, it was through his study of the Arabic thinker that Del Medigo must have been stimulated to write his main work, Sefer Behinas Hadas, for all through it we shall find parallelisms with Averroes' "Philosophie und Theologie". Besides this work we find that he translated some Hebrew works into Latin and composed some commentaries on Aristotle and Averroes. Among his works are these:

(1) Quaestiones Tres (Venice 1501)

1. De Primo Motore

2. De Mundi Efficientia

3. De Esse Essentia et Uno.

(2) באור מה מהמר הגלגל סגור

De Substantia Orbis.

(3) באור יבן לט' ס' אותיות השמים... לארסטיקס

(Venice 1488).

(4) Averroes Quaestio in Librum Priorum (Venice 1497).

(5) Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic.

(6) Averroes' Proem to the large commentary to Aristotle's "Metaphysics" XII, translated for Pico di Mirandola and also for Cardinal Grinani.

(7) Commentary to Song of Songs is also attributed to him.

(8) Several reputed works in defence of Maimonides, against the criticisms of Levi b. Gershon (cf. Joseph Solomon del Medigo's Mazref.).

(9) Adnotationes in plurima dica--Commentatoris (d. h. Averroes) et aliis rebus, etc.

(10) Two שאלות concerning הכשר ההיילאמי, (Padua 1482).

(11) Averrois Comm. in Meteora Aristoteles.

(12) Averrois de Cometis.

*

(13) De Spermate.

His major piece of writing, Behinas Hadas, first was published in Basle 1628 in הנהגת חכמים of R. Jehudah Samuel Ashkenazi, and appeared as a separate book in Vienna 1833 with a commentary and introduction by I. S. Reggio. In this work Del Medigo makes a clear distinction between Philosophy and Religion and comes to the conclusion that the fundamental truths of Judaism rest ultimately on revelation, although none of them can be considered illogical from the philosophical standpoint.

The purpose of the book may well be put in the words of the Introduction to the Moreh Nebuchim: "The object of this treatise is to enlighten a religious man who has been trained to believe in the truth of our holy Torah, who conscientiously fulfils his moral and religious duties and at the same time has been successful in his philosophical studies. Human reason has attracted him to abide within its sphere; and he finds it difficult to accept as correct the teaching based on the literal interpretation of the Torah and especially that which he himself or others derived from those homonymous, metaphorical or hybrid expressions. Hence, he is lost in perplexity and anxiety...The work has a second object in view. It seeks to explain certain obscure figures which occur in the prophets and are not distinctly characterized as being figures. Ignorant and superficial readers take them in a literal, not in a figurative sense...But (all men) are relieved if we suggest that the terms are figurative." Now let us analyze the book.

* Steinschneider, Heb. Bibliographie XXI, pp. 60-71.

Philosophy and Science are always reserved for the few scholars and sages, and those who try to bring these two sphere of knowledge down to the level of ordinary laymen pervert and destroy both the group and the subject matter itself. For we must always remember that intellectual study requires special preparation and a long period of training; and since the mass has neither it can only grasp philosophic or scientific ideas in a partial, prejudiced and totally inadequate fashion. Far better is it to keep the profound insights of the genius hidden away among the initiated until we can make the large mass of men ready for the revelation by a careful process of education.

But if Philosophy and Science are reserved for the few, faith is the common possession of all men. And our revealed Torah is the text-book for religious beliefs in which all Jews necessarily share. The validity of these beliefs is not to be tested by the external criteria of logical method, but they are innately real and true, guaranteed by the very truth of God. For ultimately, although scholarly Jews may introduce logical rules and principles to show how the words of the Torah absolutely agree with the views of Science, yet the genuine basis for the fundamentals of religion is to be found in faith not in reason. Reason is too subjective often, too much colored by the shifting trends of the times; but religious faith is the rock of the ages to which even the shipwrecked rationalist may cling in safety. For religious faith among all classes of men, scholars as well as ignorant men, is rooted in the most certain and rational element in the universe--God, the Creator of the whole cosmic scheme. This is why the Torah should be relied on when differences of opinion between Science and

Religion arise, because the Torah is a concrete symbol of God's rationality. And that there are some matters there that cannot be explained by the syllogistic method is not an indication that they are irrational, but rather, if they are understood properly, that they are super-rational. And so both the wise and the ignorant believe things in religion from the standpoint of revelation, although the sage may have proved to himself by logic that the Torah presents a rational system. The only distinction between the faith of the mass and the faith of the few lies in the method of verification.

But we may go beyond this and say that the Torah is not the primary basis for fundamental religious principles. Rather are these roots made known to all men through their innate ideas, which are derived from the Universal Mind, and the Torah become so important only because it contains the particular laws and commandments unique for men of our religion, by which the root principles may be realized in action and fulfilled in concrete ways. Now, to some of the secondary root-principles--such as prophecy, messiah, primacy of Moses, etc.--the philosophic method may object. It is then that we come to realize that methods of study vary greatly and that the rules that apply to religious principles are entirely out of place in the province of science, and vice versa. Hence, the thinking religionist sees that there is a line of demarcation marking off religious truth from scientific truth, and woe be to him who confuses the two methods. As soon as we realize that the methods of study vary greatly we must then be very careful not to confuse one with another. Very rare indeed are philosophically inclined religionists who have the ability to apply the demonstrative

method to the ikkarim and prove their perfection. Maimonides is a rare example of one whose philosophic speculation did not lessen faith and belief. Most men, however, in attempting to reconcile Philosophy and Religion, become neither genuine religionists nor real philosophers. But even if they are successful their results must be hidden except to those who are prepared to apply logic intelligently. And yet all men know intuitively that our divine religion and our Torah are not irrational. Indeed, if our religious beliefs were out of harmony with reason, if they were self-contradictory and absurd, then we would be in duty bound to discard all of them, because we dare not do violence to the intellect which God has implanted in us.

Now let us turn to another subject. Our religion is not unique in its fundamental beliefs, for all men have implanted within them ideas of God, and all philosophers agree that He exists, and that He is One. But however similar other religions may be to ours in theory, yet in practical commandments and statutes we are distinguished from all others. In fact, that which saves Judaism from being merely a natural religion is its practical, ritualistic, ceremonial aspects, the side of deed rather than creed. And yet we cannot escape the fact that the practical aspect is rooted in the theoretical. We do have beliefs and dogmas as soon as we have actions, for our works are but the final stages in our beliefs and if we remove the props of beliefs, the whole superstructure of actions must inevitably crumble to dust.

So let us turn, says Del Medigo, first to the ikkarim and search out their nature and their number. He derives them from

the words of the Torah and from the words of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud, beliefs without which religious practices would be impossible. And following Maimonides thirteen articles of belief, Del Medigo sets down the fundamentals in this order:

1. The existence of God.
2. The unity of God.
3. The incorporeality of God.
4. Prophecy.
5. Reward and Punishment.
6. Providence.
7. Immutability of the Torah.
8. Primacy of Moses.
9. Resurrection of the Dead.
10. Messiah.

Several of these beliefs are not obviously root-principles among the people, but when we search more deeply we see that they too are essentials. For example, the belief in Incorporeality, on the surface, seems strange, since we ordinarily ascribe existence only to bodily beings. But this habit of thought was changed by Maimonides when he showed the people that God is Incorporeal; and, hence, we may include it in our list of ikkarim. Likewise, the dogma of the Messiah does not at first appear as essential to religion, but the view of the sages that he who denies the Messiah is a heretic without share in the world to come shows that this must be one of the root-principles. But interesting above all else is the criterion of judgment about these fundamentals. The sole standard is their intelligibility to all men. If all men everywhere

believe in them and accept them, then they must be true.

Now let us take up the question of the legal decisions of the Torah and show how they are interpreted and how their literal meaning cannot suffice. The laws and judgments which guide the people's communal life are derived by the hermeneutical rules from Biblical verses, and they are called Dine Torah and Din ~~De~~ Sofrim, interpretations that stand half-way in importance between the direct mitzvot of the Torah, on the one hand, and the rabbinical ordinances, on the other. Definite rules of interpretation are, of course, absolutely essential for these laws. Otherwise, we would fall into the grievous error of the Karaites, who rejected the rules and gave permission to each man to explain the Torah as he wished, and thus increased explanations without end.

There are some, however, who maintain that the Talmudic method produces discord and dispute among our people. The answer is that the disputes arise, not because of the method, but because the Mishnah and the Talmud, which by nature were oral tradition, had to be written down on account of human forgetfulness. If we had not been dispersed throughout the world, but had our own state, then matters would have been different, and we could have consulted the Great Sanhedrin for legal decisions. But now we must make the best of our unfortunate lot. Above all, we must remember that all the laws were potentially what was said to Moses at Sinai, and that now we may use them for our own problems.

Now Del Medigo brings his vehement attack on the Kabbalists, "who think that all the words of the Torah are only allegorical and are hidden to all save themselves." He says, first

of all, that the Gaonim knew nothing of the way of Kabbalah, and that no Talmudic statement can be found to uphold its views. And many of the great sages, like Maimonides and others, were totally ignorant about it. He gives many reasons, in the second place, why the so-called ancient source, the Zohar, could not have been the work of R. Simon b. Yohai, but was a modern forgery. Furthermore, this Kabbalah, so-called "Tradition", is far remote from a really traditional matter, for there is great difference of opinion among the adherents themselves: some maintain, for example, that the ten Sefiros are the Godhead in Itself--which is real heresy--while others maintain that they are only attributes of God. Hence, Kabbalah, for him, was an "intellectual swamp", a lying, false, shallow system, deceiving even the most intelligent religionists by the false glamor of its mysticism.

And yet we have still to determine whether the words of the Torah are to be taken literally or not. The principle to be applied in this matter is that we must not multiply explanations beyond necessity, that we shall accept the literal meaning of a verse, unless it proves to be self-contradictory. Thus it becomes evident that some of the stories of the Torah must be given interpretations beyond the p'shat.

Now, just as the Torah is divided into two parts--the legal and the narrative--so too the Talmud contains two sections: the one dealing with laws; and the other with aggadoth. The laws of the Talmud we must accept without the slightest deviation, but it is not obligatory for us to agree always with the sages of the Talmud in the midrashim and aggadoth, for here no matters of

conduct or fundaments of belief are involved, but only the personal views of our scholars, "and they have no higher authority than other expressions of important men." The halakic elements, of course, are divine in nature and must be accepted without question.

As a matter of fact, the aggadoth are to be treated in the same way as the words of the Torah--some of them are to be taken literally and others must be interpreted. And of those which are given explanation, some may be put down in writing and others not. And the test for them is whether the large mass of religionists will be injured in any way by the publication of the interpretations. All the way through the "Behinas Hada^tas" this is the major standard of judgment--the good and the harmony of the mass of religionists has priority over all other considerations--and any idea that tends to confuse and destroy them must be suppressed. Del Medigo does not make any false distinctions in the faith of the mass and the few. Essentially, it is the same, but the mind of the mass is unprepared for the profundities and subtleties of the scholars, and when these are made known to all the mass is harmed rather than benefitted.

This is the main principle of the book--the common good of all demands an intellectual sacrifice on the part of the few, and that those men who attempt to popularize the deep views of the scholars and try to combine Science with Religion succeed only in destroying both--in weakening the faith of men and in bringing true wisdom into disrepute among the indiscriminating many. Particularly in his own age, when Italian Judaism was so sterile and barren, there arose many half-baked thinkers who confused the methods

proper to Religion and to Science and caused thereby a great increase in disputes and in internal dissension.

And now, at the end of his work, Del Medigo discusses the final problem--the reasons for the mitzvoth. It is the duty of every intelligent man to seek the causes of the Biblical commands, for through them the final purposes of God become revealed. In fact, we must postulate that the mitzvoth have intelligible causes, for we cannot imagine that the divine commands are irrational. But when we have discovered the reasons for the mitzvoth, we must not think that they are final and absolute, for we must retain a proper humility when we approach the thoughts and the plans of God.

And we discover the reasons when we understand the general purpose of the Torah, which is to influence man to the true good in thought and in deed. If we apply this principle to the mitzvoth, we discover their causes and their goals--that we must perform them, not to influence Heavenly Beings or to improve them, but in order to reform and improve ourselves.

The mitzvoth, perhaps, form the most vital part of our religion. Not only do they distinguish us from all other peoples, but they are the connecting links between Belief and Action. The very essence of the mitzvoth is that it leads from Thought to Deed. And the Deed is the final purpose of the Torah and of our religion--not only to have right beliefs but to transmute them into right actions is the fundamental tenet of our religion. Hence, those men who have rationalized away the necessity for action, and have made the Good Motive and the Moral Intent the summum bonum--these

men are the destroyers, not only of the practical side of religion, but even of the theoretical aspect, for a belief that issues in no action soon withers and dies.

Finally, Del Medigo asks whether the reasons for the mitzvoth shall be written down or not, and since he finds no justification in the Torah itself for both points of view, he concludes that certain reasons may be spread abroad, while others, which would do incalculable harm to the mass, must never be revealed. Each generation of sages must measure the wisdom and test the strength of its own age, and then determine which secrets of God may safely become the common possession of all Jews.

Elijah Del Medigo cannot be classed as a great thinker--or an epoch-making genius--for the thoughts that he expressed were not new creations nor were his solutions unusually original. Nor is his work distinguished by beauty of style. Rather is it involved, labored and heavy. And yet, in spite of the lack of profound originality and of literary artistry, Del Medigo served the needs of his age admirably. Italian Jewry did not need a towering intellect, separated far from them by the unbridgeable chasm of thought; they required a man close to them, who could understand their immediate difficulties and help them solve their problems. The people were confused and lost--the sophistry of the pseudo-philosophers, the fanatical mysticism of the Kabbalists, the unyielding obstinacy of the orthodox hopelessly divided the people into sects, hating and fighting and misunderstanding one another. As a result, the light of Judaism was being threatened with

extinction in Italy, for if one could not know either what to believe or how to act, if authorities were so irrevocably divided, then of what use was the loyalty to this muddled religion? It was into this scene of confusion that Elijah del Medigo brought his work, "An Inquiry Into Religion"--a book which stood out in its time as a beacon light to men of faith.

Now let us try to see exactly what position Del Medigo really occupies and what is his unique viewpoint.

Del Medigo, we might say, occupies a middle of the road position--between faith and reason, Religion and Science, with the emphasis, if anywhere, on faith and religion. He starts out with a definite goal in mind--to show that Judaism is a rational, at times a super-rational system, but never an irrational one. But the measuring rod of truth, in religion as religion, is not the syllogism of logic, but the words of Revelation. And when the two conflict, not only must we turn to words of accepted tradition, but also to the inner voice of faith. Inquiry and investigation is permissible up to a certain point in religion, but there are definite limits to which the methods of one study can apply in another field.

Del Medigo, after all, was the child of his age and as such inherited with his secular studies the spirit of Scholasticism--and this temper reveals itself all through the Behinas Hada^{ta}s. "Investigate and study in the sphere of religion, if you desire, but remember that the end is pre-determined--the demonstrated proofs of logical must inevitably agree with the revealed truths of religion."

One of the most valuable principles of Del Medigo is his insistence on the distinction between the mass and the few. In our judgment this is his most important contribution--that the capacities of men differ vastly and that the greatest sin that can be committed by a thinker is to publish views that cannot be positively digested by the large majority of men. If the philosopher has arrived at certain deep conclusions after a long period of reflection, let him not attempt to foist them upon the unprepared mind of the crowd. If certain unique ideas are derived from the Torah and the Talmud by scholars, let them be read and understood by the scholars alone.

And this distinction of Del Medigo between the chosen few and the large mass is most essential today, when the faith of Jews everywhere is being corroded by the acids of shallowness--shallow thinking, shallow feeling, shallow searching--and when the cry for popularization is making the leaders forget that there are certain concepts that should be reserved for them alone--certain interpretations that they alone can really understand. This does not mean that the religion of the scholar is a truer or a finer one than the religion of the layman, but that it is necessarily more creative, more adventurous and hence a more dangerous religious quest. In fact, a Maimonides can dare to apply the rigid tests of Philosophy to religion and paint a blended masterpiece, just because he is a master of both fields. But give the same paint and the same brush to a less skilled artist and he will only blur the colors.

Another interesting point in Del Medigo is the relation of the dogmas to the mass mind. Here his criterion of judgment is quite different from that of Maimonides. For a belief that is not commonly accepted by the majority is no real belief to Del Medigo, whereas in Maimonides * the test of the validity of belief is the reaction of the sage, rather than of ten thousand fools. And it is just here that we feel that Del Medigo reveals one of his weaknesses. For, in the first place, consensus gentium has never been the test for truth in Judaism. The mass too often places its trust not in verification or in proof but in popular credo, and in inherited superstition. And, in the second place, there may be fundamental beliefs that are not understood by the mass, as Del Medigo might have realized had he remembered his own example of belief in the Incorporeality of God. In Maimonides' own time this view was condemned by many authorities as rank heresy. Philosophic inquiry has no advantage whatever, if only beliefs that can be comprehended by the mass can be taken as the root principles of a religion.

But although Del Medigo seeks for a "mean" position

* Introduction to Helek.

between two extremes in most matters, he certainly goes to extremes in his hatred and contempt of the Kabbalists. But there was a reason for his sweeping condemnation of them--his disciple and friend, Count Pico di Mirandola, had suddenly been attacked by the Kabbalah through the influence of a Jew, Johanan Aleman, and he thought he had discovered in Kabbalistic formulae many important secrets of the Christian religion--the Trinity, Original Sin, Fall of the Angels, etc. It was in order to save his friend from the error of Kabbalah and in order to prove to the Jews the fallacy of its doctrines that Del Medigo devoted so much of his work to this subject.

That Del Medigo depended on other writers is self-evident from his work. In many places he refers to Maimonides as his source for authority, and he follows him closely with regard to the fundamentals of religion, in his attitude to philosophic investigation, in his opposition to the Karaites, in his dependence on the Talmudic method, in his argument against Kabbalah, and in his discussion of the mitzvoth. He also follows Maimonides in his distinction between "philosophical beliefs which can be established by reason, and the religious dogmas which can neither be proved nor disproved by reason and must be accepted on faith and authority."

It is very interesting to notice the parallelisms between Del Medigo and Maimonides:

DEL MEDIGO

(p. 23) There is no doubt that the existence of God...ought to be con-

MAIMONIDES

The existence of the Creator is the first cardinal doctrine

* cf. Christianity and Judaism Compare Notes, p. 60

sidered a root-principle...Faith in Him should be the beginning of all religion.

(p. 24) And it is obviously necessary to believe about the existence of the First Cause that it is the Cause of all existence.

(p. 4) The purpose of this Torah is to guide us in human affairs and in good deeds and true opinions, according to the capacities of the general mass of the people ... (p. 6) The Torah aims at the perfection of every religionist in accordance with his possibilities. (p. 65) The general purpose of the Torah is to lead men to the true good of which they are capable both in thought and in deed. (p. 69) The Torah exists... either for the confirmation of true knowledge or for the refutation of false knowledge or for the good deed.

of faith (Intr. to Helek). The foundation of foundations and the pillar of the sciences is to know that there is a First Being and that He caused the existence of all beings (Beg. of Mishnah Torah).

The general object of the Torah is two-fold...the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body. The well-being of the soul is promoted by correct opinions communicated to the people according to their capacity... The second is to teach every one of us good morals (actions)... Hence, the Torah seeks to train us in faith, to impart to us correct and true opinions when the intellect is sufficiently developed (Moreh Nebuhim 3.27). Every narrative in the Torah serves a certain purpose in connection with religious teaching. It either helps to establish a principle of faith or

(p. 26) And that this Torah does not change is an absolutely essential postulate for men of this religion.

(p. 52) But about the subject of the aggadoth which are in the Talmud and the Midrashim...we find many views. One group believes all of them literally. Another group rejects the far-fetched aggadoth according to their literal meaning and ridicules them. And a third class interprets those whose simple meaning is far-fetched and justifies the words of the sages.

to regulate our actions, and to prevent wrong and injustice among men (Mor. Neb. 3.50).

The Torah of Moses will not be abrogated and no other Torah will come from God (Intr. to Helek).

(Maimonides classified students of rabbinic literature into 3 groups.) The first group adopts the words of the sages literally and gives no kind of interpretation whatsoever. The second group applies itself to showing the weaknesses of the rabbinical statements (thinking that the sages meant nothing but what the literal interpretation indicates). They make sport of the sages from time to time and imagine themselves more intellectually gifted... whereas they are more stupid than the first class. The third class of thinkers is so very small in numbers that one would call it a class only in the sense that the

(p. 60) We must now ask if there are reasons for the commands of the Torah, and causes known to us or capable of being known by us. And I said "known to us" for I do not think that there exists a human intelligence unless it be that of a simpleton which believes that they have no reasons at all. For who is the man who could imagine that the commands of God should be in vain and to no purpose like the deeds of fools who work without any goal, any aim in their work?...The reasons for some of the mitzvot--they are called hukim--are unknown to us, or knowledge of them is very difficult for us.

sun is termed a species. They are convinced beyond doubt that the words of the sages have an outer and an inner meaning (Intr. to Helek).

Although all the statutes of the Torah are divine decrees, it is proper to reflect upon them and to assign a reason wherever it is possible (Yad ha-Hazakah - Tmurah 4.13).

It is proper for a man to reflect upon the laws of the Holy Torah and understand their purpose to the utmost of his ability...

There is a cause for every commandment; every positive or negative precept serves a useful object.

In some cases the usefulness is evident, e.g., the prohibition of murder and theft; in others the usefulness is not so evident...

The former are called mishpotim and the latter hukim.

I will now tell you what intelligent persons ought to believe in

this respect, namely, that each commandment has necessarily a cause. (Mor. Neb. 3.28).

Del Medigo's dependence upon the Arabic philosopher Averroes is even greater perhaps. For we find that his whole idea of the two-fold truth, and of the separation of Reason and Revelation and of the ultimate priority of Revelation, all of these are derived from the implications of Averroes' work, "Philosophie und Theologie". We find here clearly implied the view of two classes of religionists, the few and the mass, and the necessity of concealing from the mass the scientifically discovered views of the chosen individuals.

We will quote a few parallels between the two works:

DEL MEDIGO

(p.4) Let us investigate first whether philosophic inquiry is permissible to men of this religion...And if it is permitted, we must determine whether it is from the standpoint of necessity --for, if so, then the study of it becomes not only permissible but commanded--or whether it is just from the standpoint of advantage.

And we may say that there is no doubt among religionists who are

AVERROES

Der Zweck dieser Abhandlung ist der, dass mir in Rücksicht auf die religiöse Spekulation untersuchen, ob die Speculation über Philosophie und logische Wissenschaften durch das religiöse Gesetz erlaubt oder verboten oder befohlen sei, sei es als etwas freiwillig zu Unternehmendes, sei es als nothwendige Pflicht (page 1).

Da das Alles bestimmt ist und wir Moslimen überzeugt sind, das

correct in their views that the purpose of this Torah is to guide us in human affairs and in good deeds and in true opinions, according to the capacities of the general mass of the people and the nature of individuals in what is peculiar to them. And therefore the Torah and the Prophets set down some fundamental principles through tradition and figurative or argumentative interpretation in accord with verification among the mass. And it stimulates the few to search for the proper proof in these matters.

The prophet says to all the people, "Lift up your eyes to

dieses unser göttliches Gesetz Wahrheit ist und dass es aufmerksam macht und auffordert zu dieser Glückseligkeit, welche durch die Erkenntniss Gottes und seiner Geschöpfe hervorgebracht wird, so steht dieses für jeden Moslim in Folge der Methode des Glaubens fest, welche seine angeborne und natürliche Anlage erfordert-- nämlich die Naturen der Menschen sind abgestuft in Bezug auf den Glauben; der eine glaubt vermöge der Demonstration, der andere in Folge von dialektischen Sätzen, gerade aber so wie der Mann, der sich durch Demonstration leiten lässt, denn in seiner Natur liegt nicht mehr als jene; wieder ein Anderer in Folge von rhetorischen Ausführungen, und sein Glaube ist, wie der des Mannes der Demonstration durch demonstrative Ausführungen. (p. 6)

Dass das religiöse Gesetz den Menschen auffordert, über die

the heights and see who has created these," and similar words. You find that the greatest of the prophets said to the house of Israel, "Hear, O Israel", etc. but he aroused the few to their unique way either explicitly or by hints, explicitly when he said, "Know therefore this day and lay it to mind", or by hints through the command of love and fear, as the great Moses Maimonides has explained it. (p. 5).

(p. 65) There is no doubt but that the purpose of the Torah is to lead men to the true good, both in thought and in deed.

existirenden Dinge durch den Verstand zu reflektieren und durch ihn nach der Erkenntniss derselben eifrigst zu streben, geht aus mehr als einer Stelle des gesegneten Qorans hervor; z. B. Sur. LIX, 2, So reflektirt denn, ihr mit Einsicht begabten. Dies ist ein beweisender Text, dass es notwendig ist, den Verstandesschluss anzuwenden, oder den Verstandesschluss in Verbindung mit dem Religionschluss. Ferner Sur. VII, 184: Haben sie nicht nachgedacht über die Pracht des Himmels und der Erde und was Gott an Dingen erschaffen hat. Dies ist ein Text, welcher zum Nachdenken über alle existirenden Dinge ermuntert (p. 1).

Du musst wissen, dass der Zweck des Religionsgesetzes nur die Lehre des wahren Wissens und der wahren Praxis ist. Das wahre Wissen ist aber die Kenntniss Gottes....die wahre Praxis besteht

in der Befolgung der Handlungen,
welche die Seligkeit zur Folge
haben, und die Vermeidung derjeni-
gen, welche die Unseligkeit zur
Folge haben. (p. 18).

Not only do we find that Del Medigo was related to Averroes and to Maimonides but we find also that his view of the two-fold aspect of truth was common to the Christian scholastics. In Thomas Aquinas, for example, there are these statements:

"Theology is a distinct science. Though theology is occupied with certain questions touched on by philosophy, theology and philosophy are none the less distinct sciences, for they differ in the aim pursued, the processes and the methods. The philosopher consults only reason; the theologian begins by an act of faith and his science is directed by a supernatural light." (De Wulf, "Medieval Philosophy", pp. 152-3).

"If theology borrows from philosophy, it is not because it needs help, but in order to make more obvious the truths which it teaches." (ibid. p. 163). This is strikingly similar in fact to the statement of Del Medigo, "We do not ask that the pursuit of philosophy concerning these fundamental principles should become the proof of these principles among the reflective religionist, but we seek to show thereby that what is generally accepted among scientists agrees with what is generally believed by religionists" (p. 11).

Not only, however, was Del Medigo influenced by

philosophic currents of his own age but, as his commentator, Isaac Reggio, points out in many places, he really influenced a number of later Jewish thinkers in their attitude to Faith and Reason, Creed and Deed. Moses Mendelssohn himself, in his work "Jerusalem", shows a strong thought relationship to Del Medigo. This will be seen when we quote some of the important passages:

"Judaism boasts of no exclusive revelation of immutable truths indispensable to salvation. Revealed religion is one thing, revealed legislation is another. The universal religion of mankind (contains the immutable truths), not Judaism alone...

"All the commandments of the Mosaic law are addressed to the will of man and to his acting faculty. Commandments...are for actions only, for life and morals...

"Hence, Judaism has no articles of faith. It has a few fundamental ideas which are laid down as a basis...but these, thank God, have never been forged into religious fetters... (Jer. pp. 105-11)

"Religious laws, however, admit of no abridgement. In them everything is fundamental. Accordingly, every one of these actions, every custom, every ceremony, thus prescribed, had its meaning and cogent reason...Hence, there were but few written laws, nor were even these quite intelligible without oral instruction and tradition...(ibid. p. 138; cf. Del Medigo, p. 129ff.)

"Historical truths...must be received on trust. And they were confirmed to the nation by miracles...

"Laws, judgments, commandments, rules of life, which were to be peculiar to ~~that~~ nation; and by observing which, it was

to arrive at national and individual happiness...

"These laws were revealed--made known by the Lord by words and in writing. Still, only the most essential part thereof was entrusted to letters--and without the unwritten laws, without explanations, limitations and more particular definitions, even these written laws are mostly unintelligible,, or must become so in the course of time...

"As ceremonial laws, there is sense and meaning in them. They lead inquiring reason to divine truths. The ceremonial law was the bond for uniting practice with speculation, conduct with doctrine..." (ibid. pp. 150-154; cf. Del Medigo pp. 30-39, 72). *

Although in the Jerusalem, Mendelssohn goes beyond Del Medigo in his emphasis on the religious act, and apparently does not agree with our author that there are any fundamental dogmas in Judaism, yet we find that in the Monatschrift of 1859 Mendelssohn shows that he has modified his position and implies the existence of certain fundamental beliefs, thus really adopting completely the standpoint of Del Medigo. **

As we look at the Behinas Hadas as a whole, we feel that Del Medigo's interest in Philosophy was really secondary and subordinate to his love for his religion. There is no doubt that he wants to prove that Judaism is a rational system and that its fundamental beliefs can be accepted by thinking men, but above all, as he points out in the conclusion of his work, he wants to

* Jerusalem, Samuel's edition, London 1838.

** In a letter (Monat. p. 173) he says, "We have no dogmas contrary to or beyond reason."

emphasize the prime necessity of Action. Indeed, his whole concern about what the mass may or may not be told is merely a logical corollary of his view--that action is the summum bonum of Judaism. He desires to save the mass from intellectual confusion so that they will not forego the performance of the mitzvoth. His interest in the ikkarim is secondary to his interest in maasim.^{*} The practical laws of the Torah must be followed without deviation.

The reason that he places practical observance above theoretical belief may be explained in this way. The fundamental dogmas of religion are common to all men, and there is no theoretical distinction between Israel and other religions in the realm of principles or dogmas. Judaism, however, is distinguished from all other religions by its mitzvoth. Hence, it is most important that all Jews shall see their value and understand that they are rational, even though their causes may not be apparent on the surface.

Just a word of conclusion. Del Medigo was an outstanding man for his age, a man who tried to be honest with himself, and who brought to the problems of religion a searching mind and a deep love for knowledge. His views may be called conservative, and his attitude one of compromise, but these are not false when we realize that his age--one which he himself characterized as lacking order and harmony--was sated with unintelligent radicals and destructive extremists. Indeed, we may call him and his work, "an oasis in the desert," for it was through him that Italian Jewry survived and progressed.

* It seems possible to us that his objection to Kabbalah was that interest in mystic thoughts and rites leads to contemplation rather than to action.

A BOOK OF INQUIRY OF RELIGION

THE BOOK OF INQUIRY OF RELIGION

Just as security and a sure and established state aids men to attain ethical and political happiness either by giving direct means to the achievement of these or by helping the attainment of external things which become tools to success, so the lack of security and of government is the cause of the opposite of these. This truth can be seen from well-known peoples who had the reputation for wisdom but when their state ceased their wisdom perished from among them. And, therefore, when our state ceased and we could find no rest among the nations, lost as in the midst of the sea, our sages and the ancient books of our people disappeared almost completely, and we were left nothing of the words of the ancient sages of our people except the Mishnah and the Talmud and similar works in which there are no clear statements about all the fundamental matters of our religion except a little here and there, at times in hidden things which receive explanations and additions. It is then no wonder that differences of opinion should arise among the sages of our people about some of these things. And there is no doubt but that matters, faith in which depends either on the Torah or on distinguished religionists alone, when disputes arise among well-known men of the Torah about them, proof does not apply. Therefore, in such cases we ought to search the words of the prophets and the words of the sages, and we rely on those which are found to be more harmonious and more fitting to the words of the prophets. And no intelligent man can doubt that methods of study vary greatly, not only in the different sciences, but within one science itself, for example, in Logic. You see that the proper method appropriate for the talmudists in deducing laws is different from the method appropriate to logicians and to literalists.

Therefore, it is proper that we should pursue a method in the study of these matters which is peculiarly appropriate for them, nor should any one demand of us absolutely final proof in these things. They must be satisfied with proper proofs appropriate to this study itself.

Let us investigate first whether philosophic inquiry is permissible to men of this religion, which is the Law of Moses, or not. And, if it is permitted, we must determine whether it is from the standpoint of necessity--for, if so, then the study of it becomes not only permissible but commanded--or whether it is just from the standpoint of advantage. And we may say that there is no doubt among religionists who are correct in their views that the purpose of this Torah is to guide us in human affairs and in good deeds and in true opinions according to the capacities of the general mass of the people and the nature of individuals in what is peculiar to them. And, therefore, the Torah and the Prophets set down some fundamental principles through tradition and figurative or argumentative interpretation in accord with verification among the mass, and it stimulates the few to search for the proper proof in these matters; for example, the prophet says to the ordinary people, "Lift up your eyes to the heights and see who has created these," ⁽¹⁾ and similar words. And you find that the greatest of all the prophets said to the house of Israel, "Hear, O Israel," etc. ⁽²⁾ But he aroused the few to their unique way either explicitly or by hints, explicitly when he said, ~~know~~, therefore, this day and lay it to mind," ⁽³⁾ or by hint through the command of love and fear, as the great Moses Maimonides has explained it. It is, therefore, clear that the study of science is not compulsory in this religion as

religion; and it is obvious, therefore, that it is only from the standpoint of advantage.

This also will be further explained, for the Torah aims at the perfection of every religionist in accordance with his possibilities. And since the demonstrative method is impossible for the mass of people, whereas it is possible to the few, the Torah demands both of these. And that the demonstrative method aids the few to understand some of these fundamentals is clear, for the demonstrative method leads us to the knowledge of active beings and from their knowledge one attains to the knowledge of the active agent, concerning whom the Torah awakens individuals in this knowledge, as we shall show. And it is apparent that this method is essential for the wise religionist, but not for the ordinary religionist.

Moreover, the wise man comprehends these principles not from reflection alone but because of the agreement of the Torah with them, and in this way the wise man and the ordinary person are joined together in the matter of religion; namely, that both of them believe things from the standpoint of the Torah, except that the scholar combines speculation with what the Torah decrees, whereas the ignorant man cannot make this combination. The use or necessity of the study of science for the religious scholar will also be apparent from other points of view, as will become clear in what follows. And, therefore, in fundamentals in which the Torah and science seem to be divided the decision of the mass and of the few is the same--they both believe these things from the standpoint of the Torah. But if there arises a matter for which there is an explanation reserved for the few, but without deviating from the

fundamentals of the Torah and its purposes, and its interpretation is not given to the majority of the people for many reasons, then the intelligent man will be distinguished from the ignorant. And also a greater completeness is found among the sages, in verifying that matter, as shall be shown later. But it is necessary in things like these that the sage should not expound them either in writing or orally; that is, these explanation are only for those religionists who are fit. And, if this rule is not observed, then the general purpose of the Torah is changed and suffers; and, consequently, many of our people have erred when they wrote about these matters. Indeed, in matters in which there is obvious conflict between Torah and science, if such a thing occurs, we should not seek to verify them by the logical method but we ought to rely on the words of the Torah and what is generally accepted about the Torah among religious men. For in reality logical discussions in the first stage of reflection cast doubt; but we religionists ought at no time be doubtful about the root-principles, and so we should not pursue the method of logical discussion. And these principles are the reality of prophesy, the reality of reward and punishment, as all religionists agree, and that miracles are possible with God, and this is so, although it may not be obvious that miracles are one of the root-principles of the Torah. For, in any case, most subjects of the Torah cannot be proved true, except by the assumption of the possibility of miracles. And this is also the case with the rest of the fundamentals like these. But it is proper for you to know that we do not postulate miracles because we think that through them any intellectual matter will be solved. For from the existence of ten thousand miracles nought can be deduced save their existence, for such a principle is

not in the power of miracles to explain, as all rational inquirers undoubtedly realize. But we postulate them for the reason which we have already given.

Let us turn back now to our starting point. If someone should say that this is the truth, then it is necessary that we should not pursue the philosophic method about the basic principles, namely, the existence of God, His unity, that He is incorporeal, and that He is not a force in matter. The difference about this is that we do not ask that the pursuit of Philosophy concerning these fundamental principles should become the proof of these principles among reflective religionists, but we seek to show thereby that what is generally accepted among the scientists agrees with what is commonly believed by the men of the Torah. And, furthermore, that it is without a doubt generally accepted among all philosophers that God exists, that He is one, and that He is incorporeal, as is not the case with the other fundamentals, for the philosophers are divided about them. Consequently, in these (latter) matters, if we wish to interpret them logically and oppose our opponents in this way, great loss will occur from this; first, because we try to interpret by logical method--that is, demonstrative and rational method--what should not be explained except by scriptural verification alone; second, that when we are not able to interpret the matters by logical method the situation will compel us either to deny the Torah or misinterpret the Torah, or cast aside the ways of logic absolutely and thus injure reason and its effects. But when we agree that the verification of these matters shall only apply from the standpoint of the Torah and that the methods of study are different, as we have already said, then no confusion or doubt will ensue.

However, reflection in these matters will help us in this way, for we shall know in a logical way that the methods of study vary greatly, and that the scriptural method is different from the logical method. And, in the second place, philosophy helps us to find general propositions which help us to verify these matters; that is, to say, that that which is generally accepted by all ought to be regarded as essential for us. And it aids us, in the third place, for through this we understand that the proofs of our opponents in these matters are not axioms which the intellect cannot under any circumstances deny. And, if some one should say, that our divine religion postulates anthropomorphism, or that all of our senses err in what is tangible, that is, that the senses of all men and in all times err, and that accident may become essence, that one substance may be changed into another without generation and decay, as some say--would we be obliged to verify these matters with the scriptural verification, for if we say that we are not obliged to verify them do we say this from the standpoint of reflection or from the Torah? And already it has been assumed in our examples that this is not from the Torah; if so, it must be from reflection. Then our opponents will say, since you have been following reflection in these matters how will you distinguish among the principles which are presupposed in your religion, and how will you separate one from the other, and how will any one know which of the laws ought to be believed in and which not, for even in our divine religion are there not matters which do not agree with the intellectual method, as we have already said?

The exceptions to this argument are manifold: First, that our divine Torah does not obligate us at all to believe contra-

dictory things, nor to deny first principles or those which are like first principles, nor to deny percepts. And were it like this in our religion we would decide the proposition in refutation to the religion; even if it were assumed that the truth were so we would not be punished, that is, for our being unbelievers in those matters which our intellect (by the very nature that God has implanted in it) is unable to accept or believe in but constantly imagines and knows the opposite of them to be true, which is presupposed in accordance with its very nature, and habits and imaginations do not disturb it. Unless, of course, a man wants to follow his imagination and his impulses and turn into a visionary and oppose known concepts and percepts.

Second, that these subjects are not necessary to the fulfillment of any particular laws unless a man wills them nor from things common to all believers. And this is so, for even if anthropomorphism is postulated it is only as an accident in the subject of God. And even if its opposite is believed or not believed, anthropomorphism does not detract from faith in the essence of God or His permanent elements; but this will be explained further.

Third, that the reasons for these postulates could not even be accepted by common reason, and therefore were their postulates assumed like these in our religion we should by no means be compelled to accept them. [And that they should gather]....And were a man placed in one of the mountains from the time of his birth and he would not hear these, and it would happen that they were told to him that behold there are postulates like these, without doubt he would deny it--that it is possible that there exist in the world those who be-

lieve these assumptions. Indeed he would be much astonished at that tale.

But if we find anyone who agrees with all these, and who replies that it is not the way of reason to perceive these, we do not pay any attention to it, nor do we desire at this time to dispute with them, for this is not our way, and argument in this matter is very absurd and improper.

But if someone should say, behold even you have said that God is able to do anything, and if so, the existence of some of these is possible, we reply that we religionists shall not say that God's freedom of will is extended to contradictions or opposites. But we shall say that God cannot will them. Nor do we even say that His omnipotence extends to Himself, as it were, to change Himself or any of His essential attributes--but He does not will it at all. But we do say that His omnipotence may be conceived as applying to things outside of Himself, but we do not pay attention at this time to this matter, for talk about it is absurd.

From all these things, and from what we shall say, it is proper that true religion in its fundamental principles may be distinguished from the untrue, and matters fitting to be verified from religion shall be distinguished from those which are not. Should, perhaps, a religion be found which agrees with our divine Torah in its theoretical aspects, yet you must distinguish from it its mitzvot and its statutes, for they undoubtedly lead man to the good; and the truth of that religion should not be tested on the basis of its theories alone. Therefore, I have not chosen in my essay on philosophy to argue with philosophers about matters on which they

do not agree with us in the way of philosophy, for this is not in the power of philosophic method. But I rely on prophesy and on traditional truth, and I consider that my predecessors in religion who wish to explain these matters in an intellectual way changed the methods of study which were unique to the matter and they became intermediaries between Scripturalists and Non-Scripturalists, and they were neither Scripturalists nor Philosophers. And although perhaps they thought that by this they would bring science near to men they have really caused trouble. For when men see that these men are not following religion properly, and they are the most distinguished persons among the scientists, then that science becomes a blemish to its possessor until men agree that philosophers are really heretics and perverters of the Torah. But this indeed is far remote from the nature of the completely wise man, for he is the man who seeks with all his might to follow religion and the general good that is common to them all, which leads them to possible perfection and to the real good.

And there does not exist a sage among the Israelites who opposes the Torah unless his character and temperament are evil by nature, and science cannot be held responsible for his native disposition; or this happens to him because he has not seen all of the words of the sages systematically, and he forsakes the Torah and yet does not possess true knowledge, and especially when it happens that this man has a fine mind, as is natural with men who want to philosophize, for then it will hurt religion and science very much and will injure the purpose of the Torah. And, therefore, you will not find among the ancients in general, or

even among the rest of the scholars of other nations that they oppose the Torah or say anything against it. Even the head of the Peripatetics mentioned at the end of his writings the subject of Cain and Abel, and wanted to explain from this that hatred and jealousy are the heritage of the world, since this existed among the first brothers, according to the story of the Torah. But the later Mohammedans began to write analyses about matters of religion, and some of the men of our religion followed them.

I think that what induced that noble man Maimonides to pursue this method in some of the matters of the Torah was: first, because the evil men of our people thought that they knew a great deal about rational method, although their way was in truth far remote from this, and they wanted to push the Torah away contemptuously whereas he wanted to save the Torah even according to their method; second, because he saw that the men of the Mohammedan religion were following this method and because of his great love for the Torah, he did not want our Torah to be considered, God forbid, inferior in degree to their Law; third, because he found that there was no other way by which true religion could be distinguished from false religion except the method which he followed. However, some of those who came after him wanted to follow his method, but they became misinterpreters of the Torah.

But we have already hinted about the method by which true religion may be distinguished from untrue. We shall say more about it in what follows. And we have told already about the method which we shall pursue in these religious matters which are in opposition to science. And I promise to speak in some of my

statements about those who philosophize and men like them. And I promise to point out at times how I am in accord even with the statements that are generally accepted among these, and to tell when I do not agree with their words.

After we have reached this place it is proper for us to consider in the afore-mentioned manner which is the method which shall lead us to the knowledge of the principles of religion and to their number. And, second, we must consider whether it is proper to interpret the words of the Torah in details and in rules, or whether they should be set down according to their plain meaning. And in this question we shall speak about those matters which some religionists call Kabbalah, and about the reasons of their opponents.

And we shall also speak about matters of law and justice and about the disputes between Rabbinites and Karaites (literally, Sadducees), which occurred among the men of our religion. We shall also speak concerning the words of our ancient sages, that is to say, the wise men of the Mishnah and Talmud, whether it is proper that their reasons should be explained or not, and which method we shall use to understand the reasons for the mitzvot. And we say first, that the method we shall pursue to attain the knowledge of the principles and of their number is a compound, as you might say, of the words of the Torah and of the Prophets, and of the words of the wise men of the Mishnah and of the Talmud, and of their essentiality to this divine religion. Afterwards we say that there is no doubt that the existence of God and other attributes which are intelligible to the general run of people--for example, that He is one and incorporeal, and the cause of all other existences--

that these ought to be considered root-principles. And that, as He is the First Cause of all beings, so the faith in Him should be the beginning of all religion (the root-principle). Therefore, you will find that the earliest sages will term the statements about the attributes of God, First Wisdom. And the same applies to these things of which we say that through them we attain the root-principles, that is, from the words of prophesy and of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud and from the essentiality of this religion.

And it is first of all clear from the words of the master of the prophets ⁽⁴⁾ *לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים*, etc. which deal with the attributes of God, the first with His existence, and the second with His unity. And these two are, as it were, one commandment, and that commandment is about God, and that first commandment of the Decalogue is to show that He is the root and the cause of all the other commandments. And further he says ⁽⁵⁾ *א' דעת היום* *והשבות אל לבבך*, etc. which points also to the existence of God and to His unity. And we do not find language like this in the rest of the commandments of the Torah, which shows that these things are among the fundamentals of religion. And we also find it said in the Torah, "Take ye therefore good heed of your souls, for you saw no manner of similitude," ⁽⁶⁾ and there is found no language like this in the rest of the commandments of God. And Solomon in his prayer said, "For behold the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee." ⁽⁷⁾ And our early sages said, "On high there is no standing up and no sitting down." Observe their statement that "On higher there is no standing up and no sitting down"; ⁽⁸⁾ they do not say, "The Holy One blessed be He does not sit," and it can even be seen from

the words of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud, when they say that the heretics and the Epicureans are not in the class of ordinary Israelitish sinners, but that they have no share in the world to come. And so also with the sects; and the best of the commentators think that the belief in the opposite of these matters can be understood from the names *הכפירה והאפיקורסות* *אין ומינוח*. But, nevertheless, it is obviously necessary for this religion at least to believe about the existence of the First Cause that It is the cause of all existence and that It is one. And it is obvious that all these matters are possible for the comprehension of the mass without any injury occurring to them from this. But what about the view of the mass that that which has no body nor any corporeal power is non-existent? The answer to this is that already the truth of God's incorporeality has become well-known among our people, and the greatly exalted and esteemed Maimonides was responsible for this and therefore it is proper to honor him for this work, although in his time before this matter became well-known such deterioration of truth did occur, so that some of his opponents criticized him in this and said that this is no heresy. However, the early sages sustained his position in their statement that the Torah uses ordinary human language. How wonderful is this statement in the explanation of the fundamentals of religion!

But that the existence of Prophecy and Reward and Punishment is necessary for men of this religion is clear, and from this it also becomes clear that it is necessary that God knows and observes all. And it can be seen that these, or some of them at least, are essentials in this religion from the points of view that we have expressed, that is to say, from the words of Prophecy and from the other matters which we have discussed.

And that this Torah does not change is an absolutely essential postulate for men of this religion, especially since it is assumed as a well-known truth by men of other religions that this Torah was established at a certain time but afterwards another Law was given. And from this it is seen that the fact that Moses is the master of all the prophets is a root-principle is involved in what was already said about the subject of the continuance of the Torah. But it is not necessary to seek for proof that this is the Torah which is in our hands, and that the Torah of Moses commanded by God is a root-principle of our religion, and that Resurrection of the Dead is a principle in this religion of ours is clear from the words of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud and this is so for they have said in Perek Helek that he who does not admit this and that this is from the Torah is a heretic and he has no share in the world to come, and if so he is not included in the rest of Israel--not because of an evil act is this so but on account of an evil religious tenet; hence, Resurrection of the Dead must be a root-principle in religion.

And so also in the matter of the Messiah, which is also a principle, at least one of the principles of religion at the present time, although it may not have been one of the root-principles of the Torah originally. When the sage, Hillel the Younger, said that there is no Messiah in Israel, the wise men said against him the statement which is made against those who profane God and against those who busy themselves in the books of the heretics. This is their saying, "May the Lord forgive Rabbi Hillel." Consequently, we see that they regarded anybody that made a statement

like this as a heretic. Since this is so, the Messiah must be a root-principle in religion. And behold, this is the most certain method in acquiring an explanation of these principles; Maimonides inclined to this method. But some poor Jewish philosophers wanted to catch him up in these matters, as is customary in the majority of our men, namely, that as soon as they attain to the knowledge of anything, even though it is utterly insignificant, immediately they try to catch up the most important men of the Torah and of science. And this has been one of the most powerful reasons for the increase of dispute among the men of our people, and jealousy and hatred and the search for honor also is a contributing factor (literally, helps this). But intelligent men, men of worthwhile characters will understand these things and will know their insignificant criticisms. Hence, we will not continue this discussion, for this will be sufficient for the needs of this essay.

The second question can be understood in two ways, the first categorically, that is to say, that there is either explanation or not; and second, if it is assumed that there is an explanation for them we must determine whether it is proper that it should be put down in writing. We shall speak on these questions in accordance with both these ways of interpretation.

We say that the laws of the Torah and its decisions-- for all of them or for the majority of them there is an explanation, and that the literal meaning does not wholly suffice. And this is clear when man comes down to the particular mitzvot, for example, about Succoth and the Tefillin, and so forth. And from this will be seen the necessity of the talmudic method in religion, that is,

in the civil decisions and laws of religion. And this is so because by that method traditional things about which there are no disputes at all shall be explained. And the traditional rules of interpretation through which the Torah is explained also will be pointed out, for they, as it were, are the foundations and the loci for legal analogy. And these likewise are not subject to absolute differences of opinion, meaning that one may say that he does not depend on the rules of interpretation (themselves) but disputes do arise at times about their conditions, that is to say, about "a General, Particular and a General", whether the first generalization is the root-principle or whether the last generalization is the root-principle, or exactly as this is expounded in Haholez ⁽¹⁰⁾ and in other places. And at times dispute arises whether it is proper to deduce a matter from "a General, Particular and a General", or from "Extension, Limitation and Extension", and questions like these. And the decisions which are derived from these are called Dine Torah, as if to say that they are derived from biblical verses as a result of the hermeneutical rules. At any rate, they are not written down in Scripture explicitly nor are they especially traditional--they are also called Dibre Soferim, that is, that the Soferim deduced them by hermeneutical rules from the words of Scripture. And sometimes he who transgresses against them shall die, for example, the man who has intercourse with a man who is only consecrated to her husband by means of silver. But under no circumstances are they considered rabbinical, as for example the decrees and the ordinances which are a fence around the Torah.

And the Karaites deny all these matters, and they

forsake religion, and they make a show, as it were, of despising interpretation, and really increase interpretation. For when no definite explanation is agreed on, but each man may interpret as he wishes, then interpretations increase without end. And behold this evil group separates those who are gathered together, since there is no possibility of agreement among them. No wonder that it could not gather together the separated, as Maimonides has already pointed out. There is no doubt but that the leaders of these groups want to separate themselves from the sphere of religion in their mistaking the meaning of Antigonus, but they are afraid of the mass, and so they find a way to loosen the yoke of the Torah from their necks without any loss occurring to them from them. This is true because, since the explanations are according to the desire of every man, it will be found that every interpretation is in harmony with what he desires, as Maimonides has already said. Consult also Pirke Rabbi Nathan.

How is it possible that the decisions of the Torah could be without interpretation and agreement, when we see that even the words of ordinary men receive many different explanations; if so, how much more difference of opinion will there be about the words of the prophets which are less clear.

There may be some who will maintain that the talmudic method increases disputes, as is clear from the Talmud itself and from its many commentators who having different methods themselves interpret as they wish, and hence no agreement can be reached about the matters of laws. The answer to this is that disputes arise not on account of the Talmudic method but because the traditions were

written down; really the Mishnah and the Talmud would not have been written down had it not been necessary because of (human) forgetfulness, and consequently it can be called Torah she b'al Pe. And from this it becomes clear that the interpretation of scriptural decisions would not have been written down had it not been necessary, but as a dispute arose about a certain matter the case would have been decided according to the sages of Israel and according to the Great Sanhedrin who were expert in legal rules and in the deduction of laws. But now, since we are dispersed, we can secure agreement about a matter only by great effort. And if this is so then the absence of agreement and the multiplicity of interpretation cannot be blamed upon the talmudic method but are due to external causes, as we have said, and there is no doubt but that these destroy the purpose of the Torah, and there is no doubt that the laws of every tongue and people ought to be interpreted by the sages of that people who are well versed in civil law and who know the customary usages of that religion.

And besides the matters which we have discussed difference of opinion exists among the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud in understanding the details of the biblical verses from which some civil laws have been deduced. And this difference of opinion depends on the words of the biblical text and its details, just as we differ now; at times it is hard to decide between one of the views and tradition does not settle this matter. And whoever says that tradition does settle it, either he has not investigated thoroughly in the Talmud in regard to these differences of opinion, or he is a fool and a stubborn person.

At any rate, we may say that all these instances were potentially in what was said to Moses at Mount Sinai either written or oral, with the exception of the reforms and the enactments which were potentially very remote from what was said to Moses, as they said, "Whence are we commanded (about these) from the prohibition, 'Ye shall not turn aside from what they shall tell you.'" And, as for those matters which are untrue, we may not say that they were potential at all. And it is not improbable that about some of the legal decisions there was tradition which was forgotten, but when the tradition about them was forgotten then dispute arose about them either by the application of the hermeneutical rules or the views of the sages of the generation as views of sages.

But about the content of the rest of the branches of the Torah which are not laws there are many changing views among the men of our people. Now, there is that class whose adherents think that all the words of the Torah in their entirety and in their letters are only allegorical and are hidden except to the men of that group. And the men of this group relate these things to kabbalah and they take violent issue with anyone who wants to differ with them about their interpretations and their views. Then there is the great party of followers of the Talmud, also the literalists and the class of the philosophers among our people, who take issue against these.

And the latter ones object to them, for we find that all the Gaonim, or the majority of them, do not pursue their method nor are their words in agreement with them. Indeed, you will find that all of the Gaonim or the majority of them do not know a thing

about this but wanted to follow reason. And they said about the subject of the necromancer that things ought not to be believed according to their simple meaning when they were denied by the intellect. And we find that the greatest of the commentators on the Talmud did not know anything about this, but they wanted to follow reason, as you can see from the words of ר' אברהם אבן עזרא against 'שך in the interpretation of וְיִדְבָקוּן שָׁמָּה (2). Do not argue about the derivation of דְּבִיל from אֲבִילִיּוֹת (13), which 'שך wrote in his commentaries, for it is not related to the study of Kabbalah nor is it unique to it alone. It will also be found that R. Isaac Gayat inclined to the philosophic way, and Rav Saadya Gaon favored the philosophic way as his way. There will not be found in the words of the Talmud any statement which points necessarily, or even approximately necessarily, to those opinions which these Kabbalists hold. It is found likewise that Maimonides who was so well-versed in all the words of the Talmud that there was none to compare to him that he did not know anything of these. And so with very many beside him. And those who oppose this view say that the claim of those interested in Kabbalah that it is derived from the words of R. Simon b. Johai in the book called Sefer Hazohar is not the truth. This can be seen in many ways: first, that if it had been the work of R. Simon mention would have been made of it in some boraitha or in some aggadah in the Talmud just as was done with the books and with the rest of the talmudic works. But this is not found to be so. And they object further because the names of those men who are mentioned in that book are of men who lived many years after R. Simon b. Johai as is known to any one who has seen their names and who

has also seen them in the Talmud. Therefore it is absolutely impossible that this book should have been composed by R. Simon b. Johai. Furthermore, they object because that book has not been known among our people except for approximately three hundred years. And they object still further for if R. Simon had been the father of the Kabbalists, and had he known the secrets of the laws and their allegories in a true way, then the halacha ought to have been according to him; but this is not the case. As a matter of fact, we see that many times the Kabbalists say that according to allegory the law ought to be so and so, while we see in every case the authorities and the great men of the Talmud deciding just the opposite (way).

And they object further for in a (really) traditional matter it is not fitting that any difference of opinion should exist, but we find, however, great dissension among these Kabbalists about the very important fundamentals of the Torah. For there are some who maintain among them/that the ten sefiros are the Godhead in itself, that there is absolutely nothing greater (than these). As a matter of fact, this view is a denial of religion, and especially of what is well-known among all Jewish scholars and the rest of the people. Unless, perhaps, they wanted to say that these sefiros were attributes or aspects found in God either by the investigation of the intellect or by another method. But this is far remote from their principles and from their words about these sefiros. And they also say that all of our prayers aim at these sefiros and are directed to them. And there are some among them who say that there is a higher cause beyond these, and they call it En Sof, and when their words are properly understood there will be no great distinction between them

and the accepted beliefs among the people on the subject of God. And, if this is so, how can we say that their words are kabbalah. But do not argue with me about the differences of opinion which exist among the sages of the Talmud, for when you understand thoroughly what was said in the Talmud about this matter and what the great Maimonides also said about it then no doubts will arise because of it.

And already you know from what was previously said that if matters which do not receive verification except through publicity, when dispute arises among these well-known things and especially among men of great fame, then no verification is possible at all. And, if so, that there is no publicity without dispute, why are we compelled to go in this way? Especially since we find many of these things in disagreement with what is interpreted by logical rules. But many of them agree with the words of the old philosophers whose interpretation is ignored among the informed. And whoever sees the words of the old philosophers and also some of the words of the Platonists will know that these words are true. But I have already spoken about this in another place, and therefore I do not want to prolong the discussion here.

But many of our philosophers have departed from the way of the Torah and its purpose, according to my estimation. And this is so because they want to change all the plain meanings of the verses in the majority of branches and in the narratives of the Torah, and they desire as it were to improve the words of the Torah and to adjust them to syllogistic reasoning. But they do not succeed. And this is so, for we undoubtedly have to admit miracles, for they are necessarily implied both in the literal meaning of the Torah as well

as in interpretations of the Torah. And if so, why should we change the literal meaning of a biblical verse? And I think that it is not fitting to do so in general, except when words contradict themselves according to their literal meaning. And in this there are different degrees. There are some among them the contradiction of which is known only to the scholars, and others where the contradictions are well-known almost to all the people. The example of the first is when it is said that the angel who is assumed to be stripped of all body and of all corporeal attributes is perceived, nevertheless, by the senses just as bodies are perceived. The example of the second is the subject of the serpent, for when we classify it as an animal without the power of speech and it does speak with its fellow beings according to its nature, then here is a thing which contradicts itself. The truth about which almost all the commentators agree is that it cannot be taken literally under any circumstances. And they are aided by the literal meaning of the verse, since we do not find in connection with the "curse of the serpent" that speech was taken away from it, and many aggados help them to explain this also. And, furthermore, speech is applied only to man. But about the first case dispute arises among groups, for the Kabbalists say that this is possible according to the simple meaning. And they posit a cloak which the angels don when they appear to the sense of man. But the philosophers reject all this, and they say that these things occur only in the visions of prophets or in dreams. And we say that it will be seen that the Kabbalists did not postulate this garment, except that the appearance of the angel without covering to the senses would have had to be denied among them, and if so, they admit the words of the philosophers. And then

the question about the cloak reappears. The answer is very difficult, and there is very great difference of opinion among our people about these matters. The men of one party say of the other party that they are heretics and perverters of the Torah, and they raise their voices loudly among the mass. And the philosophers say in regard to them that they are fools and simpletons and extinguishers of the light of the Torah. And the hatred between men of these two groups is increasing, especially among the fools of both parties, until the Torah becomes (really) many Torahs.

But we are confused in these matters, especially how to determine the decision of these things and how to decide about the details of the branches, which are fitting to be expounded and which are not. Of course, whoever knows the things that are commonly accepted among our people will know which things are fitting that their interpretation may be stated in writing without any loss to the general mass of religionists. And it is proper that thoughtful religionists should consider these things well and suspect their own reason. Hence, my method is far from the ways of many philosophers of our people who change the meaning of the Torah and of science and mix together the scriptural and speculative methods, and confuse the general method with the particular method; and, as it were, become a sophist-group midway between the religionists and the philosophers. And the middle position does not justify either one of the two absolute extremes. And, therefore, these men are neither men of the Torah nor men of science. And I think that what brought them to this was the hatred of other sects (in our religion) and

their interpretations, and the habit of philosophizing about their religions which they found among other peoples. But whatever led them to it, it is fitting to judge them favorably, for we see that their intention in this was only to exalt the Torah and glorify it in the eyes of the sages. And they pursued this course because of their love for it. And how much more (is it the case) when their words in these matters are very close to the intellectual method and give a place to the intellect, and do not cast reason out as some of the other sects did. But it is very clear that some of the stories of the Torah and its branches shall be interpreted, and their interpretation be stated clearly in writing, according to the words of our sages. And the sages of the Talmud say that the Torah spoke in a hyperbolic manner. (14)

But about the subject of the Aggados which are in the Talmud, and the Midrashim of the men of the Mishnah and of the Talmud, we find many views in regard to them. One group believes all of them literally. Another group rejects the far-fetched Aggados, according to the literal meaning, and ridicules them. And a third class interprets those whose simple meaning is far-fetched, and justifies the words of the sages. And these parties fight one another, and every one of them calls his opponent by the name of fool or heretic. And all this happens to us because of the lack of sages and the absence of harmony among our people. For we shall see that the lack of harmony and our fighting one another is a peculiarity of our people. But this is changed more or less through the change of the nature of the lands and the climates. Perhaps it happens to us because we imagine ourselves to be sons of princes. But the truth,

as I have said in the introduction to this subject, is that through the lack of a state order is wanting among men, especially when they lack the perfection which is necessary for all art, and real perfection, and they love contention and dispute. Therefore, I resolved to myself that I would not speak about these matters explicitly, but will call the attention of the sages to them in a sufficient manner. And all this because of our love for the words of the Torah, and our sages, and the men of our people.

And I say that the Talmud is divided into two parts: one part with a statement of all the laws; and the other part with midrashim and aggados. And that it is not fitting to have any differences of opinion about the first part is undoubtedly agreed upon by all religionists of our people, as we have already said. But, as for the second part, it is possible at times that we should not all agree with it, and still there would be no sin in it. And this is so because the Torah does not make it incumbent on us to listen to the sages except in matters of law in which an act is involved or in matters of principles of Belief which are commonly accepted among them.

About the matters of the laws it is clear from the saying of the Torah, "in accordance with the instruction which they may instruct thee and according to the decision which they may say unto thee, shalt thou do," ⁽¹²⁾ but it is obvious that with regard to the principles of religion commonly accepted among them that the matter should be just as we have said, for they were the most important of our people and its sages who knew the essential principles of religion. But the second part (of the Talmud) and

those words which are said from the standpoint of an opinion not according to the teaching of the Torah we are undoubtedly not obliged to believe in them, since it is apparent to us that they are opposed to the truth. And the sages certainly shall not be regarded as greater than the prophets in this matter, for if the prophet should say something not by virtue of his being a prophet but merely as a human being or a wise person and it seems to us incorrect we are not obliged to believe it. And, therefore, that great man Maimonides wrote in his commentary on the Mishnah that in matters where there is no difference of opinion and where legal decisions are not involved it is not proper to decide the law according to the words of any particular person. And we are supported in our view by what is found in this matter without any dispute in Tana debe Eliyahu--two thousand years of void, two thousand years of the Torah, and two thousand years of the Messiah. But because it has not come on account of our sins, hence we know that this is not so as it was said there and in many other places. And anyone who desires to be stubborn in this we shall not oppose him. However, it is not proper to ridicule those who say this for they are the most important men of the people and its judges and, as it were, they complete the Torah. And he who spurns them ought to be included among the heretics who despise the sages.

And what I personally think about the subject of Aggados is that part of them are to be taken literally and part of them admit of interpretation, since the custom of the ancients was to speak in a figurative and an allegorical fashion. And of those which receive interpretation some of them are fit to be put down in writing

--they are the things from the interpretation of which absolutely no injury is incurred. And a part of them should not be put down in writing--they are the things about which we may fear lest loss will occur through their explanation, and especially since it is not fitting to do this among the mass.

One should not wonder at my frequent use of the word "mass" and as it were imagine that I distinguish the faith of the mass from the faith of the few, for our rabbis have already said that we do not reveal the secrets of the Torah, etc., especially since when we tell the mass of people these profundities as they are in reality they are benefitted in no way, for they cannot grasp them. But it injures them very much and changes the words of the general method into the words of the particular method. And so we say even if there exists in them many aspects which are in accordance with the literal meaning and those which are impossible according to the p'shat we ought to urge ourselves to explain their words in a way that will harmonize with the truth. And if to the least of men our rabbis commanded, "Judge every man favorably," ⁽¹⁶⁾ how could we not understand their words--the words of the outstanding men of the nation--in a becoming manner; how could we not judge them favorably, and especially since there are found in their words matters which show their wisdom. And so, therefore, as we have said, the ways of all the ancients in study was this method (of allegory), since their intention was that the profundities of their words should not be understood except by those who were prepared for them.

But with those who have but the appearance of men

who believe all their words literally it is not proper to speak or to differ, since they are entirely fools, and a fool will believe anything; ⁽¹⁷⁾ hence, they do not accept reason and argument with them is of no avail, and they are, as Maimonides has said, "as the most honored of sages in their own eyes," and they ridicule the wise men with utmost contempt. We shall leave them alone and shall not continue about them.

We must now ask if there are reasons for the commands of the Torah and causes known to us, or capable of being known by us. And I said, "known to us", for I do not think that there exists a human intelligence--unless it be that of a simpleton--which believes that they have no reasons at all. For who is the man who could imagine that the commands of God should be in vain and to no purpose, like the deeds of fools who work without any goal, any aim in their work? And if they have reasons known to us or capable of being known by us, which method shall we pursue, and to what places shall we go to (obtain) the knowledge of those causes and reasons? And if we know them (we must ask) whether it is proper to write them down or not. We shall speak about these problems now. And we say that as the knowledge of anything which has a cause is complete when we know its cause, so the act which has a purpose is realized completely when we know the goal and the cause. And, therefore, it is essential that the knowledge of the ends and the reasons for the commandments should be possible for us. And we even see that the Torah speaks in praise of the mitzvot, ⁽¹⁸⁾ "Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding before the eyes of the nations that shall hear all these

statutes, and they will say, 'Nothing but a wise and understanding people is this great nation.'" And how will this be known unless the knowledge of the reasons for the mitzvoth is possible. And, furthermore, what holds good for the part is equally applicable to the whole. For we see that the Torah endeavors to give reasons for some of the commandments, for example, in the commandment about the Sabbath for which the Torah gives two reasons: one of them to make known that all beings, except the First, are effects of the First Cause, and that they do not exist either by accident or in their essence without an Efficient Cause; and the other is to teach us the subject of the Exodus from Egypt through which the attribute of Providence and other root-principles become known. And we see many reasons for the commandments in what is set down about the legal decisions and the commands of the king, and we see that the ancient sages sought to give an approximate reason for a commandment, and therefore they said in Kesuboth, "For what reason did the Torah forbid bribe?" They gave the approximate cause when they said, that the judge becomes self-interested through it. And the reason which the Torah gives, "the bribe blinds the eye of the wise," is not an approximate reason. And in general when you really examine the Torah and the words of the sages you will find almost always many reasons for the mitzvoth. And since this is so the manner of all of them should be like this. But further discussion about this is superfluous, for it is obviously so from the words of the Torah itself.

But the method we shall pursue in these reasons is not known in itself but requires explanation, and hence we say

that this method is taken from the general purpose of the Torah. It is undoubtedly true that its purpose is to lead men to the true good of which they are capable, both in thought and in deed, particularly in deeds which include the virtues, for through good deeds man becomes good in himself and with his household and with all the men of his district. And the use of the word "midoth" should not strike you as singular, for we see well that the evil qualities destroy man both in soul and in body.

And how much the more is it true that the lack of order destroys the body politic and the services that are peculiar to the worship of God in a manner fitting for a people. And these services are essential to the establishment of true views which are possible for all the people, and they keep us far from false views and from the evil deeds and decisions which are common to society and to groups of men, and the manner of their diet and other matters. But that great man Maimonides added that some exist also to keep us far from the evil acts and services which were common to men of the idolatrous religion in the time of Moses. And when we reflect deeply about the words of the Torah and the words of the men of that religion, as Moses himself has told them, we shall know that he was right. And these things will lead us to true happiness and will deliver us from that sorrow and punishment which are reserved for the truly evil.

But that they obtain the reasons from these things is clear. For the Torah is not given to the ministering angels and we do not influence through it the higher beings, nor change them, for the angels influence us but are not influenced by us, and they

guide the lower world through the power of God but are not guided by lowly creatures. And what man could possibly imagine when he reflects well in what he says, and if he strips himself of all the imaginations which he has heard, that the angels are only reformed through the deeds of men. For we human beings are not able to improve ourselves. How then could we reform the heavenly creatures, and what improvement would we effect in them? What some men say with regard to this is but faulty imagining; it is improper for the soul. Would that I could know if it is possible that any attribute or characteristic or quality of ours should affect them when we think about them or when we perform certain actions, and what influences of ours will affect them through which we would become their guides. But what the intelligent religionist thinks about this is that when we reform ourselves and change unto the good then we attain the good of God, but the only change that takes place is from the standpoint of the receivers. Also it is not possible to say that through them we bring down spiritual influences in the manner of the astrologers, for when we investigate the words of the Torah we find them opposing this view very much (and those who believe in it) are (pursuing) the ways of idolators. And it is also impossible to say that those reasons are allegories and subjects barely understandable to men inasmuch as in what we have already said it has been made clear that there are reasons for the mitzvoth capable of being known. And this is so because it is not clear from those proofs alone that the mitzvoth have reasons capable of being known, but it is made clear from them that which we have said, namely, that the reasons are derived from these

subjects--either for the confirmation of true knowledge or for the refutation of false knowledge, or for the good deed. And this is seen when we investigate the reasons which the Torah gives for the many mitzvot we will find following this way, and this in truth is obvious in itself when we examine carefully the words of the Torah, and our argument.

And we undoubtedly know that some of the men of our people will raise their voice against us loudly and vociferously, and they will picture us in this (matter) as opposing the words of the Torah and the sages--God forbid. But we know well that they are far from the truth, and they are the changers of the Torah and its honored and truly good meanings. And we follow in the footsteps of the great men of our Torah who have reflected deeply in the words of the Torah and the Prophets, and we drink in the words of the sages and the Mishnah and the Talmud of their day. And without doubt, if we should find in the words of the early sages a matter which points necessarily or approximately necessarily to that which they say in their views remote from the understanding of the human intellect, we would hold our intellect suspect and follow in their footsteps.

And it is fitting in any case that the reasons for some of the mitzvot--they are called Hukim--are unknown to us, or knowledge of them is very difficult for us. Or perhaps knowledge of them is possible only to those who have steeped themselves in matters of religion, and to none beside them.

Also you ought to know that one of the great purposes of our Torah is the Deed not Belief and Intention (motive) alone,

and this theory no religionist nor scientist will oppose. And those evil men who are found among our people who imagine themselves to be philosophers, although in fact they are far remote from the Torah and from science, do not desire to perform the commandments of our Torah--and some of them mock us and say that the motive is sufficient for them--they belong to the category of heretics and destroyers of the Torah. And their way is indeed remote from the path of the Torah and from the way of the sages really steeped in wisdom. Especially since when we do not perform the act the purpose also is destroyed, as the sages have said happened to Solomon and also to R. Ishmael on Sabbath. And who is the evil man who sees this and relies on his feeble mind to nullify the Deed which is common to all, and to destroy the purpose of the Torah, the purpose of which is to guide us in thoughts and in acts. And the Torah says, "Ye shall observe and do," and it is said that "good intelligence is for all those who do," and the sages said to their disciples, "It was not said except to those who do," and they say that Study leads to Action. Therefore, we ought to keep these (evil men) very far from us. And at times the necessity arises to put them to death, according to the laws of the Torah, or according to a decision under an emergency, unless they turn back from their evil course. And we ought to consider if we may have faith in the repentance of these evil men, since we know that their views about the root-principles are evil and that their actions are contrary to the will of the Torah, which should guide all of us. And only defectives will do this, men who are far remote from true wisdom, but they hear perhaps or see a matter

spoken about in some of the works of our people or of other people, but they do not learn wisdom, and they only injure men and society. And especially if it should happen that these men of evil purposes yet have fine minds. And on account of these evil men who destroy the Torah and science, wisdom becomes a blemish to its possessor. For the fools of the mass who do not know who is the true sage and who is not, when they see these evil things they attribute it to wisdom until they mock at the truly good sages. And those fools (the half-baked philosophers) regard their foolishness as a merit and their deficiencies as virtue, and therefore these do more harm to the genuine men of wisdom than the haters of wisdom ever can do.

There are many sides to the problem whether it is fittings to explain in writing the reasons for the mitzvoth or not. For on the one hand we see the Torah and the sages have written down the reasons for many mitzvoth, as we have already said; if so, it is proper for us also to pursue this method. And yet, on the other hand, the opposite may also be seen, for the Torah conceals the reasons for many mitzvoth. And men stumble even in the mitzvoth whose reasons are explained just because of their explanations, as we have said about Solomon; if so, it is not proper to explain the reasons in writing. And we say that the mitzvoth from the explanation of which reasons no loss occurs in theory or in practise at all--unless by some very remote accident--then it is proper to write down the causes of such mitzvoth.

And we say, secondly, that when we find certain reasons it is not proper to conclude that there are no other reasons beside

them, for there are seventy phases to the Torah and perhaps the Torah points to many other reasons.

And it is fitting that every intelligent man should hold his intellect suspect in this, for it is not easy for us to (obtain) the knowledge of the plans of God or His will which He manifested to His prophets, and if men would only calculate about this (correctly) they would not fall into error. Thirdly, we say that some of the reasons of the mitzvot ought not to be written down at all for indubitably there occurs from their explanation great loss to those whose nature is not to know the truth nor to do the good. And perhaps this is the cause of the changes of the purpose of the Torah. But which of the mitzvot may have their interpretations written down and which not is a very difficult matter to decide. But this is reserved for the inquiry of the profound sages who exist in every generation, and who must examine the commonly accepted beliefs of their times, and the worth of the men of their times (and then determine) whether these ought to be revealed to them or not. And in any case it is most proper that the meanings of the Torah should not be written down except here and there, as we have already said. And these matters undoubtedly come under the category of secrets of the Torah, which should be concealed except to the initiated, and to them only by oral hints (should they be revealed). But this is sufficient for the wise man who knows his mind, and this method is applicable not only to the reasons of the mitzvot alone but also to some other subjects of the Torah and its stories. And he who reveals a secret of God to the unfit, behold God will slay

him, as the earliest sages have already said.

Behold, this is what appears to us at this particular time about this matter considering the subject itself and considering the hindrances and the obstacles and the behavior of the men of our religion. And if perhaps there exists a man who wants to explain our words with a far-fetched interpretation, and to attribute to us something which we have not said, or some students want to oppose us as is natural with insignificant students who extinguish the light of the Torah, who desire to become masters in controversy and thereby acquire a reputation among the mass, we shall not pay attention to it. The truth is enough of a witness for itself, and were it not for the openness with which our men have begun to speak about these things and the condition of the men of our time we would not have written this small work. And undoubtedly the wise man who is not stimulated by what we have said in these beginnings would not be satisfied by a ten thousand camel load of books, and conversation with him is fruitless.

And I have called this work B'hinas Hada'as, and I have completed it the eighteenth day of Tebeth of the year 1491, and of God, blessed be He, who guides aright, I implore His aid to continue life and prosperity.

NOTES

- * Sefer Beḥinas Hada'as first appeared in Taalumoṯ Ḥoḥmo of R. Jehuda Samuel Ashkenazi, Basel 1629, and as a separate book in Vienna 1833 with Introduction and Commentary by J. S. Reggio.
- ** Moreh Nebuḥim III, chap. 51.

1. Isaiah 40:26.
2. Deut. 6:4.
3. Ibid. 4:39.
4. Exod. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:6-7.
5. Deut. 4:39.
6. Ibid. 4:15.
7. I Kings 8:27.
8. Hagigah 15a.
9. Sanhedrin 99a.
10. In Yebomoṯ.
11. Shabbas 23a.
Deut. 17:11.
12. I have been unable to find the place for this discussion. However, consult Reggio, p. 107, note 11.
13. He refers to Rashi in Succa 45a where he says that out of Exod. 14:19-20 we may construe the name of God of 72 letters.
14. Ḥullin 90b.
15. Deut. 17:11.
16. Kesuboth 105a.
17. Prov. 23:9.
18. Deut. 4:6.
19. Pirke Aboṯ 1:6.

NOTES

- 20. Exod. 23:8.
- 21. Shabbas 12b.
- 22. Deut. 4:6.
- 23. Ps. 110:11.
- 24. Kedushin 40b.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Guttman - Elia Del Medigo's Verhältniß zu Averroës in seinem Bechinat Ha-Dat - in Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams, Jewish Institute of Religion 1927.

Rippner - Elia del Medigo, ein jüdischer Popularphilosoph - in Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums, XX, pp. 481-494.

Steinschneider - Heb. Bibliographie, XXI, pp. 60-71.

Hübsch - Elias Delmedigo's Bechinas Ha dat und Ibn Roschd's Fac ul-maqal, - in Monatschrift, XXI, pp. 555-563; XXII, pp. 28-46.

Graetz - History of the Jews, vol. IV, pp. 290-293.

Joseph Solomon Del Medigo - Mazref Lehohmo.