

*David R. Blumenthal*

#### MAIMONIDES' PHILOSOPHIC MYSTICISM

This article gives the scholarly background and then proceeds to argue that there is such a phenomenon as “philosophic mysticism”; that is, that there exists a mystical experience that is based upon, and yet goes beyond, philosophical reflection. The example given is Maimonides for whom there are three stages of the true spiritual life: (1) intellectual apprehension, also known as the love of God; (2) intellectual contemplation, also known as the intellectual worship of God; and (3) continuous intellectual contemplation of God.

These stages are successive. The terms used by Maimonides are closely examined, as are his possible sources for this worldview. A large selected bibliography is appended.

*Hannah Kasher*

#### MYSTICISM WITHIN THE CONFINES OF REASON ALONE

The phrase “intellectual mysticism” can be interpreted in at least two senses, as follows: (1) mysticism that in essence does not go beyond contemplative life; (2) mysticism whose attainment is, among other things, necessarily conditional upon the study of philosophy, thereby becoming post-intellectual. In the present article I argue that Maimonides’ teaching cannot be interpreted in the second sense. Exalted spiritual life belongs exclusively to the intellectual realm, and as such it characterizes God, the non-corporeal rational entities depicted in Maimonides’ teaching, and the human being seeking to emulate them.

*Shaul Regev*

PROPHECY IN MAIMONIDES' PHILOSOPHY —  
BETWEEN RATIONALISM AND MYSTICISM

Prophecy according to Maimonides' philosophy distinguishes between two paths. The mystical path, running from top to bottom, bestowing prophetic vision on those deserving of it and ready for it, and the rational path, of rational, intellectual activity resulting in intellectual perfection, that enables conjunction and then acceptance of prophecy.

Maimonides' main perception, as evidenced in his *Guide to the Perplexed* and in *Mishne Torah*, is a combination of these two paths. On the one hand, the mystical path of the endowment of vision and its acceptance through mystical actions of focusing all thoughts on God, and on the other hand, the rational path of natural preparation for prophecy. The philosophers, or sages, do not attain prophecy because they cannot rise above rational thought. So long as they remain in the realm of rational thought, they cannot receive vision. The ability to focus all thoughts on God is what differentiates between the philosophers and the prophets.

*Esti Eisenmann*

BETWEEN KABBALAH AND MAIMONIDEAN PHILOSOPHY IN  
*AHABAH BE-TA'ANUGIM*

This essay presents the distinctive attitude towards Kabbalah, of the Hebrew 14<sup>th</sup> century philosophic encyclopedia *Ahabah be-Ta'anugim* (1353–1356), and its relation to Maimonides' thought.

The author of the encyclopedia, Rabbi Moses ben Judah Noga, who was a student of Rabbi Yom Tob ben Abraham Ishbili ("Ritba"), considers the Kabbalah as a legitimate source of Judaism; not only does it not contradict Maimonides' rationalistic philosophy, but more so, it complements the study of philosophy in general. As a result, he uses kabbalistic motifs and terms in his discussions on physics and metaphysics, by giving them a philosophical meaning which removes their mythological aspect.

The author's method will be demonstrated in two issues: (a) His identification of the ten *sefirot* with the ten metaphysical intellects; (b) His interpretation of the

kabbalistic secret on the levirate marriage as relating to Averroes' doctrine on the hylic intellect.

*Amira Eran*

THE DIFFUSION OF THE HADS THEORY FROM AVICENNA TO  
RABBI NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV

The paper discusses the possible transmission of the paradigm of attaining highest divine knowledge from its originator, Avicenna through Maimonides, to Rabbi Nahman. Despite the systematic similarity and the affinity in the terminology, there is a substantial difference between Avicenna's original attempt to turn prophecy from a subjective uncontrolled individual experience into an intellectual individual accomplishment and Rabbi Nahman's intellectual ecstasy.

My premise is that it was Abulafia's interpretation of Maimonides, that made medieval mystics, as well as modern scholars, believe that Maimonides secretly fostered mystic beliefs.

*Gideon Freudenthal*

THE PHILOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM OF MAIMONIDES

My claim in this essay is that Maimonides was a rationalist throughout and therefore also a mystic at the same time and in the same respect. This seemingly paradoxical claim follows from Maimonides' epistemology: knowledge is here conceived as the unification of subject and object in knowledge (אחדות שכל משכיל מושכל) (*Guide* I, 68). When the object of knowledge is the divine, cognition means conjunction with it, and this is also mystical union, the supreme religious end (*Guide* III, 51). I therefore offer an alternative to the allegedly necessary dichotomy between mysticism and rationality. This dichotomy forced interpreters either to explain away obvious mystical passages in Maimonides' writings, or to conceive Maimonides' mysticism as not rational and alien to his rational philosophy. I suggest that Maimonides was a rationalist throughout and *therefore* a mystic.

I first introduce the notion of “philosophical mysticism”. I conceive mysticism as the experience of an immediate encounter with the divine, philosophical mysticism as an immediate encounter with the divine achieved in philosophy. Since Maimonides’ epistemology explains knowledge as the conjunction of the intellect with its object, it follows that in this philosophy knowing the divine is equivalent to achieving conjunction and unity with it.

*Yossef Schwartz*

MAGIC, PHILOSOPHY AND KABBALAH:  
THE MYSTICAL AND MAGICAL INTERPRETATION OF  
MAIMONIDES IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

The article describes the development of a certain tradition that involves Jewish and Christian authors in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Relying on some rather obscure passages in Maimonides’ interpretation of divine names these authors suggest different combinations of philosophic, scientific, mystic and magic speculations. Common to all of them is the strong idiosyncratic character of their writings that escape most of the boundaries still in use in modern scholarship.

*Shoey Raz*

METAPHYSICS AND *THE ACCOUNT OF THE CHARIOT*:  
MAIMONIDES AND IŞĤAQ IBNUL LAṬĪF

This study offers a reading in Maimonides’ interpretation of the *Account of the Chariot* (*Guide of the Perplexed*, Part III Chapters I-VII, according to *Ezekiel* Chapter I and X) and a comprehensive description of R. Işĥaq Ibnul-Laṭĭf’s interpretive remark on Maimonides’ esoteric study.

Ibnul-Laṭĭf (1210–1270) was a Judeo-Toledan philosophical author, who formulated a complex synthesis between Arabic-Hebraic Neoplatonic trends and the Arabic-Hebraic Aristotelian school of the Judeo-Andalusian intellectual elite of the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, which was mainly influenced by Al-Fārābī (880–950) and Maimonides (1138–1204).

Ibnul-Laṭīf's interpretive remark on Maimonides' philosophical commentary on *the Account of the Chariot* indicates his vast familiarity with the Andalusian philosophical milieu and his deep affinity toward the philosophical and the mystical lores which flourished throughout Andalusia during the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Abraham Melamed*

#### THE MYTH OF THE PENITENTS: MAIMONIDES AND ARISTOTLE

This paper traces the sources and transmission of the story concerning Maimonides' so-called 'conversion' to Kabbalah in his old age, after he met a certain Kabbalist who visited him in Egypt. This particular story should be distinguished from another story which claimed that Maimonides was in reality a true Kabbalist throughout his life. This story evolved in 14<sup>th</sup> century Spain, and was very popular until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It played a meaningful role in the debate concerning Maimonideanism in the later middle ages. It was used by traditionalists and mystics in order to prove that Maimonides himself repudiated his own Aristotelian-rationalistic opinions and accepted the basic tenants of Kabbalah before he died. This was deemed a most useful tool in their struggle against Maimonides' radical followers in the later middle ages.

The details of this story and its purpose are very similar to equivalent stories concerning Aristotle's conversion on his deathbed from his own rationalistic opinions, and his acceptance of the true belief. The stories concerning Aristotle were in circulation in Muslim, Jewish and Christian circles alike, before the similar story concerning Maimonides started to circulate in the same cultural environment. Already Abrabanel and Leone da Modena noticed the great similarity between the two stories; Abrabanel used it in order to prove the veracity of the story concerning Maimonides, while Modena concluded that all these stories were Kabbalist inventions. The conclusion is that most probably there was a connection between the transmissions of these two stories, and the previous stories concerning Aristotle's conversion might have been the source for the later story concerning Maimonides' penitence.

*Erez Peleg*

#### R. SHEM TOV'S CRITIQUE OF MAIMONIDES' CONCEPT OF MAN

The current essay analyzes how Maimonides' concept of man is treated in the thinking of Rabbi Shem-Tov Ben Shem-Tov (~1380–~1430/1440). In examining R. Shem-Tov's critique, the following findings have emerged:

(1) Shem-Tov characterizes Maimonides' thought as philosophical-intellectual, radical, and esoteric. Adopting an approach very similar to that of R. Yitzhak Albalag, the extreme intellectualist, in his *Correction of Attitudes*, Maimonides managed to present the radical themes he treated in the guise of loyalty to tradition, thus posing a great danger to the wholeness of the Jewish faith.

(2) In Shem Tov's interpretation, Maimonides presented a most extreme and intellectual understanding of the essence of man. His notion of the soul as a mere "prerequisite" for pursuing the objects of thought and perfecting the acquired intellect, with no existence of its own after the decay of the body, undermines the traditional definition of such essential concepts as Heaven and Hell and the Resurrection.

(3) Most of Shem Tov's specific arguments against Maimonides had already been articulated, in similar wording, by his predecessors but were directed against "philosophers" or "philosophy" in general.

*Moshe Hallamish*

#### ON MAIMONIDES' STATUS IN THE WRITINGS OF THE SAFED KABBALISTS

The relation of the Safed Kabbalists to Maimonides is varied. Sometimes they disapprove of his notions, just as they denounce philosophy in general. At other times they incorporate his views in their Kabbalistic expositions, while considerably departing from them (as is especially true of R. Moshe Cordovero). In matters that have no bearing on basic issues, some of the Safed Kabbalists cite him in order to substantiate their own views, even in cases where the contact point is barely tenable. These phenomena suggest that Maimonides' philosophical works were included in the material these kabbalists studied and that they certainly held him in high esteem.

*Nissim Yosha*

MAIMONIDES AS AN EXPONENT AND AN OPPONENT  
IN ABRAHAM MIGUEL CARDOSO'S TRACTATES

Abraham Miguel Cardoso began his career as a Converso who attended a Spanish university but later became one of the leading thinkers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Sabbatean movement. In his scholastically written kabbalistic tractates, which were stylistically influenced by his educational background, he relied on Maimonides in halakhic matters and also adopted his concept of redemption as presented in *Mishne Torah*, namely that Redemption would occur within the natural course of history. In other respects, he was opposed to Maimonides. As a supporter of the Renaissance theory of *Prisca Theologia*, Cardoso considered the ancient Chaldeans to be part of the human chain of wisdom, thus rejecting the *Guide of the Perplexed's* view that they were worshippers of the Sabba cult. Cardoso also attacked some Jewish philosophers, including Maimonides, for viewing the *Shekhinah* as a created being and not as part of divinity. Finally, while accepting Maimonides' view that *Da'at* is part of the divine, he rejected his notion that it is the First Cause. According to Cardoso, *Da'at* is the conceivable part of Deity, apprehensible by humans' *Da'at*, and therefore it should be treated in the *via positive*, rather than in the *via negativa*, as did Maimonides. In contrast, the upper, unconceivable *hypostasis* of the Deity should be treated only metaphorically.

*Joëlle Hansel*

MOSHE HAYYIM LUZZATTO'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAIMONIDES

In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the "Maimonidean controversy" experienced a revival in the brilliant school of Kabbalah that blossomed in Italy. It involved major kabbalists and proponents of Lurianic teachings such as R. Joseph Ergas and R. Aviad Sar Shalom. The aim of my paper is to shed light on this key page in the history of the strained relationships between Kabbalah and philosophy, or "rational inquiry". It focused on the fruitful dialogue that Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal) engaged with Maimonides's work. By analyzing Luzzatto's references to Maimonides, I evaluate the way in which Maimonidean thought contributed to the

elaboration of his Kabbalistic doctrine as regards two major issues: the definition of the divine (Elohut) and the prophetic nature of kabbalistic knowledge.

*Jacob Gotlieb*

#### HASIDIC MAIMONIDEAN THEOLOGY

This article explores the ways in which Habad thinkers interpreted Maimonides' theology and suggests that they saw it as part of Habad theology. Their interpretation ranges between two related positions. On the one hand, they adopt a harmonistic approach that recognizes Maimonides' theology as the underlying layer of the Hasidic-Kabbalistic teaching. On the other hand, they offer kabbalistic interpretation of the Maimonidean theology itself. Their harmonistic approach is based on the assumption that faith is clarified and revealed through a constant process down the ages, and Maimonides merited being one of the outstanding figures through which faith is revealed, with the result that his teaching is an important layer of Jewish thought. Conversely, the interpretation of Maimonides in terms of the Kabbalah is motivated by the notion that his works have the status of rabbinic literature, and it is therefore legitimate to load them with meanings he was not consciously aware of.

Except for the interpretation of the Maimonidean teaching, it seems that Maimonides also serves as a factor that shapes Habad thinking. Thus, a circular relation emerges between Maimonides and Habad thinkers. Habad interpretation increases the admiration toward Maimonides and this in turn increases his influence on the thinkers of Habad.

The article illustrates this reciprocal influence in reference to various theological issues.

*Avraham Segal*

#### A COMMENTARY ON MAIMONIDES' "THIRTEEN PRINCIPLES OF FAITH" BY R. YIZHAQ EIZIK OF KOMARNO

R Yizhaq Eizik of Komarno, the prolific mid 19th century Hasidic *Zaddiq*

and Kabbalist devoted one of his first literary efforts to an exposition of Maimonides' "Thirteen Principles of Faith". This work, which was originally called *Derekh 'Emunah*, was eventually incorporated into his monumental five volumes commentary on the Pentateuch, *Heikhal haBerakhah*.

The choice by R Yizhaq Eizik to expound on the 'Thirteen Principles' was one of compromise, stemming from his being interdicted — perhaps by his teachers — from writing a full-length commentary on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. His aim was to prove that there is no contradiction between Maimonides' philosophy and Kabbalistic thought.

This article seeks to illustrate R Yizhaq Eizik's commentary by presenting his reading of a number of these Maimonidean principles. In the course of his exposition R Yizhaq Eizik reveals some of the guiding principles of his own religious thought. He discusses the ontological nature of the Kabbalistic 'Sefirot'; the processes of Prophecy and their operative applications by the Hasidic *Zaddikim*; methods of Torah-study; and the Messianic stirrings that impelled him. All of the above, within the context of attempting to show the consistency of the Maimonidean positions with those of the Lurianic Kabbalah.

*Dov Schwartz*

RAV SOLOVEITCHIK AS A MAIMONIDEAN  
THE UNITY OF COGNIZATION

The article analyzes Rav Soloveitchik's approach in the mid 40s of the 20th century to the unity of cognization and intellection. This issue is considered as one of Maimonides' discussions that is characterized by mystical motives. Soloveitchik thinks, that intellectual mysticism is the peak and the top of the religious consciousness. Kabbalah, in contrast, reflects the surface phase of this consciousness. Therefore Soloveitchik interprets Maimonides according to phenomenological and Neokantianic principles.

*Isaac Hershkowitz*

A THEURGICAL COMMENTARY ON MAIMONIDES:  
RABBI Y.S. TEICHTAL ON ACQUIRING CONVERSION CERTIFICATES

In the midst of the Holocaust, Rabbi Yissakhar Shelomo Teichtal, author of *Em Ha-Banim Semecha*, composed a diary consisting his insights and experiences. One of these insights deals with the problematic issue of Jews who acquired conversion certificates in order to decrease the threat from Nazi and Slovakian pursuers. Teichtal confronts this issue both morally and ideologically, using Maimonides' writings as his major source. However, despite the rational manner of Maimonides' outlook, Teichtal interprets it in a theurgical sense. This is most evident in two key topics: the power of Israeli deeds in affecting divine actions on earth, and the significance of Israeli unification in promoting the supremacy of holiness upon the impure influences of *Sitra Ahra*.

*Aharon Shear-Yashuv*

THE HARMONY BETWEEN MAIMONIDES, KABBALAH AND KANT  
ACCORDING TO RABBI SHEM TOV GEFEN

Rabbi Shem tov Gefen (1856–1928) is hardly mentioned in the literature about Jewish thought in modern times, but after the publication of his major writings in 1974 there is a growing interest in the man and his work.

Gefen is not only one of the representatives of Kantian epistemology, but his philosophy is also based on Kabbalistic and Maimonidean thought. The article briefly describes the important elements of his philosophy in order to show that the obviously strange combination of the three schools makes to a certain degree sense, since on the one hand Maimonides influenced Kant and on the other hand the great rationalist himself is close — according to Gefen — to kabbalistic thought. The article ends with the question if this example of the *coincidentia oppositorum* really fits with the main streams of Jewish Theology.

*Tony Lavi*

#### DEVOTION TO GOD IN WISDOM AND BEYOND WISDOM

The article deals with the devotion of the human being to God. The level of devotion to God indicates the level of completeness or wholeness of the human being, with the equation being: the more a human being is whole, his wholeness is being expressed by his devotion to God. In other words, a whole man is the one in which his devotion in God is the most complete. In religious faith, the devotion to God is the ultimate aim imposed on the Jew. In order to be devoted to God, the whole human being has to put all his hope in God.

In this article I would like to make a comparison of the perception of devotion to God between Maimonides and the Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi Ashlag, known as “Ba’al HaSulam”. This article will present the principle guidelines which stand out in both, as well as indicate what differentiates between their respective positions.

*Uriel Barak*

#### THE FORMATIVE INFLUENCE OF THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST DEGREE OF PROPHECY IN THE *GUIDE* ON THE PERCEPTION OF “THE BEGINNING OF THE REDEMPTION” IN RABBI A. I. KOOK’S CIRCLE

The issue discussed in this essay has never before been addressed by scholars: the formative influence of Maimonides’ theory concerning the first degree of the eleven degrees of prophecy — as described in his *Guide*, II: 45 — upon the theory of redemption articulated by R. Abraham Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook and his circle (especially his son, R. Zvi Yehuda Ha-Cohen Kook and R. David Cohen, better known as *Harav Hanazir*). My central thesis posits that the Maimonidean conception of the first degree of prophecy significantly informed the historiosophical understanding of certain modern-historical events by R. Kook and his circle, such as the mass immigration to the Land of Israel sponsored by the Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel. The novel understanding of the subject, that I intend here to demonstrate, points to the direct relation between R. Kook and his circle’s view of the rise of the modern National-Zionist movement and its

resettlement of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel, and the first degree of prophecy as depicted by Maimonides. In my estimation, R. Kook and his circle perceived their generation as possessing a special level of prophecy, to be viewed as part of a process that could ultimately restore the level of prophecy attained by the Prophets of Israel. This novel perception, that in their time the first degree of prophecy has been attained, is identifiable as the first degree of prophecy as described by Maimonides in his *Guide*.

*Eli Gurfinkel*

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE LINKAGE BETWEEN  
MAIMONIDES, THE KABBALISTS, AND THE KABBALAH

This bibliography is divided into two sections:

a. The attitudes of major Kabbalists. This section expands and updates the bibliographical lists compiled by Jacob I. Dienstag.

b. A Methodical review arranged according to topics and subtopics.

One of the characteristics of this comprehensive list is the inclusion of classic and innovative rabbinical sources side by side with academic works.

רפאל שוח"ט

התאולוגיה של הרמב"ם ומגבלות החקר האנושי  
דיון והשוואה בין הגותו של הרמב"ם לצמח צדק

רציונליסט הוא אדם הרואה את שכל האדם כאמת המדה לכל. לכן, הרציונליסט הדתי חייב לחיות עם ההתגלות ועם השכל האנושי ללא פשרות. האם דבר זה אפשרי? מה מקומו של השכל בהבנת ההתגלות? אם השכל הוא הכלי דרכו מבין האדם את ההתגלות, האם אפשר ללכת צעד נוסף ולטעון כי לשכל יכולת גם להסיק דברים חדשים מתוך ההתגלות עצמה? האם נוכל לטעון כי כמו שפוסק ההלכה לומד דינים חדשים מתוך ההלכה הקיימת, כן החוקר מבין דברים חדשים מתוך ההתגלות הנוגעים לאמונות ודעות? מטרתו של מאמר זה היא לבחון את מעמדו של השכל בנושא אמונות ודעות בהגותו של הרמב"ם. אטען כי לא רק שהרמב"ם משווה את מעמדה של התבונה האנושית למעמד

ההתגלות, אלא שהתבונה האנושית יכולה גם להסיק עיקרי אמונה מתוך ההתגלות. לדעתי, על פי הרמב"ם, עקרון זה כה עמוק, שאם עיקר אמונתי שהוסק על פי השכל סותר היגד כלשהו מדברי חז"ל או מדברי הגאונים, יש צורך לפרש מחדש את ההיגד החז"לי על מנת להתאימו לשכל. בסופו של דבר אוכיח כי על פי הרמב"ם מעמד השכל הוא לא רק כלי להבנת ההתגלות כי אם גם לדבקות באל, כיוון שזה השפע המיוחד שהשפיע האל על האדם ובגללו נאמר שהוא נברא בצלם אלוקים. ולבסוף, אדון בגבולות ההגיון האנושי בעניינים תאולוגיים ואשווה בין עמדתו של הרמב"ם לזו של ר' מנחם מנדל, בעל צמח צדק.