

## ABSTRACTS

*Ronit Meroz*

### INTER-RELIGIOUS POLEMICS, MESSIANISM AND REVELATION IN THE SHORT VERSION OF SEFER YEZIRAH

This article studies the last paragraph of Sefer Yezirah (§61) according to a single source – Mss. Parma 2784.14 (De Rossi 1390), the earliest manuscript containing the short version of this work. The underlying methodological assumption is that delving into the messages of this text requires a deep understanding of all of its separate versions. Paragraph 61 of this manuscript is conspicuously different from the rest of the text. Until this point, the text deals solely with abstract aspects of cosmology, but in §61, for the first time, a human being, Abraham, is mentioned, together with his deeds and achievements. Abraham is described not only as meriting circumcision, but also as gaining exceptional knowledge: he is able to “gaze” at the upper worlds and investigate them mathematically. God repays him with great love: God puts him in his lap, kisses his head and makes him his son; that is – Abraham undergoes a process of apotheosis that changes his nature and allows him to dwell in heaven. Moreover, Abraham merits not only the physical covenant of circumcision but also a spiritual “covenant of the tongue” – his tongue is “tied” to letters of the alphabet, endowing him with automatic speech, or glossolalia. With this speech, inspired by the Holy Spirit, God reveals his secrets to Abraham until he knows all knowledge and is able to master creation. This article suggests that in the scene in God’s lap, Abraham’s depiction transforms him into a messianic figure who replaces Wisdom as God’s partner in the creation of the world. He is joined later in this partnership by Moses and the Messiah, as is hinted at in Sefer

Yetzirah by the enigmatic Hebrew letters – A-M-SH (שמא); *A* for Abraham, *M* for Moses, and *Sh* for the Messiah. A further suggestion is to read Sefer Yetzirah as a polemic against Christianity, Judeo-Christianity and possibly Islam. Contention with Paulinian ideas is very conspicuous, for example in the special emphasis on the double meaning of the covenant, its physical aspect alongside its spiritual one, which depends on belief. Even more so is the role of the beloved son who rises to heaven and enjoys the gift of the Holy Spirit in the form of glossolalia. Sefer Yetzirah is one of a very few Jewish texts of the first millennium which engages itself in such controversy, not by attacking another religion directly, but by proposing a new theology. This theology has four pillars – the unity of God, the importance of the physical covenant of circumcision, the turning of Abraham into God’s son, and the spiritual covenant which is induced by the Holy Spirit.

*Adam Afterman*

GLORIFIED WITH EMBROIDERIES OF SONGS: A CHAPTER IN  
THE HISTORY OF MYSTICAL PRAYER IN JUDAISM

The article follows an ancient tradition that correlates the Divine appearing in different garments with human theurgy and prayer. A key chapter in both the anthropomorphic and theurgical Jewish traditions finds its expression in different sources spanning the Hebrew Bible, Qumran texts, Hekhalot mystic writings, Midrashim, liturgical poems and Ashkenazi sources. All articulate the connection between the different appearances of God, His garments and human theurgy. In medieval Ashkenazi sources we find a clear link between the prayer of Israel and God’s different clothes and garments, specially His crown and phylacteries, which are used on different occasions to directly link with the state of the collective of Israel and its prayer. The different garments, their position, luminance, colors and size all indicate the level of intimacy reached between the “assembly of Israel” and God. These ideas are yet further developed in early kabbalah and in the Zohar, where the erotic dynamics between the “assembly of Israel” and God are now represented in a complex interplay of mutual crowning and mutual dressing and undressing, as manifestations of Jewish theurgy, prayer and Torah study.

*Israel Ben-simon*SERMONS ON THE TORAH: R. JACOB ANATOLI AND HIS  
INFLUENCE ON R. JOSHUA IBN SHU'EIB'S SERMONS

Melamed Hatalmidim, Jacob Anatoli, substantially affected many philosophers in Provence and Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries. Philosophers such as Levi Ben Avraham, Menachem ha-Meiri and Immanuel of Rome were considerably affected by Anatoli's composition. In this article I discuss the influence of R. Jacob Anatoli on R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib as expressed in the latter's *Derashot 'al Hatorah*. I claim that these sermons are largely based on Jacob Anatoli's interpretations in his *Melamed Hatalmidim*.

R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib rarely quotes his sources, but in five instances he does so, and the source is *Melamed Hatalmidim*. This shows Anatoli's impact even across the border from Provence and Italy, and even on philosophers who were not members of the Philosophical Society. R. Jacob Anatoli's impact on R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib appears both structure and content, and his apparent target audience seems similar as well. Both rabbis strive to make their content more accessible to the public and their essays more available to a wider range of readers. Anatoli aimed to share the Torah's philosophical interpretations, while R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib did the same with the Kabbalah. A comparison of R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib writings with Anatoli's *Melamed Hatalmidim* shows how Shu'eib used his mentors writings, sometimes by elaborating on them and sometimes by simply copying them.

*Roe Goldschmidt*"IS THERE A TREE WITHIN OR NOT?":  
A ZOHARIC PASSAGE BY R. MENAHEM RECANATI

Rabbi Menahem Recanati and his literary corpus are considered among the most important sources for understanding the formation of the Zohar. Recent scholarship has noted Recanati's influence upon various Kabbalists active in the generations after the Zohar, such as R. Joseph Gikallia, and even upon those who wrote parts of the Zohar, such as the anonymous author of the *Tikkunim* and *Ra'ya Mehemna*. The fact that Recanati quotes from the Zohar as it lay before him, *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and the *Idra Rabba*, makes his writings a valuable witness to the text of the Zohar and

a window for understanding the ways in which the work was redacted. In the present article I seek to demonstrate that a Kabbalistic passage was written by Kabbalists who had studied Recanati's words and then proceeded to compose a Zoharic passage based upon them. This passage, which appears in *Parashat Shelah*, was redacted and inserted into the Zohar amidst a section that deals with an entirely different subject. I give a number of reasons to support my claim that Recanati was the source of this Zoharic passage, and not the reverse, as is often the case. One of the reasons is the way in which the passage relates to the biblical story of the Jewish people in Rephidim. Here we find a disagreement amongst the Kabbalists, and it seems that the author of the Zohar in *Shelah* endorses Recanati's unique interpretation. I also provide additional philological case studies that confirm the connection between Recanati's interpretation and that of the Zoharic passage, in addition to structural and conceptual affinities. The integration of Recanati's writings into the Zohar itself has been overlooked by scholarship. This example has much to teach us about the ways in which Kabbalists of the fourteenth century and beyond were influenced by the writings of their predecessors, employing the language and literary conventions of Zoharic interpretation.

*Ariel Malachi*

ON THE SOUL BY IBN SINA:

A REMARK ON THE HEBREW TRANSLATION AND ITS  
IMPLICATION FOR YEHUDA HALEVI

In the last chapter of *Kuzari*, Yehuda Halevi includes an adaptation and integration of Ibn Sina's *On the Soul*. In his Hebrew translation of Ibn Sina's original text, the late Prof. Michael Schwartz commented on a difficult paragraph laden with logical and epistemological terms, mentioning that Halevi chose to omit most of those epistemological terms. This article seeks to clarify this paragraph in light of logical and epistemological aspects of Ibn Sina's thought and their Greek and Arabic sources. This article also tries to suggest an explanation for Halevi's apparently intentional omission of all but one of the epistemological terms in the paragraph. In this respect, the main argument is that in *Kuzari*, Halevi purposely varies his arguments with different epistemological qualities. While offering

diverse qualities in his arguments for the educated reader, Halevi designs those same arguments to be strong and convincing to the layman. In this way, Halevi addresses two kinds of readers simultaneously, guiding each of them to different understandings and conclusions by means of the same text and arguments.

*Jair Haas*

R. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA AND THE NEO-PLATONIC WORLD-SOUL: THE IDENTITY OF 'HAY' IN 'HAY BEN MEQITZ'

R. Abraham ibn Ezra's epistle 'Hay ben Meqitz' is an allegory for the path Man's eternal soul must take in order to cling to the spiritual worlds. In the epistle this path is likened to a physical journey undertaken by an anonymous traveler and his guide, "Hay ben Meqitz." They embark from the sub-lunar world, traverse the world of the stars and celestial spheres, and end in the upper spiritual world. While scholars agree that the anonymous traveler represents the soul, they widely disagree concerning the identity of "Hay ben Meqitz" – is he Elijah, an archetypical philosopher or perhaps the Active Intellect? The present study analyzes the descriptions of "Hay ben Meqitz" found in the epistle in light of ibn Ezra's other writings. It reaches the conclusion that the guide represents the neo-platonic world-soul. The world-soul is the source of all individual souls and is their ultimate unity. The soul's path to cling to the spiritual worlds is thus attained by attaching itself to its own real "self."

*Dov Schwartz*

THE PASSION FOR METAPHYSICS IN  
MAIMONIDES' PHILOSOPHY

This article analyzes the Guide 1, chapters 31-35, which discusses the obstacles that stand in the way of the student of metaphysics. The most dangerous obstacle of all is the passion for attaining metaphysical knowledge, that is an impulse for attaining general knowledge. This passion can be understood properly by comparing it to sexual desire. Maimonides ascribed

this passion to every human being, the wise and the masses as well. Now a political capacity is needed to rule and to regulate this passion. Maimonides tendentiously treated Talmudic mysticism in order to emphasize the dangerous side of the passion for metaphysics. Elaborating this issue reveals Maimonidean rationalism.

*Shalom Sadik*

FREE WILL IN THE THOUGHT OF RABBI ABRAHAM BIBAGO

Rabbi Abraham Bibago (died c. 1489) was a prominent thinker in the last generation of a thriving Jewish community in Spain. In his central book, *Derech Emuna* ("Way of Belief"), Bibago aimed for a synthesis between moderate philosophical views and traditional Jewish belief. This article describes the position of R. Bibago on free will. The first part of the article analyzes R. Bibago's understanding of the psychological process of choice. According to R. Bibago, freedom of will characterizes humans as opposed to animals and divine beings (such as angels). These latter have only corporal (animals) or intellectual (divine beings) capacities, while humans have both. Using free will, people can choose whether to follow their corporal or intellectual inclinations. The second part of the article describes the differences R. Bibago finds between the workings of human free will and animal will. Due to the intellectual part of the human soul, people's fates are not predetermined by the stars. The third part of the article analyzes R. Bibago's interpretation of the heresy of Elisha ben Abuya. According to Bibago, akrasia exists and people not only can act against their intellectual knowledge but also can change their opinions at will.

*Eli Gurfinkel*

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE AS A PRINCIPLE  
OF FAITH

The theme of the chosenness and uniqueness of the Jewish people has wielded considerable influence on Jewish history, and occupies an important place in the history of religious ideas in the Abrahamic faiths.

Consequently, its omission from the Maimonidean principles of faith has aroused extensive discussion, and various aspects of this question were examined over the course of time: some thinkers maintain that the omission of this principle teaches of its negation, while others took pains to show its inclusion in the list, or to argue that its omission was due to other reasons. In several post-Maimonidean lists this notion was added as an independent principle, or was explicitly mentioned as part of one of the other listed principles. The current research will survey the history of this discussion, shed light on a chapter in the history of the interpretation of Maimonidean thought, and examine the place of this controversial theological principle within the context of the listing of the principles in Maimonidean thought and in that of other classical Jewish thinkers.

*Ohana Michal*

“THROUGH WHAT DO WOMEN EARN MERIT?”  
 WOMEN’S ULTIMATE PERFECTION AND THEIR REWARD  
 IN THE WORLD-TO-COME, IN THE THOUGHT OF RABBI  
 YIZHAK ZARFATI

Rabbi Yizhak Zarfati II (1611- 1661) served as Rabbi in the city of Fez, Morocco, and delivered sermons to his congregation on various occasions. In this article, I will analyze his theory of women’s ultimate end, and their reward in the world-to-come, based upon eulogies that he delivered for various women of his time. Zarfati suggested four possible means for women to attain both perfection and reward. Apparently these means do not apply solely to women, but to anyone who does not study Torah. Indeed, an examination of eulogies delivered by Zarfati for men reveals that he applied the same criteria to individuals who were not Torah scholars, and suggested that they too attain both perfection and eternal reward based upon these alternative means.

*Avinoam Bier*

“THE JOURNEY AT THE DESTINATION” THE CHARACTER  
OF MYSTICAL PRACTICE IN THE THOUGHT OF THE MAGGID  
OF MEZRITCH

The purpose of this research is to investigate the character of mystical practice in the thought of the Maggid. The intention of this article is to reveal an additional aspect of his thought on this practice, namely its circular nature. Mystical practice is commonly thought to contain defined points – a beginning, a climax and an ending, whereas in the circular concept the beginning and end coincide. This article claims that according to the Maggid, the division of the practice into discrete stages exists only in human consciousness, whereas from the perspective of divinity, the human mystic, in his ascent as in his descent, is on a constant level – that of sojourning in the divine presence. Additionally, this article claims that the constant sojourn in the divine presence, which is a derivative of the circular mystical practice, is fundamentally identical to the nature of reality as it appears in the Maggid’s writings. Reality according to the Maggid consists of opposing entities which coexist due to the *Ayin*, or “nothingness” between them. The identity between mystical practice and the dialectical nature of reality is what enables the work of the *Tzaddik*, turning existence into non-existence.

*Tsiri Levononi*

## WHERE DOES THE SOUL RETURN TO BY REPENTANCE?

Repentance (*teshuva*) is a major concept in the thought of Habad’s Rebbes. Repentance is defined as the *return* (the literal meaning of the word *teshuva*) of the soul to its supernal source. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Habad Chassidism, and his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber Shneuri of Lubavitch, explain that repentance raises the soul even beyond its original source in God. In Rabbi Dov Ber’s expositions, the essence of Divinity appears as a source of the soul. Thus, repentance reaches beyond the essence of Divinity! Rabbi Shneur Zalman and Rabbi Dov Ber see the point to which the soul must return as being the essence of the Infinite Light of God. This is greater than the experience of the

soul in the “World to Come” (the “Garden of Eden”), where it enjoys a limited degree of the Light of God, measured according to the spiritual level and virtue of its actions that it attained in this world. In contrast, through repentance and performance of God’s commandments (*mitzvot*) in this world, the soul is drawn at once into God’s very essence. This occurs instantaneously, without any progression of stages. In this connection, Rabbi Shneur Zalman and Rabbi Dov Ber analyze the power of repentance. They note that repentance reaches greater theosophical depths than does the performance of God’s commandments. It can therefore successfully fill the spiritual void caused by having missed opportunities to perform the commandments. However, both repentance and *mitzvot* reach the essence of God, so how can repentance exceed the *mitzvot*? Rabbi Dov Ber explains that the performance of God’s commandments reaches God’s essence by first “donning” the *havva* letters of God’s name, whereas repentance reaches God’s essence directly. Moreover, although performing the commandments indeed reaches God’s essence, repentance reaches “the depth of the depth of God’s essence,” which performing the commandments cannot reach.

*Elie Holzer*

THE *SFAT EMET*’S HOMILIES IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL  
RICOEUR’S ‘WORK OF THE TEXT’

This article examines the literary genre of the written Hasidic homilies of Rabbi Aryeh Leib Alter (1848-1905), known as *Sfat Emet*. The discussion is conducted through the lens of Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “the work of the text.” This concept encompasses the elements of composition and codification of the text as well as the desired effects of the reading process. The analysis identifies the features that are at work in the homilies, along with the type of hermeneutic activity into which the reader is drawn. This activity is designed to cause the reader to become open, in new or renewed ways, toward various dimensions of reality. The article suggests that the Hasidic homily is designed to act upon the reader in and through the very reading process: what the reader learns is not confined to the content of the homily but is first and foremost due to the nature of the reading experience itself.

*Eli Schonfeld*“FORSAKEN GOD”: MOSES MENDELSSOHN AND RABBI JACOB  
EMDEN ON CHOSENNESS AND UNIVERSALISM

This article revisits the dispute between Moses Mendelssohn and Rabbi Jacob Emden on the question of Jewish chosenness and Universalism, based on a renewed analysis of their correspondence concerning Maimonides’ synthesis of the Noachide laws. Whereas Mendelssohn advocates for a universalism of Reason, Emden develops a surprising idea of universalism as mediated by divine commandment. This article proposes to uncover the philosophical layers beneath the Mendelssohn-Emden debate and highlights the theoretical originality of Emden’s idea of Jewish universality, often regarded as dogmatic and pre-modern in comparison to Mendelssohn’s enlightened thinking. More importantly, this paper demonstrates how, had Mendelssohn accepted Emden’s doctrine of universalism, he could have found a solution to one of the most important problems he struggles with in his book *Jerusalem*, i.e., the contradiction between universalism and chosenness.

*Yossi Turner*NATIONAL INDIVIDUALITY, UNIVERSAL HUMANITY AND SOCIAL  
JUSTICE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF AARON DAVID GORDON

This paper discusses the thinking of the 2nd Aliya pioneer-philosopher, Aaron David Gordon, on justice, national individuality and universal humanity. As opposed to the existing literature which either considers these topics individually or limits itself to their discussion in general terms, the present paper exposes the deep philosophical consistency that makes these topics inter-dependent in Gordon’s thinking. The paper adopts the claim already present in the literature on Gordon’s thought, according to which his concept of “man in nature” constitutes the philosophical starting point of the many different topics developed in his writings. More specifically, the article demonstrates that as in other areas of his thought, Gordon places the creative power of life in nature at the center of his thinking on individual nationality, universal humanity and social justice. The basis for this claim is established through an investigation of the role

played by the power of life in the ethical urge that Gordon ascribes to creation, in his critique of modern society, in his understanding of the interaction of the moral sensibility and the religious spiritual heritage in the formation of a people, as well as in the ideas he set forth for the formation of a workers' community and his thinking concerning the desired relations with the Arab residents of the Land of Israel. It is demonstrated, toward the end of the paper, that as result of his focus on the power of life in the ethical and religious aspects of national existence, Gordon paradoxically understood national individuality to be a necessary condition for the existence of a universal humanity and the realization of morality and justice in the world.

*Ronny Miron*

THE POET OF REALITY

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON BARUCH KURZWEIL'S  
HERMENEUTICS VIS-À-VIS MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S IDEA OF  
A WORK OF ART

The common distinction in modern philosophy between approaches that are anchored in mundane reality and those that are addressed to the transcendent is put to a radical test in Baruch Kurzweil's hermeneutics, at the center of which the Hebrew author and poet represent the alternative to the traditional Jewish scholar. This article develops the relationship between Kurzweil's understanding of the mundane and transcendent realities expressed in modern Hebrew literature and his interpretation of the ways in which the meaning-creating reader responds to them. Relying on the affinities between Kurzweil's hermeneutics and Martin Heidegger's idea of man (*Dasein*) and art, the central argument in the article is that the dominance of the artist in regard to his work of art does not diminish his metaphysical position as "a poet of reality." Quite the opposite, the modern author and poet in Kurzweil's thinking transpires as having a special access to mundane and transcendent realities that enable him to give them voice, even in works of art that declare their unreserved secularity.

*Yaron Silverstein*BETWEEN THE HEROISM OF SAUL AND THE FIGHTERS OF  
THE GHETTO: THE MYTH OF MASADA IN THE THOUGHT OF  
RABBI SHLOMO GOREN AND RABBI MOSHE-ZVI NERIA

The story of the last battle at Masada, the end of the Great Revolt against the Romans which took place in the years 66-73 AD, has occupied a central and important place in the world-view of various factions within the Zionist movement since the 1920s. The story was long used as a formative myth to bolster the characteristics of physical courage and strength among the Jewish people, out of a deep desire to fashion a model of a “new Jew.” The main characteristics of this “new Jew” were the priority of power and physical strength in the scale of values, and the forging of an identity associated with a defined place – the land of Israel. The construction of the myth around Masada was accomplished primarily through glorifying the heroism of its historic fighters, combined with trips to forge an acquaintance with the striking, heroically oriented topographical aspects of the mountain. Throughout its history, religious Zionism has perceived itself as a natural partner in the Zionist movement and in the vision of the restoration of Jews to their homeland. However, the combination of Zionist values with religious values has persistently raised questions for religious Zionists about the proper balance between them. In the case of the myth of Masada, its persistent use in Israel caused Rav Goren to deal with the element of suicide in the Masada myth, while his article on that subject brought Rav Neria to publish a counter-statement. In his treatment, Rav Goren considered foremost the soldiers of the IDF. He saw in the actions of Jews on Masada a continuation of the heroism of King Saul, meaning an approach both legitimate and of value. As such, he advocated that it be continued and applied to the actions of Israeli soldiers bearing responsibility for renewed sovereignty over the land of Israel. It can be assumed that Rav Goren was also cognizant of the act of Uri Ilan in the Syrian prison. Rav Neria, in contrast, had in mind in this discussion the citizens of the state. He saw in the actions of the people of Masada a precursor of some, but not all, of the types of Jewish heroism that occurred during the Holocaust. Thus, in his opinion, Jewish heroism need not be characterized by an uncompromising fight to the death against a powerful enemy. Rather, heroism, in his eyes, can be expressed in the ability to tolerate subjugation or degradation while

maintaining the commandments of Judaism. It seems that in this context, both rabbis were trying to define the desired type of heroism for the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. For his part, Rav Neria attempted to bolster the heroic dimension of the simple and practical life, whereas for his, Rav Goren in contrast sought to shape the “new Jew” in the Jewish state as one who is ready to pay for his political freedom and for the Jewish people’s political sovereignty even with his life.