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THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY AS A RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION

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§ 1. Each of the participants in our colloquium is using a set of documents to reconstruct the religious character of a segment of medieval Jewish society. I have undertaken to examine a small selection of documents—narrowly philosophic works, and other literature that may have been affected by philosophy; and to illuminate the religion of a small segment of medieval Jewish society, the segment comprising thinkers of a rationalist bent.

When we think of the meeting between philosophy and institutionalized religion in any period of history, we are likely, as if by an involuntary association of ideas, to think at once of conflict. Philosophy and religion, it would seem, are ways of looking at the universe just too antagonistic to permit even an armistice, let alone peaceful cooperation. And indeed the meeting of philosophy and religion in the Jewish middle ages did bring conflict, conflict in several spheres.[1] In the strictly philosophical and theological sphere, that conflict expressed itself in what is known as the problem of reason and revelation, or faith and reason. The problem of reason and revelation itself contained at least two aspects. There was a conflict between differing methods of attaining the truth; and also a conflict between different bodies of doctrine resulting from the use of those methods. That is to say, there was a conflict between the method of attaining truth through the unaided exercise of human reason, on the one hand, and the method of attaining truth through prophetic revelation, on the other hand; and also a conflict between the body of doctrine drawn from Greek philosophy, on the one hand, and the body of doctrine drawn from revealed religion, on the other.

Considerable attention has been paid by scholars to the problem of reason and revelation in the Middle Ages. The attention is justified, for the issue left its mark on the mentality of all whom it touched. It was, of course, a central concern for the philosophers themselves, but it was

also a concern for thinking men who were not philosophers, yet who felt either a sympathetic interest, or more likely than not, an antipathetic interest in philosophy. A many-colored spectrum could be painted to represent the different positions taken on the issue of reason and revelation. Those positions would range from an ultra-reliance on reason at one end of the spectrum, to what might be called an infra-reliance on reason at the other end, with every medieval Jewish thinker who interested himself in the problem finding his place on the spectrum.[2] Tools were elaborated to deal with the problem. Liberal thinkers developed the theory that truth can be—and for psychological reasons must be—presented in different forms to different audiences; Scripture could accordingly be viewed as a popular and figurative version of the very truth put forward by philosophy. Conservative thinkers for their part, developed a critique of human reason and of the philosophic method, establishing areas where philosophy is intrinsically incapable of attaining the truth. Virtually all parties along the spectrum employed the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, recognizing at least some verses of Scripture that must not be accepted literally but must be interpreted figuratively; the extent to which the allegorical method was applied depended on the place along the spectrum that any given thinker occupied. These remarks—and those that follow—apply, to medieval Islam and Christianity as well as to medieval Judaism.

Granted that the conflict between philosophy and religion was highly significant in the Middle Ages, the meeting of philosophy and religion should be viewed as a two-sided coin. The appearance of philosophy on the medieval religious scene was not merely a force threatening destruction for religion. For some medieval thinkers it was a challenge that—if we allow ourselves the cliché—elicited a fruitful response; it was an opportunity to rethink essential elements in their religion in a form that was more satisfactory precisely for religious reasons.

The point can be made as follows: We may, it is true, think of the efforts of medieval Jewish philosophy as a *rationalization* in the pejorative sense of that term. We can think of the medieval thinker as overwhelmed by Greek philosophy. If he did not flee into obscurantism, he was forced to join the enemy and salvage his religion by shallow and hypocritical reinterpretations that hardly could have convinced him, let alone others. But we may also think of the efforts of medieval Jewish philosophy as a *rationalization* in the favorable sense of the term. We can think of Greek philosophy as highlighting, for the medieval thinker, elements in the Jewish religion that were vague and problematical, and then providing him with the means for clarifying those problematical elements, for understanding them in a more rational way.

I am going to describe how medieval Jewish rationalists went about

rethinking three essential elements in their religion, with the aid of philosophy: belief in the existence of God, love of God, and the religious duty of study. And I shall try to show that in the case of the men I am dealing with, the appearance of Greek philosophy was not an ill omen for religion. The appearance of philosophy allowed them to rethink their religion in a form more satisfactory for them, from a strictly religious viewpoint. And therefore, the Jewish thinkers in question became convinced that they had to study philosophy, for purely religious reasons.

Let us begin by drawing a profile of a Jewish intellectual in the medieval period. He is someone who is sincerely religious, a sincere adherent of the religion of his fathers. He is, however, interested in ideas, and open-minded; he is willing, even eager to examine theoretical problems in an analytic, rationalist manner. Further he is possessed of the medieval mentality in the following important sense: He has a completely static view of history. He cannot even imagine that people in Biblical times and rabbinic times had looked at the universe differently from the way he looks at the universe. And by the same token he never questions that the schools of Greek philosophy had achieved, definitively, once and for all, the most accurate description of the universe possible for the unaided human intellect. I want to trace how such a Jewish intellectual could analyze fundamental elements in the Jewish religion, and how in each instance his analysis could lead to the obligation of studying philosophy—to a *religious* obligation to study philosophy. The medieval thinker whose reasoning I am going to trace is not a single individual, but a composite of several: in particular, Baḥya ibn Paquda, Abraham ibn Ezra, Abraham ibn Daud, Maimonides, and to a lesser degree, Saadia, Joseph ibn Saddiq, and Albo. All the positions I am going to present are quotations, paraphrases, or explications of these writers.

§ 2. Our composite medieval thinker is, to begin, certain that an essential, if not the most essential element in the Jewish religion is the belief in the existence of God. Some scholars, of course, understand that in Biblical times, people were so naive that they never questioned the existence of God. Whether or not that is true of Biblical times, medieval thinkers were not so naive. Some modern theologians have, on the contrary, contended that a Jewish religion without a deity is possible and even desirable. Whether or not such a religion is indeed possible and desirable, medieval thinkers were not so sophisticated. For an intelligent medieval Jew it was obvious that the Jewish religion is meaningless, in fact that Judaism as a whole is meaningless, without a belief in the existence of God.[3] But it was very far from obvious just what the belief in the existence of God might consist in. Asking the question, asking just

what belief consists in, was one result of the meeting with Greek philosophy.[4] And once the question was asked, there was a degree of inevitability in the way medieval Jewish intellectuals answered.

The medieval rationalist whom we are considering is careful to insist that belief in the existence of God cannot consist merely in saying something; belief cannot, for example, consist merely in saying the words: "God exists." The theory that belief consists merely in saying something, had to be ruled out because certain Moslem theologians actually had held that that is all true belief does consist in.[5] But for the medieval Jewish thinker, as for most men of intelligence, such belief would be worthless, if not paradoxical: A person may say things he has not really thought about; a person can even be described as saying things he does not believe. Belief, therefore, clearly must consist in more than saying a few words.[6] Once he is satisfied that belief must consist in more tnan just saying something, our medieval Jewish intellectual proceeds to ask whether belief in the existence of God may consist simply in *thinking* something, in having an opinion. Some beliefs surely do consist exclusively in thinking that something is so, but they are not necessarily true beliefs. A pauper, for example, may arbitrarily believe he has money in his pocket; the man with a mortal enemy may arbitrarily believe that his enemy has died.[7] But such beliefs are not merely false, they are foolish; and a religion based upon beliefs of that type would be a religion of fools.[8] The medieval Jews who thought about the question were sure that they required a much sounder foundation for their religion.

They were sure that the only adequate basis for religion is a *true* and *certain* belief, a belief consisting not merely in thinking that something is so, but in knowing with certainty that it is so. In other words, an adequate *belief* in the existence of God as demanded by the Jewish religion must consist in true and certain *knowledge* of the existence of God.[9]

In the Middle Ages, several ways were recognized in which true and certain knowledge can be acquired.[10] But there were only two recognized ways for ordinary people to acquire knowledge of the existence of God. Ordinary people, people who are not prophets or semi-prophets,[11] can acquire knowledge of the existence of God either through reliable tradition or through rational demonstration. The medieval intellectual was thus faced with the necessity of adjudicating the relative value of those two sources of knowledge.

Exclusive reliance on the traditional route to knowledge of the existence of God would be tempting. The tradition of the Jewish nation going back to Sinai, the written Law, the oral Law—these are the pillars of the Jewish religion. But the traditional route to knowledge has drawbacks. To believe by tradition means to relegate oneself to an inferior class. The believer by tradition allows someone else to attain the primary belief; then

he, the believer by tradition, trails after.[12] Furthermore, there is always the chance that the ostensibly reliable source of tradition is in error, and therefore knowledge through it can never be completely certain. Believers by tradition are like "blind men" walking single file, "each with his hand on the shoulder of the man preceding." If by chance the leader of the line is unfaithful, if he is treacherous, if he is simply lost, or if by chance someone in the middle of the line should stumble, then all those who follow after will go astray. They may even fall into the pit.[13] Our medieval Jewish intellectual therefore finds that tradition by itself is insufficient. The most adequate belief in the existence of God, or—some went so far as to hold—the only adequate belief in the existence of God must consist in certain knowledge attained by the believer through his own powers, through a rational demonstration.[14]

The medieval rationalist, whom we are following, has, then, reached the stage where he is sure that an adequate belief in the existence of God is a matter not merely, as he puts it, for "the tongue," but also for "the heart."[15] Adequate belief furthermore consists not merely in thinking that God exists, but in knowing that God exists. And the most adequate way of knowing God exists is by demonstrating the existence of God rationally to oneself. The train of reasoning, it should be added, closely followed Islamic models.[16]

How is one to go about demonstrating the existence of God employing only unaided human reason? For our medieval thinker, the answer was again obvious: Greek philosophy offered a set of proofs of the existence of God. Those proofs, together with new proofs growing out of medieval adaptations of Greek philosophy, were accordingly embraced by medieval thinkers of a rationalist bent as a welcome and indispensable underpinning for *religious* belief: An adequate belief in the existence of God as required precisely by religion must, it was understood, consist in the ability "to adduce proofs of the existence of God in a theoretical manner,"[17] that is to say, in the ability to present philosophic proofs of the existence of God.

We assumed at the outset that our medieval thinker was a sincere adherent of the religion of his fathers. He had no intention of constructing a new religion; he considered himself only an expositor of the old religion. Having arrived at his conception of a philosophic and scientific faith in God—faith based on philosophic knowledge—he would therefore ask himself whether the conception finds confirmation in the Holy Books. Fortunately, as he read those books, it does. Scripture repeatedly summons mankind to *knowledge* of the Lord. Scripture says: "Know this day . . . that the Lord is God" (Deut. 4:39). "Know the Lord of thy father, serve Him with a whole heart and a willing soul" (I Chron. 28:9). One biblical verse, as read in the Middle Ages, explicitly teaches:

"Glory only in this, in *intellectual* understanding and knowledge" of God (Jer. 9:23).[18] And other verses echo the theme.[19] Our medieval rationalist was in no way conscious of reading anything into these verses. On the contrary, for him they had just one clear meaning: Scripture is exhorting mankind to learn to know the Lord in the only manner whereby something invisible can be known with certainty and truth—through a scientific and philosophic demonstration. Support for a scientific belief in the existence of God was thus forthcoming from the Bible, as the Bible was read in the Middle Ages.

Support was forthcoming from rabbinic literature as well. There the patriarch Abraham had been described as discovering the existence of God through a process of inquiry. Abraham had been compared to a wayfarer who sees a castle all lit up and asks, "Can the castle have no governor?"; like that wayfarer, Abraham asked, "Can the world have no governor?" And only after this inquiry was Abraham vouchsafed prophetic converse with the deity. Such is the rabbinic account.[20] Our medieval thinker approached the rabbinic account already understanding that man can establish the existence of God through inquiry only by formulating philosophic proofs. Accordingly, Abraham's inquiry concerning the deity had to refer to such a proof. The rabbinic account of Abraham's conversion signified that—more than a millennium before the appearance of philosophy among the Greeks—the father of the Jewish people had formulated a philosophical proof of the existence of God.[21]

Several midrashim current in the Middle Ages offer a different, more elaborate account of the way Abraham came to learn of the existence of the true God. One day, the present account runs, Abraham prayed to the sun. In the evening, when the sun set, he directed his prayers to the moon. But by morning the moon too had set; then Abraham understood that the heavenly bodies have "a master above them," and he began to worship the invisible being who is the true deity. Although the Hebrew sources of this other account of Abraham's conversion are late, the story itself is fairly early, for it appears in the Koran.[23] To a medieval student of specifically Aristotelian philosophy, the implication was clear. Not merely did Abraham demonstrate the existence of God philosophically. He was led to his demonstration precisely by contemplating the heavenly bodies. When translated from figurative, to scientific language, the story means that Abraham studied the phenomenon of celestial motion. He must have asked himself "how it could be possible for the celestial sphere to move continually without a mover"; and he must have concluded that there "exists a deity who moves the celestial sphere." Abraham, in other words, must have demonstrated the existence of God through the well-known proof from motion, the very proof to be used—rediscovered—by Aristotle many hundreds of years later.[24]

To summarize: The composite medieval rationalist whose reasoning we have been following understands that adequate belief in the existence of God as required by religion must consist in true and certain knowledge of the existence of God. The best way to true and certain knowledge, and consequently the best way to adequate belief in the existence of God, is not through tradition but through scientific demonstration. Therefore in order to be adequate from a purely religious standpoint, belief required study of the philosophic proofs of the existence of God. This position was reached through an analysis of the concept of belief and was supported by texts from Scripture and rabbinic literature. It was the position of a line of medieval thinkers of different schools and different temperaments, but all having in common that they were sincerely religious and yet all rationalists.

The point I have been making here—that medieval Jewish rationalists recognized an obligation to study philosophic proofs of the existence of God for purely religious reasons—can also be made with regard to the unity and incorporeality of God. Proper belief in God, from the strictly religious standpoint, was understood to include belief in His unity and incorporeality.[25] An adequate belief in the unity and incorporeality of God, it was argued, must consist in true and certain knowledge; such knowledge rests on the ability to demonstrate the unity and incorporeality of God; and the requisite demonstrations are available only from philosophy.[26] But instead of following the details of that train of reasoning, let us leave the cognitive side of religion and turn to another side of religion, the emotional side.

§ 3. I wish to consider the quality of love of God, unquestionably another essential element in the Jewish religion. Love of God is prescribed by Scripture, by rabbinic literature, and in the liturgy; and it was especially praised in the Middle Ages as a religious virtue.[27]

Love is something that we suppose we intuitively understand. But when one stops to analyze just what is meant by love, in just what love consists, it turns out to be a puzzling phenomenon. And it is particularly puzzling when the object of love is an invisible being. The medieval thinkers whom we are following did ask themselves what love of God should consist in, and they found that love of God presupposes knowledge of God.

As one writer states: "No one can experience the enormous love [due the deity] without knowing the object of his love";[28] you cannot love something you do not know. The principle is far-reaching. To begin, it means that the *existence* of the object of love has to be known: You cannot love something if you do not know it exists. And so the very first step in analyzing the obligation to love the deity reinforces the result

reached in analyzing the obligation to believe in the deity. Both require study of whatever proofs there are of the existence of God. But love requires something more. Simply knowing the existence of an object is still obviously not sufficient to inspire love on the part of any rational person. The nature of the proposed object of love must also be known; a sensible person loves an object only because he finds in it characteristics inspiring love. The emotional duty of loving God thus opens up into a wide-ranging cognitive obligation, the obligation to acquire true and certain knowledge not only of the existence of God, but also, as far as possible, of the nature of God.[29]

Unfortunately, acquiring knowledge of the nature of God is not easy. In the Middle Ages philosophers and non-philosophers alike agreed that the very essence of God is unknowable. All that can be known is a number of divine attributes; and knowledge of those attributes is necessarily limited, for such knowledge is both indirect and incomplete. The attributes of God can be known not in themselves but only insofar as they are reflected in what has come from God, in what God has said and done.[30] From an examination of what God has said and done one may infer what attributes God must have, always with the understanding that man never can reach the essence of God or the attributes of God in themselves.

Two sources of knowledge were recognized whereby ordinary people may learn what God has said and done, the same two sources of knowledge whereby man can acquire knowledge of the existence of God. First, such knowledge is possible through reliable tradition, the tradition crystallized in Scripture and rabbinic literature: From God's recorded words and deeds, such attributes as goodness and wisdom can be inferred and those attributes will inspire love of God. Secondly, the requisite knowledge is also available through a rational investigation of the physical universe: Many may discover what God has done by examining the physical universe, and from the handiwork he may learn of the Maker; from a rational investigation of the universe, such attributes of God as goodness and wisdom can again be inferred, and those attributes will, again, inspire love of God.[31] Our medieval rationalist, as will be recalled, discovered drawbacks in knowledge based on tradition, and he determined that the better of the two sources of knowledge of the *existence* of God is human reasoning. By the same token, rational examination of the universe will be the better of the two sources of knowledge of the *attributes* of God.

The route to love of God has now been plotted: Man "loves God only through his knowledge of God."[32] Man must begin with what God has said and done, that is to say, with an examination of the words and deeds of God as recorded in religious tradition, and with an examination of the deeds of God as discoverable by a rational investigation of the physical

universe. Studying the words and deeds of God will lead to knowledge of the attributes of God. And knowledge of the attributes of God will inspire love of God. It follows that only the man of knowledge can fulfill the obligation of loving God;[33] and the greater one's knowledge, the greater the love that will be inspired.[34] Furthermore, since human reasoning is the more certain source of knowledge, special attention must be given to that source of knowledge of divine attributes. Knowledge of God's attributes through human reasoning is the high road, as it were, to love of God.

In that instance, when knowledge of divine attributes is pursued through unaided human reasoning, a systematic and scientific knowledge of the physical universe is clearly necessary, for only such knowledge can serve the human reason as valid grounds for inferring what lies beyond the physical universe. In addition, at the juncture where human reason does go beyond the physical universe and draws inferences regarding the invisible divine realm, the inferences too must be drawn in a systematic and scientific way. A systematic and scientific knowledge of the physical universe is what is called the science of physics, and such knowledge of the invisible divine realm, standing behind the physical universe, is what is called the science of metaphysics. Thus in order properly to understand God's attributes, a man must study both the science of physics and the science of metaphysics. Only mastery of physics and metaphysics can provide the true and certain knowledge that inspires the very highest love of God, and, consequently, only the master of those sciences, only the complete philosopher, is fully able to fulfill the religious obligation of loving God.[35] The emotional aspect in love of God can, on this theory, be explained as the "supreme pleasure in our knowledge of God."[36]

Scriptural support was discovered for the theory of a philosophic love of God. The Bible enjoins: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul . . ." (Deut. 6:5). The heart or the soul was universally understood to be the locus of the human cognitive faculties;[37] accordingly, an obvious interpretation of the verse suggested itself to our composite thinker. The injunction to love God with all one's heart and all one's soul must be an injunction to devote one's cognitive faculties completely to the study of "those sciences . . . that teach man about his God";[38] it must be an injunction to inspire in oneself the love of God that flows from a complete knowledge of the science of physics and the science of metaphysics.[39]

The medieval thinker whose reasoning we have been following thus added a theory of philosophic love of God to his theory of philosophic faith; and he supported this theory too with what was for him a natural exegesis of Scripture. The theory of philosophic love of God did not, of course, satisfy the religious needs of every medieval Jewish thinker. But for those who developed it, it arose from an analysis of the specifically

religious obligation to love God; and the scriptural support[40] was adduced ingenuously, without hypocrisy. The theory was worked out to serve a purely religious purpose, to satisfy the purely religious needs of the medieval rationalist.[41]

Other religious obligations related to love were explored along similar rationalist lines, notably the duty to fear God,[42] and to worship Him.[43] But I wish to turn now to a different sphere of Jewish religious activity, the sphere of study.

§ 4. Study of the Holy Law, the Torah, is another essential element in the Jewish religion. Such study is prescribed by Scripture; and for the ancient rabbis it was unquestionably the most important single human activity. The rabbis vigorously opposed the study of subjects other than the Law, including a subject they called "Greek wisdom,"[44] and their opposition stemmed not merely from fear of heretical opinions; it stemmed equally from concern about the loss of time that would result. All available time should, according to the rabbis, be devoted to a single discipline, the study of God's written and oral Law, and therefore the study of anything else was forbidden as a misuse of time.[45] The medieval thinker whom we are following, therefore had to ask himself whether his growing attachment to philosophy could harmonize with the religious obligation to study only the Torah.

When the medieval rationalist began to consider the religious duty of studying the Law, he found that duty itself problematical. In the Middle Ages as in rabbinic times, the study of the Law was generally understood to consist in the study of the intricacies of rituals, torts, marriage law, and the like.[46] But common sense would suggest that if study is indeed a religious virtue then there are other, perhaps more important, things to study.[47] There seemed, for example, to be at least as much religious value in pursuing a course of study leading to knowledge of God and of God's workings in the universe.[48] A medieval Jewish thinker who was both an adherent of the Jewish religion and also of a rationalist temperament would thus be faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, exclusive attention to the divine Law is prescribed by the authoritative sources of the Jewish religion. On the other hand, common sense suggests that pursuing knowledge of God and God's workings has at least as much religious value as studying ritual and civil law, even God-given ritual and civil law.[49]

Certain medieval intellectuals found a solution to the dilemma within the authoritative religious sources themselves. For while the ancient rabbis did insist that only the divine Law is worthy of study, the rabbis at the same time conceived of the Law as much wider than a corpus of civil and ritual regulations. In addition to strictly legal subjects, the Law, according to ancient rabbis, includes other subjects; specifically it includes

theological subjects. Three terms used in rabbinic literature with reference to theological study are of interest here. These are *pardes,* "the pleasure garden"; *maᶜaseh bereshit,* "the account of creation"; and *maᶜaseh merkabah,* "the account of the Chariot." Precisely what the three terms originally represented is impossible to determine. We, however, are interested not in what they originally signified, but rather in the way they were understood by our medieval rationalist.

The well-known Talmudic account of "four" who "entered the pleasure garden"[50] was, in the Middle Ages, widely taken to refer to an esoteric doctrine.[51] The rabbinic sources had also stressed the dangers lurking, as it were, in the *pleasure garden.*[52] Still, inasmuch as R. Akibah had been described as an adept therein, and as having "entered in peace and come out in peace," the esoteric doctrine in question was taken to be highly approved for all who are properly qualified. The only theological subject recognized by a rationalist is philosophic or scientific theology—what is today called *natural theology.* Furthermore, philosophers in the Middle Ages, it so happened, did regard philosophy as an esoteric subject, to be pursued only by the properly qualified.[53] It was thus natural for medieval Jewish rationalists to surmise that the *pleasure garden* sanctioned by the Talmudic rabbis was a philosophic study of the nature of God.[54]

A rationalist analysis of the *account of creation* and the *account of the chariot* led further. Both the account of creation and the account of the chariot had been expressly included by the ancient rabbis within the Holy Law taken in the broad sense; study of them thus was sanctioned as part of the general obligation to study the Law.[55] Furthermore, a well-known passage in the Talmud offers an evaluation of one of the two. The passage in question compares the account of the chariot with ordinary legal disputations; and it describes intricate legal disputations as only "a small matter," in contrast with the account of the chariot, which it characterizes as a "great matter."[56] Thus the two areas of theological study under consideration had not only been sanctioned as part of the study of the law; at least one of the two had been rated as a subject of study superior to merely legal disputations.

As for their original content, virtually nothing was known in the Middle Ages, just as virtually nothing is known today. It was known only that the account of creation was an esoteric interpretation of the creation story in the book of Genesis, and the account of the chariot was an esoteric interpretation of the divine chariot in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel.[57] Anything further was, as it still is, conjecture. Yet there was an obvious direction for the conjecture of a medieval rationalist to take: The account of creation was in effect a rabbinic description of the manner in which God constructed the physical universe. And the account of the chariot was in effect a rabbinic description of the structure of the

divine realm, the realm standing behind the physical universe. Now a *systematic* description of the physical universe is what is known as the science of physics; and a *systematic* description of the structure of the invisible divine realm is what is known as the science of metaphysics. It was therefore natural to infer that the ancient rabbinic account of creation contained a rabbinic science of physics, and the ancient rabbinic account of the chariot contained a rabbinic science of metaphysics. To replace the lost rabbinic sciences, recourse had to be had to other sources. And, indeed, a reliable science of physics and of metaphysics, in fact the most reliable science of physics and metaphysics that could ever be produced through unaided human reason, was available. Greek philosophy offered those sciences. It followed that the only source now available to those who wished to fulfill the religious duty of study at its highest level, at the level of the account of the chariot, was Greek philosophy.[58]

On a priori grounds our medieval rationalist thus found that the religious obligation to study must include more than merely legal subjects; for knowledge of God and knowledge of God's workings in the universe are surely appropriate subjects of religious study. The study of philosophy was not, however, then recommended in opposition to the old injunction to study only the Holy Law. On the contrary, the study of philosophy was recommended as an integral part of study of the Law. In fact, Greek philosophy, it ironically turned out, provided the only available means for fulfilling the obligation of studying the Law at the very highest level recognized by the ancient rabbis themselves.[59]

This result confirmed and reinforced the results reached when our medieval rationalist analyzed the religious obligation to believe in the existence of God, and the religious obligation to love God. He analyzed the religious obligation to believe in the existence of God; and, he found, that obligation could properly be fulfilled only through knowledge of proofs of the existence of God. He analyzed the religious obligation to love God; and, he found, that obligation could properly be fulfilled only through knowledge of the science of physics and the science of metaphysics. He further analyzed the obligation to study the Law, and that obligation too, he found, can be fulfilled only through studying the sciences of physics and metaphysics.

It is well known, of course, that some medieval thinkers approved of the study of Greek philosophy. I am not making that point. The point I have been attempting to make is a different one. Given medieval Jewish thinkers who were faithful adherents of the religion of their fathers and yet of a rationalist temperament—to these men, religious obligations could make sense only when analyzed and understood in a rational manner. For them, only a rationalized religion was a satisfactory religion, and thus the study of philosophy became necessary on religious grounds. The study of philosophy itself became a religious obligation.

NOTES

1. For example, the social and legal spheres.
2. Men like Isaac Albalag and Joseph Caspi would appear at one end of the spectrum; those like Moses Taku and Shem Tob b. Shem Tob at the other end.
3. Cf., e.g., Baḥya, *Ḥobot ha-Lebabot*, ed. Sifroni (Jerusalem, 1928), I, 1; Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Exodus*, 20:2; Maimonides, *S. ha-Miṣwot*, Positive Command § 1; Naḥmanides, commentary to *idem; ibid.* Negative Command § 5; H. Crescas, *Or ha-Shem*, Introduction.
4. Cf. H. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 112-119.
5. Cf. Ashari, *Maqālāt*, ed. H. Ritter (Wiesbaden, 1963), p. 141.
6. Saadia, *Emunot we-Deᶜot*, Introd., § 4; Baḥya, *Ḥobot ha-Lebabot*, I, 2; Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, I, 50; J. Albo, *ᶜIqqarim*, I, 19.
7. Saadia, *Emunot*, Introd., § 4.
8. *Ibid.*; Maimonides, *Guide*, I, 50.
9. Saadia, *Emunot*, Introd., § 4; Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, I, 2; Maimonides, *Guide*, I, 50; Albo, *ᶜIqqarim*, I, 19.
10. Saadia, *Emunot*, Introd., § 5; Maimonides, *Millot ha-Higgayon*, chap. 8; G. Vajda, "Autour de la Théorie de la Connaissance chez Saadia," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, CXXVI (1967), pp. 135 ff., 375 ff.
11. The "divine degree" of mankind in Judah Hallevi comprises semi-prophets, possessing a peculiar faculty that provides knowledge of God. Cf. H. Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the Cuzari and Hallevi's Theory of Causality," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, CXXXI (1972), pp. 382-385.
12. Implied in Saadia, *Emunot*, Introd., § 6; Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, Introduction.
13. Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, I, 2.
14. Saadia, *Emunot*, I, § 6; Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, Introduction; I, 3; III, 4; Joseph ibn Saddiq, *ᶜOlam Qatan*, ed. S. Horovitz (Breslau, 1903), II, introd., p. 21; III, pp. 43-44; IV, i, p. 60; Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Exodus*, 20:2; *Commentary on Proverbs*, 9:10; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah*, ed. S. Weil (Frankfurt, 1852), p. 47; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah*, I, 1-6; *Guide*, I, 50; Aaron ha-Levi, *S. ha-Ḥinnuk*, § 25; Albo, *ᶜIqqarim*, I, 19; 24. A contrary position is taken by Hallevi, *Cuzari* I, 13; 20.
15. Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, I, 2; cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, I, 50.
16. Cf. *Encyclopedia of Islam*², art. *Imān;* F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden, 1970), pp. 29-30; 98-108; G. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 17-18.
17. Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, I, 2. Cf. references in n. 14.
18. *"Haskel wa-yadoᶜa oti"; sekel* had become the established term for intellect.
19. Baḥya, *Ḥobot*, I, 2-3; Abraham ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora*, chap. 1. Saadia, *Emunot*, III, 1, cites the verse from Chronicles; Joseph ibn Saddiq, *ᶜOlam Qatan*, II, p. 21, and Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah*, p. 46, cite the verse from Jeremiah; Hallevi, *Cuzari*, V, 21, refers to a Karaite interpretation of the verse from Chronicles as commanding study of philosophy. N. Krochmal, *Moreh Nebuke ha-Zeman*, ed. S. Rawidowicz (Waltham, 1961), pp. 313-315, still cites these verses to justify study of philosophy.
20. *Bereshit Rabbah*, § 39.
21. Joseph ibn Saddiq, *ᶜOlam Qatan*, II, p. 21; Judah ben Barzilai, *Comm. on Sefer Yeṣirah* (Berlin, 1885), pp. 2-3; Hallevi, *Cuzari*, IV, 27. Cf. Ashari, *K. al-Lumaᶜ*, ed. R. McCarthy (Beyrouth, 1953), § 11; Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Muḥaṣṣal* (Cairo, 1905), p. 106.

22. *Bet ha-Midrasch,* ed. A. Jellinek (Leipzig, 1853), II, xxxiv; 118; *Midrash ha-Gadol, Genesis,* ed. M. Margulies (Jerusalem, 1947), pp. 204, 210 (apparently influenced by the passage in Maimonides cited below, n. 24); *Sefer ha-Yashar* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), p. 24; L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* V (Philadelphia, 1925), p. 210.
23. Koran, 6:76-80. Similar stories are to be found in *Jubilees,* 12:16-18, and Philo, *De Abrahamo,* XV, §§ 68-71.
24. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah,* ᶜ*Abodat Kokabim,* I:3. Maimonides proceeds to interpret additional midrashic passages as meaning that Abraham instructed others in his philosophic faith; also cf. *Sefer ha-Miṣwot,* Positive Command § 3. Averroes too understood that Abraham was a philosopher; cf. *Faṣl al Maqāl,* chap. 1, transl. G. Hourani (London, 1961), p. 45; *Long Commentary on Metaphysics,* ed. M. Bouyges (Beyrouth, 1948), p. 1634; *Tahāfut al-Ṭahāfut,* ed. M. Bouyges (Beyrouth, 1930), p. 416; transl. S. van den Bergh (London, 1954), p. 251. For Aristotle's proof from motion, see *Physics* VIII; Maimonides, *Guide,* II, 1(a).
25. Cf. H. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, 1948), II, p. 152. Non-philosophers and critics of philosophy agreed. See the text of Eleazar of Worms edited by J. Dan in *Temirin* I (1972), 156-7; Hallevi, *Cuzari,* I, 89; Crescas, *Or ha-Shem,* I, iii, 6.
26. Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* I, 2; 8; Joseph ibn Saddiq. ᶜ*Olam Qatan,* II, p. 21; III, p. 44; Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Proverbs,* 9:10; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 47; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah,* I, 1-7; *Guide,* I, 50. Cf. H. Wolfson, "Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God," *Jewish Quarterly Review,* LVI (1965), pp. 112-136.
27. Cf. G. Vajda, *L'Amour de Dieu* (Paris, 1957).
28. Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 100.
29. *Ibid;* Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* X, 1; 7.
30. Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* Introd., pp. 16, 20; Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora,* chap. 1; *Commentary on Exodus,* 31:18; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 100; Maimonides, *Guide,* I, 54.
31. Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Miṣwot,* Positive Command, § 3.
32. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah,* X, 6.
33. Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* X, 1; 7; Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Exodus,* 31:18; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 100; Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Miṣwot,* Positive Command § 3; *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah,* X, 6; Albo, ᶜ*Iqqarim,* III, 35.
34. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah,* X, 6; Albo, ᶜ*Iqqarim,* III, 35.
35. Maimonides, *ibid.*
36. Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Miṣwot,* Positive Command § 3.
37. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide,* I, 39.
38. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah,* X, 6.
39. Cf. Saadia, *Emunot,* II, 13; Ibn Ezra, *Commentary on Deuteronomy,* 6:5; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 100; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah,* II, 2; *Guide,* I, 39; III, 28; Albo, ᶜ*Iqqarim,* III, 35.
40. Support was also adduced from rabbinic literature. Cf. Maimonides' interpretation of the rabbinic description of Abraham's love of God, *Sefer ha-Miṣwot,* Positive Command § 3.
41. Cf. also F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant,* p. 141; Spinoza, *Ethics,* V, xxxii-xxxiii.
42. Saadia, *Emunot,* II, 13; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah,* II, 2.
43. A. Altmann—S. Stern, *Isaac Israeli* (Oxford, 1958), p. 124; Saadia, *Emunot,* II, 13; Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* III, 2; 3; 6; Maimonides, *Guide,* III, 51.
44. *Baba Qamma,* 82b-83a. *Yefeh* ᶜ*Enayim, ad loc.,* lists parallels. For interpretations of the prohibition in a manner sympathetic to the study of philosophy, cf. Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Soṭah,* IX, 14; Meiri's Commentary on *Baba Qamma,* 83a; R. M. Isserles on *Ṭur Yoreh Deᶜah,* § 246, n. 9; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (N.Y., 1950), pp. 100-105. Also cf. Isaac b. Sheshet, *Responsa* (N.Y., 1954), § 45.

45. *Sanhedrin,* 100b; Lieberman, *ibid.,* pp. 100-101.
46. Cf. *Qiddushin,* 30a, and R. Tam's comment.
47. Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* Introd., p. 12; Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora,* chap. 1; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 45.
48. I cannot recall a medieval argument to the effect that studying God-given ritual and civil law will permit inferences about the nature of the divine legislator.
49. Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* Introd., p. 7; III, 4, p. 93; Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora,* chap. 1; Maimonides, *Guide,* III, 51.
50. *Ḥagigah,* 14b, and parallels.
51. See, however, Rashi's commentary, *ad loc.*
52. *Ḥagigah,* 14b.
53. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide,* Introd.; Averroes, *K. al-Kashf,* Introd.; transl. M. Müller, as *Philosophie und Theologie* (Munich, 1875), p. 26.
54. Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 2; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah,* IV, 13; *Talmud Torah,* I, 12. Cf. I. Twersky, "Aspects of the *Mishneh Torah,*" *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies,* ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, 1967), p. 111.
55. *Ḥagigah,* II, 1; *Midrash Mishle,* chap. 10.
56. *Sukkah,* 28a, and parallel.
57. Ezekiel, chaps. 1, 10.
58. Implied in Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora,* chap. 10; *Commentary on Genesis,* 3:23; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah,* p. 2 (the reference to R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai is a reference to *Sukkah,* 28a). Explicit in Maimonides, *Commentary on Mishnah, Ḥagigah,* II, 1; *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah,* II, 11; IV, 13; *Guide,* Introd. Cf. A. Heschel, *Torah min ha-Shamayim* (London-N.Y., 1962) I, pp. xxi-xxiii; Twersky, "Aspects of the *Mishneh Torah,*" pp. 112-116.
59. Cf. also Baḥya, *Ḥobot,* Introd., pp. 6-7; Ibn Ezra, *Yesod Mora,* foreword; chap. 1; *Commentary on Proverbs,* 9:10; Averroes, *Faṣl al-Maqāl,* transl. G. Hourani.

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