

RABBI JACOB EMDEN, PHILOSOPHY, AND MAIMONIDES

JACOB J. SCHACTER

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute

IN A FOOTNOTE at the beginning of the epilogue to his magisterial *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, Isadore Twersky stated his intention to write “a separate monograph on the study of MT [*Mishneh Torah*] through the ages.”¹ Unfortunately, his illness and untimely death prevented Professor Twersky from completing this project and robbed students of Maimonides of what undoubtedly would have been an important contribution to an understanding of one of the major works written by “perhaps the most famous and resplendent figure of medieval Judaism.”² I offer the following observations in memory of my teacher in an attempt to shed light on some of the material that undoubtedly would have appeared in that volume.

Rabbi Jacob Emden was born in Altona at the very end of the seventeenth century into a prominent rabbinical family. His maternal grandfather, Rabbi Meshullam Zalman Neumark Mireles, and his father, Hakham Zevi Ashkenazi, served as rabbis of the Triple Community of which Altona was then a part (together with Hamburg and Wandsbeck). At the age of twelve, young Jacob moved with his family to Amsterdam when his father was invited to serve as that city’s Ashkenazi chief rabbi. Four years later, Hakham Zevi and his family left Amsterdam and, after traveling with his father for a while, Emden married in the spring of 1715 and settled with his wife’s family in Broda in Moravia. After his father’s death three years later, Emden embarked on a decade-long series of travels that took him to over a dozen cities through western and central Europe, finally settling in the city of Emden, where he served as rabbi from 1729–1732. Before Rosh Hashanah, 1733, he returned to Altona, where he lived for the rest of his life, until his death in 1776.

-
1. Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven and London, 1980), 515.
 2. *Ibid.*, 1.

Other than the few years he spent as rabbi of the community from which he drew the name by which he was to be known for posterity, Emden held no official leadership position in the Jewish community. He earned his living as a moneylender, importer of precious stones, printer, and buyer and seller of real estate. He had a most difficult personal life, burying two wives and sixteen children! But, as he often noted, it was the study of Torah that gave him strength. Indeed, Emden was a preeminent rabbinic scholar who produced an extensive literary *oeuvre* dealing with virtually all aspects of Jewish intellectual creativity including commentaries on the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the *siddur*, the *Shulhan Arukh*; almost four hundred responsa; a major ethical tract; a book on Hebrew grammar; several sermons; an autobiography; and a number of other assorted monographs. He also played a major role in the eighteenth-century battle against Sabbatianism, and in the last two and a half decades of his life became obsessed with exposing and hounding any vestiges of that movement. In addition, Emden lived long enough to witness the emergence of the Haskalah and, unlike some of his more traditional colleagues, shared some of the openness to secular culture advocated by that movement headed by his acquaintance and correspondent Moses Mendelssohn. In short, Emden was one of the most colorful and influential Jewish figures of the eighteenth century.³

The towering figure of Maimonides figured prominently in each of these three aspects of Emden's life: his intellectual interests, his role as a ferocious anti-Sabbatian activist, and his relationship with Moses Mendelssohn. But, in order to appreciate fully Emden's complex attitude toward Maimonides, one must frame it within the larger context of his attitude toward secular knowledge in general and philosophy in particular.⁴

-
3. For a full treatment of Emden's biography and intellectual contribution, see my "Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988) and my forthcoming edition of his autobiography, *Megillat Sefer*, to be published by Mosad Bialik.
 4. There is some question as to how to refer most appropriately and correctly to the broad range of "non-Torah" disciplines. The difference between "secular studies" and "general studies" in English or the nuances differentiating between "*hokhmah*" and "*madda*" in Hebrew are more than a matter of simple semantics; they reflect some very significant conceptual ideological positions. See my "Torah u-Madda Revisited: The Editor's Introduction," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 1 (1989): 10-11; Aharon Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict," in *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?*, Jacob J. Schacter, ed., (Northvale and Jerusalem, 1997), 220-21, n. 1. For one to assert that Maimonides, for example, considered philosophy a "secular" discipline is to reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of what that great rationalist considered to be its indispensability for the true religious personality. See Herbert A. Davidson, "The Study of Philosophy as a Religious Obligation," *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S. D.

There is certainly no doubt that Emden had an insatiable curiosity about all forms of knowledge. In a long and remarkable passage in his autobiography worthy of extended citation, he described in detail his multi-faceted and wide-ranging intellectual interests, while yet a young man, which he was able to pursue not without a small measure of difficulty.⁵

I yearned to know and to recognize the script of the German language in its own form (which my revered father did not teach me nor did I receive instruction in their handwriting from a teacher. It was necessary for me to learn by myself) ... My heart was always inclined to know and to examine worldly matters (*'inyanei ha-olam*) as well; nations and faiths, their characteristics and dispositions, their histories and wisdoms, all of whose matters cannot be known from our sacred books.

This was also [necessary] in order to know how to respond to a heretic,⁶ to mingle comfortably with people (*ve-lihiyot me'urav im ha-beriyot*),⁷ to know the proper etiquette of each country, the nature of the lands and the character of their inhabitants, to reveal their secrets and to overcome any difficulties. All this I yearned to learn from their own books in the original. But I found no way or manner to achieve this for I did not permit myself to hire for myself a teacher for reading books of Gentiles for I feared a great waste [of time from Torah study]. It was also abominable in my eyes to spend money on this [and], in addition, I was embarrassed to do so in the presence of people.

Behold, I knew a young lad from among the servants [who] was learning the writing and reading of Latin script. I clandestinely took him aside and asked him to show me the shape of the printed letters of the foreign alphabet. He had just begun to learn from a Gentile teacher who was a scribe and he still barely knew the shape of the separate letters, without knowing how to read the connected letters or understand the meaning of their words. The lad showed me just once or twice to say this is A, this is B, this is C, etc. Nothing more. With the help of God, may He be blessed, Who endows man with wisdom, I immediately grasped the recognition

Goitein (Cambridge, 1974), 53–68 and the articles by Prof. Twersky cited below, n. 145.

Following Prof. Twersky's choice of formulation, I will use the word "secular" in the course of this essay to refer to all "non-Torah" disciplines. See the titles of his "Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquières: His Attitude to and Acquaintance with Secular Learning," *PAAJR* 26 (1957): 161–92; *Rabad of Posquières* (Cambridge, 1962), 260: "Attitude toward Secular Learning."

5. See *Megillat Sefer* (Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* [Oxford, 1886], 590, no. 1723:2), 163b–165a, col 1. I have translated from the manuscript. For an incomplete version of this text, see David Kahana's edition of *Megillat Sefer* (Warsaw, 1896), 96–98.
6. *Avot* 2:14. See below, n. 13, 35.
7. *Ketubot* 17a. See below, n. 36, 38.

of the letters in their forms. I then struggled alone by myself to put together the words; I applied myself and understood the matter without assistance from any tutor or teacher whatsoever. Within a short time, I acquired the ability to read a German book well as if I had a teacher for this for many years.

However, I succeeded in reading only their printed books and Latin script. But the German script with its swift connected flourishes I still cannot recognize due to my inadequate study of it ... because, for me, [this] matter was snatched (*yegunav*) fleetingly and superficially. Even the lad who had shown me was not perfect. Afterward, I was ashamed to ask anyone [for help with] that which I was missing of their wisdom.

With it all, I hastened to read all their printed books immediately by myself until I acquired the skill to read even the Dutch language and gazettes and to understand much of the Latin language. I read many of their books with all the varied information of the names of ...⁸ to understand all the views of people around the world in matters of their faiths, religions, and customs and to reveal their thoughts about us and our holy faith.

I also long, my soul yearns⁹ to know and to understand the arrangement of the terrestrial globe as clarified in the book¹⁰ regarding the celestial movements. Although it is explained in our literature, it is done in a very brief manner. I also wanted to know and to perceive matters of nature: the nature of minerals; the qualities of plants and grasses; especially the science of medicine; the practices of nations and kings, their wars, and history; their unique tales and the annals of the[ir] generations; the original ideas of those who write about lands, oceans, rivers, mountains, and deserts and those who describe their condition; the designer's craft, skills, cunning, fraud and deception and the foolish stories of fabricated contrivances. All this my eyes saw in their books. I have expert knowledge of them and their deeds. All their thoughts, their frauds and their good qualities are known and revealed to me so as not to be ignorant¹¹ of the wisdom of the people of the world.

However, I am careful to read and study them only in a place where it is forbidden to meditate on words of Torah, nowhere else at all. Since by nature I need to lengthen my time in the bathroom in keeping with the warning of the sages,¹² I benefited as a result in that my hours in the bathroom were not totally lost and wasted ... Above all, I thus succeeded in knowing how to refute a heretic¹³ and in not being considered a fool in

-
8. The next word in the manuscript is unclear. D. Kahana, *Megillat Sefer*, 97, n. 1, deciphers it as "Europe." That seems unlikely to me.
 9. Cf. Ps 84:3.
 10. There is a space here in the manuscript.
 11. Lit. '*arum*, naked. See also below, n. 41.
 12. *Berakhot* 54b-55a.
 13. Above, n. 6.

their eyes. As mentioned above,¹⁴ I examined their books in times of leisure, especially those in the fields of medical science and health preservation that is the [very] life of all creation. I studied the science of nature that I felt to be absolutely essential for the survival of the human species.¹⁵

Indeed, Emden made repeated references to his great curiosity about all aspects of human creativity. In the winter of 1737, a medical student from Göttingen by the name of Benjamin Wolf Ginzberg wrote to him inquiring as to what procedures he should follow regarding surgery on the Sabbath, given the fact that so much of what would be required of him would be problematic from the perspective of Jewish law. After a very long and detailed halakhic response, Emden entered into a highly significant discussion on the value of secular studies in general. He concluded his responsum in the following manner: "Signed by one who, like you, yearns to establish a covenant with secular wisdoms [*hokhmot*]; from his youth did he cling to them with love.¹⁶ *My soul is consumed with longing* (Ps 119:20) to examine the fancies of their heart,¹⁷ to reveal the living waters from their cisterns¹⁸ to quench my thirst for the delights of perfect joy.¹⁹ [But] *they disdained me* (Job 19:18) and did not permit me to come to them after the manner of all the earth.²⁰ They drove me out from their midst and pushed me away from having a share in their possessions.²¹ They rejected me with their two hands."²²

In the introduction to the second part of his *Luah Eresh*, Emden wrote how "great was my aching²³ from my youth for the love of secular wisdom [*ha-hokhmot*] and knowledge [*ve-ha-yedi'ot*]." He went on to list those areas that interested him: "to understand fully the ways of the world [*bi-derekh erez*] and the behavior of people; to uncover the hidden treasures of nature, the form of the structure of the world and the divisions of the lands, seas,

14. *Megillat Sefer*, 163b, col. 1; D. Kahana ed., p. 96.

15. For Emden's level of knowledge in the areas of foreign languages, non-Jewish religions, history, geography and astronomy, see my "Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works," 514-33. For an earlier analysis of Emden's attitude toward and knowledge of secular disciplines, see Azriel Shohat, *Im Hilufe Tequfot* (Jerusalem, 1960), 198-241.

16. Cf. I Kgs 11:2.

17. Cf. Ps 73:7.

18. Cf. Isa 30:14.

19. Cf. Ps 16:11.

20. Cf. Gen 19:31.

21. Cf. I Sam 26:19.

22. *She'ilat Yavez* I:41, end. For the last phrase, see *Soṭah* 47a; *Sanhedrin* 107b.

23. Cf. Job 2:13.

rivers, mountains, and valleys; the divisions between states, languages,²⁴ religious faiths, and cultural patterns; the events of history, the generations of the past; the accounts of the secular rulers, the genealogy of the scholars and that which occurred to them ... In all of these did my Creator favor me."²⁵

Finally, Emden clearly described his great desire to master all bodies of knowledge in his *Iggeret Purim*, an important work that, like his autobiography *Megillat Sefer*, was written in the heat of his bitter controversy with Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz. In the course of describing his reluctance to be involved in the study of *shemot*, or divine names of God, Emden claimed that: "Even though I was able to acquire all the literature on this subject ... I did not want to take²⁶ even a copy of any of them. However, in any case, I did not restrain myself from looking into them when they came into my hand. (Such is my practice with regard to all areas of knowledge in the world, whether religious or secular [*ben qodesh ben hol*], that come to my attention; to feast my eyes upon them [in order] to know the good and evil; to discern truth from falsehood; to understand and analyze the nature of the [different] faiths, opinions, and religions and to reveal the origins and slightest bit of information in them.²⁷ Even mundane, frivolous, and non-sensical matters I knew [and] read."²⁸

-
24. The 1912 edition of *Luah Eresh* must be corrected in light of the first edition (see below, n. 25). It should read "*ve-ha-leshonot*."
 25. *Luah Eresh* in '*Ez Avot* (Amsterdam, 1751), 76a–b; in '*Ez Avot* (Maramarossziget, 1912), 76b. *Luah Eresh* was recently reprinted (Toronto, 2001) in a clear and meticulously precise edition. See my introduction, pp. 9–25, and, for this text, pp. 187–88. All forthcoming references to '*Ez Avot* will be from this latest edition.
 26. Cf. Deut 25:8.
 27. Cf. Job 26:14.
 28. I published this passage from this as yet unpublished work in my "Rabbi Jacob Emden's *Iggeret Purim*," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature 2* (Cambridge, 1984), 444. For another example of this sentiment, see also Emden's introduction to the second volume of his *Morū-Kezi'ah* (Altona, 1768), 1b; (Jerusalem, 1996), 287.

For *Megillat Sefer* as a work rooted in the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy, see my "History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden," in E. Carlebach, J. N. Efron and D. N. Myers, eds., *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover and London, 1998), 428–52.

The discerning reader will notice that among the works cited below in presenting Emden's attitude toward philosophy and Maimonides there are several that he wrote specifically in the context of this controversy. It is clear that Emden's entire corpus must be studied for a proper understanding of any aspect of his thought: the Sabbatian-related material for a full appreciation of his general intellectual world view and the halakhic material for a complete picture of his anti-Sabbatianism.

More significant than Emden's repeated references to his abiding personal interest in extra-talmudic subjects are the arguments he adduces in support of them. In one case, he underscores their importance for providing information not found in Torah texts. After noting how rabbinic scholars sometimes invoked the Jerusalem Talmud or *Tosefta* to supplement the more standard Babylonian Talmud, Emden continued:

This too we saw and more than this did we find among later authors who are helped even from secular books [*sefarim hizonim*]. They are helped and gather assistance from whatever comes into their hands, *two fistfuls of labor* (Eccl 4:6), in those areas where they could not acquire a handful of satisfaction from the sweet honey of the Talmud to quench their thirst.²⁹

It is appropriate that this should be done because so did our sages teach, "Learn from every person."³⁰ Regarding this did the wise one [King Solomon] say, "A thief is not held in contempt for stealing to appease his hunger" (Prov 6:30), not hunger for bread but for seeking the word of God.³¹ They will wander about [and] behold, they will find. *They would steal no more than they needed* (Obad 1:5) for the work necessary for [understanding] the essence of the lengthy Torah...³²

Therefore, the sages also permitted the use even of those seriously secular books, the reading of which was severely punished. Upon this they already commented, "Good statements found in them may be expounded."³³

Elsewhere, Emden also cited the passage from *Avot* (4:1), "Who is a wise man? He who learns from all people," to justify his quoting "every good portion from the ethical teachings of the Gentiles who are known for wisdom."³⁴ He also made reference to the standard argument that involvement in secular studies was necessary to "know how to respond to a heretic."³⁵ These traditional justifications for secular studies clearly assume,

-
29. Note the ambivalence even in this justification for the legitimacy of utilizing secular sources. This sentence is a play on the words in Eccl 4:6. The entire verse reads, "Better is a handful of gratification than two fistfuls of labor, that is pursuit of wind." Emden here identifies the Talmud as providing the more optimal "handful of gratification" while the secular sources provide, at best, "two fistfuls of labor that is pursuit of wind."
30. Cf. *Avot* 4:1.
31. Cf. Amos 8:11.
32. Once again note his ambivalence in twice referring to those seeking assistance from secular sources as thieves, albeit behaving appropriately.
33. *Iggeret Biqqoret* (Zhitomir, 1867), 19a–b. For the last phrase, see *Sanhedrin* 100b. For another use of this argument, see 'Ez *Avot* on *Avot* 5:22 (58b).
34. *Migdal 'Oz* (Jerusalem, 1969), 107b. Here too his ambivalence is manifest, citing this justification after referring to such study as an '*averah li-shmah*.'
35. *Avot* 2:14. See *Lehem Shamayim* (Jerusalem, 1978), 3:134a (on *Sanhedrin* 10:1). See also *Mitpahat Sefarim* (Lvov, 1870), 72, 79; '*Amudei Shamayim* (Altona, 1746), 236a; *Megillat Sefer*, above, n. 6, 13.

however, that they have no independent value *per se*; their value is limited only to the extent to which they can help elucidate texts of Torah.

On other occasions, however, Emden justified involvement in secular studies, albeit on a limited basis, on broader, and therefore much more significant, grounds. In his aforementioned responsum to Benjamin Wolf Ginzberg, Emden noted that such study "would be a bit beneficial so that the Children of Israel should know, to teach them to do battle in order to be saved from the sword of the tongue and not to leave room for the *apikoros* to reign. However, while a little bit is good to temper the intellect, to spice the mind and to be intermingled with people (*le-mazeg ha-sekheh u-le-vasem ha-da'at ve-lihiyot me'urav im ha-beriyot*)³⁶ much of it is harmful and a waste of precious time."³⁷ In commenting on the Mishnah in *Avot* that lists *derekh erez* among the "forty-eight matters with which Torah is acquired," Emden wrote, "Perhaps it includes also the study of worldly wisdoms (*hokhmot ha-olam*) that are necessary, e.g., mathematics, fractions, and matters of nature. A minimal understanding of them is commendable in order to know the ways of the habitation of the world that the Lord gave to mankind; how to behave [in fulfilling] the essential bodily needs, domestic matters, interpersonal human relations and political administration. [All] so that one should be sociable with people (*she-tehei da'ato me'urevet im ha-beriyot*)."³⁸

In addition to adducing the anti-heresy argument, Emden clearly maintained in the Ginzburg responsum that secular studies are independently valuable "to temper the intellect [and] flavor the mind." Furthermore, in both texts just cited, as well as at the beginning of the passage from his autobiography quoted above, Emden introduced what appears to be a new argument into this discussion, maintaining that such study was important "to be intermingled with people." In a very subtle way, this justification of secular studies indicated that he was sensitive to something in his general environment that influenced him to acknowledge the need to study secular literature. Unlike some of his more traditionalist contemporaries, Emden was very much aware of the shifting emphases in Jewish religious and intellectual life that were beginning to affect the Jewish community in the middle of the eighteenth century. He intuitively recognized that the lack of some level of secular knowledge would place what he considered to be an unwelcome barrier between Jews and the broader society in which they lived.

True, an outerdirected justification for involvement in secular studies had already been made long before, in the thirteenth century. R. Ya'akov b.

36. *Ketubot* 17a; above, n. 7.

37. *She'ilat Yavez* I:41, end.

38. 'Ez *Avot* on *Avot* 6:6:20 (65a).

Makhir wrote Rashba that, "Also, in the eyes of the *goyim* our knowledge of them [reflects our] wisdom and discernment (*hokhmatenu u-vinatenu*), so that they not say that our heart is empty of all understanding and wisdom (*haskel ve-hokhmah*)."³⁹ But the argument there was one of respect, echoing the celebrated talmudic passage, "R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Yohanan, 'From where do we know that there is an obligation incumbent upon a person to calculate the seasons and constellations? For it is stated, "You shall safeguard and perform [it] for it is your wisdom and discernment (*hokhmatkhem u-vinatkhem*) in the eyes of the nations." What wisdom and discernment is in the eyes of the nations? You have to say that it is the calculation of the seasons and constellations."⁴⁰ However, by introducing the talmudic principle of "*lihiyot me'urav im ha-beriyot*" in this context, Emden is introducing a new *social* element into the discussion, thereby providing a strikingly novel justification for the value of involvement in secular studies. He wanted Jews not only to be respected by Gentile society; he also wanted them not to be estranged from Gentile society.⁴¹

But while Emden was clearly drawn to secular knowledge and conceptually justified engaging in it, he could not bring himself fully to embrace it. For all his comments in favor of a limited involvement in secular knowledge, he could not consistently attribute independent value to it and wrote with even greater passion and intensity about the dangers of engag-

39. See *Minḥat Kena'ot* (Pressburg, 1838; New York, 1958), 67. See too R. Ovadia of Bertinoro's commentary on *Avot* 3:18.

40. *Shabbat* 75a. See Moshe Arend, "Limud Ḥokhmat ha-Goyim bi-'Einei Ḥakhmei Yisrael," *Iyunim bi-Ḥinukh* 28 (1980): 55.

41. Note also the justification presented in the passage from *Megillat Sefer* cited above, "not being considered a fool in their eyes." Both these justifications, in the context of the level of knowledge incumbent upon a *talmid hakham* to achieve, are presented in virtually the same way in *Mor u-Kezi'ah* #307 (1768), 18a; (1996), 341 (*shelo yihiyeh 'arum* [cf. above, n. 11] *mi-yedi'ah bi-korot ha-yamin . . . ve-lo yehi nehshav pesi ve-sakhal bi-'inyanei ha-'olam*). See also *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 2 (1768), 1b; (1996), 287; *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 73, "The correct thing is that it is proper for a rabbinic scholar to study worldly knowledge (*yedi'ot ha-olamiyot*) necessary (for a man who is social by nature [*medina bi-tava*])."

On the significance of this argument, see David Ruderman, "Science, Medicine and Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe," Lloyd P. Gartner, ed., *Spiegel Lectures in European Jewish History* 7 (Tel Aviv, 1987), 17–19; David Berger, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?*, 139. One needs to compare this argument with the others presented in defense of involvement in secular disciplines in order to appreciate its novelty. See all the articles in *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*; Yehudah Levy, *Sha'arei Talmud Torah* (4th ed.; Jerusalem, 1990), 280–350; trans. as *Torah Study* (Jerusalem, 1990), 237–83; Shlomo H. Pick, "Jonathan Eybeschuetz and Secular Studies," *Niv Hamidrasha* 24–25 (1993): 43–50.

ing in such study. After justifying Maimonides' involvement in these areas in terms that will be analyzed below, Emden continued:

However, the rest of the talmudic scholars who were knowledgeable also in secular studies [*bi-hizonot*) did not study them at all with any regularity [*bi-kevi'ut*). They resorted to them only in a case of absolute necessity, utilizing them only when vitally essential

God forbid that any Jew should be involved in secular studies [*bi-hizonot*) with any regularity. This is in the category of [one] *who has spurned the word of the Lord* (Num 15:31), which according to the sages [refers to] whoever is capable of involvement in Torah study and refrains from it.⁴² They did not permit even one who learned the entire Torah to study Greek wisdom except at an hour that is neither day nor night.⁴³ Certainly [was it forbidden] to diligently study their books written in a foreign tongue and, it goes without saying, to attend their schools, to come early to their gates.⁴⁴ For, as a result of this, the time for *the loving doe* (Prov 5:19) [i.e., Torah] is automatically suspended. The end result will be that he will forsake her completely and be infatuated with a forbidden one.⁴⁵ And in the end he will roar when his flesh and body will be consumed in the house of a stranger⁴⁶ From the permissible they came to the forbidden. *The more they increased, the more they sinned* (Hos 4:7), becoming frivolous with the commandments. They did not desist until they denied Torah and prophecy

Gentile books (*sifrei ha-nokhrim*) ... are neither beneficial for the body nor save the soul. They do not guarantee success, not in this [world] or the next Israel was exiled from its land and from other lands within which they dwelt with honor only because of this matter, as it is written, *They mingled with the nations and learned their ways* (Ps 106:35). Even if a bit of honey is found in their words floating on the surface, behold the poison is hidden beneath them.⁴⁷

In his own commentary on the Mishnah in *Avot* (2:14) where the obligation to "know how to respond to a heretic" is presented, Emden did an about face and explicitly rejected his earlier assertion that this requirement could be invoked as a justification for the pursuit of secular wisdom. In a long and important passage, he claimed that the two phrases in this Mishnah, "Be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to respond to a heretic" are conceptually related to one another. The latter simply supplies an additional reason for the former and cannot be extended at all to include

42. *Berakhot* 5a.

43. *Menahot* 99b.

44. Cf. Prov 8:34.

45. Cf. Prov 5:20. See too below, n. 48.

46. Cf. Prov 5:10–11.

47. *Mitpahat Sefarim*, 72–73. See also 'Ez *Avot* on *Avot* 6:2 (60b).

any type of non-Torah study. He wrote, "However, you may not study the views of the nations [*de'ot ha-umot*] with any regularity. For this is forbidden to all. The wise man [King Solomon] declared, *A loving doe, a graceful mountain goat. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times. Why be infatuated, my son, with a stranger?* (Prov 5:19–20)⁴⁸.... What have we to do with their alien ideas? ... What is a priest (*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* [Exod 19:16]) doing in a cemetery⁴⁹ to seek knowledge of *the living God* (Deut 5:23) from the dead? Who can permit us that which our sages explicitly prohibited, not to learn anything from the heretics?"⁵⁰

Finally, and most significantly, Emden repeatedly noted that he relegated his involvement in secular studies to the bathroom, "a place where it is forbidden to meditate upon words of Torah."⁵¹ While Emden's secular knowledge was far too wide-ranging to understand this statement literally, it obviously reflected his clear ambivalence about engaging in such activity. By use of this argument, he was able to allow himself continued involvement with this material while simultaneously denying it any real value. Although possessing great intellectual curiosity and sensing that such knowledge, albeit in moderation, was important, ultimately Emden could not bring himself to endorse wholeheartedly any non-Torah study. In both his public statements as well as in the way he lived his personal life, he accepted the traditional primacy of Torah learning to the exclusion of anything else.

Central to an assessment of Emden's attitude toward secular wisdom in general is an analysis of his complex and multifaceted attitude to the study of philosophy in particular. While Emden's negative attitude toward

48. See above, n. 45 for another use of this verse as a reference to secular studies. See also Emden's marginalia to *Sha'arei Shamayim*, first printed by Moshe Zvi Aryeh Bick (New York, 1966), 104; repr. *Siddur ha-Yavez 2* (Jerusalem, 1994), 200. For this verse as a reference to philosophy, see *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 79. See also 'Ez Avot on Avot 5:22 (58b).

49. See *Shemot Rabbah* 5:14.

50. 'Ez Avot on Avot 2:14 (20a). In *Mor u-Kezi'ah 2* (1768), 1b; (1996), 287, Emden also notes that it is the study of *Torah* that will enable someone to respond to an *apikorus*. See, in general, Dov Rappel, "Hevei Shekod Lilmod...mah she-Tashiv le-Apikorus," *Tehumin* 3 (1982): 477–84.

51. See *Megillat Sefer* cited above; *Lehem Shamayim* 3:134a (on *Sanhedrin* 10:1); *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 69–70, 73, 75, 80; *Iggeret Purim*, ms., 3a; my article (above, n. 28), 444; *Migdal 'Oz*, 23b; 'Ez Avot on Avot 2:14 (20b); *She'ilat Yavez* 1:10 (where he also indicates that this was the practice of Nahmanides as well as his own father, Hakham Zevi Ashkenazi). For another reference to this as his father's practice, see *Megillat Sefer* (ms., 122b; these words are missing in the Kahana edition, p. 17). In "Meteg la-Ḥamor," *Sefer Shimush* (Amsterdam, 1762), 25b, Emden boasted how even his time in the bathroom was well spent in secular study, something in which he did not otherwise allow himself to become involved.

that discipline was already expressed in some of the passages cited above, there are a number of places where he fully and explicitly stated his position. In summary, his argument in opposition to that discipline ran as follows: Philosophers lack any heteronomic awareness, deny God's role in the governance of the universe and consider the world *hefquer*, attributing every occurrence in it to chance. Since they reject the binding authority of divine legislation, adherents of philosophy are free to follow only that which their logic accepts as reasonable, a position of subjectivity in moral behavior that allows them to justify a life of hedonism and a concomitant rejection of the laws of the Torah. Indeed, Emden's primary objection to philosophy stemmed not so much from his conceptual opposition to some of the basic principles he attributed to it, e.g., an emphasis on autonomy as opposed to heteronomy and a denial of both divine providence and the existence of miracles. He did not engage philosophy in a debate on conceptual, theoretical grounds as much as he decried the practical behavioral distortions to which he believed it inevitably gave rise. Emden was much more concerned with what he considered to be the unacceptable practical implications of those ideas, e.g., the unlimited pursuit of pleasure and antinomianism in the everyday lives of those who espoused them. He insisted on heteronomy as the basis for morality, and argued that the result of an autonomously grounded moral system is unbridled hedonism. It was the antinomian implications of adherence to philosophy that aroused his ire more than the basic tenets of philosophy themselves. In a word, he opposed the *beliefs of philosophy* primarily, if not exclusively, to the extent that he considered them responsible for what he saw as the resultant unacceptable *behavior of philosophers*.⁵²

Finally, Emden's polemic against philosophy was not conducted in a calm, reasoned, detached, objective manner, in the rarified world of academic, intellectual discourse. There was a passionate immediacy and very real practical relevance to his opposition because, together with Sabbatianism, Emden considered the evils of philosophy to be one of the most dangerous features of the Jewish community of his time. Indeed, the first half of the eighteenth century saw a renewed interest in philosophy in the Jewish community. In 1742, a new edition of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* with the commentaries of Shem Tov, Efodi, and Crescas was published for the first time in almost two hundred years.⁵³ The appearance of this work was a major event and it made a great impact in a number of Jew-

52. See 'Amudei Shamayim, 247b–249a; *Sha'arei Shamayim* (Altona, 1747), 77a–b; *Migdal 'Oz*, 47a–b; 54a; 'Ez Avot on Avot 2:4 (14a), 5:22 (58b–59a); "Ḥali Ketem," in *Derush Tefillat Yesharim* (Podgorze, 1911), 26a–b.

53. The last time the *Guide* had been published was in 1553 in Sabionetta.

ish circles.⁵⁴ Emden was acutely aware of what he considered to be the negative results of this new involvement in philosophy by his own contemporaries. He saw a number of them engaging in what he considered to be distortions of Judaism as a result of their affinity for philosophy, and therefore felt compelled to attack them. He recognized that something had changed in his time and, as a result, the old anti-rationalist arguments took on for him a new and practical significance.⁵⁵ As far as he was concerned, the combination of Torah and philosophy is "a grafting that can never take hold"⁵⁶ and he considered the time he spent involved in its study to be a sin.⁵⁷ Emden was so opposed to philosophy that he even maintained that it was adherence to that discipline, with its concomitant antinomianism, that was responsible for the destruction of both temples, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the Chmielnicki massacres of the seventeenth century, and other major Jewish tragedies through the ages.⁵⁸ In fact, Emden's opposition to philosophical inquiry was so intense that he even

54. See Azriel Shochat, *Im Hifufe Tequfot*, 196, 207, 221–22; idem, "Reshit ha-Haskalah bi-Yahadut bi-Germanyah," *Molad* 23 (1965): 329, 330; Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* (Alabama, 1973), 10–12; Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay, "The Ideology of the Berlin Haskalah," *PAAJR* 25 (1956): 5–6; Zemah Tsamriyon, *Moshe Mendelssohn ve-ha-Idi'ologiyah shel ha-Haskalah* (n.p., 1984), 34–35, n. 144; *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography*, trans. J. C. Murray (Boston, 1888), 104–5, 123, 143; S. Pick, "Jonathan Eybeschuetz and Secular Studies," (above, n. 41), 44.

The appearance of the *Guide* made such an impact that two years later a need was felt also to republish *Ru'ah Hen*, a medieval philosophical dictionary attributed to R. Judah ibn Tibbon, to explain philosophical terms in that work that were being misunderstood. It was reprinted in Jessnitz, 1744 with a commentary of R. Israel of Zamocz. See the preface of the printer, Israel b. Abraham.

55. See most clearly in *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 77a ("And that seducer still dances among us"), 77b; "Hali Ketem," 26b ("It is still galloping among us"); *Iggeret Purim*, ms., p. 33a; (above, n. 28), 445–46 ("Verily, I am the man who has seen the affliction of my people in my time, when the heresy of philosophy has reasserted itself"); *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 79 ("For especially now when philosophical texts have increased and have been intermingled with the works of Jewish scholars...").

56. *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 77a.

57. 'Ez Avot on Avot 5:22 (58b).

58. 'Amudei Shamayim, 249a; *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 77a–b; marginalia to *Sha'arei Shamayim* (1966), 100, 103; (1994), 190, 199; *Migdal 'Oz*, 158a; "Hali Ketem," 26b; *Iggeret Purim*, ms., p. 33a; my article (above, n. 28), 445; 'Ez Avot on Avot 5:22 (59a); *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 62 (below, n. 122), 84. See also my "Echoes of the Spanish Expulsion in Eighteenth Century Germany," *Judaism* 41:2 (Spring 1992): 180–89; below, n. 122.

For other anti-philosophical statements in Emden's works, generally formulated as attacks on the opinions of "mitpalsifim," see *Migdal 'Oz*, 2b–3a (philosophers are in no position to provide rationales for *mizvot*), 21b–26a (scores of comments interpolated into Emden's presentation of the first four chapters of Maimonides' *Hil. Yesodei ha-Torah*), 51a, 54a, 95a, 121a, 151a, 155b, 158a; *Torat ha-Kena'ot* (Amsterdam, 1752), 69b; 'Ez Avot on Avot 4:22 (44b–45a); 'Amudei Shamayim, 5a–6a

went so far as to consider it to be a greater threat to Jewish survival and continuity than Sabbatianism, that cursed movement to whose eradication he devoted the last third of his life!⁵⁹ Conscious of the fact that the Jewish world of the second half of the eighteenth century was changing because "the heresy of philosophy has reasserted itself,"⁶⁰ even the standard arguments he used against philosophy were presented with an urgency born out of a recognition of how immediately relevant they had become.

All this negativism toward philosophy notwithstanding, it would be a distortion of Emden's position to brand him as an anti-intellectual who treated the entire philosophical tradition with disdain and distrust. Although he clearly opposed philosophy, Emden must be considered as part of a long line of illustrious predecessors, including Judah Halevi, R. Meir Halevi (Ramah) Abulafia, and Hasdai Crescas, who, although critical of philosophy, were familiar with its sources, terminology, and mode of argumentation and even went so far as to incorporate them into their own writings. History had long shown that opposition to philosophy did not need to be equated with ignorance of philosophy, and anti-rationalism did not need to be equated with the rejection of reason as a source of truth.⁶¹ Indeed, Emden's opposition to philosophy was by no means total and unilateral. As indicated earlier, he limited his negativism, as forceful and as intense as it may have been, to the specific type of philosophy he claimed to have confronted among his contemporaries, e.g., an autonomous position that allowed for subjectivity in moral behavior and the rejection of the binding authority of divine legislation. Emden never attacked the ideational content of philosophy without directly linking it to the antinomianism that, he claimed, followed naturally from it. In fact, Emden informed the readers of his commentary on the *Siddur* that he too studied philosophical works in his youth. He pronounced himself an expert in them [*"baki ani bahem u-ve-ma'asehem"*], although only selectively accepting their conclusions; "I extracted their honey and sweetness and discarded their

(a long polemic against the Epicurean notion of chance; see too *ibid.*, 133b, 260b), 11b, 17b (against those who deny the immortality of the soul), 24b (against the philosophical disdain for the sense of touch; see too *ibid.*, 352b), 27b–28a; marginalia to *Sha'arei Shamayim* (1966), 104; (1994), 200 (approving citation of the commentaries of Ibn Ezra and Radak on Isa 55:2, "Why do you spend money for what is not bread?" as a reference to "strange wisdoms" (*hokhmot nokhriyot*)).

59. "Ḥali Ketem," 26a–b.

60. See above, n. 55.

61. For Halevi and Abulafia, see Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Cambridge, 1982). For Crescas, see Harry A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1929), 124–27; idem, "Studies in Crescas," *PAAJR* 5 (1933–1934): 172–73; repr. idem, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* 2 (Cambridge and London, 1977), 475–76.

shell.”⁶² Emden was familiar with and quoted from classical philosophical literature, was well acquainted with the major representatives of the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition, and frequently used philosophical terminology.⁶³ There were certain elements of the philosophical tradition with which he was familiar and that he incorporated approvingly into many of his writings.⁶⁴

Most significant was Emden’s utter rejection of “undemonstrated faith” and his insistence on the use of reason to buttress his own personal religious commitment. In a striking statement, he wrote: “Do not think that I acquired my faith by tradition alone. But, from my youth, I examined and analyzed (*hakarti ve-darashti*) to arrive at the truth with all my strength and might, regarding that which is intellectual, natural, sensed and felt by man (*bi-muskal u-be-mutba u-muhash u-murgash le-adam*). For man is an understanding being. Therein is he different from animals.”⁶⁵

62. *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 77b. See too 'Ez Avot on Avot 5:22 (58b).

63. For some references to Aristotle, particularly his *Ethics*, see *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 2 (1768), 91b (corrigenda); (1996), 268; *Shevirat Luhat ha-Aven* (Altona, 1756), 55a; *Migdal 'Oz*, 22a, 42a, 42b, 51a; 'Ez Avot on Avot 1:1 (4a), 1:6 (8a), 3:9 (25b), 5:22 (58b); 'Aqizat 'Aqrav (Amsterdam, n.d. [1753]), 11a; *Petah 'Enayim*, 8a; *She'ilat Yavez* 1:10. In 'Amudei Shamayim, 248b, Emden made reference to Aristotle, Plato, and Averroes. For references to Mani, see 'Amudei Shamayim, 133b, 260a–b.

Emden’s knowledge of medieval Jewish philosophical classics included Saadya Gaon’s *Emunot ve-De'ot* ('Amudei Shamayim, 256b; *Migdal 'Oz*, 66a [it is greater than both Bahya’s *Hovot ha-Levavot* and the *Moreh Nevukhim*]); Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari* ('Amudei Shamayim, 4b–5a, 29a, 94a; *She'ilat Yavez* 1:171; *Mishneh Lehem on Berakhot* 1:3 [printed in *Lehem Shamayim* 4:200a]; *Migdal 'Oz*, 82b–83b, 117b, 150b, 151a [referring to Halevi as “the crown of Jewish philosophy”], 155b, 156a, 157a); Bahya ibn Pakuda’s *Hovot ha-Levavot* ('Ez Avot on Avot 2:10 [18b], 2:13 [19b]); Joseph Albo’s *Sefer ha-Iqqarim* ('Amudei Shamayim, 181a; *Migdal 'Oz*, 22a, 26b, 35a–36a [“a great philosopher”], 51b, 118a); the classical commentaries on the *Guide* by Crescas, Narboni, and Efodi (*Migdal 'Oz*, 120b). In *Sefer Shimush*, 36b, Emden made reference to *Emunot ve-De'ot* of Saadya Gaon, the *Kuzari*, Abraham ibn Ezra’s introduction to his biblical commentary and Isaac Arama’s 'Aqedah.

For some examples of philosophical terminology, see *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 2b (God is “*sibah rishonah*”), *Lehem Shamayim* 1:8 (introduction; “*hokhmah ha-Elohut . . . tiv'iyot ve-limudiyot*”); 'Aqizat 'Aqrav, 4b (“*homer, zurah, po'el, takhlit*”), 11a (“*muskalot rishonot*,” “*derekh hekeshi*”); 'Ez Avot on Avot 3:9 (25b).

64. See, for example, 'Amudei Shamayim, 18b, 249b; *Migdal 'Oz*, 60a (philosophers’ definition of shame), 103b (“philosophers stated that man is social [*medini*] by nature”); *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 23a; *Sefer Shimush*, 24a (“as is known to one who has even only some familiarity with the science of logic [*hokhmat ha-higayon*]”), 24b, 85b (“The philosophers said, “That which is well known requires no proof; because I did not see Rome or Constantinople with my own eyes, can I deny their existence!”); *Iggeret Purim*, ms., 6a (Emden quoted “a statement often cited by philosophers, ‘Love Socrates, love Plato [but] love the truth even more.’”).

65. “Meteg la-Ḥamor,” *Sefer Shimush*, 12b.

That Emden was not totally opposed to philosophy in general but rather utilized some of its notions to combat what he considered to be some of its excesses was already recognized by his brother-in-law, Rabbi Aryeh Leib, in his approbation to Emden's commentary on the *Siddur*. In a list of Emden's achievements in that work, R. Aryeh Leib included the fact that "he builds a foundation and a pillar in ... philosophy to refute Greek wisdom."⁶⁶

Nevertheless Emden's lack of total distrust and disdain for the entire philosophical tradition does not detract from his fundamental opposition to that discipline. At most, it had only limited value; at worst, it was dangerous and responsible for the worst national tragedies in all of Jewish history.

And now, with this introduction, we move to Emden's attitude toward Maimonides. As a result of his essentially negative attitude toward philosophy, Emden was forced to confront the same serious dilemma that faced many since the thirteenth century who refused to accept the absolute primacy of philosophical inquiry in Judaism. How could they justify the obvious and intense emphasis on rationalism on the part of Maimonides, universally considered to be one of the most outstanding, towering, and influential personalities in all Jewish history? How could they possibly deny major significance to philosophy when the great Maimonides, whose image had achieved "heroic" proportions already shortly after his death in 1204, clearly considered rational investigation of Judaism to be a crucial religious imperative and an indispensable component of the Jewish religious experience? Anyone who followed Maimonides was forced to reckon with the powerful stature and authority of his position.⁶⁷

A series of approaches to this dilemma had already been well established by the time Emden was forced to deal with it in the eighteenth century, five hundred years after it became an issue. One suggestion was to view Maimonides as a unique and exceptional personality who could never be duplicated. Precisely because he was so outstanding and towering, blessed as he was with an exceptionally powerful and overwhelming intellect, he and he alone was able to engage in the kind of philosophic

66. The *haskamah* was printed in *Sha'arei Shamayim*, 159b.

67. For the phrases "heroic conception," "heroic proportions," and "heroic image" of Maimonides, see I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, 1; B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 48, 63, 99-100.

For the extraordinary degree of Maimonides' popularity, see also I. Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières*, 181; idem, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," in H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger, ed., *Jewish Society Through the Ages* (New York, 1973), 206.

speculation he espoused without endangering the purity and wholesomeness of his faith. All others, however, with more ordinary and conventional minds, would be obligated to avoid that kind of philosophical inquiry that could only confuse and mislead them. Another approach was to differentiate between the Maimonidean position *per se* and subsequent, more extreme, formulations of it. There were some who argued that it was necessary totally to disassociate Maimonides from many of his followers, translators, and commentators who later distorted, misrepresented, and radicalized his positions. Still others focused on Maimonides' intention. Yes, what he did was not optimally appropriate but his motive was pure for he engaged in philosophical speculation only in order to counter the heresies being perpetuated by many of his contemporaries who had already been misled by it. Still another possibility was to differentiate between Maimonides the halakhist and Maimonides the philosopher, limiting respect for Maimonidean authority only to the former while being harshly critical of the latter. Finally, some Kabbalists solved the problem by claiming that Maimonides realized his error at the end of his life and became one of their own.⁶⁸

Emden explicitly rejected the last of these options,⁶⁹ but all the others appear throughout his writings.

You will not find any one of the scholars of truth (*hakhmei ha-emet*) who wasted his time with it (*higayon*). We have found that only Maimonides deeply investigated it (*his counsel is unfathomable, his wisdom marvelous* [Isa 28:29]) in his book the *Guide*, for the sake of his contemporaries. It is appropriate to say that he established it for his generation alone. The generations that succeeded him immediately rejected that book and did not want to

-
68. All these approaches abound in the polemical literature of the Maimonidean controversies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They can also be found, with different nuances of expression and shades of emphasis, in the substantial anti-rationalist literature throughout the Middle Ages and modern times. A comprehensive history of anti-rationalist reactions to the stature and authority of Maimonides remains a major desideratum. In the interim, see Abraham S. Halkin, *Bi-'Iqvot Rambam* (Jerusalem, 1979); B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*; Gershom Scholem, "Mi-Hoker li-Mekkubal," *Tarbiz* 6 (1935): 90–98; Michael A. Shmidman, "On Maimonides' 'Conversion' to Kabbalah," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* 2, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge and London, 1984), 375–86; M. Idel (below, n. 69).
69. *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 73. For other examples of Emden's assertion that Maimonides "did not merit to achieve" knowledge of Kabbalah "which was not publicized in his days," see *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 6; *Lehem Shamayim* 2:152a (*Ḥagigah* 2:1), 3:51a–b (*Soṭah* 7:6). Regarding this issue in general, see, most recently, Moshe Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," in *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge and London, 1990), 31–79, esp. p. 51f.

walk in its ways⁷⁰ even though its thinking is high and deep.⁷¹ All its paths and directions are not known to all ... In all the later Jewish scholars there is none equal to him; who like him can teach the religion⁷²

Certainly not to study regularly with them [heretics] and in their heretical works as did Maimonides It is possible to judge him favorably for [responding to] the needs of the hour. In his days, the *land was filled* (Isa 11:9) with the heresy of philosophy. The heretics in his generation compelled and forced him to engage in Greek wisdom (*bi-hokhmah yevanit*) in order to stand up against them.⁷³

His intention was for the sake of Heaven. He spoke for his time when heresy prevailed in the world.⁷⁴

Their intention [Ibn Ezra and Maimonides] was for good for they *were imbued with a different spirit* (Num 14:24).⁷⁵ However, in the generation that followed them, they took their words literally and rejected the Torah in its entirety. This became for them a snare and an obstacle, a stumbling block for the household of Israel.⁷⁶

The rabbi, author of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, did well However, his students, the philosophers, *would not walk in his ways* (Isa 42:24).⁷⁷

He is remembered for good and for a blessing for eternity while the lawless wicked ones who made of the book *Guide of the Perplexed* an ax to cut off the branches of the Torah and *mizvot*, to chop down the roots of prophecy and providence, will be *to everlasting abhorrence* (Dan 12:2). *The name of the wicked shall rot* (Prov 10:7). May God save us from them and from those like them.⁷⁸

Primarily, however, it is the penultimate approach cited above that is most often found in his works. In a desire to maintain his essential anti-rationalism while expressing great respect for Maimonides, Emden differentiated on a number of different occasions between the halakhic and philosophical parts of the Maimonidean *oeuvre*. He held Maimonides' halakhic achievement in the highest regard, regularly cited his opinions and consistently treated him with the greatest of respect. In one of his last

70. Cf. Isa 42:24.

71. Cf. Ps 92:6.

72. *She'ilat Yavez* I:41, end.

73. 'Ez *Avot* on *Avot* 2:14 (20a).

74. *Migdal 'Oz*, 22a. See also 96b; 'Amudei *Shamayim*, 236a; *Mitpahat Sefarim*, 72; below, n. 120.

75. The verse refers to Caleb, who was held by God in high esteem.

76. *Migdal 'Oz*, 23a. For the last phrase, cf. Isa 8:14.

77. *Migdal 'Oz*, 23b.

78. *Mishneh Lehem* on *Avot* 2:14 (49a). This commentary on *Avot* was printed only once, at the end of the first edition of Emden's *Lehem Shamayim* 2 (Altona, 1768). His 'Ez *Avot* commentary on *Avot* was printed earlier (1751; see above, n. 25) and is a totally different commentary.

works, Emden noted how his respect for Maimonides pervaded many of his halakhic works: “the well-known Maimonides, prince and great scholar in Israel of old, as he is always [described] by me throughout my writings for prominence and praise, in many places in my works. Many times I fought on his behalf with all my strength as one can find often in the book *Lehem Shamayim*, *Kuntres Binyan Bet ha-Behirah*, *She’ilat Yavez*, *Iggeret Biqqoret*, *Mor u-Kezi’ah*, ‘*Ez Avot* and in my *Siddur*, besides very many others ... If I were worthy, I would say that Maimonides was my teacher.”⁷⁹ About Maimonides he wrote, “Verily, the man who enlightened the eyes of Israel with fundamental *halakhot* in his great work (*bi-hibburo ha-gadol*; i.e., the *Mishneh Torah*) is to be remembered for good.”⁸⁰ By means of several logical opinions (*de’ot yesharot*), he strengthened and fortified *hands that are slack and tottering knees* (Isa 35:3), weary of dispersion. May his compensation be full from the One Who rewards.”⁸¹

To be sure, Emden’s support of Maimonides’ halakhic rulings was not unlimited. After describing in the text cited above how he fought with all his strength in Maimonides’ behalf, he insisted upon his right to be independent of him. He continued, “However, not in every case. Only in a place where I was able to justify his ruling did I not refrain from defending him. And when I saw that the law tended toward his opponent, the Rabad, then too I did not show favoritism to the great. I did not refrain from defending his opponent who argues with him. [This is] not like the practice of several authors who constantly tend toward the opinion of one great scholar to strengthen his fortification⁸² under any circumstances.”⁸³

In fact, Emden often took issue with halakhic rulings of Maimonides,⁸⁴ but this was all done in the context of enormous respect for him. Prof. Twersky has presented a number of medieval examples where even sharply worded criticism is not inconsistent with great reverence⁸⁵ and

For other examples of the distinction Emden draws between Maimonides and his students who distorted and radicalized his position, see *Migdal ‘Oz*, 25b–26a (see below, n. 118), 36a, 121b; ‘*Ez Avot* on *Avot* 5:22 (59a).

79. *Mitpahat Sefarim*, 3.

80. See *Shabbat* 13b, ‘*Avodah Zarah* 8b, and elsewhere. See below, n. 119.

81. *Migdal Oz*, 22b. For the last phrase, cf. Ruth 2:12. For other highly laudatory programmatic statements, see *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 21b, 23b.

82. Cf. Dan11:1.

83. *Mitpahat Sefarim*, 3.

84. See for example, *Lehem Shamayim* 1:57a–b (*Pe’ah* 7:1), 68a–b (7:7), 148b (*Ma’asrot* 1:7), 155b (4:4), 169b (*Orlah* 2:16), 171a–b (*Bikkurim* 3:4; Maimonides made a historical mistake); 2:14a–b (*Shabbat* 14:1), 24a (24:1). See too above, n. 69.

85. Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières*, 191–92. For a specific example involving the attitude of Rashba to the *Mishneh Torah*, see M. Shmidman, “On Maimonides’ ‘Conversion’ to Kabbalah,” 380–81, n. 26.

this was certainly the case here as well. Throughout Emden's halakhic writings, he refers to Maimonides as "the distinguished rabbi (*ha-rav ha-muvhaq*), luminary of Israel,"⁸⁶ "teacher of all Israel (*raban shel Yisrael*),"⁸⁷ "the pillar of decision-making (*amud ha-hora'ah*) upon whom rests the house of Israel,"⁸⁸ "the most fortunate of the sages,"⁸⁹ and "a righteous man (*zaddiq*) who is holy unto his Lord and faithful to Israel."⁹⁰ Emden expressed confidence that "Moses and his Torah are true unblemished. Whenever he diverted from the path trodden by many, he chose for himself a correct path due to profound reasons and arguments."⁹¹ He also often noted how important it was to make an effort to justify Maimonides' opinions. "We are compelled to interpret the words of Maimonides in such a manner that they will conform to the halakhah and to the truth. For it is impossible for the great luminary to err in [such] a clear manner."⁹² "It is incumbent upon me to justify Maimonides in this matter for who is as wise as Maimonides whose strength is great."⁹³ Twice he even went so far as to claim that "I am to be commended⁹⁴ for when I will die, Maimonides will come forth to greet me because I explained his teaching correctly."⁹⁵

Emden was also a careful student of the *Mishneh Torah*, not only regularly citing its opinions but also underscoring some of its salient features:

We extend our graciousness⁹⁶ to Maimonides, the light of Israel (*me'oran shel Yisrael*) who did not omit anything large or small⁹⁷ that is included in the two Torahs [i.e., both written and oral] from his holy book. [He proceeded] in a proper order, with great comprehensiveness (*bi-shlemut rav*). For *him did God choose* (Deut 18:5) and want. He [i.e., God] assisted

86. *Lehem Shamayim* 1:intro., p. 5; 9b (*Berakhot* 1:2).

87. *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 8a.

88. *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 4a.

89. *Lehem Shamayim* 3:165a (*'Eduyot* 8:6). For the phrase, see *Ketubot* 40a, *Giṭṭin* 26b, and elsewhere.

90. *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 19b.

91. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:151a (*Hagigah* 1:2). Emden often surmised that Maimonides had some kind of a source for a position he took, either from the Jerusalem Talmud, *Tosefta*, or a *Baraita*. See, for example, *Lehem Shamayim* 1:58b (*Pe'ah* 7:1), 154b (*Ma'asrot* 3:10); 3:118a (*Sanhedrin* 1:3).

92. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:66a (*Sheqalim* 8:8).

93. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:152a (*Hagigah* 1:2). See too *Lehem Shamayim* 1:57a (*Pe'ah* 7:1); 2:4b (*Shabbat* 6:4); *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 8b–9a.

94. See *Shabbat* 118b; 119a, Rashi, *s.v. teti li*.

95. *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 3; *Lehem Shamayim* 2:98a (*Yoma* 7:5).

96. *Bava Mezi'a* 119a.

97. Cf. *Sukkah* 28a. This phrase plays a very significant role for Maimonides. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Hil. Yesodei ha-Torah* 4:13; I. Twersky, "Some Non-Halakic Aspects of the *Mishneh Torah*," (below, n. 145), 112f.

him to prepare an all-inclusive volume (*sefer kolel*) so that none of his words should be rejected.⁹⁸

He did not omit anything, large or small,⁹⁹ from all that is found in the Talmud, in addition to that which he gathered from other sacred books, for his strong hand has attained plenty.¹⁰⁰

It is not the practice of Maimonides to cite matters totally out of their place (*huẓ le-meqoman legamri*).¹⁰¹

The language of Maimonides is everywhere refined like pure silver, clean of all fault and blemish.¹⁰²

These features of the *Mishneh Torah*—comprehensiveness, logically organized system of classification, and concise clear literary style—were all later developed and described by Prof. Twersky in his major work on that book.¹⁰³ In this context it is also noteworthy that while Emden referred to this work as the *Sefer ha-Yad*,¹⁰⁴ he also used its given title of *Mishneh Torah*, a name that some authorities avoided because they considered it too presumptuous.¹⁰⁵

98. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:95b (*Yoma* 7:5). The last phrase is lit. “drop to the ground”; cf. I Sam 3:19.

99. Above, n. 97.

100. *She’ilat Yaveẓ* 1:24. The last phrase combines Job 31:25 with the name by which Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* was popularly known, *Yad ha-Ḥazaqah* (see below, n. 104).

101. *Migdal’Oz*, 32b. See also *Lehem Shamayim* 2:95b (*Yoma* 7:5); ‘*Amudei Shamayim*, 316a; *Iggeret Biqqoret* 19b.

102. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:96a (*Yoma* 7:5). See too 1:61b (*Pe’ah* 7:2): “The clear and lucid language (*ha-zah ve-ha-barur*) of Maimonides is ten times better [see Dan 1:20] than all the styles of the authors who arose in Israel after the completion of the Talmud”; *Iggeret Biqqoret* 28a: “the clear and lucid language (*ha-zah ve-ha-barur*) of Maimonides”; *Kuntres Binyan Bet ha-Behirah* 4:1 (113b): “his language is very precise (*meduqdaq me’od*).” See too *Lehem Shamayim* 1:7b (*Berakhot* 1:1), 11a (2:1), 50a (*Pe’ah* 5:5); 2:76b (*Yoma* 3:4); *Iggeret Biqqoret*, 8a.

103. See above, n. 1.

It is also interesting to note that Emden was sensitive to the difference between Maimonides’ methodology in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* and his *Mishneh Torah*. In *Mor u-Kezi’ah on Oraḥ Ḥayyim* #117 (1:50a) he wrote, “It was not his task in that commentary to copy into it the novellae (*hidushim*) found in the Gemara that are not essential for the explanation of the Mishnah. (For the collection of the novellae added in the Gemara is the task of the *hibur* [i.e., *Mishneh Torah*].) All this is known.”

104. *Lehem Shamayim* 4:122b (*Nega’im* 3:1), 125b (4:7); *She’ilat Yaveẓ* 1:11; ‘*Ez Avot on Avot* 2:14 (20b; below, n. 120); 3:15 (30a; below, n. 141); *Mitpaḥat Sefarim*, 72; *Mishneh Lehem on Avot* 2:14 (49a; below, n. 124); *Iggeret Purim*, ms. 33a (below, n. 136).

105. *Lehem Shamayim* 2:53b (*Sheqalim* 1:3).

On a number of occasions, Dr. Twersky underscored the significance of the choice of these different names for this work. See his *Rabad of Posquières*, 131, n. 2; “Beginnings of Mishneh Torah Criticism,” in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, 1963), 173, n. 55; “Al Hasagot ha-Rabad le-

But while Emden's assessment of Maimonides' halakhic contribution was highly favorable, he rejected his philosophical emphasis as nothing less than a distortion of Judaism. As a pious, traditionalist Jew, Emden evinced the highest respect for Maimonides but maintained that the implications of Maimonides' philosophical system posed a real threat to traditional Jewish life. Although at times Emden did claim that Maimonides' intention was an honorable one, as indicated earlier, he repeatedly asserted that he was misled by philosophy and that even he, let alone his followers, could not survive its dangers.

It is with justification that our sages already prevented the study of *higayon*¹⁰⁶ ... for it is very, very dangerous. Please note that the two great masters, R. Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides, could not stand up against it with all the strength of their wisdom. They were not protected from the sword in its hand. For in fleeing and escaping with all their strength from the trap of anthropomorphism utilizing the tools of philosophical logic, they nevertheless became ensnared in *the trap of the fowler* (Ps 91:3), [seeming to affirm the possibility of] the eternity of the world into which *stumbled and fell* (Jer 46:6, Ps 27:2) many fools who did not understand their words.¹⁰⁷

May his Master [God] forgive him,¹⁰⁸ Maimonides, who said He was pulled by the view of the philosophers How deep did his intellect sink into Greek mire (*tit he-yevani*).¹⁰⁹

He plunged into the majestic waters and came up with [only] a potsherd in his hand.¹¹⁰ In the book *Guide of the Perplexed, in which he walked in darkness* (Isa 50:10), he did not stride freely.¹¹¹ His ankles stumbled on the slippery foreign beliefs and opinions The danger is very great. Is it insignificant that the sages included 'and he who studies *sefarim hizonim*' among those who have no share in the world to come!"¹¹²

It is possible to speak favorably about him [i.e., Maimonides] in the manner written about King Solomon. Even though he was beloved by

Mishneh Torah," in *Sefer ha-Yovel Likhvod Zvi Wolfson* ((Jerusalem, 1965), 184, n.86; and, most fully, in "R. Yosef Ashkenazi ve-Sefer Mishneh Torah la-Rambam," in *Salo W. Baron Jubilee Volume 3* (Jerusalem, 1975), 185–91.

106. See *Berakhot* 28b. See ' *Amudei Shamayim*, 235b–236a, where Emden rejected various interpretations of *higayon* in medieval literature (e.g., as a reference to Bible study, childish talk, and more) and concluded that it refers to philosophy. See also *She'ilat Yavez* 1:41, end; *Migdal 'Oz*, 23a.

For a history of meanings of this phrase, see Mordecai Breuer, "Min'u Benekhem Min ha-Higayon," *Mikhtam le-David* (Ramat Gan, 1978), 242–61.

107. *Migdal 'Oz*, 23a.

108. *Berakhot* 25a, ' *Eruvin* 29a, and elsewhere.

109. *Migdal 'Oz*, 49a. See too ' *Ez Avot* on *Avot* 3:5 (49a).

110. *Bava Kamma* 91a.

111. Cf. Ps 18:37.

112. ' *Ez Avot* on *Avot* 2:14 (20a–b). The last phrase is a reference to *Sanhedrin* 10:1.

God ... he too was brought to sin by the foreign women about whom he repeatedly warned in the Book of Proverbs. Behold, so it is found written in the name of Maimonides in a letter that he said of himself that he took the strange secular wisdoms (*ha-hokhmot ha-hizonot ha-nokhriyot*) as cooks and perfumers.¹¹³ (He appropriately called them by these names for surely they are cooks to the insensitive man [*adam hasar lev*] who is lured after them *like an ox going to the slaughter* like the word of the wise man [King Solomon] in his parables [Prov 7:22], and they are as perfumers *for the lips of a strange woman drop honey* [Prov 5:3]). It is therefore no wonder that they caused him [Maimonides] to sin as well, for he was lured by the *smooth tongue of an alien woman* (Prov 6:24). He was not better than Solomon.¹¹⁴

Emden drew an explicit contrast between the two aspects of Maimonides' contribution, halakhah and philosophy. He assured his readers that although Maimonides was involved in philosophy "on a regular basis (*derekh qeva*), his major preoccupation was certainly only with the Talmud and rabbinic rulings (*hora'ah*) It is certain that he treated other wisdoms (*she'ar hokhmot*) only as of secondary importance."¹¹⁵ He excoriated "those who call themselves his disciples ... because they wasted their days with foolishness and their years with the vanities of the philosophical ideas of the nations of the world They cast the normative *mizvot* of the Torah behind their backs¹¹⁶ and the study of the Talmud, which was the bread and meat of the great rabbi¹¹⁷ (in whom they glory) was loathsome to them."¹¹⁸ And, Emden indicated, it is for the "bread and meat" of Maimonides, his substantive halakhic achievement, that he is to be remembered for posterity. "Even though Maimonides' intention was undoubtedly for the sake of Heaven, and he surely deserves that we seek his merit, he is nevertheless to be remembered for good¹¹⁹ as the man who illumined the eyes of Israel with his great work, the *Yad ha-Ḥazakah*."¹²⁰

But Emden went one step beyond denying the legitimacy of Maimonides' philosophical enterprise. In his desire to reject Maimonides' rationalism without impugning his universally acknowledged greatness, Emden was prepared to go so far as to deny, on occasion, the Maimon-

113. Cf. I Sam 8:13. For the text of this letter of Maimonides to R. Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel, see Yehoshua Blau, ed., *Teshuvot ha-Rambam* 3 (Jerusalem, 1961), 57. For the use of this imagery, see too *She'ilat Yavez* 1:41, end; *Migdal 'Oz*, 25b.

114. *Mishneh Lehem on Avot* 2:14 (48b-49a).

115. *Mitpachat Sefarim*, 72. See too *She'ilat Yavez* 1:41, end.

116. Cf. Neh 9:26.

117. *Mishneh Torah, Hil. Yesodei ha-Torah* 4:13.

118. *Migdal 'Oz*, 25b-26a; above, n. 78.

119. See above, n. 80.

120. *'Ez Avot on Avot* 2:14 (20a-b).

idean authorship of the *Guide*. Although there were a few times when Emden cited that work approvingly,¹²¹ far more often did he oppose it and even considered it to be the epitome of what he considered evil about philosophy.¹²² As a result of this highly negative assessment, Emden sometimes made the claim that Maimonides, who achieved such great heights in the realm of halakhah, could not possibly have written what he considered to be such a dangerous and damaging book. "This is not the work of the great author among the Jews¹²³ but one of the philosophers of the generation ... Since he benefited the masses (with his work, the *Yad ha-Ḥazakah* [written] by him), for this reason I cannot believe that he was responsible for the aforementioned sinful striking stone."¹²⁴ It is important to note that often, in the course of a general discussion, Emden did simply assume and assert, without question, that Maimonides was the author of the *Guide*.¹²⁵ Indeed, he began this very passage by stating that "Maimonides was responsible for an obstacle (for Jews) for he left over a stumbling block for generations, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, as is well known."¹²⁶ It was only when he specifically addressed the issue of the deleteriousness of Maimonidean philosophy or pointed to the dangers of the *Guide* itself that he was moved, on occasion, to deny Maimonides' authorship. There is little doubt that Emden knew full well that Maimonides authored the *Guide* but yet found it necessary to assert repeatedly the contrary because of what he considered to be the dangers it would effect in the community.

Emden's most elaborate and forceful attack on the *Guide* coupled with a denial of its Maimonidean authorship is found in his *Iggeret Purim*, and this brings us to the role the work of Maimonides played in a second fun-

-
121. See, for example, 'Amudei Shamayim, 4b, 11b; Migdal 'Oz, 23b, 66a; 'Aqizat 'Aqrav 3a, 5a; Lehem Shamayim 3:51a (Soṭah 7:6).
 122. See, for example, Mitpaḥat Sefarim, 62: "Who knows how many hundreds and thousands left the faith because of this. It is the direct cause of the destruction of many great and mighty Jewish communities and their total eradication from the lands of Spain and France" (see above, n. 58). See also p. 80: "Surely it is not good (Exod 18:17) to waste much time reading the book *Guide of the Perplexed*, unless it is in order to refute its delusions and fabrications"; p. 84; *Iggeret Purim*, ms., 33a-b (my article [above, n. 28], 445-46); 'Amudei Shamayim, 236a; Shevirat Luḥat ha-Even, 48b; 'Ez Avot on Avot 5:6 (49b-51a).
 123. Cf. Esther 10:3.
 124. *Mishneh Lehem*, 49a. See also Migdal 'Oz, 121b; Mitpaḥat Sefarim, 3, 56, 61-62, 64; 'Ez Avot on Avot 2:14 (20b), 3:15 (30a). For an example of Emden's ambivalence on this matter, see Mitpaḥat Sefarim, 6.
 125. A long list of these sources would include 'Amudei Shamayim, 189b, 191a; She'ilat Yaveẓ 1:41, end (above, n. 72); Migdal 'Oz, 2b-3a, 22a, 22b, 23b, 26a, 118a; 'Ez Avot on Avot 2:14 (20a-b; above, n. 112), 5:22 (59a); 'Aqizat 'Aqrav 3a, 5a; Lehem Shamayim 3:51a (Soṭah 7:6).
 126. *Mishneh Lehem* on Avot 2:14 (49a).

damental component of Emden's life, Emden the anti-Sabbatian. From the outset of Emden's bitter, sharp, and virulent controversy with Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz, Emden was repeatedly accused by the pro-Eybeschütz forces of being an inveterate agitator and petty, jealous troublemaker with a long history of cantankerous behavior. In this context, they asserted that he was grossly disrespectful not only to their revered leader but also to other contemporary Torah scholars and to even more illustrious rabbinic figures of previous generations, especially Maimonides.¹²⁷ It is in responding to these critics that Emden defended his behavior by sharply differentiating between Maimonides the halakhist worthy of utmost veneration and Maimonides the philosopher worthy of indictment and criticism. He wrote:

They further accused me of *an iniquity that is a sin* (Hos 12:9) in my pen, in that I criticized even the early masters (*qadmonim*) like Maimonides and Radak to provoke arguments, new as well as old,¹²⁸ to move the lips of those who are asleep.¹²⁹ In this case too I will not deny that I spoke against the book *Guide of the Perplexed*, which, in my opinion, was never authored by the same Maimonides who created the book *Yad ha-Ḥazakah* in which we glory. Unless we say that as rich as he surely was in wisdom, at that time [when he wrote the *Guide*] he was poor. (Or perhaps there were two Rambams. Even though in *Sefer Madda* there are also found some of the mistaken notions of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, perhaps it [the *Guide*, was written by] someone who wanted to choke and hanged himself on a big tree.)¹³⁰ I cannot imagine that such a great stumbling block could come forth from the hand of a man great among the Jews¹³¹ in Torah and good deeds as R. Moshe, famous for his good name, *flawless in beauty* (Ezek 28:12). For that book, the *Guide*, is full of blemish. In truth, it contradicts Torah and faith, more than could be believed, were it to be told ...¹³²

Verily, it is true¹³³ that I did not invent the slander about this book. For immediately after its birth it acquired a bad name that it was born with a blemish. All the true scholars of that generation hated it, despised it, considered it abominable, erased it, and some burned it. No one selected it except for the heretics, deserted and forsaken like the wilderness,¹³⁴ who

127. For an analysis of this aspect of the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy, and for a bibliography of secondary literature dealing with the controversy as a whole, see my "History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden," (above, n. 28).

128. Cf. Songs of Songs 7:14.

129. Cf. Song of Songs 7:10.

130. See *Pesahim* 112a. See below, n. 140.

131. Cf. Esther 10:3.

132. Cf. Hab 1:5.

133. Cf. Gen 18:13.

134. Cf. Isa 27:10.

choose a profligate life.¹³⁵ They will take from it withered proofs and reasons and fragile conjectures to ridicule Torah, prophecy, deeds, reward and reverence

In any case, we have not found in the records of the wise men of the generations anyone who permitted becoming involved in it.¹³⁶

It is most interesting that Emden once actually claimed to have proven that Maimonides could not possibly have authored the *Guide*. He wrote:

The book, *Guide of the Perplexed*, did not emanate from this great author. He could not be responsible for [such] a ruin.¹³⁷ He who considers what he wrote in the Laws of Kings,¹³⁸ namely, that one who fulfills the seven Noahide laws based on a reasoned conclusion alone is neither from the pious ones of the nations of the world, nor from their scholars, is forced to admit that I said the truth.

Aside from [this], one can prove [he did not author the *Guide*] from several places in the book *Yad* that point with a finger to the disgrace of the would-be-philosophers (*mitpalsifim*), wise men [only] in their own eyes, with whom he had no portion. His opinion was far from theirs for *their wisdom amounts to nothing* (Jer 8:9).

This is not the place to elaborate. Rather, one of the philosophers who has no portion and inheritance with us¹³⁹ hung on a big tree¹⁴⁰ to improve his bad business.¹⁴¹

The first argument introduces a passage from Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* that figured prominently in a very important correspondence Emden had with Moses Mendelssohn, thus bringing us to the final major focus of Emden's life, his relationship with Mendelssohn and through him to the Haskalah in general. True, Emden's complex attitude toward secular studies delineated above must clearly be understood within the overall context of his attitude toward that movement, but his relationship to it is placed into sharp focus through an analysis of one exchange between Emden and Mendelssohn. Once again, a passage in the works of Maimonides played a major role. In October, 1773, Mendelssohn penned a letter to Emden containing a most respectfully worded request that Emden

135. Once again, Emden associated heresy with a hedonistic lifestyle. See above, p. 240.

136. *Iggeret Purim*, ms., 33a; my article (above, n. 28), 445. For Emden's struggle to defend himself against the charge leveled against him by the pro-Eybeschütz forces that he was disrespectful to contemporary Torah scholars as well as to illustrious rabbinic predecessors including Maimonides, see my "History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden," (above, n. 28), 433f.

137. Cf. Isa 3:6.

138. *Hil. Melakhim* 8:11.

139. Cf. Deut 12:12.

140. Above, n. 130.

141. 'Ez Avot on Avot 3:15 (30a).

provide him with the talmudic source for Maimonides' view presented in the passage just cited that even Gentiles need to acknowledge divine revelation as the compelling force behind their observance of the seven Noahide Laws in order to be included in the category of *hasidei umot ha-olam* thereby meriting a share in the world to come. Mendelssohn was clearly upset with this Maimonidean insistence upon a heteronomic awareness on the part of Gentiles as a prerequisite for their eternal salvation, for such an insistence ran absolutely counter to his assertion that the universalism of Judaism allowed for the eternal salvation of anyone who lived a moral life. Emden went out of his way to try and defend the Maimonidean position, as difficult as it was for him to find a clear source for it.¹⁴² The story of this correspondence and its very direct implications for understanding the general worldviews of both Emden and Mendelssohn is a very important one that deserves to be told in detail.¹⁴³ However, our interest here is limited to Emden's use of this text, as well as his second more general argument, as proof that the author of the *Mishneh Torah* could not possibly be the author of the *Guide*.

One need not look further than Prof. Twersky's own writings to discern the weakness of both of these arguments. The first is inconclusive because, in discussing this very passage in the *Mishneh Torah*, Prof. Twersky noted that insistence upon an heteronomic awareness for Gentiles is no contradiction to the indispensability of philosophic rationalism. He wrote: "For Maimonides, laws are true by divine sanction, but reason discovers their wisdom and intelligibility. Reason does not replace divine authority but convinces man of the utility and rationality of the laws that he would obey even if they were preemptory prescriptions . . . It is man's duty—and if he is wise, his aspiration—to rationalize revealed truths."¹⁴⁴ Even a Gentile does not observe the law because it is rational but because it reflects the divine will. However, given that he will observe it in any case, it is appropriate for him to exercise his philosophical acumen to understand the rationale behind it.

Prof. Twersky's work also makes it clear that Emden's second argument is equally unconvincing. In one of his early articles and at greater

142. Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften* 16 (Berlin, 1929), 178–83, #154–55. The complexities of this Maimonidean passage have spawned a large secondary literature. Most recent treatments include Mikhael Zvi Nehorai, "'Hasidei Umot ha-'Olam Yesh Lahem Helek le-'Olam ha-Ba,'" *Tarbiz* 61:3–4 (1992): 465–87; Eugene Korn, "Gentiles, The World to Come, and Judaism: The Odyssey of a Rabbinic Text," *Modern Judaism* 14 (1994): 265–87.

143. For the time being, see my *Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works* (above, n. 3), 696–716.

144. I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, 457–58.

length in one of his books, Prof. Twersky drew attention to the many “non-halakhic aspects of the *Mishneh Torah*.”¹⁴⁵ Indeed, a number of passages in this work reflect the philosophical emphasis of a committed and thorough-going rationalist. In fact, as indicated earlier, Emden himself was aware of this fact.¹⁴⁶ There is no doubt that Emden was independently uncomfortable with attributing the *Guide* to Maimonides for the reasons outlined above and, after having come to that conclusion, sought some degree of post-facto rationalization for this position and presented “proofs” that he must have known were inconclusive. Indeed, the weakness of both of them indicates how anxious Emden must have been to salvage Maimonides’ greatness by distancing that extraordinarily great figure from having anything to do with what he considered to be the most dangerous, harmful, and deleterious beliefs presented in the *Guide*. The philosopher in Maimonides is rejected and discredited; the halakhic master remains sacrosanct and reigns supreme.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that Emden’s rejection of Maimonidean philosophy in general and his authorship of the *Guide* in particular had an impact in a number of very different contexts in the nineteenth century. The prominent Russian *maskil*, Isaac Baer Levinsohn (1788–1860), noted with derision that there were contemporaries of his, “despisers of wisdom and knowledge (*son’ei ḥokhmah va-da’at*), who say that Maimonides did not author the distinguished work, *Guide of the Perplexed*. They said that so did they find written in the book *Mitpahat* of the *gaon*, our master, R. Emden, known as Yavez.”¹⁴⁷

Opposition to this position was also forthcoming from a contemporary of Levinsohn’s, one of the leaders of the Hasidic community, R. Israel of Rizhin (1797–1850). On January 5, 1835, R. Israel penned an approbation for one of Emden’s books, *Migdal ‘Oz*, that was reprinted in Berditchev in 1836. After its publication, the work was brought to R. Israel who apparently perused its contents for the first time. It is reported that he commented that had he known that Emden opposed Maimonides and the

145. See his “Some Non-Halakhic Aspects of the *Mishneh Torah*,” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, 1967), 95–119; *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, 356–514; “Birur Divrei ha-Rambam Hilkhot Me’ilah Pereq H̄et, Halakhah Het: Li-Parshat Ta’amei Miṣvot la-Rambam,” in *Peraqim bi-Toldot ha-Hevrah ha-Yehudit bi-Yemei ha-Benayim u-va-‘Et ha-Ḥadashah* (Jerusalem, 1980), 24–33; “On Law and Ethics in the *Mishneh Torah*: A Case Study of Hilkhot Megillah II:17,” *Tradition* 24:2 (Winter 1989): 138–49.

146. See the passage in *Iggeret Purim*, above, n. 136.

147. See I. B. Levinson, *Sefer Te’udah bi-Yisrael* (Vilna, 1828), 136, n. For the passages in Emden’s *Mitpahat Sefarim*, see above, n. 124.

Guide, he would never have consented to write a recommendation on its behalf.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, the power and force of the works of Maimonides continued and continue to be felt for centuries after his death.

148. See S. A. Horodetsky, *Ha-Ḥasidut ve-ha-Ḥasidim* 3 (Berlin, 1922), 104; idem, "Ha-Rambam bi-Kabbalah u-vi-Ḥasidut," *Moznayim* 3 (1935): 454; repr. *Idem, Yahadut ha-Sekhel ve-Yahadut ha-Regesh* 2 (Tel Aviv, 1947), 218; Zvi Meir Rabinowitz, "Yahas ha-Kabbalah ve-ha-Ḥasidut el ha-Rambam," in *Rabbenu Mosheh ben Maimon*, ed. J. L. Maimon (Jerusalem, 1935), 286; Y. Y. Dienstag, "Ha-Im Hitnaged ha-Gra le-Mishnato ha-Filosofit shel ha-Rambam?" *Talpiyot* 4:1–2 (1949): 259.

Harvard University
Center for Jewish Studies

Be'erot Yitzhak

STUDIES IN MEMORY OF ISADORE TWERSKY

edited by
Jay M. Harris

Distributed by
Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England
2005