early mysticism is the central focus in no. 2; the testing of the mystic in the Story of the Four Who Entered the Pardes (Hagigah 14b) is considered in no. 3; *gevurah* as a term referring to God who reveals Himself is explained in no. 10; no. 11 addresses the Holocaust from the presumed perspective of rabbis of antiquity, utilizing their responses to other catastrophes that devastated the Jewish people; the names of the Messiah as a typology of rabbinic messianism are discussed in no. 12; no. 18 is an original approach to the deictic elements in midrash based upon Bühler;[11] no. 19 analyzes the form and context of martyr narratives in rabbinic literature; no. 20 considers the canonization of rabbinic texts.

Goldberg writes in a turgid style of German that requires both discipline and patience of the reader. The essays on form analysis found in this collection served as a catalyst that transforms the study of the rabbinic literature of antiquity. It is convenient for scholars and students of rabbinics to have these essays in one volume, and any serious Judaica research library should have this book in its collection.[12]

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Dov Schwartz. *Messianism in Medieval Jewish Thought.* Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1997. 292 pp. (Hebrew).

Dov Schwartz has taken an insight that all students of medieval Jewish messianism will recognize, sharpened it, placed it at the center of an original analysis of a large corpus of messianic literature, and produced a stimulating, important, occasionally problematic work that will surely play a major role in future scholarship.

The key insight is that the standard Jewish conception of the ultimate destiny of righteous individuals is riven by an almost unbearable tension.

11. K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache* (1934; reprint ed., Stuttgart and New York: Fischer, 1982); and K. Ehlich, *Verwendungen der Deixis beim sprachlichen Handeln, linguistisch-philologische Untersuchungen zum hebräischen deiktischen System* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1979).

12. The reviewer of this book was a student and collaborator of Goldberg's for eleven years (1975–86).

On the one hand, the disembodied soul ascends to a state of spiritual bliss often described as eternal and surely perceived in a manner that would make one hope that it is. On the other hand, the dogma of physical resurrection points with eager anticipation to the moment when the righteous soul is wrenched out of this supernal bliss to be reunited with the body. Schwartz demonstrates that the power of each of these models was so great that some thinkers affirmed them both, occasionally within the same few pages, without noticing the glaring difficulty.

Maimonides attempted to mitigate the tension by the expedient of a temporary resurrection followed by a return to the disembodied state. Schwartz suggests that the purpose of this resurrection may be to provide an opportunity to merit an even higher level of spiritual immortality (p. 77); still, Maimonides himself specifies no reason, and I suspect that his resolution left him less than fully content.

For many other medieval Jews, the resurrected state was permanent. In the classic presentations of R. Saadya Gaon and Naḥmanides, the messianic age (*yemot ha-mashiaḥ*) would be followed by a transformed reality in which human beings would, in the famous rabbinic formulation, neither eat nor drink nor engage in sexual relations, but sit with crowns on their heads and enjoy the splendor of the Divine Presence.

For Schwartz, the first approach is typical of philosophical rationalists and helps produce what he describes as naturalistic messianism; the second, while endorsed by some philosophers, is more typical of literalist theologians and kabbalists, and coheres with a view that he terms apocalyptic. The naturalistic model is generally marked by a deemphasis of the messianic age in favor of the personal salvation of the disembodied soul (a state called *'olam ha-ba*), a smooth, bloodless, nonmiraculous transition to the redemption, a redeemed world governed by natural law, a temporary resurrection (if that), and an unchanged halakhah. The apocalyptic approach envisions a messianic age inaugurated and characterized by the uprooting of the natural order, the destruction of the enemies of Israel, and, ultimately, eternal life in transformed bodies following the disembodied soul's sojourn in a physical Garden of Eden. It is this eternal life, where there is little room for much (if any) traditional Jewish law, that the rabbis called *'olam ha-ba*.

With impressive erudition and subtle argumentation, Schwartz unfolds a tapestry that begins with R. Saadya's philosophical legitimation of the apocalyptic model, moves to Maimonides' thoroughgoing naturalism, and

proceeds to the shifting, complex confrontations with both approaches: the partial reestablishment of an apocalyptic model disciplined by Maimonidean rationalism, extreme naturalism that flirts with the rejection of a physical messianic age, the more systematic analysis of the models by late medieval thinkers, and, finally, what is presented as the victory of apocalypticism in the synthetic works of Abravanel.

This is an ambitious and impressive reconstruction. It is not, however, without its difficulties. For a book whose major objective is to limn the detailed contours of the end of days in medieval Jewish thought, there is a remarkable degree of imprecision in the use of critical terms. We are told about the eternity of the Torah in "the Messianic era" (p. 54) in a context where much depends on the unclarified question of whether *'olam ha-ba* is included; we read of "the future period (*ha-tequfah ha-'atidit*) of the days of the Messiah," (p. 104), and, without clear differentiation, of the unmodified "future period" (just *ha-tequfah ha-'atidit*), where the latter must refer to the *'olam ha-ba* that *follows* "the days of the Messiah"; we confront the startling assertion that R. Shimon b. Ẓemaḥ Duran maintained that "the Messianic world" (*ha-'olam ha-meshiḥi*) would begin after the seventh millennium, i.e., after the destruction of the world following the sabbatical period (p. 227, n. 70), when Duran is of course referring to *'olam ha-ba*; and in the final summary we begin with the position that "the Messianic world" is a wholly new cosmos, but the only examples deal with the period of *'olam ha-ba* (p. 244).

Schwartz's occasional failure to distinguish between the messianic age and the subsequent world-to-come may be connected with his view that the scenario of the end of days was not really clarified until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, even though earlier figures "hinted" at the relevant distinctions (p. 198). While I am persuaded that there was a move toward systematization in the later Middle Ages, the author ascribes a much greater degree of fuzziness to earlier thinkers than is warranted. At the end of a very brief presentation of Naḥmanides' analysis in *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*, Schwartz informs us in a single sentence of the redemptive process set forth explicitly in that work and reminds us in a footnote of Saadya's similar, though not identical, position (p. 108, and cf. p. 180). Medieval Jews read these works and knew what they said.

Schwartz gives short shrift to *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* in another respect as well. He tells us nothing about its author's enormously influential arguments for the eternal, physical character of *'olam ha-ba* until the much later account

of the views of Abraham Bibago, where we are provided one example of "a series of proofs [Bibago] cites in the name of Naḥmanides" (p. 216). Thus, when readers are informed (not quite accurately, in my view) that Bibago's approach eliminated Naḥmanides' proofs, they have no way of evaluating the assertion. Moreover, Schwartz appears to be struck by the novelty of Abravanel's argument that the naturalistic view of "the days of the Messiah" ascribed to the talmudic sage Samuel applies only to the period before the physical *'olam ha-ba*; this argument, we are told, undermined the last textual bulwark of the naturalists (p. 240). In fact, Naḥmanides had already taken for granted, quite correctly, that this is the straightforward, almost self-evident meaning of Samuel's assertion that the only difference between this world and the messianic age is political subordination; after that age, the extravagant visions of the prophets begin to apply (*Sha'ar ha-Gemul*, Chavel's *Kitvei Ramban* II, pp. 300–301). The most interesting aspect of this talmudic text has been missed not only by Schwartz but, to the best of my knowledge, by all students of medieval messianism: despite its use by Maimonides and other rationalists, it is in reality one of the most powerful arguments against the denial of a physical *'olam ha-ba*.

Schwartz presents sharp methodological observations about the value and limitations of models and on the need to dismantle, rebuild, and refine them in the course of a historical analysis. Nonetheless, his use of the models is sometimes confused and sometimes arbitrary. Not until the discussion of Abravanel does he clearly recognize that an "apocalyptic" redemptive process can logically be followed by a naturalistic age of redemption; there is in fact nothing at all novel about Abravanel's presentation of such a scenario. (After the section on Abravanel, we find the assertion that this was ha-Meiri's view as well [p. 244], but the point is much less clear in the discussion of ha-Meiri [pp. 169–172]). This conception, which Schwartz considers essentially apocalyptic, also weakens his clever argument that rationalists logically require a nonapocalyptic messianic age since the contemplative life which is the objective of that era depends on observing the operations of the natural world (pp. 75–76).

On two occasions (pp. 109, 174), Schwartz describes the doctrine of a purified, eternal body as a retreat by conservatives of the mid- and late-Middle Ages from full apocalypticism, when the doctrine, as he himself notes elsewhere, is Saadyanic pure and simple. He regards even the most elementary affirmation of peace and rectitude at the end of days as a deviation from the apocalyptic model (pp. 167, 190, n. 94). He sees the

denial of sin in the messianic age as a sign of apocalypticism and even antinomianism. Hence, he fails to understand that ha-Meiri's assertion that no sin offering will be brought in the future age because there will be no sin is far from the acceptance of an "antinomian dimension" after the redemption; it is his effort to neutralize the antinomian position that the sacrifice will be abolished in principle (pp. 170–171). In one passage, Schwartz regards the attempt to render the miracle of resurrection plausible by reference to creation *ex nihilo* as a sign of a Maimonidean orientation (p. 211), while in another he appropriately presents it as Saadyanic (p. 225). Even the assertion that the messianic age is not crucial to Judaism, which he correctly sees as congenial to naturalism (e.g., p. 192), was also made by Naḥmanides—who is improperly characterized as "obsessed" by messianism (p. 247)—on two separate occasions (*Kitvei Ramban* I, pp. 279–280, 310).

Finally, I believe that Schwartz overstates matters when he affirms that Maimonides said "openly and vigorously that the Messianic doctrine is an inconsequential incentive to study and enlightenment" (p. 186). While Maimonides' discussion in his *Commentary to the Mishnah* does suggest that naive conceptions of both the messianic age and the world-to-come are to be compared to candy given to a child as an encouragement to study, an age of peace and prosperity that will afford an untrammeled opportunity for contemplation is not necessarily as utterly inconsequential as Schwartz repeatedly indicates. In a similar vein, we are told that a series of rationalists after Maimonides reached the point of denying the reality of the messianic age and seeing it as a symbol for the state of disembodied immortality (pp. 121, 126, 148, 154). Here too the evidence for this strong formulation strikes me as tenuous in the extreme.

Precisely because several of these reservations speak to central points of Schwartz's argument, I must close with a reiteration of the importance of this study. Although the messianic idea has been a major focus of Jewish scholarship, nothing like this book has ever been attempted. Schwartz has provided a new angle of vision for the examination of a core doctrine in the history of Jewish thought. Few works can aspire to such an achievement.

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