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## Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz

### *The Case of Anthropomorphism*

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Samuel b. Mordekhai of Marseilles, a little-known Provençal scholar writing in defense of Maimonides and against his detractors (in light of the Maimonidan controversy of the 1230s), records in an epistle that “the majority of the rabbinic scholars in northern France [accept] anthropomorphism.”<sup>1</sup> Nahmanides (Ramban), in his better-known letter of 1232 to the rabbis of northern France, notes that Ashkenazic scholars leveled the charge that Maimonides was mistaken in insisting (in his *Sefer ha-Madda*) that God has no form or shape. These rabbinic scholars apparently believed that God did have some kind of physical form.<sup>2</sup> Rashi is singled out by a Provençal rationalist, Asher b. Gershom (perhaps of Beziers), as holding, in consonance with the view of Maimonides but against the general tenor within the rabbinic circles of northern France, that the physical or anthropomorphic descriptions of God reported by the prophets were products of their (prophetic) imagination rather than actual images.<sup>3</sup> This study will argue that the range of beliefs found in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Ashkenaz with respect to anthropomorphism was broader than these particular (polemical) passages suggest, and was more varied and nuanced than we have become accustomed to thinking.

In considering anew the specific question of anthropomorphism in Ashkenazic rabbinic thought, two related issues that have clouded earlier perceptions must be addressed. The first concerns

the interpretation of talmudic and rabbinic *aggadah* generally, and its place within medieval Ashkenazic rabbinic scholarship. Literal versus non-literal interpretation of *aggadah* was a core issue of the Maimonidean Controversy.<sup>4</sup> The approach to aggadic interpretation in medieval Ashkenaz was relatively uniform. E. E. Urbach has shown that the Tosafists (who were the leading talmudic scholars, interpreters, and halakhists in northern France and Germany and, to a lesser extent, in England, Austria, and Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) brought proofs to their talmudic interpretations from works that were essentially aggadic. Indeed, there are extensive citations from these works in Tosafist literature.<sup>5</sup> The Tosafists took talmudic *aggadah* seriously (even investing it with halakhic valence)<sup>6</sup> and, as legalists, they tended to interpret this material literally or according to its plain sense (following the approach of Rashi in his talmudic commentary).<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that the Tosafists (and Rashi) do not seem to have been particularly troubled in their talmudic commentaries by anthropomorphic statements in the *aggadah* should not be taken as proof that they endorsed this position.<sup>8</sup> As Urbach suggests, the Tosafist approach to *aggadah* and to *midrash* was akin to their approach to *halakhah* in another respect as well. The Tosafists (perhaps taking their cue from Rashi once again) did not often pursue the spiritual dimensions or the religious depth of aggadic texts when they interpreted these texts.<sup>9</sup> Only the German pietists composed what Urbach characterizes as “a kind of theological *Tosafot*.”<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, although *Tosafot* passages gather and compare aggadic statements to each other and attempt to resolve contradictions between them,<sup>11</sup> Urbach maintains that these comparisons and conclusions should be viewed as typical specimens of Tosafist interpretation of the talmudic corpus, rather than as possible evidence for Tosafist religious thought or beliefs. In order to argue that something is an actual theological position or belief of the Tosafists, one must be able to demonstrate that a belief that emerges from an interpretation of *Tosafot* is not simply a part of the resolution of the talmudic contradiction or textual problem at hand.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Urbach devotes less than a handful of pages in his work to this issue further supports the sense that aggadic interpretation was not, in any event, a major scholarly activity or concern of the *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*.<sup>13</sup> In sum, despite the tendency in medieval Ashkenaz to understand talmudic *aggadah* according to its literal or plain sense, uniformity of position with respect to anthropomorphism should not automatically be assumed.

The second issue that should be raised at this point emerges from the polemical literature of the kind cited at the beginning of this study. This literature maintains that groups of French rabbis espoused various anti-Maimonidean positions, including anthropomorphism. These views are presumed without offering any significant corroboration from the writings or statements of the French rabbis themselves. Although no one questions the reliability per se of the Provençal or Spanish rabbinic writers who made these assertions, it is nonetheless problematic to learn about the positions that northern French anti-Maimonists or anti-rationalists allegedly held primarily from the pens of those whose mission it was to defend Maimonides.<sup>14</sup>

Accusations in the Maimonidean Controversy were never made to or about a particular Tosafist or Ashkenazic rabbinic scholar. Nahmanides does not mention the names of any northern French rabbinic figures in his letter to them in which he asks that their ban on the study of *Sefer ha-Madda* and *Moreh Nevukhim* be lifted or modified. At one point, Nahmanides refers to the *herem* as having been agreed upon by "all the land of northern France, its Rabbis and Torah leaders."<sup>15</sup> The letter sent by Asher b. Gershom is titled אגרת שלוחה מאת הרב ר' אשר בר' גרשום על אודות מורה הנבוכים לרבני צרפת.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, when the anti-Maimonist, Rabbi Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier, wished to bring his case against Maimonides and his philosophical writings to the rabbis of northern France for their opinion (in Solomon's words, חשבנו בלבנו להראות צרותינו לרבני צרפת וגדוליה . . . גם הגיע אליהם, (חשבנו בלבנו להראות צרותינו לרבני צרפת וגדוליה . . . גם הגיע אליהם, מאד), he did so without designating a particular rabbinic figure as the addressee. Rabbi Solomon sent Rabbi Yonah of Gerona (who had studied in northern France at the Tosafist Academy at Evreux) to carry out this mission. Here, too, there is no record of any specific rabbinic figures with whom Rabbenu Yonah interacted.<sup>17</sup>

Who then were the French rabbis in question? From all the evidence that we have (and despite the lofty titles and designations found in the various letters to the rabbis of northern France), recognized French or German Tosafists (with one exception) were not openly involved in this phase of the Maimonidean Controversy, certainly not in the *herem* that was promulgated against *Sefer ha-Madda* and *Moreh Nevukhim* in the early 1230s.<sup>18</sup> There were, of course, many non-Tosafist rabbinic scholars and students in northern France, and it may well have been this level of the intelligentsia that was more heavily involved.<sup>19</sup> The only known Tosafist to have penned a letter during this phase of the Maimonidean Controversy seems to have been

Rabbi Samuel b. Solomon of Falaise.<sup>20</sup> Rabbi Samuel's brief document, however, focuses mostly on the importance of the literal interpretation of *aggadah* (and the negative influences of Maimonides' works) and does not refer to the issue of anthropomorphism at all.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, Samuel's leading Tosafist contemporaries and colleagues in northern France, Rabbi Yeḥi'el of Paris and Rabbi Moses of Coucy, can hardly be characterized as anti-Maimonidean in the way that Rabbi Samuel was.<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Moses makes extensive use of *Mishneh Torah* in his *Sefer Mišvot Gadol*. Indeed, *Sefer Mišvot Gadol* appears to be dependent on *Mishneh Torah* in many ways. To be sure, Rabbi Moses plays down and even ignores many of the philosophical aspects of *Mishneh Torah*.<sup>23</sup> This pattern is not surprising, however, given that the Tosafists (and Ashkenazic rabbinic scholars on the whole) received neither legacy nor training in the formal discipline of philosophy, and displayed no real interest in its study.<sup>24</sup> Although Maimonides' philosophical teachings and *Moreh Nevukhim* were certainly not part of the curriculum of the Tosafists,<sup>25</sup> our inability to identify leading rabbinic figures who were involved in the Maimonidean controversy should cause us to resist the temptation and the tendency to lump all Tosafists and Ashkenazic rabbinic figures together when it comes to the issues that surrounded this controversy, such as anthropomorphism. The picture that has emerged to this point in our study, which has focused only on developments in northern France, is already much more complex and variegated than has been assumed.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, contrary to the impression given by the defenders of Maimonides (that has been perpetuated by modern scholarship), a number of Tosafists and rabbinic figures in both northern France and Germany plainly assert that the Divine form cannot be characterized or defined accurately through anthropomorphic terms or physical dimensions. Nonetheless, these rabbinic scholars also had to contend with the various biblical and talmudic passages that suggest that God appeared in different modalities and forms to prophets and certain rabbinic figures. Although one might not be inclined to attribute actual physical (or human) dimensions to God, the Bible and the Talmud certainly seem to suggest that God has the ability to appear to human beings in various guises that they can apprehend.

In an effort to reconcile these disparate conceptions, Rabbi Joseph b. Isaac *Bekhor Shor*, a late-twelfth-century northern French *peshat* exegete and Tosafist (who studied with Rabbenu Tam, and is known in

the literature of the *Tosafot* as Rabbi Joseph of Orleans),<sup>27</sup> offers the following as the first of two interpretations to Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image" (נעשה אדם בצלמינו כדמותינו). "Let us create man in such a way that (through intimidation) he will rule and dominate all (on earth), just as the Almighty and other heavenly beings dominate in their realms." *Bekhor Shor* cites several biblical verses that suggest that God cannot be described in physical terms or compared with physical beings. The biblical phrases that refer to the eyes or hands of God and so on are merely a convention devised to convey Divine actions to man (*le-sabber et ha-ozen*), who can comprehend intelligent existence and functions only in human terms. The vision reported by Ezekiel in which God appears to the prophet in human form is only in the prophet's mind's eye. "For God and the Heavenly entourage can make themselves appear in any form that they would like man to see." The same holds true for the various rabbinic figures (as reported by the Talmud) and other prophets to whom the Almighty appeared. Thus, the comparison of forms in Genesis 1:26 is made (only) with respect to the ability to intimidate other beings, even though in this case as well, the comparison is imprecise.<sup>28</sup>

One is tempted to suggest that Joseph of Orleans had access to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. In "Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah" 1:8, Maimonides writes that Scripture explicitly indicates that God has no body or bodily form. Two of the three verses which Maimonides cites to prove his contention are Deuteronomy 4:15 and Isaiah 40:25, the key proof texts adduced by *Bekhor Shor*. In "Yesodei ha-Torah" 1:9, Maimonides goes on to explain (just as *Bekhor Shor* does) that the Torah's phrases which describe the various limbs and parts of God are meant only as illustrations, expressed in human terms that are the only ones which man can appreciate and understand (הכל לפי דעתך של בני אדם הוא שאינן מכירין אלא הגופות), and are not meant to be taken literally. On the other hand, since Joseph of Orleans probably died before Maimonides' death in 1204, and the earliest citation of *Mishneh Torah* by French Tosafists does not occur before the turn of the twelfth century,<sup>29</sup> it is unlikely that Joseph derived his formulation from this work.<sup>30</sup> To be sure, Joseph *Bekhor Shor* is known as one of the more "rationalistic" Tosafists and *peshat* exegetes.<sup>31</sup> He attempted, in a number of verses (and almost systematically), to eliminate anthropomorphic references.<sup>32</sup> Joseph had access to works of Spanish biblical exegesis and thought, including those of Ibn Hayyuj, Abraham bar Hiyya, and Bahya Ibn Paquda, if not to the commentaries of Abraham

Ibn Ezra.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, *Bekhor Shor* does not express himself here in philosophical terms,<sup>34</sup> and cannot be characterized as anything more than a rationalistic rabbinic scholar who had to confront the vexing but obvious dilemma outlined above: How can God, who is essentially non-corporeal, appear to man in seemingly human form? *Bekhor Shor's* solution appears similar to that of Maimonides in *Mishneh Torah* (as noted) and in *Guide of the Perplexed* as well.<sup>35</sup> Good Tosafist that he was, *Bekhor Shor* was also concerned with identifying and explaining relevant talmudic sources, and he marshals them to support his claim that God appears to man in physical form only via some type of mental imagery (*medammeh/idmei*).

The notion of a paranormal or psychologicistic revelation, directed by God, through which a vision appears in the mind of the prophet without anything actually happening in the external world, is also held by Rabbi Hai Gaon, Rabbi Ḥanan'el b. Ḥushi'el of Kairwan, and Rabbi Nathan b. Yehi'el of Rome, author of the *Arukh*.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the Tosafist Rabbi Joseph (*Bekhor Shor*) of Orleans cannot be included among those rabbis of northern France who wished to attribute forms of corporeality or anthropomorphism to God. To be sure, Joseph's view also dovetailed with his second interpretation of Genesis 1:26, an overly polemical refutation of this verse as a Trinitarian proof text.<sup>37</sup>

Rabbi Moses Taku, a German Tosafist writing (ca. 1220) in his rather idiosyncratic treatise of Jewish thought titled *Ketav Tamim*,<sup>38</sup> describes the Almighty in terms that are, at first blush, strikingly similar to those of Joseph *Bekhor Shor*. Moreover, Taku's underlying concerns are the same as those of *Bekhor Shor*. Nonetheless, Taku reaches a conclusion that is decidedly different.<sup>39</sup>

Although Rabbi Moses Taku begins, as *Bekhor Shor* did, with an assertion that God cannot be accurately characterized by or compared to any particular physical form (*lo yedammeh lo shum demut*),<sup>40</sup> Taku adds that when God decides to show himself in a particular form to angels or to prophets, he actually adopts that form. He does not create a separate form (often referred to as the *kavod ha-nir'eh*) to represent Him (which is the view held by Saadya Gaon and, with modification, by the leaders of the German pietists, as we shall see). Moreover, while God sometimes does adopt a well-defined form, in other instances He does not, appearing instead as "an unusual light without form,"<sup>41</sup> or even through a voice, without any visual imagery.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Rabbi Moses asserts that God has the power of movement (נידח וניעה), an assessment that once again puts him at

odds with both Maimonides and Saadya (who believe that this compromises God's infinitude).<sup>43</sup>

In the course of this passage then, Rabbi Moses Taku rejects almost all other contemporary Jewish approaches toward eliminating or minimizing anthropomorphism, a contrarian approach taken throughout his *Ketav Tamim* for which Rabbi Moses is well known in modern scholarship.<sup>44</sup> It must be pointed out and emphasized, however, that Rabbi Moses himself does not believe that God is simply or consistently anthropomorphic.<sup>45</sup> Rather, just as God has the ability or possibility of appearing in various forms, He has the ability to move in certain ways and vice versa. This observation explains the somewhat perplexing fact that Rabbi Moses (unlike several other Ashkenazic thinkers, including Eleazar of Worms and members of the *Hug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuḥad*) denies completely the authority of the highly anthropomorphic *Shi'ur Qomah* on any plane (even the non-literal or symbolic).<sup>46</sup> Some have understood this as a function of Taku's respect for the canonical (biblical and) talmudic corpus, and his concomitant discounting of conflicting rabbinic traditions or interpretations outside of that corpus.<sup>47</sup> Although this may be so (and we will see another example of this attitude below, in Taku's interpretation of Genesis 1:26), the more compelling ideological reason for Taku's view, to my mind, is based on the notion that God does not have a singular, permanent form that can be precisely traced or described (as the work *Shi'ur Qomah* attempts to do). What God does have, according to Taku, is the possibility of adopting different forms as the situation warrants. As Israel Ta-Shma put it, Taku's approach "does not reject the anti-anthropomorphic conception [*ha-tefisah ha-mufshetet*] which is also not exclusive but only one possibility. The Godhead can choose for itself the type of appearance that is most appropriate at a particular time and does not require the approval of the philosophers in order to adopt for itself the option of anthropomorphism, [which can be done] as warranted or desired."<sup>48</sup>

For this reason, in my view, Rabbi Moses is equally unhappy with the more "permanent" solutions proposed by Saadya (that God appears through the created *kavod*), Rabbi Judah *he-Hasid* (that God appears through an emanated *kavod*), and Maimonides (that God appears to the prophet in a vision that is in the prophet's mind).<sup>49</sup> For Rabbi Moses, God actually appears to the prophet in a particular form at a specific point and time, even though He has no fixed, permanent form that can be sketched or described. Indeed, Rabbi Moses distinguishes

elsewhere in *Ketav Tamim* between a *šelem*, which God has, and a fixed *demut*, which He does not have. *Šelem* for Rabbi Moses denotes the fact that a being (in this case the Almighty) actually exists, as opposed to *demut*, which conveys the notion of a fixed form for that being (which does not apply to God).<sup>50</sup> This distinction, between the physical appearance of God at a particular point in human history even though God does not have a fixed form, is found in Taku's interpretation of Genesis 1:26 (where he presents additional examples of God's ability to appear in different forms).<sup>51</sup> Rabbi Moses Taku (and a northern French predecessor, Rabbi Jacob b. Samson,<sup>52</sup> whose view Rabbi Moses cites approvingly in this passage), could certainly have been a target of the Maimonists' critique. Nonetheless, it should be noted that while Rabbi Moses Taku was not completely atypical in his view, he does not represent a monolithic position within medieval Ashkenaz, as we shall continue to see.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Moses is not arguing for absolute Divine corporealism, nor does he believe that God can be fairly and accurately characterized in crude anthropomorphic terms. Indeed, if we look purely from the standpoint of methodology, the distance between Taku and *Bekhor Shor* is not all that great.<sup>54</sup>

Rabbi Solomon Simhah b. Eliezer of Troyes (c. 1235–1300), a descendant of Rashi and student of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg and Rabbi Perez of Corbeil, flourished well after the Maimonidean Controversy of the 1230s.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, given his keen interest in maintaining an anti-allegorical approach to Scripture, Rabbi Solomon analyzes and addresses the dilemma of divine anthropomorphism in his *Sefer ha-Maskil*. Solomon utilizes terms and texts found in both *Bekhor Shor* and Taku, but ultimately stakes out a unique position somewhere in between their approaches. In two places in his work, Solomon criticizes the view held by (rabbinic) scholars and philosophers that when the Torah asserts that God spoke, it is merely a *mashal*, since speech only emanates from a being that has a body. According to this view, God's words were not heard at Sinai, but rather they were apprehended and understood by the intellects of Moses and the Jewish people. Solomon rejects this possibility, arguing that it is not the physical mouth that gives a human being the power of speech but rather the *ruah*, the essential being or existence of the person. Similarly, God's existence gives Him the ability to speak (although the speech of God is obviously produced in a different manner). Thus, even though God is incorporeal, He did actually speak to the Jewish people.<sup>56</sup>

In another passage, Solomon chides those who go astray by presuming that God actually revealed Himself in the various physical forms and imageries that the Torah intimates and that are described by the prophets. Rather, Solomon insists, God has no image or form (*ein leha-Shem yitbarakh demut ve-šurah*). Solomon cites the verses in Isaiah 40 to this effect, and he also notes that the biblical descriptions of various Divine limbs are simply to facilitate their understanding, *le-sabber et ha-ozen mah she-hi yekholah lishmoa*. Moving forward, Solomon characterizes the physical forms that the prophets saw in their prophetic visions in a different way. What they saw was a temporary image (*demut she-hu lefi sha'ah*), "For God does not have a standing (permanent) form or shape."<sup>57</sup>

Gad Freudenthal notes that one of the verses cited by *Sefer ha-Maskil* is found in Maimonides' treatment of anthropomorphism in "Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah" 1:8 (and both are found in Shabbetai Donnolo's treatment of Genesis 1:26, in his *Sefer Hakhmoni*).<sup>58</sup> More significantly, however, both verses are also found in *Bekhor Shor's* commentary to Genesis 1:26, as is the phrase *le-sabber et ha-ozen*.<sup>59</sup> The question here is whether Solomon's use of the concept of *demut le-fi šorekh ha-sha'ah* (even though, at the same time, "*ein lo demut omedet*") signifies that God actually adopted the temporary physical form (in line with the view of Moses Taku), or whether Solomon, in accordance with the view of *Bekhor Shor*, means that God has no real image or form (*demut omedet*) and that the temporary prophetic image that he refers to is not a corporeal manifestation of God.

Freudenthal holds that as opposed to Taku, Solomon was not a *magshim* (even though Solomon, like Taku, was strongly against allegorical interpretation).<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Freudenthal demonstrates that *Sefer ha-Maskil* also developed a unique approach to angelology that informs his view. According to Solomon, there are three classes of angels who do the will of the Almighty. The "permanent" or "existing" ones (*mal'akhim kayamim*) are those such as Mikha'el, Refa'el, and Gavri'el. The second and third classes are called the "temporary angels" (*mal'akhim le-sha'ah*) and the "separate air" (*ruah nifrad*). The temporary angels are appointed for a particular mission or activity. When their mission is completed, they are consumed by fire. This type of angel is also described as "a separate air from the secret source, from the mysterious (Divine) air, blessed be He" (*ruah hamufla barukh Hu*). Similarly, the members of the third class (the *ruah nifrad*) were also mobilized specially in order to do His bidding, but

following their missions they are returned to their place. As opposed to the “permanent angel,” the latter two classes of angels are derived from the essence of the Almighty (*ruah ha-iqqar*). While the “permanent” angels have set responsibilities, the latter two groups do not, serving in limited capacities and particular one-time situations.<sup>61</sup>

Most important for our purposes, however, is Solomon’s view that the Divine essence (*ha-E-l ha-iqqar*), which in Solomon’s cosmological scheme is to be identified with the cosmic Air that fills the entire world (*ha-E-l ha-avir/ha-avir ha-mufla*),<sup>62</sup> can be manifested through various physical forms. The different “separate airs,” each of which has a unique and finite mission, do not compromise Divine corporeality on the one hand, but are responsible, on the other hand, for the many forms through which the Almighty reveals Himself to the prophets and to others.<sup>63</sup> It is these groups of angels who are responsible for the “temporary manifestations” (*demut she-hu lefi sha’ah*) of God that appeared to the prophets as needed (*le-šorekh ha-sha’ah*), but who then receded. As Solomon concludes, אין להקב"ה גוף וצורה עומדת— all of these various representations of God are angelic, and are therefore not permanent.

Although Solomon’s solution to the problem of anthropomorphism in situations where God appeared to prophets and others seems to be closer empirically to the approach of Joseph *Bekhor Shor* than to the position of Moses Taku, there is one additional factor that must be considered. The identification made by Solomon between God and the cosmic Air is itself at least partly anthropomorphic. Saadya’s comparisons between God and the *avir* that fills the entire world (found especially in his commentary to *Sefer Yeširah*) were figurative and were meant only as metaphor. Solomon invested this comparison, however, with real, physical properties (the substance of God is to be found in the air and in the light above the firmament), moving him closer overall to the position of Taku.<sup>64</sup>

There were, however, a number of other leading scholars in northern France and Germany during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries whose views are more closely in line with the position of *Bekhor Shor*. The German pietists were quite interested in eliminating anthropomorphism by distinguishing between the hidden essence of God and the divine glory (*kaḇod*) that was created or emanated, and therefore distinct from God. Beginning with Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* himself, and employing ideas of Saadya Gaon,<sup>65</sup> as well as other earlier medieval rabbinic figures such as Rabbi Nathan b. Yeḥi’el, Rabbi Ḥanan’el b.

Ḥushi'el, Rabbi Shabbetai Donnolo, and Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (and, to a lesser extent, Abraham bar Ḥiyya), the pietists were thus able to explicitly and repeatedly reject anthropomorphism, and to assert that God has no material or representable form.<sup>66</sup>

In a treatise attributed to Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid*, three approaches are presented as to which manifestation of God the prophets saw: (1) they saw the created Glory (following Saadya); (2) they saw a vision in their own mind, directed by God, but which never actually occurred (*ahizat enayim*; this position is held by Rabbi Hai and by Maimonides); (3) they saw an emanated Divine power, the Divine Glory (*kavod*). The upper aspect of this emanation cannot be seen, but the lower aspect is the subject of prophetic vision. This is the position that Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* prefers, although he was not unalterably opposed to the others. Judah's preferred position follows the approach of Abraham Ibn Ezra.<sup>67</sup>

The phrase *אין שייך בו [לבורא] לא צלם ולא דמות* and its variants are found repeatedly in the treatise titled *Sha'arei ha-Sod ve-ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah*, composed by Judah's leading pupil, Rabbi Eleazar of Worms. Eleazar also decries those who insisted on radical anthropomorphism by attributing various limbs to the Almighty (*אין לבורא לא גוף וגושם/אין לו איברים / אין לו מידת הגושם/נים*), categorizing them as grave sinners (*חוטאים בנפשם*). Biblical phrases that describe God's actions in anthropomorphic terms were formulated only so that human beings would be able to grasp their meaning (*ומה שנאמר* *מילות בקרייה ענייני גושמנים לא נכתבו כי אם להבין לפני אדם*).<sup>68</sup> Rabbi Eleazar mentions those earlier rabbinic authorities (including Saadya Gaon, Rabbenu Ḥanan'el, Rabbi Nissim Gaon, and Rabbi Nathan b. Yehi'el) who agreed that God has no physical image or form. Like Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid*, Rabbi Eleazar is fundamentally comfortable with their views, even as he, like Rabbi Judah, advocates the model of the emanated (or revealed) *kavod* that appeared to the prophets in various forms (including human ones) as needed (*כפי צורך שעה*).<sup>69</sup>

In this same treatise, Rabbi Eleazar also offers a related interpretation of Genesis 1:26–27 that blunts the possible anthropomorphic reference suggested by these verses. According to Eleazar, these verses do not imply that the Creator has the form or image of His creations. Rather, the meaning of making man “in our image” is that “we [the angels who are implied in the plural form of the verse] wish to be revealed to the prophets in the most desirable countenance, which is the human face.” Thus, man was created in the cherished human-like

countenance or image of the angels, which is the image that God shows to the prophets.<sup>70</sup>

Naḥmanides, in his letter of 1232 to the *rabbanei Şarefat*, cites extensively from this treatise by Rabbi Eleazar of Worms in an effort to show that the view of a leading Ashkenazic scholar (and sometime Tosafist as well) is compatible with that of Maimonides.<sup>71</sup> He also notes that this work of Rabbi Eleazar was readily available to the rabbis of northern France.<sup>72</sup>

In his commentary to *Sefer Yeşirah*, Eleazar states unequivocally that God has no bodily image and cannot be seen. Nonetheless, God “appears to the prophets by means of the presence of His glory through many images (נראה לנביאים על ידי שכינת כבודו בדמיונות הרבה), according to His desire and will.” The prophets, according to Eleazar, did not simply see a figurative image of God in their minds. Rather, the Divine glory assumed a concrete shape or form in the mind of the one seeing the vision.<sup>73</sup>

It must be noted, however, as this last example intimates, that the German pietists also had to deal with earlier esoteric materials which tended to support anthropomorphic descriptions. Within their more exoteric writings (such as the treatise of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms cited by Naḥmanides, which was part of the so-called *sifrut ha-Yiḥud*),<sup>74</sup> the pietists were able to firmly maintain their commitment to eliminating anthropomorphism. In their esoteric writings, however, the pietists developed strongly mythical formulations in accordance with the symbolism of the earlier esoteric material. Thus, anthropomorphic speculations can be found in the esoteric writings of Eleazar of Worms and others, especially with respect to the prophetic and visionary experiences that were cultivated and achieved in connection with pronouncing and understanding certain Divine Names. Anthropomorphic beliefs can also perhaps be found within the intentions of prayer (*kavvanot ha-tefillah*) of a related mystical circle, the *Ḥug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuḥad*. All these various mystical practices and experiences were, however, highly private and deeply secret, and were taught and shared only in limited ways.<sup>75</sup>

In the same vein, a leading member of the *Ḥug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuḥad*, Rabbi Elḥanan b. Yaḡar, included in his *Sod ha-Sodot* (a mystical treatise on creation and cosmology) one formulation concerning the way that God appeared to the prophets that is markedly different from his other treatments of this subject, even those within the same work. Although Elḥanan does not mention Rabbi Moses Taku or his

*Ketav Tamim* by name, the more radical formulation of Rabbi Elhanan's contains several close similarities and parallels to anthropomorphic passages in *Ketav Tamim*.<sup>76</sup>

Rabbi Eleazar of Worms' pietist student, Rabbi Abraham b. Azri'el of Bohemia (who composed his *Arugat ha-Bosem* ca. 1234), in commenting on a liturgical poem that refers to the Divine *kavod*, reviews and briefly describes the theories that were known to him with respect to the forms through which God revealed himself to man.<sup>77</sup> Abraham begins by stating that God never revealed His essence, about which one cannot make comparisons or offer formulations. The talmudic passages in the first chapter of tractate *Berakhot* that refer to God putting on *tefillin* and the like speak about the manifest form of God, the *shekhinah* (the *kavod*). Indeed, one Gaon (a reference to Rabbi Hai) understands the talmudic passages in *Berakhot* to mean that God showed the *kavod* to His prophets and adherents (and indeed to Moses) and they perceived it, through an understanding of the heart (*ovanta de-libba*). That is, they received a mental image of a seated person (or any other vision that was meant to represent God) but did not see it with their eyes (*lo re'iyah be-ayin*). Rabbi Abraham related (with approval) the approach of this Gaon to the manner in which God appeared to Moses following the sin of the golden calf, and also mentions the similar approach of his teacher Rabbi Eleazar of Worms and of a Rabbi Neḥemyah b. Solomon.<sup>78</sup>

Abraham next presents the view of Maimonides on this issue, as it is found in "Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah," 1:8–9. God cannot possibly have any anthropomorphic form. The anthropomorphic phrases found in the Torah are written in this way only so that human beings can have a proper understanding of God's functions and powers. A proof for this approach is that one prophet saw a vision of God dressed in pristine clothing, another prophet saw God in soiled clothes, Moses saw God at the crossing of the Red Sea as a fighting warrior, and God appeared at Sinai as a prayer leader wrapped in a *tallit*. All of these diverse visions show that God has no (physical) image or form, only the non-physical manifestations that are seen in prophetic visions.

Rabbi Abraham turns next to Saadya Gaon. Saadya stresses that the Divine form that appears to the prophets, the form that speaks to them and that sits on the throne and so on, is a created, distinct form (*ha-šurah beru'ah hi va-ḥadashah*). This created luminous form is the Divine *kavod*, also known as the *shekhinah*. At times, the light (of the

*shekhinah*) shines without embracing any image or form, and the divine voice is heard from the luminous form. Abraham then distinguishes between the way that Moses and other prophets heard this voice. He then cites Rabbi Ḥanan'el b. Ḥushi'el who held (like Rabbi Hai) that prophetic visions were mental images (*avna de-libba*) and not actual ones, since God has no real, physical form. Rabbenu Nissim Gaon and Shabbetai (Donnolo) *ha-Rofe* also held this view. Moving to a related issue, Rabbi Abraham describes a tradition of his teacher Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* on the way that Moses more clearly perceived the *kavod* (*be-ispaqlarya ha-me'irah*) than did all other prophets (*be-ispaqlarya she-einah me-irah*) and he also cites a passage from Rabbenu Ḥanan'el on this issue.

Finally, Rabbi Abraham cites a passage from Moses Taku's *Ketav Tamim* on the same subject. As Urbach notes,<sup>79</sup> this passage is not found in the version of *Ketav Tamim* that is extant, a development that is not particularly troubling since we know that there are sections of the original work that have not survived.<sup>80</sup> More suggestive, however, is the fact that Rabbi Abraham, who cites *Ketav Tamim* with some frequency in his work and without fanfare, omits Rabbi Moses' anthropomorphic approach to the appearance of God in prophetic visions.<sup>81</sup> Rabbi Abraham chose not to present it in this survey that, in accordance with the somewhat eclectic style of his pietist teachers in this matter, is otherwise quite thorough and complete. Indeed, Abraham had no difficulty including the rationalistic position of Maimonides.<sup>82</sup>

Rabbi Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, author of the Tosafist halakhic compendium *Sefer Or Zarua'*, was a student of Rabbi Judah Sirleon, Rabbi Simḥah of Spires, Rabiah, and Rabbi Samson of Coucy, among other Tosafists in northern France and Germany. He also studied with Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* and with others associated with the German pietists, including Rabbi Abraham b. Azri'el of Bohemia.<sup>83</sup> In the course of his (halakhic) commentary to tractate *Berakhot*, Rabbi Isaac cites at length the explanation and approach of Rabbenu Ḥanan'el (which was mentioned briefly by Rabbi Abraham in his *Arugat ha-Bosem*) to two talmudic passages that seemingly attribute physical forms to God. In light of the fact that God does not project an actual physical image (according to the verses in Isaiah and others), Rabbi Ḥanan'el interprets the claim that the Almighty wears *tefillin* in accordance with the concept that God provides a mental or psychological image of Himself (as represented by the lower *kavod*) to the prophets (בראית העין). Similarly, when the Talmud maintains that

God prays, the reference is to a mental image of God (ראיית הלב) represented by the *kavod*. Rabbi Isaac also ratifies the view of Rabbi Ḥanan'el that the figure of Akatri'el, who appeared to Rabbi Ishma'el the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, was a manifestation of the *kavod* (seen by Rabbi Yishma'el in his mind's eye), and was not merely an angelic figure.<sup>84</sup>

Rabbi Isaac b. Judah *ha-Levi*, the northern French compiler of the Tosafist biblical commentary *Pa'aneah Raza* that appeared in the late thirteenth century, was strongly influenced by the Torah commentary of Rabbi Joseph *Bekhor Shor*. Rabbi Isaac *ha-Levi* also included much exegetical (and pietistic) material from the German pietists.<sup>85</sup> According to one of the comments to Genesis 1:26 found in *Pa'aneah Raza*, God's intention to create man in "our image" refers to the image of the angels (who have a human form). God appears to the prophets via this (angelic human) form, so that the prophets will not become disoriented or terrified. *Pa'aneah Raza* emphasizes that all intelligent people must understand that the Creator Himself has no structure or form (as the verses in Isaiah 40 indicate). He sees but is not seen, just as the human soul, which is infused with His spirit but has no form, allows a person to see but is itself not seen, even as it fills the entire human body. Similarly, there is no finitude to the greatness of God. He is unlimited and has no limbs, but He fills everything. All references to the hands and ears and heart and mouth (of God) are merely representations (*mashal*) of His ability to hear, think, and speak in order that the (human) ear hear what it is capable to understand. The prophets saw only the splendor of (the lower) part of the *kavod*. Moses saw this through a clear speculum (as Rabbenu Ḥanan'el explains in tractate *Yevamot*), but no one ever saw the (upper) *kavod*. Furthermore, Rabbenu Ḥanan'el and Rabbenu Nissim, among others, wrote that the Creator has no form, and they castigated anyone who claims that He does. One who believes that the Creator has no form is fortunate and one who does not believe thusly will be afflicted and is close to being a heretic. In the work of Maimonides, it is stated that whoever posits a form for the Creator is among those who will be severely punished. The comparable forms (of God and man), alluded to in Genesis 1:26, only establish the comparison with respect to the ability to intimidate others, so that their fear will extend to created beings.<sup>86</sup>

This passage in *Pa'aneah Raza* (like the passage in Abraham b. Azrie'el's *Arugat ha-Bosem*) includes virtually every one of the approaches that we have encountered in medieval Ashkenaz to address

the problem of anthropomorphism. It begins with the interpretation of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, that the human image adopted by those angels who are sent by God to appear to the prophets constitutes the “common image” between the Divine and the human realms. The passage refers to the Saadyanic theory of the *kavod*, and mentions by name the early medieval talmudists who subscribed to a form of this view. Maimonides’ position is cited directly, and the verses and principles gathered to explain the references to anthropomorphic characteristics in the Torah follow both the specifics in *Mishneh Torah* and in the commentary of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, *Pa’aneah Raza* (again like *Arugat ha-Bosem*) found no need or opportunity to include the approach of Rabbi Moses Taku. In a comment to Exodus 20:3 (לא יהי לך אלהים אחרים על פני), *Pa’aneah Raza* rejects completely the possibility that God possesses an actual physical form.<sup>88</sup>

To be sure, *Pa’aneah Raza* was composed well after the Maimonidean Controversy of the 1230s, and was perhaps influenced in its interpretation of Genesis 1:26 by that complex of events as well. Nonetheless, there are other, earlier Ashkenazic interpretations of Genesis 1:26 (aside from that of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms) that express their rejection of anthropomorphism in this verse by invoking a comparison to the images of the angels, using even simpler terms. The earliest example is the commentary of Rashbam, “in our image [means] in the image of the angels.” Similarly, Rashbam interprets that the Divine image in which man was created (in Genesis 1:27) refers to (the image of) the angels.<sup>89</sup> Rashbam makes his comment from the standpoint of rationalistic *peshat* exegesis, without any recourse to formal philosophical (or mystical) concepts or terms.<sup>90</sup>

The views of Rashbam and Maimonides (as well as *Bekhor Shor*) are brought together in an interpretation of the northern French Tosafist Torah commentary *Sefer ha-Gan* (compiled by Aaron b. Joseph ca. 1240) to Genesis 1:26.<sup>91</sup> *Sefer ha-Gan* begins by presenting (without attribution) the essence of *Bekhor Shor*’s interpretation of this verse. It is inappropriate to refer to the form of the Creator as various biblical verses indicate. The references to Divine eyes or speech is a *mashal* to convey the notion that God can communicate, just as Scripture compares the voice of God to the sound of deep, rushing water. The claim that man is made in God’s image refers only to the ability to intimidate, that man’s fear (like God’s) will be placed over other creatures.<sup>92</sup> *Sefer ha-Gan* describes the punishment for one who believes that God has a

physical image according to Maimonides (בספר הר"ר משה אבן מימון), in what appears to be a paraphrase of "Hilkhot Teshuvah," 3:6–7.

*Sefer ha-Gan* then links Rashbam's interpretation of Genesis 1:26 (that the form attributed to man is the unique form of the angels) to Maimonides' description of the category of angels in "Yesodei ha-Torah" 2:7 called אנשים (anthropos), who appear in prophetic visions.<sup>93</sup> This is the sense of the verse that God created man in the image of the Divine (*be-šelem E-lohim*), meaning in the image of the angels (*be-šelem mal'akhim*), since in many (biblical) contexts, angels are referred to as *elohim*. These passages from Maimonides are also cited in several subsequent Tosafist Torah commentaries from the mid- and late thirteenth century.<sup>94</sup>

Rabbi Isaiah di Trani (RiD, ca. 1170–1240) was an Italian hakakhist who apparently studied in his youth with the German Tosafist Rabbi Simḥah of Speyer. Israel Ta-Shma has reviewed Rabbi Isaiah's large corpus, and has sketched the contours of his scholarship.<sup>95</sup> RiD was especially familiar with the talmudic writings of Rashi, Rashbam, and Rabbenu Tam (and those of one of Rabbenu Tam's leading students, Rabbi Isaac b. Mordekhai of Regensburg). He also cites leading earlier authorities from the Sefardic world such as *Halakhot Gedolot*, Rabbenu Ḥanan'el, and Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (RiF), as well as several important rabbinic figures from his homeland in southern Italy. In terms of overall methodology, however, RiD behaves, for the most part, like an Ashkenazic scholar, as indicated not only by his extensive *Tosafot* but also in his *pesaqim* and other halakhic compositions as well.<sup>96</sup>

One of RiD's first compositions, written according to Ta-Shma before any of his *Tosafot* and talmudic novellae (and in all probability shortly after he returned to Italy from his studies in Germany, somewhere in the early years of the thirteenth century), was his commentary to the Pentateuch titled *Nimmuqei Ḥumash*.<sup>97</sup> Not surprisingly, this work betrays a heavy dose of Ashkenazic influence. Virtually all the rabbinic figures that RiD cites in this work (which comports with the overall genre of Tosafist Torah commentary and includes halakhic and talmudic material, as well as *gematria* and the like) are from either northern France or Germany,<sup>98</sup> with one notable exception. In three places, Rabbi Isaiah reproduces passages from Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim*.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Ta-Shma notes (and explains) the rather curious phenomenon that RiD hardly quotes Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in his vast halakhic corpus (and this is true for RiD's successors in Italy for quite a while), but does quote *Moreh Nevukhim* at length on these

three occasions. Thirteenth-century Ashkenazic halakhists and rabbinic figures typically quoted freely from *Mishneh Torah* but tended to ignore *Moreh Nevukhim*. RiD's unusual pattern of citation shows that Maimonides' philosophy was not what kept RiD away from his halakhic writings (as it did for some other rabbinic figures). Rather, Ta-Shma argues, the rejection or displacement of Maimonidean *halakhah* in Italy was due to the dominance of the Franco-German halakhic tradition in Italy during this time. Nonetheless, RiD's use of *Moreh Nevukhim* stands out, and is suggestive.<sup>100</sup>

Assessing the availability of *Moreh Nevukhim* (in its Hebrew translation) in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz is difficult at best. It seems from the various letters mentioned earlier in connection with the Maimonidean Controversy that parts (if not all) of *Moreh Nevukhim* were shown to groups of *rabbanei Şarefat* (some of whom voiced specific criticisms) and were therefore available in some form to Ashkenazic rabbinic scholars who wished to use it.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, Tosafists in northern France and Germany, including those who were supportive of *Mishneh Torah*, do not cite *Moreh Nevukhim*.<sup>102</sup> Included in this pattern are figures such as Rabbi Moses of Coucy and Rabbi Isaac Or Zarua',<sup>103</sup> and even the more philosophically inclined Rabbi Eleazar of Worms<sup>104</sup> and Rabbi Abraham b. Azri'el of Bohemia (author of *Arugat ha-Bosem*),<sup>105</sup> as well as the eclectic *Sefer ha-Maskil*.<sup>106</sup> Although it is possible that Rabbi Isaiah di Trani received a copy of *Moreh Nevukim* through Italian channels,<sup>107</sup> it would appear that he is (given the point in his career when he wrote *Nimmuqeī Ḥumash*) the first Tosafist and rabbinic scholar trained in Ashkenaz to cite *Moreh Nevukhim* with authority and consistency.

RiD's use of *Moreh Nevukhim* must therefore be closely studied. Ta-Shma maintains that RiD, as reflected in his commentary to Genesis 1:26, encountered some radical Ashkenazic *magshimim*, who believed that God had a corporeal form in the literal or simplest sense. Given the inability until now to identify and pinpoint such groups, this would appear to be a discovery of great significance. RiD does not espouse this position, and he seeks to diffuse it using a lengthy citation from *Moreh Nevukhim*, while not rebuking its adherents too sharply or too directly. Indeed, it would appear that RiD also wished to explain how these *magshimim* (mistakenly) came to embrace their position. Owing to the importance of this passage, which Ta-Shma considers to be the first instance of a leading rabbinic scholar looking from the "outside" into a group of this type of committed *magshimim*, Ta-Shma

reproduces the opening lines of the passage that, in his view, are a record or reflection of this encounter.<sup>108</sup>

In fact, however, this entire passage is a faithful, virtually verbatim reproduction of the Hebrew translation of *Moreh Nevukhim* I:1 (although RiD does not note this source in his commentary, nor does he indicate that this is a citation). Thus, there is no exchange of any kind taking place here between RiD and Ashkenazic *magshimim*. Rather, RiD is presenting only the words of Maimonides, explaining why some Jews (presumably not from Ashkenaz) incorrectly felt that they must attribute a physical form to God (in order to have certain biblical verses make sense). To be sure, RiD, in citing this passage may have sought to undercut the view that existed in Ashkenaz as well among those who believed in pronounced anthropomorphism, but their voices are not being heard here. The main point of *Moreh Nevukhim* I:1 is to distinguish philosophically between *şelem*, which denotes the essential existence of a being (in this instance the Divine Being and Intellect) without signifying corporeality and *demut*, a comparative term that does imply a measure of similarity between God and man in Genesis 1:26. Maimonides' (and RiD's) conclusion is that the similarity is to be found in the intellects of God and man, and not in the physical realm.<sup>109</sup> Nonetheless, despite the fact that RiD has not helped us to pinpoint an identifiable group of Ashkenazic *magshimim*, we have in RiD another important Ashkenazic thinker who is supportive of the Maimonidean position on anthropomorphism, citing it for the first time not from *Mishneh Torah*, but from *Moreh Nevukhim*.

RiD copies extensively from *Moreh Nevukhim* in two additional instances. In his commentary on Genesis 19:1, "And the Almighty tested Abraham," RiD reproduces Maimonides' unique interpretation of the test that the binding of Isaac presented to Abraham, and he lists where this chapter is found in *Moreh Nevukhim*.<sup>110</sup> In his commentary to Exodus 32:16, RiD again refers his reader to a specific (albeit brief) chapter in *Moreh Nevukhim* (and reproduces it faithfully), in which Maimonides explains the biblical phrase (and connotation) that the tablets containing the Ten Commandments were the product of the Almighty (*ma'aseh E-lohim*). This issue has an anthropomorphic tinge as well, and RiD again seems to be endorsing the Maimonidean view by citing in full the appropriate chapter from *Moreh Nevukhim*.<sup>111</sup>

The commentary to Ezekiel attributed to RiD (which was probably composed by his grandson, Rabbi Isaiah the younger) expresses an anti-anthropomorphic view as well, although in this case it is closer to

the *kavod ha-ne'eshal* found in *Sha'arei ha-Sod ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah* (and in other exoteric writings) of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (while also hearkening back to the *kavod ha-nivra* of Saadya Gaon) than it is to the view of Maimonides. Commenting on Ezekiel's description of the *Merkavah*, at the point where a form or image that appears to be human is seen above the image of the throne (Ezekiel 1:26, *ve-al demut ha-kisse demut ke-mar'eh adam alav mi-le-ma'alah*), Rabbi Isaiah asserts that this refers to the *shekhinah* (the *kavod*). It is inappropriate, however, to ascribe any form or image to the Creator himself. Rather, this form that is seen is a temporary one by which the Creator appears to his prophets. Indeed, we find the Creator appearing in a number of different forms to his prophets, and each of these forms is created for a particular instance. He appeared to Moses as the burning fire within the bush. And at Mount Sinai as well, the appearance of the Divine Glory was as a consuming fire. Nonetheless, a person should not say that any of these are His actual form, nor should he spend a lot of time pondering these issues since one cannot fully grasp the properties of God and the glory of the *shekhinah*. In conclusion, a person should fully believe that the Creator has no form and no image. What appeared to the prophets is a form that was developed specifically for that moment, so that the prophet could say that God sent him and the voice of the Divine came directly to the prophet.<sup>112</sup>

This study has shown that the impression created by the Maimonists' letters to northern France during the Maimonidean Controversy of the 1230s, that many or most of the *rabbanei Şarefat* believed in Divine anthropomorphism, was rather exaggerated, certainly with respect to the leading scholars or the rabbinic elite of the period.<sup>113</sup> We have seen instead a wide range of positions within the rabbinic literature of medieval Ashkenaz during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from the relatively anthropomorphic views of Rabbi Moses Taku and Rabbi Solomon b. Simḥah of Troyes, to the essentially Maimonidean view held by Rabbi Joseph *Bekhor Shor* of Orleans and *Sefer ha-Gan* (and other Tosafist Torah commentaries). Other Tosafists, especially those with connections to the German pietists, were somewhere in the middle, espousing different versions of the doctrine of the (derivative) Divine Glory (*kavod*) that appeared to the prophets and others in real or imagined form. We have found these positions expressed in a number of different Tosafist genres (and contexts) as well, an important factor when trying to determine the personal beliefs and positions of the Tosafists.

If the criteria set forth by Nahmanides in his letter are used as a measuring stick, only those Ashkenazic scholars who held positions more anthropomorphic than the non-esoteric (*sifrut ha-Yiḥud*) view(s) of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms and Rabbi Judah *he-Hasid* could be considered believers in Divine corporeality (*magshimim*), although, to be sure, fully committed Maimunists (or Jewish Aristotelians) might have had a lower threshold for measuring anthropomorphism than Nahmanides did.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, we have been unable to positively identify any Ashkenazic rabbinic scholars who espoused radical (or crude) forms of anthropomorphism. The positions of Rabbi Moses Taku and *Sefer ha-Maskil* did not include overt or fixed Divine corporeality and, in any case, these positions do not seem to have had much of an impact on subsequent Ashkenazic rabbinic literature.

David Berger has suggested that the question sent by Rabbi Abraham Klausner of Vienna to Rabbi Menahem Agler of Prague in the late fourteenth century concerning which characterization of God's nature is more correct, the corporeal or the non-corporeal, means that this basic question had never been fully resolved in Ashkenaz, and that the anthropomorphic view had at least remained current.<sup>115</sup> As Rabbi Abraham indicates, however, he raised his question on the basis of having read the writings of Rabbi Saadya Gaon and Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, as well as the (pietistic) *Shir ha-Yiḥud* (which all held the non-anthropomorphic view), followed by Rabbi Moses Taku's *Ketav Tamim*, which challenges this view. Abraham was impressed by the array of biblical and talmudic texts that Taku cites and, as a result, posed his question. It would seem that Abraham became aware of the anthropomorphic view mainly from his reading of this unusual and erudite book (which was not often cited in the thirteenth century). Troubled by the impressive argumentation of this work against such luminaries as Saadya Gaon and Maimonides, Abraham sends his query to his colleague Rabbi Menahem Agler, who was partial to philosophy. Rabbi Menahem rejects *Ketav Tamim's* view on anthropomorphism out of hand in favor of the view of Maimonides, referring to Taku's work derisively as *ketav tame* (an impure text). As this instance demonstrates as well, the view of *Ketav Tamim* on anthropomorphism was not widely accepted within medieval Ashkenaz, even as the existence of *Ketav Tamim* and the position on anthropomorphism that it represents were known to some rabbinic scholars.<sup>116</sup>

Formulations of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms and other German pietists seem to assume that there were individuals in Ashkenaz who did

support the more radical position.<sup>117</sup> Paradoxically, the more esoteric writings of the German pietists and associated mystical circles (such as the *Hug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuḥad*) do convey a greater inclination toward anthropomorphism, at least on the symbolic level, but this position, held by a small, inner group of pietist followers, was hidden from non-Ashkenazic Jewry and probably from the bulk of Ashkenazic Jewry as well.<sup>118</sup> Rabbi Isaiah di Trani (and any of those Tosafists who held a middle position) may have been writing to bring people away from the edge, but there is no evidence for direct interaction with any individuals who actually held the more radical anthropomorphic position.

Perhaps there were members of the intelligentsia, who qualified as scholars of some note but were not represented by or did not contribute to the writings of the Tosafists, who believed in radical anthropomorphism (if not the position advocated by Taku).<sup>119</sup> As was the case for Rabbi Samuel of Falaise, these scholars may have been less aware of Spanish and Sefardic (rationalistic) sources, as compared to those Ashkenazic authors who presented non-anthropomorphic views. To be sure, there may also have been a degree of simple or crude anthropomorphism present within the less educated and less learned strata of Ashkenazic society. Alas, the paucity of sources that record popular religious beliefs in medieval Ashkenaz does not allow us, at this time, to assess the situation in this part of Ashkenazic society in more concrete terms.

From the larger perspective of medieval Jewish intellectual history, the range of views in Ashkenaz that we have traced with regard to anthropomorphism helps to diminish the “backward” image that has sometimes been assigned to the talmudic scholars of this region (as compared, for example, to Maimonides). Without benefit of a sustained philosophical tradition, the Tosafists (not to mention the German pietists) were able nonetheless to respond to the important theological questions that stood before them, against the backdrop of the full corpus of talmudic and rabbinic literature. The positions that they developed are interesting and even innovative, and they speak to a more varied and sophisticated rabbinic culture in medieval Ashkenaz than has been imagined until now.

## Notes

1. Ms. Neofiti 11, fol. 219v: כי רוב חכמי צרפת מנשימים. See Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 406–7. On Rabbi Samuel

- b. Mordekhai and his epistle, cf. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 224–26, and Moshe Idel, “Qeta Iyyuni le-R. Asher b. Meshullam mi-Lunel,” *Qiryat Sefer* 50 (1975): 148–53.
2. See the text of Nahmanides’ letter published in *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. C. D. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1968), 1:345–46 [= *Qoveš Teshuvot ha-Rambam* (Leipzig, 1859), sec. 3. fols. 9d–10b]. Cf. Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 79: “Not only rationalist polemicists but even an anti-rationalist like Nahmanides indicates that anthropomorphism played an important role in the condemnation of Maimonides’ works [in Ashkenaz].” Nahmanides cites extensively from a treatise of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms to show that Eleazar did not subscribe to the anthropomorphic view. Nahmanides indicates that there were some right-minded (but unnamed) *Hakhmei Šarefat* who agreed with the non-anthropomorphic view. E. E. Urbach, *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1963), 74–81, suggests that the goal of Eleazar in composing his treatise and, indeed, the broader purpose of the German pietists in developing their *torat ha-kavod*, was to counter those around them who insisted on radical anthropomorphism. See below, notes 66, 68, 70.
  3. See ms. Cambridge Add. 507. 1, fols. 75r–v, transcribed in Joseph Shatzmiller, “Les Tossafistes et la Première Controverse Maimonidienne,” *Rashi et la culture juive en Fance du Nord au moyen age*, ed. G. Dahan et al. (Paris: E. Peeters, 1997), 75. Later in his letter (fol. 78–v; Shatzmiller, 79–80), Asher claims that the rabbis of northern France decreed that the Bible and the Talmud must be studied only according to the commentaries of Rashi, ostensibly because Rashi tends to interpret in accordance with rabbinic teachings and the plain sense meaning of *aggadah*. (This claim is also found in the letter to the rabbis of northern France sent by Samuel b. Abraham Saporta; see B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 78.) And yet, Asher notes, there are instances in which Rashi interprets a biblical verse according to its context, unlike Onkelos does and without any support from talmudic literature. Moreover, Rashi maintains in “many instances” that Scripture is phrased in a manner that “appeases the ear” (לשכך את האזן) so that it can be understood in a way “which comports with the words of our teacher (Maimonides).” Shatzmiller (note 229) suggests that an example of this can be found in Rashi’s commentary to Exodus 15:8, “And with a blast of Thy nostrils the waters [of the Red Sea] were piled up.” Rashi’s comment is that “Scripture speaks as if this were possible of the Divine Presence in the way of a king of flesh and blood, only in order to let the ears of people hear in accordance with what usually happens, in order that they will be able to understand the matter. When a person is angry, his breath emerges from his nostrils.” See also Shatzmiller, note 167.
  4. This is evident throughout the studies of the Maimonidean Controversy (with special emphasis on the events of the 1230s) that have appeared over the last four decades. See, e.g., D. J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy, 1180–1240* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), chaps. 8–9; Joseph Shatzmiller, “Li-Temunat ha-Maḥloqet ha-Rishonah al Kitvei ha-Rambam,” *Zion* 35 (1969): 126–44; Shatzmiller, “Iggarto shel R. Asher b. Gershon le-Rabbanei Šarefat mi-Zeman ha-Maḥloqet al Kitvei ha-Rambam,” *Meḥqarim be-Toledot Am Yisra’el ve-Ereš Yisra’el le-Zekher Zvi Aoneri*, ed. A. Gilboa et al. (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1970),

- 129–40; Shatzmiller, “Les Tossafistes et la Première Controverse Maimonidienne,” 54–82; Azriel Shohat, “Berurim be-Farashat ha-Pulmus ha-Rishon al Sifrei ha-Rambam,” *Zion* 36 (1971): 26–60; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, chaps. 4–5; David Berger, “Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times,” in *Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures*, ed. J. J. Schacter (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1997), 85–100. See also Moshe Halbertal, *Bein Torah le-Hokhmah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 114, and below, at n. 21.
5. E. E. Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 4th ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), 2:713–15.
  6. Thus, for example, both Avraham Grossman, “Shorashav shel Qiddush ha-Shem be-Ashkenaz ha-Qedumah,” *Qedushat ha-Hayyim ve-Heruf ha-Nefesh*, ed. Isaiah Gafni and Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1992), 99–130, and Israel Ta-Shma, “Hitabdut ve-Rezah ha-Zulat al Qiddush ha-Shem: Li-She’elat Meqomah shel ha-Aggadah be-Massoret ha-Pesiqah ha-Ashkenazit,” *Yehudim Mul ha-Şelav*, ed. Y. T. Assis et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 150–56, have argued with respect to preemptive acts of martyrdom (including suicide and the killing of others) that Ashkenazic rabbinic leaders decided these difficult matters of Jewish law on the basis of aggadic passages within the talmudic corpus. Without undermining in any way the validity of this approach, I have demonstrated that medieval Ashkenazic martyrdom was justified by leading rabbinic decisors on the basis of precise halakhic grounds and categories as well. See my “Halakhah and *Mezi’ut* (Realia) in Medieval Ashkenaz: Surveying the Parameters and Defining the Limits,” *Jewish Law Annual* 14 (2003): 193–224.
  7. Note, e.g., the comment of Rabbi Samson of Sens (*Kitab ‘al Rasa’il*, ed. Yehiel Brill [Paris, 1871], 136): ואיך יעלה על לב [איש] לומר שלא רקח דברי ה[א]גדה כפסטה, cited and briefly discussed by Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 57–58, and see below, note 18. Cf., however, *Shitah Mequbbešet to Bava Meši’a* 85b. The Talmud recounts an incident in which Elijah showed a rabbinic scholar the members of the heavenly academy in their heavenly abode, with the proviso that this scholar not look at the throne on which Rabbi Hiyya sat. The scholar could not restrain himself and his eyes were injured. Although the standard *Tosafot* (B.M. 86a, s.v. *itseï*) appears to understand this passage in literal terms, *Shitah Mequbbešet* records a passage from *Tosafot Shanş* in which “our teacher” (*rabbenu*), ostensibly Rabbi Samson himself, maintained that Elijah showed this sight to the rabbinic scholar only in a dream.
  8. See Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 7–8, and Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 193–94, and cf. above, note 3. In one instance, Ta-Shma contrasts Rashi’s silence on the aggadic sections that present anthropomorphic challenges early in the first chapter of *Berakhot* (fols. 6–7) with the vigorous anti-anthropomorphic interpretation of his North African predecessor Rabbenu Ḥanan’el. It should be noted, however, that Rabbi Eliezer b. Nathan (Raban), an early German Tosafist from the mid-twelfth century, reproduces a significant part of Rabbi Ḥanan’el’s commentary in his own interpretation (*Sefer Raban, massekhet Berakhot* [reprint; Jerusalem, 1975], sec. 126). Rabbenu Ḥanan’el’s passage is also cited at the end of the twelfth century by Rabbi Judah b. Qalonymus of Speyer, in his *Sefer Yihusei Tanna’im va-Amoraim* (see Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:376–77), and in the thirteenth century (in even greater detail) by Rabbi Isaac b. Moses of Vienna,

in his *Sefer Or Zarua'*; see below, note 84. Ta-Shma also notes Rashi's relatively uncritical acceptance of Rabbi Yishma'el's heavenly journey and conversation with the angel Suri'el (*Berkahot* 51a), which Rashi suggests, citing the *Beraita de-Ma'aseh Merkavah*, was achieved by adjuring a Divine Name. As I have described elsewhere, however, Rashi interprets several other heavenly journeys mentioned by the Talmud in the same manner. These interpretations reflect Rashi's familiarity with Hekhalot literature and other mystical practices and procedures, and are not the result of a simple, literal, or unsophisticated approach to the talmudic passage. See my *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 144–53, and my "Hekkeruto shel Rashi be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot uve-Torat ha-Sod," *Sefer Bar Ilan* (forthcoming). At the same time, *Tosafot Hagigah* 14b, s.v. *nikhnesu le-pardes*, interprets another of these heavenly journeys (which in Rashi's view occurred again by means of an adjured Divine name) as happening only in the minds of the sages involved, an interpretation consonant with the (anti-anthropomorphic) approach of Rabbi Hanan'el referred to above. For this passage and other relevant *Tosafot* variants, see my *Peering through the Lattices*, 189n2.

9. As I have noted in *Peering through the Lattices*, 4–5, 217–18, even those Tosafists who were interested in mysticism and other forms of spirituality hardly expressed themselves within the genre of *Tosafot*. These ideas found their expression, for the most part, in other kinds of compositions and Tosafist literature. This is not surprising, given the decidedly halakhic nature of the talmudic corpus. Indeed, Naḥmanides, who was a leading kabbalist and whose Torah commentary is replete with kabbalistic material, barely refers to kabbalistic issues in his talmudic commentaries. See also Judah Galinsky, "Ve-Lihyot Lefanekha 'Eved Ne'eman kol ha-Yamim': Perek be-Haguto ha-Datit shel R. Mosheh mi-Coucy," *Da'at* 42 (1999): 13–14.
10. Within Ashkenaz, only the German pietists were consistently committed to a level of allegorical interpretation as well. See Joseph Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism: The Evidence of *Sefer Hadrat Qodesh*," *AJS Review* 18 (1993): 216–18. At the trial of the Talmud held at Paris in 1240, Rabbi Yehi'el b. Joseph of Paris asserted that *aggadah* does not have the same binding force as talmudic law (and need not be taken as literally), although the polemical pressure of the trial was undoubtedly a factor in his formulation. See Davis, 217n80, and Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," 97–98. Israel Ta-Shma's interesting theory, that Nicholas Donin prior to his apostasy was part of a group that wished to rebel against the "Talmudism" of the Tosafists, in part by reading the written Torah allegorically, has not been sufficiently demonstrated. See Ta-Shma, "R. Yehiel de Paris: L'homme et l'oeuvre, religion et societe," *Annuaire des Ecole pratique des hautes etudes* 99 (1990–91): 215–19. The (Jewish) allegorists referred to by Rabbi Joseph b. Isaac *Bekhor Shor* in his biblical commentary (Leviticus 17–11, Numbers 12:8, Deuteronomy 6:9, and by Rabbi Solomon Simḥah of Troyes in his *Sefer ha-Maskil*), noted by Ta-Shma, were in all likelihood from a Spanish or Sefardic milieu, with which *Bekhor Shor* (and Solomon Simḥah) were familiar. See below, notes 33, 55; my "Rabbinic Attitudes Toward Non-Observance in the Medieval Period," in *Jewish Tradition and Nontraditional Jews*, ed. J. J. Schacter (Montvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1992), 3–35 (and esp. 10n17); Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," 119n107; Judah Galinsky, "Mishpat ha-Talmud bi-Shenat 1240

- be-Paris," *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri* 22 (2001–3): 45–48, 65–69; and cf. Martin Lockshin, *Rashbam's Commentary on Exodus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 129n10.
11. For example, Urbach (*Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 714n79) notes *Tosafot Bava Meši'a* 58, s.v. *huz*, which presents a fairly systematic treatment of the order of the punishments that are meted out in *gehinnom*. For a similar treatment concerning the locale of *gan eden*, see *Tosafot Bava Batra* 84b, s.v. *be-zifra*; *Tosafot Bekhorot* 55b, s.v. *mitra*; and *Tosafot Qiddushin* 71b, s.v. *ad*.
  12. On rare occasions, Tosafists do give us systematic glimpses into their beliefs. See, e.g., my "Medieval Rabbinic Conceptions of the Messianic Age: The View of the Tosafists," *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Ezra Fleischer et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 147–70. My methodological contention there is that by detecting repetitive phrases and conceptions in different genres and contexts that cannot be attributed purely to the resolution or interpretation of talmudic texts, it is possible to discover an authentic "personal" position of Tosafist thought. The Tosafists' material on the messianic age contains characteristics and constructs that are diametrically opposed to those of Maimonides. Nonetheless, the Tosafists developed and presented their material in an equally consistent and nuanced way.
  13. A comparison to the first edition of Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* (Jerusalem, 1956), 551–53, shows that little was added or changed in this topic for the revised edition. See also Yonah Frenkel, *Darkhei ha-Aggadah ve-ha-Midrash* (Giv'atayim: Yad la-Talmud, 1991), 2:512–23.
  14. The fact that the position of the northern French anti-rationalists on anthropomorphism is not found explicitly in any of their writings, but is recorded only in documents written by the Maimonists, is noted in several of the studies cited above, note 4. See, e.g., Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 79, and Shatzmiller, "Iggarto shel R. Asher b. Gershom," 134–35. As noted (above, note 2), the treatise of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms cited by Nahmanides in his letter implies that there were those who believed that God is corporeal, although in this case as well, no names are mentioned and it is impossible to determine whether Eleazar had any specific individuals in mind (greater or lesser rabbinic scholars or laypersons) and where they were located (within the Rhineland or even beyond).
  15. *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. Chavel, 1:338. Cf. above, note 2. To be sure, Nahmanides throughout his talmudic *hiddushim* frequently refers to the interpretations of *rabboteinu ha-Šarefatim/hakmei ha-Šarefatim* (not to mention [*ba'al ha-*] *Tosafot*), titles that often denote specific and recognized Tosafist authors and compositions. These designations, however, do not represent Tosafists beyond the era of Ri (Isaac b. Samuel of Dampierre) (d. 1189) and Rabbi Samson of Sens (d. 1214). See, e.g., *Hiddushei ha-Ramban le-Massekhet Ketubot*, ed. Ezra Chwat (Jerusalem: n.p., 1993), editor's introduction, 31–38. As Chwat notes, Nahmanides also had access to *Tosafot* and talmudic interpretations from the study halls of the brothers of Evreux and Rabbi Yehi'el of Paris through his cousin Rabbenu Yonah. These rabbinic figures, however, are never mentioned in connection with the *herem* and, indeed, do not seem to have had any involvement in the Maimonidean Controversy. See below, notes 17, 18, 22. On Nahmanides' goals and strategy in writing his letter, see David Berger, "How Did Nahmanides Propose to Resolve the Maimonidean Controversy?" *Me'ah She'arim* (above, note 12), 135–46.

16. For the title of Asher's letter, see Shatzmiller, "Les Tossafistes," 63. In the body of the letter, Asher refers to רבתי רבני צרפת וחכמיה, and he mentions passages and ideas in both *Mishneh Torah* and *Moreh Nevukhim*; cf. Shatzmiller, 62, 72, 74–78. (On 79, however, Asher refers to a group of *rabbanei Şarefat* who were able to see Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of *Moreh Nevukhim* only after they arrived in Marseilles. Cf. Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Yehudei Şarefat Bimei ha-Benayim* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001], 186.) Similarly, the letter sent by Samuel Saporta is titled כתב אשר שלח הרב ר' שמואל ב"ר אברהם [ספורטא] לרבני צרפת וקנאתו על מה שהשיגו על הרב רבני משה ז"ל. This letter contains a strong critique of the anthropomorphic view that was supposedly held by these rabbis, and refers to passages in *Moreh Nevukhim* that were apparently available to them. See *Yeshurun*, ed. Joseph Kobak, vol. 8 (Bamberg, 1875), 132–39, 152–53.
17. See A. Shohat, "Berurim be-Farashat ha-Pulmus ha-Rishon," 30–31, and D. J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy*, 159n1. On Rabbenu Yonah's student days at Evreux, see my *Peering through the Lattices*, 27, 63–64, 70–72. It should be noted that the study hall at Evreux was linked in a number of respects to the German pietists, whose anti-anthropomorphic views will be discussed below. Whether Rabbenu Yonah would have found this academy particularly receptive to his mission is therefore questionable. Cf. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 64: "It would seem that Rabbi Jonah, a former student at the French academies, personally brought the case before those old teachers," and below, note 20.
18. In the so-called resurrection controversy that took place in the early years of the thirteenth century (the anti-Maimonist) Rabbi Meir *ha-Levi* Abulafia (Ramah) sent Maimonidean material to Rabbi Samson b. Abraham of Sens (and his Tosafist brother Rabbi Isaac b. Abraham [Riṣba] of Dampierre) among other rabbinic figures, and received a relatively mild response composed by Rabbi Samson. Although the letter of Ramah ultimately reached Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, three of the other five northern French figures to whom Ramah addressed his letter, Samson of Corbeil, David of Chateau Thierry, and Abraham of Touques, are otherwise unknown to us. See Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 48–50, and Norman Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 402n75. Of the remaining two, Solomon (*ha-Qadosh*) b. Judah of Dreux was a Tosafist who had studied with Ri (see Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:337–40; Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy*, 400–403; and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 97–98), and Eliezer b. Aaron of Bourgogne apparently authored a treatise on *issur ve-heter* titled *Sha'arei ha-Panim*, that is cited (once) by two late medieval halakhic compendia. Cf. Simcha Emanuel, "Sifrei Halakhah Avudim shel Ba'alei ha-Tosafot" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1993), 255–56.

The letter of Asher b. Gershom makes reference to the anti-Maimonidean stance taken by the rabbinic scholars in Orleans (ידם למסרנו למלכות ורובי אורלינגש אשר כתבו כי יש לאל), without mentioning a single scholar by name. Asher also refers to an unidentified French anti-Maimonidean rabbinic figure by the derogatory epithet רב לציין. Moreover, Asher alleges that no fewer than thirty-six *rabbanei Şarefat* set out to defame (the Maimonist) Rabbi David Kimḥi (Radak). Needless to say, we cannot name even one of these rabbis. See Shatzmiller, "Iggarto shel R. Asher b. Gershom," 135–37, and Shatzmiller, "Les Tossafistes et la première

controverse maimonidienne," 60–61. (Shatzmiller's suggestion in his French article that the derisively characterized רב משה רב לציין referred to by Asher may perhaps be a relative of the Tosafist Rabbi Joseph of Clisson [קליסון] is interesting but improbable; in any event, there is no known Tosafist from Clisson by this name.) Corbeil and Orleans were important locales during the Tosafist period and each produced a number of Tosafists. The fact that no known scholars from these places can be identified as an anti-Maimunist heightens the dilemma. In short, there were obviously some northern French talmudic scholars who held this position, but none have been identified as leading Tosafists. And yet, a number of contemporary scholars refer consistently to the anti-Maimonidean stance of "the Tosafists." Indeed, Shatzmiller titled his French article "The Tosafists and the First Maimonidean Controversy" (and see esp. 55–57), and Septimus writes (63–64) that "Solomon [of Montpellier]'s circle turned for support to the Tosafist schools of northern France. . . . Discoveries by Joseph Shatzmiller have shown that at least some of the Tosafists responded with sharp condemnation of Provençal rationalism." See also Jeffrey Woolf, "Maimonides Revisited: The Case of the *Sefer Miswot Gadol*," *HTR* 90 (1997): 178, 189. The absence of leading Ashkenazic rabbinic (Tosafist) names associated with the purported northern French *herem* against *Sefer ha-Madda* and *Moreh Nevukhim* is noted by Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," 109n107 (in the name of Haym Soloveitchik), and by Schwarzfuchs, *Yehudei Şarefat Bimei ha-Benayim*, 196. I have heard this from Israel Ta-Shma as well. See also Dan, "Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy," *Maimonidean Studies* 3 (1992–93): 31.

19. See Moritz Gudemann, *Ha-Torah ve-ha-Hayyim*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1897), 56n4, and cf. Moshe Idel, "Kabbalah and Elites in Thirteenth-Century Spain," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9 (1994): 5–19, and Boaz Hus, "Hofa'ato shel Sefer ha-Zohar," *Tarbiş* 70 (2001): 532–42. On the relatively small size of the Tosafist academies (especially in northern France), and the distinction between Tosafist academies and other (lesser) *battei midrash* (and Torah scholars) within medieval Ashkenaz, see my *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 16–18, 49–51, 66–68. See also the above note, and below, notes 26, 117.
20. The letter was published by Shatzmiller, "Li-Temunat ha-Maḥloqet ha-Rishonah al Kitvei ha-Rambam," 139, from ms. British Museum Add. 27131, and cf. Shatzmiller, 127–30. The preamble begins with the phrase, וזאת אגרת אחת מאגרות רבני צרפת אשר נתקבצו כולם והסכימו לנדות כל מי שקורא בספר מורה הנבוכים וספר המדע אשר חבר הרב יהודיל רבינו משה בן מיימון זצ"ל. The letter is signed by שלמה שיחיה ר', שמואל בן הנדיב ר' יצחק בן הנדיב ר' שלמה שיחיה. Falaise is proximate to Evreux and perhaps Samuel was in touch with Rabbenu Yonah, although, as indicated, there is no evidence for any such contact.
21. Samuel's father, Rabbi Solomon b. Samuel *ha-Şarefati*, traveled to Germany where he was a student of both Rabbi Samuel and Rabbi Judah *he-Hasid*. He authored a Torah commentary in the style of the German pietists, replete with *gematria* and *sod* interpretations, and he also composed interpretations of difficult passages within Abraham Ibn Ezra's biblical commentaries, especially those dealing with Divine names. Among the *sodot* that Rabbi Solomon explains is the notion mentioned cryptically by Ibn Ezra that Moses did not write all the verses in the Torah

himself and several phrases or expressions were added by others (a concept also found in the biblical commentaries of Rabbi Judah *ha-Hasid* and other members of his circle). He also preserved various *sodot ha-tefillah*. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 94–96, 100–102.

- Samuel b. Solomon studied with the Tosafist Rabbi Solomon *ha-Qadosh* of Dreux (one of the recipients of the letter from Ramah to northern France; see above, note 18) and with others who were known for their piety or who had an awareness of mystical concepts. Samuel cites two *gematria* interpretations from his father but otherwise displays no overt tendencies toward *hasidut* or *perishut*, except that he was much more hesitant than his colleague Rabbi Yeḥi'el of Paris in declaring accepted stringencies invalid, even those that were found not to be well based. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 96–100, and cf. N. Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy*, 396–407, 463–74, and Gavriel Zinner, *Oṣar Piṣqei ha-Rishonim al Hilkhot Pesah* (Brooklyn: n.p., 1985), 14–15, 31. On the tendency toward *humra* in the writings of Rabbenu Yonah, see, e.g., Yisrael Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, vol. 2, 28–29; Ta-Shma, “Ḥasidut Ashkenaz bi-Sefarad: Rabbenu Yonah Gerondi—ha-Ish u-Fo’alo,” *Galut Aḥar Golah*, ed. A. Mirsky et al. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1988), 180–91, and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 66–67.
22. On Rabbi Yeḥi'el of Paris, see above, notes 10, 21, and E. E. Urbach, “Helqam shel Ḥakhmei Ashkenaz ve-Ṣarefat ba-Pulmus al ha-Rambam ve-al Sefarav,” *Zion* 12 (1947): 158–59. Rabbi Yeḥi'el had a particular interest in the biblical teachings of Ibn Ezra. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 96n8, 235n43; and cf. Berger, “Judaism and General Culture,” 119n107; I. Ta-Shma, “Mashehu al biqqoret ha-Miqra be-Ashkenaz Bimei ha-Benayim,” *Ha-Miqra bi-Re'i Mefarshav*, ed. Sara Japhet (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 456n21; and Abraham Lifshitz, “R. Avraham Ibn Ezra be-Ferushei Ba’alei ha-Tosafot al ha-Torah,” *Hadarom* 28 (1968): 202–21. On the brothers of Evreux, see above, note 17. On Rabbi Moses of Coucy, see Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:471–73, and the next note.
23. See Woolf, “Maimonides Revisited,” 175–203; Judah Galinsky, “Ve-Lihyot Lefanekha ‘Eved Ne’eman kol ha-Yamim,” 16–22; and cf. Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:468–69 (and in the above note); and Zev Harvey, “She’elat I-Gashmiyyut ha-E-I Ezel Rambam, Rabad, Crescas u-Spinoza,” in *Mehqarim be-Hagut Yehudit*, ed. S. O. Heller Wilensky and M. Idel (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 69–74. Urbach points out that there is not the slightest reference to the Maimonidean Controversy in *Sefer Miṣvot Gadol* (in addition to noting Moses’ effusive praise of Maimonides’ scholarship in the introduction to *Sefer Miṣvot Gadol*; cf. below, note 103), although the pitfalls of allegorical interpretation may have been behind Moses’ vigorous sermons and exhortations to ensure the performance of various precepts. Cf. Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 33–34, 46–47, and Urbach (below, note 26), 154. Galinsky (16n19) notes the veneration for *Mishneh Torah* demonstrated by associates of Rabbi Moses of Coucy in Paris (ca. 1240), who seem to have been unmoved and unaffected by the development of the Maimonidean Controversy. In the absence of a clear and direct statement by Rabbi Moses about anthropomorphism, Galinsky (20n41) is unsure as to where Rabbi Moses stands on this issue. It should be noted, however, that in *Sefer Miṣvot Gadol*, in both the (second) introduction to the positive commandments and in the third positive commandment (citing extensively from an introductory passage in Shabbetai Donnolo’s

*Sefer Hakhmoni* that interprets the phrase in Genesis 1:26, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ; see Shraga Abramson, "Inyanut be-Sefer Mišvot Gadol," *Sinai* 80 [1977]: 210–14, and cf. below, note 41), Rabbi Moses characterizes in detail the pronounced physicality of the human being, as compared to the presumed non-corporeal existence of the Almighty.

24. See Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," 117–19, and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 19n1, 161n70, and 208n40 (and the literature cited). There was, however, an awareness and interest in certain natural and scientific phenomena, especially on the part of the German pietists. The pietists were also more aware of and involved with philosophical teachings and trends. Cf. above, note 10. Woolf (in the above note) suggests that Rabbi Moses of Coucy handled the philosophical material in *Mishneh Torah* in the way that he did in order to render the halakhic material in *Mishneh Torah* more suitable and acceptable to his audience.
25. Cf. below, notes 102–3.
26. Rabbi Yehi'el of Paris, Rabbi Moses of Coucy, and Rabbi Samuel b. Solomon of Falaise are mentioned and linked together in a passage from Qershavyahu (Crespia) *ha-Naqdan* b. Isaac *ha-Sofer* concerning the writing of bills of divorce in Paris; see, e.g., *Teshuvot u-Fesaqim*, ed. Efraim Kupfer (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1973), 325–26. A fourth rabbinic scholar, Rabbi Judah b. David of Melun (or Metz), is also mentioned by Qershavyah as having been involved in this process. As E. E. Urbach notes (*Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:461), however, Judah is referred to only once in the literature of the *Tosafot* (although these four scholars were also invited to participate in the Disputation of Paris in 1240; see Galinsky, "Mishpat ha-Talmud be-Paris," n. 26). There is no way, therefore, of knowing Judah's view (or the view of other lesser-known scholars like him) on anthropomorphism. Urbach, "Helqam shel Hakhmei Ashkenaz ve-Šarefat ba-Pulmus al ha-Rambam ve-al Sefarav," 149–59, also attempts to document the stance of German Tosafists during the Maimonidean Controversy of the 1230s. The matter requires further elucidation, however, in light of the numerous documents and studies that have appeared in the half-century since this article was published.
27. See Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:132–40.
28. See *Perushei R. Yosef Bekhor al ha-Torah*, ed. Yehoshafat Nevo (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1994), 6: ... אינו אלא לשבר את האוזן ... בכל ענין שירצו להראות לאדם שהקב"ה ופמליה של מעלה מדמין עצמו ...
29. See Ephraim Kanarfogel and Moshe Sokolow, "Rashi ve-Rambam Nifgashim be-Genizah he-Qahirit: Hafnayah el Sefer 'Mishneh Torah' be-Kittav Ehad mi- Ba'alei ha-Tosafot," *Tarbiš* 67 (1998): 411–16.
30. The Tosafist exegetical comment to Genesis 1:26 (*Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. Jacob Gellis, vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Mifal Tosafot Ha-shalem, 1982], 65–66), which Israel Ta-Shma has claimed (in his *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, vol. 2 [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000], 106n22) demonstrates *Bekhor Shor's* use of *Mishneh Torah* is, in fact, an addendum or interpolation made by *Sefer ha-Gan* (ms. Nuremberg 5) to *Bekhor Shor's* core comment on this verse (see below, note 91). *Sefer ha-Gan*, written by Aaron b. Yosef *ha-Kohen*, was completed ca. 1240, when *Mishneh Torah* was already more widely available in northern France. For the heavy influence of *Bekhor Shor's* commentary on *Sefer ha-Gan*, see J. Mitchell Orlian, "Sefer ha-Gan: Text and Analysis of the Biblical Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1973), 54–61. Pro-

- fessor Orlian was kind enough to inform me that the text of *Sefer ha-Gan* found in ms. Vienna Heb 28 (19/5) cites *Mishneh Torah* in a comment to Leviticus 21:4. Cf. Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, vol. 8 (Jerusalem: Mifal Tosafot Ha-Shalem, 1990), 119.
31. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 160–61n69, 166–67n86, and the literature cited.
  32. See, e.g., S. A. Poznanski, *Mavo al Ḥakhmei Şarefat Mefarshai ha-Miqra* (reprint, Jerusalem: n.p., 1965), 66, and Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:234. With regard to the literary conventions (*le-sabber et ha-ozen*) noted by Bekhor Shor in Genesis 1:26, see also his commentary to Numbers 23:22.
  33. See, e.g., Nevo's introduction to his edition of *Bekhor Shor's* Torah commentary, 3; *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. Gellis, 1:115; Moshe Idel, "Perush Mizmor Yod Tet bi-Tehillim le-Rav Yosef Bekhor Shor," *Alei Sefer* 9 (1981): 63–69; Avraham Grossman, "Ha-Qesharim bein Yahadut Sefarad le-Yahadut Ashkenaz Bimei ha-Benayim," *Moreshet Sefarad*, ed. Ḥaim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 176–77; Avraham Grossman, *Ḥakhmei Şarefat ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 472–73; and cf. Lifshitz (above, note 22), 219–21.
  34. Cf. Galinsky, "Ve-Lihyot Lefanekha 'Eved Ne'eman kol ha-Yamim,'" 20–22.
  35. See *Moreh Nevukhim* I:46, II:44–45.
  36. See, e.g., Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 144–48, and cf. below, note 69. Wolfson characterizes what the prophets saw, according to this theory, as a mental image (*dimyon*). A text of Rabbi Judah *he-Hasid* defines this conception of a prophetic vision as an *aḥizat enayim* (illusion). See Joseph Dan, "Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy," 38–39; Dan, *Iyyunim be-Sifrut Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (Ramat Gan: Masadah, 1975), 165; and cf. below, note 67.
  37. The first northern French Tosafist and biblical exegete (and polemicist) to deny Divine anthropomorphism was actually Rashbam; see below, note 89. Since Nahmanides was certainly aware of the Torah commentary of *Bekhor Shor* (see Hillel Novetzky, "The Influence of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor and Radak on Ramban's Commentary on the Torah" [M.A. thesis, Yeshiva University, 1992], 6–33), perhaps *Bekhor Shor* is to be counted as part of the "minority position" among northern French rabbis to whom Nahmanides alludes in his letter. See above, note 2.
  38. On Rabbi Moses as Tosafist and halakhist, see Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:420–23. See also J. N. Epstein, "R. Mosheh Taku b. Ḥisdai ve-Sifro Ketav Tamim," in *Mehqarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmud uvi-Leshonot Shemiyot*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 294–302; and my "The Development and Diffusion of Unanimous Agreement in Medieval Ashkenaz," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 3, ed. Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 29–31.
  39. *Ketav Tamim* [facsimile edition of ms. Paris H711 with an introduction by Joseph Dan] (Jerusalem: Dinur Center, 1984), 53–55 (fols. 27a–28a): ... ולא ידמה לו שם דמות ... וכשרצונו להראות עצמו למלאכים מראה עצמו בקומה זקופה ... ופעמים מראה להם אור משונה בלא דמות ... וכשרוצה הקב"ה לדבר עם נביא יוצא קול במקום שזורחת שכינתו.
  40. Cf. M. M. Kasher, *Torah Shelema*, 16:315–19. Because of the similarities in terminology between *Bekhor Shor* and Taku, Kasher posits that they share the same overall view (that God, despite the fact that He has no physical form *per se*, can choose different guises to adopt including physical ones), against the view of Maimonides that God cannot have any corporeal characteristics whatsoever.

41. Saadya, in the second section (*ma'amar ha-yihud*) of his *Emunot ve-De'ot* (Leipzig, 1859), 62, writes that the kavod sometimes appears as "a (great) light, and not in a human form." Shabbetai Donnolo, the tenth-century Byzantine scholar whose *Sefer Hakhmoni* was available in medieval Ashkenaz, interprets the *demut ha-Elohim* of Genesis 1:26 as "light that has no measure or [dimension of] greatness." According to Donnolo, however, the boundless light is to be identified with the invisible "upper glory," and is not the Divine manifestation that was revealed to created beings, prophetic or angelic. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 127–34.
42. Texts from the *Circle of the Special Cherub* (*Hug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuhad*) identify the revealed (or emanated) Divine glory as having "neither form nor image, only voice, spirit and speech." See Joseph Dan, "The Emergence of Mystical Prayer," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge, Mass.: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), 93–99. See also *Sefer ha-Maskil*, below, note 56. Again, however, the reference here is to the Divine glory and not to a direct appearance of the Almighty himself.
43. For Maimonides, see, e.g., *Perush ha-Mishnayot le-Sanhedrin*, chap. 10, "Yesod shel-ishi"; *Mishneh Torah*, "Yesodei ha-Torah" 1:11, and *Moreh Nevukhim* I:54. For Saadya, see his *Emunot ve-De'ot*, ed. Yosef Kafih (Jerusalem: Sura Institute, 1970), 108.
44. See, e.g., Joseph Dan's introduction to the facsimile edition of *Ketav Tamim* (above, note 39), 11–27, and the studies cited in the next note.
45. Because of Rabbi Moses' negative attitude toward *Shi'ur Qomah* (see the next note), Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 423–24, argues that Taku did not advocate a pronounced or extreme version of Divine anthropomorphism (as does D. J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy*, 138–40). Similarly, David Berger, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," 93, suggests that Taku "affirmed a moderate kind of anthropomorphism" (that was nonetheless corporeal by Maimonidean standards). Joseph Dan, "Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy," 43, writes that Taku "most probably . . . did not believe in an anthropomorphic God." According to Joseph Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism," 213, "to suppose that the Ashkenazic rabbis, even Rabbi Moses Taku, the author of *Ketav Tamim* and the most vocal opponent of philosophy, held a corporealist view of God's nature is to credit him and them with a doctrinal or dogmatic approach to theology that they did not in fact take." On the other hand, Hayyim Hillel Ben-Sasson, in his review of Urbach's *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* in *Behinot be-Biqqoret ha-Sifrut* 9 (1956): 51–52, characterized Taku as an outright *magshim*, as did J. N. Epstein (above, note 38), 298–99; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 79; Gad Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir Barukh Hu u-Varukh Shemo be-Sefer ha-Maskil" (part one), *Da'at* 32–33 (1994): 193; and M. Saperstein (above, note 8).
46. Rabbi Moses expresses his opinion on *Shi'ur Qomah* in *Ketav Tamim*, 5 (fol. 3a). For the views of Hasidei Ashkenaz and the associated *Hug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuhad* and their contemporaries, see, e.g., Alexander Altmann, "Moses Narboni's 'Epistle on *Shi'ur Qomah*,'" in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 225–39, and Moshe Idel, "Olam ha-Malakhim bi-Demut Adam," *Mehqerei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisra'el* 3 [1–2] (1984): 1–2, 8–11, 15–19; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 214–34; and cf. below, note 72.

47. See Urbach, Dan, and Davis, above, note 45.
48. See Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, vol. 2, 194n8, and cf. J. Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism," 213, and M. M. Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah*, 16:319, 321. Ta-Shma implies, however, that this approach to anthropomorphism is virtually ubiquitous within Ashkenaz, an assessment that the present study argues should be qualified. Cf. below, note 53, and at note 108.
49. *Ketav Tamim*, 17–18 (fols. 9a–b). Cf. below, note 67.
50. Note the similar distinction between these terms made by Maimonides in *Moreh Nevukhim* I:1, in support of his diametrically opposed position with respect to anthropomorphism. Cf. Zev Harvey, "Qeṣad le-Hathil Lilmod et Moreh ha-Nevukhim 1:1," *Da'at* 21 (1988): 5–23, and Yair Lorberbaum, "'Al Da'atam shel Ḥakhamim z"l lo Altah ha-Hagshamah me-Olam' (Moreh ha-Nevukhim 1:46): Anthropomorphiyyut be-Sifrut Ḥazal—Seqirat Meḥqar Biqortit," *Madda'el ha-Yahadut* 40 (2000): 41–45.
51. *Ketav Tamim*, 7–11 (fols. 4a–6a), and cf. Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah*, 16:310–11: וראוהו על הים כבחור . . . נלחם ובסיני כזקן מלא רחמים . . . וכן כשבא לבראות העולם נראה בדמות ובקומה שהרי בדיבור בראו . . . ואם תאמר בהקב"ה שכתוב בו הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא כיצד היה מתראה בצימצום קומת אדם. On the changeable forms assumed by the angels that Taku describes toward the end of this passage, see below, note 70.
52. On Rabbi Jacob b. Solomon (1070–1140) and his commentary to *Avot*, see Grossman, *Ḥakhmei Ṣarefat ha-Rishonim*, 412–16. From this passage in *Ketav Tamim*, we learn that Jacob was a student of Rashi and a teacher of Rabbenu Tam in northern France. Grossman also sees this passage as proof for Jacob's authorship of the *Avot* commentary found in *Maḥzor Vitry*, because there is a parallel passage in *Maḥzor Vitry* (cited by Grossman, 414n215): כי בצלם אד' להים עצמו עשאו המקום. ואית דלא גרסי הא: . . . דכיון דאין לצור דמיון ולא תמונה מי שאומר ואף כי בצלם אית דמתרגם ארי בצלמא ה' כזה חישישין שמא מין הוא עבד ולא בצלמא דה' ובעברי היקף [הדקף] גדול בצידן של בצלם לפי[נ]ק הטעם להבין פתרונו and their implications, see Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah*, 16:310n3, and *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, 4:80–81. On the author of the *Avot* commentary in *Maḥzor Vitry*, cf. Ta-Shma, "Al Perush Avot shebe-Maḥzor Vitry," *Qiryat Sefer* 42 (1967): 507–8, and Urbach, *Arugat ha-Bosem*, n. 50.
53. See Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism," 212–13n65 (citing M. Saperstein, who describes Taku as "anachronistic and isolated"), and Dan (with whom Davis fundamentally agrees), who argues that Taku was unexceptional (as does Ta-Shma, above, note 48). Septimus (above, note 45) writes, "It would perhaps be rash to assert that R. Moses was fully representative of mainstream Franco-German tradition." Berger (above, note 45), 93, characterizes Taku as "not entirely a marginal figure" (although on 118, he calls *Ketav Tamim* an unusual work). Dan (in the introduction to the facsimile edition of *Ketav Tamim*, 8–11, and in "Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy," 40–47), stresses that Taku's *Ketav Tamim* predates the Maimonidean Controversy and reflects none of its actual struggles (even as Taku does argue strongly against the "heretical" views of Saadya, Maimonides, Ibn Ezra, and the German pietists), and that *Ketav Tamim* does not seem to have caused any stir within Ashkenaz. Urbach maintains (*Arugat ha-Bosem*, 4:80), specifically with regard to anthropomorphism, that Taku saw himself as fighting against a "new heresy" within Ashkenaz

that wished to label those who supported the “incumbent” position of anthropomorphism as heretics. Urbach bases his formulation on a passage in *Ketav Tamim* (facsimile ed., 61, = fol. 31a): כי זו הדת החדש והכמתם חדשה מקרוב באו ויאמרו מה שראו: נביאים הם צורות הברואים. As we have seen, Taku himself insists that wherever the biblical corpus, as explicated by the rabbis of the talmudic period, indicates that God appeared, it was God Himself who appeared, rather than a figure that He created and dispatched הברואים ולא הברואים.

54. See above, note 40. The extent to which Provençal anti-Maimunists (such as those in the circle of Rabbi Solomon Montpellier) held a crude or simplistic form of anthropomorphism is also a matter of conjecture. See, e.g., Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 204–16, 404–8; Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquieres*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980), 282–86 (and the addendum on 358); Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 80–81, and esp. n. 45; Berger, “Jewish and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times,” 94–95; Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy*, 156–63; and Moshe Halbertal, *Bein Torah le-Hokhmah*. Scholem and Urbach (see the above note) attempt to correlate the events and positions in Ashkenaz during the Maimonidean Controversy with the oft-cited gloss of Rabad on anthropomorphism (“*Hilkhot Teshuvah*,” 3:7). Cf. Harvey, above, note 50.
55. See Israel Ta-Shma, “‘Sefer ha-Maskil’—Hibbur Yehudi Şarefati Bilti-Yadua’ mi-Sof ha-Me’ah ha-Yod Gimmel,” *Mehqerei Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisra’el* 2:3 (1983): 417–19; my *Peering through the Lattices*, 239–40, and Susan Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 126–48. Rabbi Solomon Simḥah was interested in the powers and use of Divine names and mentions his teacher Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg and Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* as the greatest authorities in this area. He displays clear familiarity with the *torat ha-kavod* of the German pietists (as well as that of Saadya Gaon), and with a form of the doctrine of the ether (referred to by Solomon as שמו אויר מפלא ברוך הוא וברוך שמו) that was akin to versions of *torat ha-avir* found in the writings of these and other medieval Jewish thinkers, and in Stoic thought as well. See Freudenthal, “Ha-Avir” (part one), 208–9, and Freudenthal, “Stoic Physics in the Writings of R. Sa’adyah Gaon al-Fayyumi and Its Aftermath in Medieval Jewish Mysticism,” *Arabic Science and Philosophy* 6 (1996): 133–36. Although Solomon did not have access to Maimonides’ writings (see the next note), Freudenthal shows that he was aware of non-Ashkenazic sources such as Ibn Gabirol’s *Keter Malkhut* and various Provençal philosophical writings (in addition to Saadya’s *Sefer Emunot ve-De’ot* and Donnolo’s *Sefer Ḥakhmomi*). Einbinder notes Solomon’s awareness of Sefardic *piyyut*; see *Beautiful Death*, 132.
56. See the introductory section to *Sefer ha-Maskil*, ms. Moscow 508, fol. 1v (transcribed in Gad Freudenthal, “Ha-Avir Barukh Hu u-Varukh Shemo be-Sefer ha-Maskil” [part two], *Da’at* 34 [1995]: 87–88): וראיתי דברי בני אדם אשר נקראו בשם גדולים . . . באמרם ויאמרו ה’, וידבר ה’ אין זה אלא משל שאין חכמים ופילוסופים אשר יצאתה מהם שגגה. . . באמרם ויאמרו ה’, וידבר ה’ אין זה אלא משל שאין מאמר ודבור יוצא אלא ממני שיש לו פה ובקב”ה אין לנו לומר שום נשמות וחיתוך איברים ודמיון הדבר למשל ואמרו כי לא היה בזה רק דעה של משה ודעה של ישראל. ומי הוא אשר לא ימצא בזה עקירת נפש מן האמונה השלימה. . . ועוד כי כבר ידענו שאין הפה מדבר ואין העין רואה. אבל הרוח כל זמן שהוא בתוך הלב [האדם] רואה דרך עינים ומדבר דרך הפה. וכל זה גורם לו הרוח, כי לאחר שמת האדם מי מעכבו מלדבר - הלא יש לו פה! וכן בהמות וחיות ועופות שיש להם פה מי מעכבן מלדבר? אלא הרוח הוא

- Cf. Rashi's commentary to *Niddah* 31a, s.v. *mar'eh ha-ayin* (noted by Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" [part one], 221n120): שאע"פ שנבראת העין מן האב והאם, אינו רואה [בלא הקב"ה שנותן לו רוח ונשמה וכו']. תדע שהרי המת יש לו עינים ויש לו שפתיים ויש לו אזניים ואינו רואה ולא שומע ולא מדבר. On this section in *Sefer ha-Maskil*, see also Ta-Shma, "Sefer ha-Maskil," 420. Ta-Shma argues, correctly in my view, that those scholars who hold the position rejected by Solomon are Jewish thinkers. Indeed, Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 192–93, suggests that Solomon is criticizing the view of Maimonides himself, although he also maintains that Solomon does not seem to have had *Mishneh Torah* in front of him. Rather, Solomon became aware of Maimonides' views on anthropomorphism (as they appear in *Mishneh Torah*) from another Ashkenazic source that had this work (such as Abraham b. Azri'el's *Arugat ha-Bosem*). Solomon certainly did not have a copy of *Moreh Nevukhim*. Cf. Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 205, and see below, note 106. A more detailed version of the passage just cited (which further supports the notion that Rabbi Solomon Simḥah is arguing against learned Jewish allegorists) is found in *Sefer ha-Maskil* on fols. 48a–b. See Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 195, and (part two), 121–22.
57. Moscow 508, fol. 9a (Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" [part two], 89): העקר להעשיר את הדעת: אשר לבם פונה והולך אנה ואנה . . . וכבר ידענו כי אין להשיי דמות וצורה כמה שני ואל מי תדמויני ואשה ואל מי תדמוין ארל ומה דמות תעאכו לו כי אעפ"י שגא עיני ה', פני ה', יד ה' . . . והארץ הדום רגלי, לשבר את האזן מה שהיא יכולה לשמוע וכתב. כי ודאי אין להקב"ה דמות וצורה עומדת. ומה שנגלה ליחזקאל ולישעיהו לא נגלה להם בדמות אמתית עומדת אלא בדמות שהוא לפי שעה ובאספקלריא שאינה מאירה היו רואים ולא היו יכולין לכונן להשיג אמתית עצמותו והמראה ההיא לא היתה אלא לפי ערך נפלאו כי עמדו הנביאים (Phrases in this passage are reminiscent of formulations by Rabbenu Ḥanan'el in his talmudic commentary. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 147–48, and above, note 36). See also the introductory section of *Sefer ha-Maskil*, cited by Ta-Shma, 420–21: ועד נפלאו כי עמדו הנביאים ואמר אחד מהם ראיית את ה' וישב על כסאו וכל צבא השמים עומדים עליו מימינו ומשמאלו אם כן נראה כמייחס להם לו גבול שיש לו ימין ושמאל וכן נאמר ביחזקאל . . . וכל העולם יודעים כי אין לו חקר וקצבה, בריך הוא, and ms. Moscow 508, fol. 12a (Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" [part two], 90).
58. See Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 195n19, and above, note 41.
59. Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 193–94n15a, also notes that the phrase אין להשיי דמות used by Rabbi Solomon Simḥah has parallels in *Mishneh Torah*, Saadya's *Emunot ve-De'ot*, and works of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (including his *Sefer Roqeah*). In this instance, however, there are also parallels to the passage by Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor (see above, note 28), and in Moses Taku's *Ketav Tamim* (above, note 39).
60. Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 193.
61. Ms. Moscow 508, fol. 9b (Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" [part two], 89–90).
62. Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 189–92. See also Ta-Shma, "Sefer ha-Maskil," 429: האויר המופלא ברוך הוא וברוך שמו הוא הקב"ה והוא הממלא את הכל והנמצא בכל: 429.
63. Freudenthal, "Ha-Avir" (part one), 196.
64. See Ta-Shma, "Sefer ha-Maskil," 427–31; Berger, "Jewish and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," 95, and cf. above, note 55.
65. On the availability of a Hebrew paraphrase of Saadya's *Emunot ve-De'ot* in *Medieval Ashkenaz*, see, e.g., Ronald Kiener, "The Hebrew Paraphrase of Sa'adiah Gaon's *Kitab 'al Amanat wa'l-l'tiqadat*," *AJS Review* 11 (1986): 1–25, and cf. my *Peer-ing through the Lattices*, 219n68.

66. See, e.g., Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), 110–16; J. Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1968), 104–16, 129–30; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 134n30, 193–94, 214–15; Daniel Abrams, “Ha-Shekhinah ha-Mitpalelet Lifnei ha-Qadosh Barukh Hu—Maqor Ḥadash li-Tefisah Te’osofit ešel Ḥasidei Ashkenaz,” *Tarbiš* 63 (1994): 510–11; and cf. above, note 36.
67. See Joseph Dan, *Iyyunim be-Sifrut Ḥasdei Ashkenaz*, 165–73, and Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 38–39. As Dan notes (42–43), Rabbi Moses Taku was aware of this treatise, referring to it as *Sefer ha-Kavod*. See also above, note 49.
68. See Joseph Dan, “Sefer Sha’arei ha-Sod ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah le-R. Eleazar mi-Worms,” *Temirin* 1 (1972): 141–56; Gad Freudenthal (above, note 59); *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, 4:74; *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. Bologna, sec. 2.
69. Dan, “Sefer Sha’arei ha-Sod ha-Yihud,” esp. 146–47, 151. Cf. D. Abrams, “Sod Kol ha-Sodot’: Tefisat ha-Kavod ve-Kavvanat ha-Tefillah be-Khitvei R. Eleazar mi-Worms,” *Da’at* 34 (1995): 61–72, and Abrams, “From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature,” *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 50–55. It is important to note that *Bekhor Shor*, Moses Taku, and *Sefer ha-Maskil*, like the German pietists, were all very much aware of the various approaches to anthropomorphism held by Spanish (Sefardic) rationalists. See above, notes 33, 41, 49, 55, and see Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 34–38. The awareness of these materials is perhaps one of the elements that distinguishes these figures (including Moses Taku) from those Ashkenazic Jews who may have been simple *magshimim*.
70. Dan, “Sefer Sha’arei ha-Sod ha-Yihud,” 146: ומה שכתב זימאר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמינו . . . כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם, לא כדמותינו . . . ויברא את האדם בצלמו בצלם אלהים ברא אותו . . . כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם, לא שישלבורא יתי דמות וצלם בריוותי, אלא פיר' בצלמינו שאנו חפצים להתראות לנביאים בפרצוף אדם החמ ודוהא פני אדם צלם המיוחד לנו דמות דמיון הנראה לנו מכובד ויקר זהו בצלמו המכובד בעיניו בצלם מלאכים נראים בו שהוא יקר. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 210–11, also records another instance of this interpretation in Eleazar’s writings. He notes (n. 89) that Eleazar follows the interpretation of Ibn Ezra to Genesis 1:26 (“the expression ‘in God’s image’ refers to an angel”). This is the interpretation of Rashbam as well; see below, note 89. Wolfson mentions the view of the German pietists (and others) implied in their interpretation of Genesis 1:26 (and against the philosophical view of Maimonides), that the angels (like man) are composed of both matter and form. Cf. Moses Taku (above, note 51); *Tosafot Bava Mešit’a* 85b, s.v. *nir’in ke-okhlin*; *Perushei R. Yosef Bekhor Shor al ha-Torah* to Genesis 18:1 (ed. Nevo, 30); *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. Gellis (Jerusalem: Mifal Tosafot Ha-Shalem, 1983), 2:110. Not surprisingly, Rashbam and *Bekhor Shor* (and *Sefer ha-Gan*; see below, note 93) are closer to the Maimonidean view, but without the philosophical dimension. Cf. below, note 90.
71. *Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. Chavel, 1:346–47: ואין לו גבול ולא . . . כי אין קץ ותכלית לכל אשר יש בו ואין לו גבול ולא . . . לא יהיה כוונתם אברים לבורא העולמים . . . וכתבו שאין דמות וגשם לבורא וקללו המאמין בה . . . לא יהיה כוונתם בדבר הנראה לעין מלאכים או לעין נביאים לקרותו אל כי אם ביוצר כל אשר אין לו דמות ואין לו קץ.
72. *Ibid.*, 1:348 (וידעתי כי הספר ההוא מצוי אצלכם). On the diffusion of this work, see Urbach, “Ḥelqam shel Ḥakhmei Ashkenaz ve-Šarefat ba-Pulmus al ha-Ramban ve-al Sefarav,” 151; Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:408–9; and my *Peering through*

- the Lattices*, 19–20. On the understanding and use of *Shi'ur Qomah* by *Hasidei Ashkenaz* as referring to the *kavod ha-nir'eh* (in a manner similar to that of Saadya Gaon), see above, note 46.
73. See *Perush Sefer Yeşirah le-R. Eleazar mi-Worms*, cited and analyzed in Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 207–8. *Dimyon(ot)* in this context denotes that the invisible is made visible. Cf. Moshe Idel, “Le-Gilgulehah shel Tekhniqah Qedumah shel Ḥazon Nevu’i Bimei ha-Benayim,” *Sinai* 86 (1980): 1–3.
74. See J. Dan, “‘Sifrut ha-Yihud’ shel Ḥasidei Ashkenaz,” *Qiryat Sefer* 41 (1966): 533–44; Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*, 164–68.
75. See Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 192–95, 234–69; Moshe Idel, “Gazing at the Head in Ashkenazi Hasidism,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997): 280–94; Arthur Green, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 106–20; Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 31–32; Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*, 156–64; Dan, “*Pesaq ha-Yirah ve-ha-Emunah* and the Intention of Prayer in Ashkenazi Esotericism,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 19 (1991–92): 185–215, although cf. D. Abrams, “The Evolution of the Intention of Prayer to the ‘Special Cherub,’” *FJB* 22 (1995): 1–14. Nahmanides also appears to be anti-anthropomorphic in his letter to the *rabbanei Şarefat* (and in several passages in his biblical commentary); see, e.g., Bernard Septimus, “‘Open Rebuke and Concealed Love’: Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition,” in *R. Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 24–29, and esp. n. 45. In certain kabbalistic contexts, however, his stance becomes more complex as well, and he becomes more supportive of an anthropomorphic orientation. See Yair Lorberbaum, “Qabbalat ha-Ramban ‘al Beri’at ha-Adam be-Şelem E-lohim,” *Kabbalah* 5 (2000): 287–326.
76. See J. Dan, “Seridei Pulmus al Torat ha-E-lohut be-Sefer ‘Sod ha-Sodot’ le-R. Elḥanan b. Yaqar mi-London,” *Tarbiş* 61 (1992): 249–71. The passage under discussion is published by Dan on 265–67 (from ms. JTS 8118, fols. 53a–b): על דברתי בני אדם: כי שכינה האומרים כי שכינה בכל מקום. פתרון דבריהם, בכל מקום טהור שרצונו לזרוח שם שכינתו. כי השמש בשמים זורח בכל מקום נקלה ונכבד, ועל בתי האלילים ועל מקומות מטונפים בכל. הבורא יתברך שמו וזכרו אינו כן, כי זריחתו בכל מקום אשר יבחר לשכן שמו שם. . . . כן אינו מתראש במקדש העליון בזריחתו בכל עת כי אם בעת הצורך. . . ומראיו מתהפכים ברצונו לעינינו רבים כאשר קבלו מפי רבותינו ע"ה. Cf. above, notes 39, 51, and see Dan’s analysis, esp. 267, 270–71. On Elḥanan b. Yaqar, see also my *Peering through the Lattices*, 191–92.
77. See *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, 1:197–201.
78. On the identity of this scholar, see Urbach, “Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem le-R. Avraham b. Azri’el,” *Tarbiş* 10 (1939): 50–51.
79. *Arugat ha-Bosem*, ed. Urbach, 1:201n8.
80. See, e.g., J. Dan’s introduction to the facsimile edition of *Ketav Tamim*, 7.
81. See Urbach, “Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem,” 47–49, and Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 46–47.
82. Cf. Urbach, “Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem,” 49–50.
83. See Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:436–39, and cf. my *Peering through the Lattices*, 111–13.
84. *Sefer Or Zarua’*, vol. 1, “Hilkhot Qeri’at Shema,” secs. 7–8. Cf. I. Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 2:191–92. Moritz Gudemann (above, note 19) notes this

- material from *Sefer Or Zarua'* as part of the specific evidence for his broad contention that no leading Ashkenazic rabbinic figures supported any form of anthropomorphism. A less elaborate version of the interpretation of Rabbenu Ḥanan'el, as recorded by Isaac *Or Zarua'* in sec. 7, is found already in the commentary of the mid-twelfth-century German Tosafist Rabbi Eliezer b. Nathan (*Sefer Raban* [reprint: Jerusalem, 1975], *massekhet Berakhot*, sec. 126). The material in sec. 8 on Rabbi Yishma'el and the identity of Akatri'el is found in the *Seder Tanna'im va-Amora'im* of Rabbi Isaac b. Moses' German predecessor, Rabbi Judah b. Qalonymus (Rivaq) of Speyer (d. ca. 1200); see Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:376–77. Like Isaac, Rivaq offers talmudic proofs for Rabbi Ḥanan'el's claim that Akatri'el represents the *kavod* (and is not an angel), although Isaac's proofs are somewhat different. Cf. my *Peering through the Lattices*, 163–64n75, and Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 261–62. On Isaac *Or Zarua'*'s tendencies toward pietism and mysticism, see my *Peering through the Lattices*, 128–30, 221–25 (and in the above note), and Uziel Fuchs, “Iyyunim be-Sefer Or Zarua' le-R. Yisḥaq b. Mosheh me-Vienna” (M.A. thesis, Hebrew University, 1993), 18–19, 29, 33–40.
85. See my *Peering through the Lattices*, 248–49n79 and the literature cited, and Joy Rochwarger, “Sefer Pa'aneah Raza and Biblical Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenaz” (M.A. thesis, Touro College, Jerusalem, 2000), chap. 4. Cf. Sara Japhet, “The Nature and Distribution of Medieval Compilatory Commentaries in Light of Rabbi Joseph Kara's Commentary on the Book of Job,” in *The Midrashic Imagination*, ed. Michael Fishbane (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 98–122, and Japhet, “Perush ha-Ḥizzequni la-Torah: Li-Demuto shel ha-Ḥibbur ule-Mattarto,” *Sefer ha-Yovel le-Rav Mordekhai Breuer*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher (Jerusalem: Academon, 1992), 91–111.
86. This passage is included in Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 1:61–62, from ms. Warsaw 260 and ms. Bodl. 2344. Cf. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 211. A transcription of this passage is also found in Rochwarger, “Sefer Pa'aneah Raza and Biblical Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenaz,” 79, from ms. Bodl. 2344, fol. 8a.
87. Cf. Rochwarger, “Sefer Pa'aneah Raza and Biblical Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenaz,” 80.
88. Cited in Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 8:84 (and see also *Moshav Zeqenim*, ad loc.): פי לא תחשבו שום דמות להב"ה, והא דכתיב בצלם אֱלֹהִים [בר' ט"ו] ר"ל בצלם חשוב שהיה לו, ולכן יש אתנחנתא תחת בצלם.
89. Cf. M. Lockshin, *Rabbi Samuel b. Meir's Commentary on Genesis* (Lewiston, Me.: Edwin Mellen Press 1989), 53–54. A similar comment (to 1:26) is recorded anonymously, in a manuscript variant (ms. Paris 260) of the Tosafist Torah commentary, *Moshav Zeqenim* (published by Y. S. Lange in *Ha-Ma'ayan* 12 [1972]: 81, and also in Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 1:65): דמות המלאכים דאין לומר דמות הבורא יתברך 1:65): דמה כתיב ואל מי תדמויני ואשוח יאמר קדוש.
90. On Rashbam's rationalism (including his awareness of aspects of Spanish biblical exegesis), and his rejection of mystical teachings, see my *Peering through the Lattices*, 159–61, and cf. Davis, “Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism,” 213n67, and above, note 33. Sarah Japhet has noted in her *Perush Rashbam le-Safer Iyyov* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 127–35, that in his commentary to Job as well, Rashbam attempted to eliminate or reinterpret anthropomorphic depictions of God. Japhet notes, however, that Rashbam is not fully consistent in this

effort. As Mordechai Cohen notes in a forthcoming review of Japhet's book (to appear in *Jewish Quarterly Review*; my thanks to Dr. Cohen for providing me with a typescript of his review), this is because Rashbam does not have the rigorously philosophical outlook that Maimonides did. Cf. Lockshin, *Rabbi Samuel b. Meir's Commentary*, 338–39n3, and above, note 24. A good example of the similarities (and differences) between the exegetical/philosophical approaches of Rashbam and Maimonides can be seen in their interpretations of Genesis 18, the story of the three angels who came to visit Abraham. Coming mostly from the exegetical (*pe-shat*) perspective, but reflecting a degree of rationalism as well, Rashbam puts forward (in his commentary to Genesis 18:1, against the view of Rashi) the fairly radical interpretation that the appearance of the three angels (in physical form, as the Torah describes) constitutes the appearance of God mentioned by the Torah at the beginning of this episode. In *Moreh Nevukhim* II:42, Maimonides, like Rashbam, maintains that God appeared to Abraham in the guise of the angels. A philosophical issue, however, rather than an exegetical one was at the core of Maimonides' interpretation. In Maimonides' rigorous philosophical model, angels, like God, do not have corporeal form. Thus, they appeared to Abraham, as representatives of God, in a prophetic dream. See also *Mishneh Torah*, "Yesodei ha-Torah," 2:7.

91. Ms. Nuremberg 5, cited in Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 1:65–66: אין נכון לומר בדמות: 1:65–66: הבורא כי אין לו לאדם לתת לו דמות ותמונה דכתיב כי לא ראייתם כל תמונה וכתוב אל מי תדמויני ואשור, ואל מי תדמויני אל. ומה שמצינו גבי הבורא עינים ולשון, אין זה כי אם דרך משל להשמיע לאזנינו כמו שכתוב קולו כקול מים רבים. והא דאמר בצלמינו כדמותינו אין זה כי אם על האיום, כלומר שתהיה אימתו מוטלת על הבריות. ובספר הר"ר משה אבן מיימון מצאתי כל העורר דמות לבורא, הוא מאותם שגיהנום כלה ואינם כלים. וביסודו של רבי שמואל ראיתי בצלם המיוחד לנו, כדמותינו כדמות. ועוד ראיתי בספר הר"ר משה אבן מיימון כי עשה מיני משמשין של הקב"ה כלכדמותינו של מטה, הקרובים אלינו הנזכרים בפסוק גבי הגר, גבי יהושע וגבי מנוח, ובהרבה מקומות אותם המלאכים משווים כדמותנו נדמים בדמות כדמותנו, והיינו דכתיב בצלם אלהים ברא אותם פירוש בצלם מלאכים ובהרבה מקומות נקראו מלאכים אלהים. See above, note 30, for another citation of Maimonides by the author of *Sefer ha-Gan*.
92. See above, note 28.
93. The examples that are given in *Sefer ha-Gan*, from the angels that appeared to Hagar, Joshua, and Manoah, are not specifically mentioned in this passage in *Mishneh Torah*, but are mentioned in *Moreh Nevukhim* II:42. See above, note 90. This suggests that the author of *Sefer ha-Gan* had access to *Moreh Nevukhim* as well. See below, note 103.
94. Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 1:65, records two other Tosafist Torah commentaries, ms. Bodl. 271 and ms. Paris 48, which cite the first reference to Maimonides found in *Sefer ha-Gan* (on the punishment for believing God is corporeal), together with Rashbam's comment. Both these collections were put together after *Sefer ha-Gan*, and one of them cites material directly from *Sefer ha-Gan*. See Gellis's introduction, 22–23, 34. The second Maimonides passage found in *Sefer ha-Gan*, on the angels who appear in human form in prophetic visions, is cited in *Perushei ha-Torah le-R. Hayyim Palti'el*, ed. Y. S. Lange (Jerusalem: Hafaṣah Rashit Ben Arza, 1981), 4. Lange notes in his introduction (10–11) that this commentary contains a significant amount of material from both Joseph *Bekhor Shor* and *Pa'aneah Raza*. Hayyim Palti'el was a student of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, who ultimately settled in eastern Germany. His collection of *minhagim* followed those of Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid*,

- including a number that reflect earlier practices in northern France rather than those of Rhineland Germany. Rabbi Ḥayyim Paltī'el appears to have spent some time in northern France himself, and is also referred to as R. Ḥayyim of Falaise. Indeed, somewhat ironically, he may have been the son-in-law of R. Samuel of Falaise (see above, note 21). See Lange in *Alei Sefer* 8 (1980): 142–45, Eric Zimmer, *Olam ke-Minhago Noheg* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1996), 271, 277, 283, 286, 296–97, and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 113. Maimonides' statement of the principle of Divine incorporeality (based on *Mishneh Torah*) is quoted by Jacob b. Judah Ḥazzan of London in his *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, ed. Israel Brodie (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1962), 1:5–6 (איינו גוף וגייה). Cf. Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism," 217–18. On the increased use of *Mishneh Torah* in Ashkenaz in the mid- and late thirteenth century, see, e.g., my "Preservation, Creativity, and Courage: The Life and Works of R. Meir of Rothenburg," *Jewish Book Annual* 50 (1992–93): 250–52.
95. See Ta-Shma, "Ha-Rav Yeshayah di Trani ha-Zaqen u-Qesharav im Byzantiyyon ve-Ereṣ Yisra'el," *Shalem* 4 (1984): 409–16; Ta-Shma, "Ha-Sefer Shibbolei ha-Leqet u-Khfelav," *Italia* 11 (1994): 39–51; Ta-Shma, "R. Yeshayah di Trani u-Mif'alo ha-Sifrutī," *Mehqerei Talmud* 3 [Prof. E. E. Urbach Memorial Volume; in press]. The synopsis presented here follows primarily Ta-Shma's treatment of Rabbi Isaiah in his *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 2:174–87. See also my *Peering through the Lattices*, 223, and my "Progress and Tradition in Medieval Ashkenaz," *Jewish History* 14 (2001): 287–92.
96. Indeed, as noted by Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 2:185, Ritva and other Spanish scholars refer to him as Rabbi Yeshayah *ha-Ashkenazi*.
97. See Ta-Shma, "Sefer 'Nimnuqei Ḥumash' le-R. Yeshayah di Trani," *Qiryat Sefer* 64 (1992–93): 751–75. According to Ta-Shma, the most complete version of this work is preserved in ms. Moscow 303.
98. See *ibid.*, 752. See also Ta-Shma, "The Acceptance of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in Italy," *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 82. Among the northern French and German rabbinic figures cited by RiD are Rabbi Joseph Qara (fol. 77r), Rabbi Joseph *Bekhor Shor*, Rabbi Judah *he-Ḥasid* and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, Rabbenu Tam, Ri, Rabbi Eliezer of Metz' *Sefer Yere'im*, Rabbi Samson of Coucy, RiD's long-standing correspondent Rabbi Isaac, *Or Zarua'* (and Rabbi Isaac's teacher Rabbi Jonathan b. Isaac of Wurzburg), as well as eastern European scholars such as Rabbi Moses Fuller. In addition, one or two Italian scholars are mentioned. See also below, note 112.
99. Ms. Moscow 303, fols. 59v, 64r, and 80r.
100. Ta-Shma, "The Acceptance of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in Italy," 79–90. Cf. Jacob Dienstag, "Yahasam shel Ba'alei ha-Tosafot leha-Rambam," *Sefer ha-Yovel le-S. K. Mirsky*, ed. Simon Bernstein and Gershon Churgin (New York: Va'ad ha-Yovel, 1955), 365.
101. See above, notes 16, 17, 20.
102. See Davis, "Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism," 210n58, and Dienstag, "Yahasam shel Ba'alei ha-Tosafot leha-Rambam," 350–79.
103. On the frequent citation of *Mishneh Torah* by Tosafists in the mid-thirteenth century, see Ta-Shma in *Italia* (above, note 98), and cf. above, notes 2, 23, 28, 94. (On Rabbi Moses of Coucy's possible awareness of the existence of *Moreh Nevukhim*, see Woolf, "Maimonides Revisited: The Case of *Sefer Misvot Gadol*," 186.) The so-called

- perushei Ba'alei ha-Tosafot al ha-Torah* (with the exception of the passage in *Sefer ha-Gan*, above, note 91, which betrays an awareness of *Moreh Nevukhim*) also follow this pattern for the most part. Indeed, these commentaries do not even cite *Mishneh Torah* with much frequency. See, e.g., Gellis, *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 1:61–62, 65–66 (the pieces from *Mishneh Torah* cited in connection with Genesis 1:26; see above, notes 86, 91, 94); 121 (a possible parallel to *Moreh Nevukhim* on the angelic powers of the primordial snake); 183 (a possible parallel to *Moreh Nevukhim* from a passage in Bekhor Shor, cf. above, note 35); 6 (1986): 42 (*Mishneh Torah* on the laws of inheritance); 9 (1993): 101 (a citation from *Mishneh Torah*, “Hilkhot Avodah Zarah”); 172 (the making of the *hoshen* based on *Mishneh Torah*, “Hilkhot Kelei ha-Mikdash”).
104. Rabbi Eleazar of Worm’s pietistic introductory section to his halakhic work, *Sefer Roqeah* (“Hilkhot Ḥasidut”), was patterned, to some extent, after Maimonides’ *Sefer ha-Madda*; cf. Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, 1:393. Maimonides’ “Hilkhot Teshuvah” is also cited extensively in the so-called *Sefer Ḥasidim* I (ed. Bologna, secs. 1–152); see, e.g., Ivan Marcus, “The Recensions and Structure of ‘Sefer Ḥasidim,’” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 131–53. Cf. Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*, 31. And yet, the German pietists do not cite *Moreh Nevukhim* as far as I can tell.
105. *Arugat ha-Bosem* cites liberally from *Mishneh Torah*, including the theological portions of *Sefer ha-Madda*; see Ta-Shma (above, note 100), and Urbach, *Arugat ha-Bosem*, 4:166, 177. Moses Taku, somewhat surprisingly, does not refer to *Moreh Nevukhim* in his attack on Maimonides’ philosophy, but works only with material found in *Mishneh Torah*. Cf. Dan, “Ashkenazi Hasidism and the Maimonidean Controversy,” 31–34, 40–41; Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy*, 138; and cf. above, notes 51, 55. Reference is made to a passage in *Moreh Nevukhim* in a gloss found in the Paris manuscript of *Ketav Tamim* (see the facsimile edition, 43–44 [=fol. 22a-b]). Although the identity of the author of this gloss is unclear, it does not appear to have been Rabbi Moses himself.
106. See Freudenthal, “Ha-Avir” (part one), 193. Cf. above, note 23.
107. To be sure, however, there are no Italian halakhists prior to Rabbi Isaiah who can be positively identified as the conduits. Note that the kabbalist Abraham Abulafia apparently taught or explained pieces of *Moreh Nevukhim* in Rome to RiD’s grandson (and namesake), Rabbi Isaiah the younger (Ri’az), and to the Italian halakhist, Rabbi Zedekiah b. Abraham *ha-Rofe* (author of *Shibbolei ha-Leqet*, d. ca. 1260), who had a strong literary connection with RiD (although he did not actually study with him). See Ta-Shma, “Ha-Rav Yeshayah di Trani,” 411; Moshe Idel, *R. Menahem Reqanati ha-Mekubbal* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1998), 36; and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 228n21.
108. Ta-Shma, “Sefer Nimmuqei Ḥumash,” 752: צלם דמות, כבר חשבו בני אדם כי צלם בלשון, “752: העברי יורה על תמונת הדבר ותואר והביא זה אל הגשמה גמורה לאומי נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וחשבו שהשם על צורת האדם ר”ל תמונתו ותוארו, והתחייבה להם ההגשמה הגמורה והאמינו בה וראו שאם הם יפרדו מזאת האמונה יכאיבו הכתוב, וגם ישימו את השם נעדר אם לא יהיה לו גוף בעל פנים ויד כמותם בתמונה ובתואר, אלא שהוא יותר גדול ויותר בהיר לפי סברתם וחומר שלו גם כן אינו בשר ודם, והוא תכלית מה שיחשבוהו ורוממות בחוק השם. Cf. Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 2:194. After citing Ta-Shma’s “Sefer Nimmuqei Ḥumash,” Yair Lorberbaum, “Al Da’atam shel Ḥakhamim z”l lo Altah ha-Hagshamah me-Olam,” 6nn17–18, 42n170, notes that the passage in *Nimmuqei Ḥumash* is taken word for word from

- Moreh Nevukhim* I:1, but maintains nonetheless that it helps to demonstrate that “many rabbis” in Ashkenaz took anthropomorphism literally.
109. נאמר [בצלמינו כדמותינו] באדם מפני זה הענין ר"ל מפני השכל האלהי המודבק בו שהוא בצלם אלהים [בדמותו], לא שהשם ית' גוף שהיה [א"כ] בעל תמונה. This kind of distinction between *selem* and *demut* was taken to a very different conclusion by Rabbi Moses Taku and Rabbi Jacob b. Samson. See above, notes 51–52.
110. Ms. Moscow 303, fol. 64r: רבי משה בן מיימון ז"ל דבר על זה הפסוק וייסד עליו פרק כ"ד בחלק. ענין הנסיון גם כן מסופק מאוד וכי שלשי לספר מורה הנבוכים, ענין הנסיון גם כן מסופק מאוד וכי. The rest of RiD's commentary to *Va-Yera* consists of the full citation of this chapter, ending on fol. 65v.
111. Ms. Moscow 303, fols. 80r–v, citing from *Moreh Nevukhim* I:66: רבינו משה דבר על זה: הפסוק בחלק הראשון פרק ס"ו וכי.
112. See RiD to Ezekiel 1:26, in *Mikra'ot Gedolot 'Haketer': Ezekiel*, ed. M. Cohen (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000), אלא זו. וחלילה חלילה שנתאר דמות או תמונה לבורא, אלא זו. הצורה ברואה היא לפי שעה שהבורא מדבר לנביאיו. ובכמה צורות משונות מצינו שנדמה לנביאיו, והכל הם נבראים לפי שעה... כמה יסמוך ויאמין כל אדם כי אין דמות לבורא, לא דמות ולא תמונה, ואין לו חקר מרוב דקותו והעלמו. ומה שנדמה לנביאיו הוא דמיון נוצר לפי שעה... [partially cited in E. Z. Melammed, “Le-Perush Nakh shel R. Yeshayah mi-Trani,” *Mehqarim be-Miqra uve-Mizrah' ha-Qadmon Muggashim li-Shmu'el Leonstam bi-Melot lo Shiv'im Shanah*, ed. Yitzhak Avishur and Joseph Blau (Jerusalem: A. Rubenstein, 1978), 292]. RiD is referring here to a form of the הנברא. RiD's last sentence is also quite similar to a formulation of Saadya Gaon in *Emunot ve-De'ot*, ed. Kafiah, 103. For a similar notion of a lower Divine form that is created (or emanated) for a short period of time in order to be shown to a prophet in a particular situation, see, e.g., Dan's edition of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms's *Sefer Sha'arei ha-Sod ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah*, 147, 151, and see above note 69. Cf. the analysis of the German pietists' *Shir ha-Kavod* in Green, *Keter*, 111 (to line 11), “God's appearance changes as is appropriate to human need in a particular situation.” RiD cites a pietistic biblical interpretation of Rabbi Eleazar in his *Nimmuqei Humash*, ms. Moscow 508, fol. 81v, and interpretations of Rabbi Judah *he-Hasid* (fols. 63r, 68v, 85r, 98r). Moreover, Naḥmanides noted the availability of Eleazar's *Sha'arei ha-Sod* within Ashkenaz; see above, note 72. Note also *Tosafot* RiD to *Ḥagigah* 16a, where RiD refers to man's inability to ponder and to ascertain a full understanding and description of the *shekhinah*. In the final section of that discussion (s.v. *de-khtivo ke-mer'eh ha-qeshet*), RiD concludes, כך מראה השכינה אינם יכולים לכוין בביור מה הוא.
113. A letter written from Narbonne to Spain in the 1230s severely ridiculed the “great men of Israel among the *Ṣarefatim* and their scholars, their heads and men of understanding,” for their magical uses of Divine names, angels, and demons through conjuration, referring to them as “madmen full of delusions” and the like. See, e.g., Septimius, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition*, 86–87; Halbertal, *Bein Torah le-Hokhmah*, 115. As I have demonstrated throughout my *Peering through the Lattices*, these practices, found among many (but certainly not all) of the Tosafists in Ashkenaz, were undertaken with the same kind of care and precision that typified the talmudic scholarship of Ashkenaz.
114. In addition, the unique version of the *kavod* theory held by the *Ḥug ha-Keruv ha-Meyuḥad* might have been considered closer to anthropomorphism than the other versions of this theory that we have seen. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, above, note 54, and cf. above, note 76.

115. Berger, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," 95–96. The correspondence between Rabbi Abraham and Rabbi Menahem Agler was published by Efraim Kupfer, "Li-Demutah ha-Tarbutit shel Yahudut Ashkenaz ve-Hakhamehah ba-Me'ot ha-Yod-Daled—Tet-Vav," *Tarbiš* 42 (1972–73): 114–15. See also Y. Y. Yuval, *Hakhamim be-Doram* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 301.
116. Cf. above, notes 53, 76, 81, 88. On the limited reception of *Ketav Tanim* during the early modern period in eastern Europe, see, e.g., *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Ramo*, ed. Asher Siev (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1971), no. 126, sec. 3; and cf. Jacob Elbaum, *Petiḥut ve-Histagrut* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 166n46.
117. See Urbach, *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, above, note 2.
118. See above, note 75.
119. See above, notes 19, 26. Cf., e.g., *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. Gellis, 1:262. Unknown and unnamed Ashkenazic rabbinic figures expressed and implemented their views with regard to a complex, highly charged (and tragic) application of the precept of *kiddush ha-Shem*. Interestingly, the lives and achievements of those who wrote the letters to *Rabbanei Šarefat* on behalf of the Maimonidean corpus, with the obvious exception of Naḥmanides, are also barely known to us.

# Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics

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*Jewish Authority, Dissent,  
and Heresy in Medieval and  
Early Modern Times*

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and  
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