

JAY M. HARRIS



NACHMAN KROCHMAL

Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age

NACHMAN KROCHMAL

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Nachman Krochmal: Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age

NACHMAN
KROCHMAL

GUIDING THE PERPLEXED
OF THE MODERN AGE

Jay M. Harris



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To Cheryl
Song of Songs 2:2

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Moving on to the financial side, I wish to record with

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Erev Shavuot, 5750
Cambridge, Mass.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In Text:

- CJ* Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Hafner, 1951.
- E* Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Edwin Curley, eds., *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Princeton University Press, 1985.
- LPH* G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Dover, 1956.
- LPR* G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Peter Hodgson, ed., University of California Press, 1984–85.
- Nisbet Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, Basic Books, 1980.
- PR* G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Oxford University Press, 1942.
- Shils Edward Shils, "Tradition" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13 (1971): 122–59

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Van Seters John Van Seters, *In Search of History*, Yale University Press, 1983.
- WE J. G. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 14, B. Suphan, ed., Berlin, 1871.
- WS Gotthold Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, H. Chadwick, ed., Stanford University Press, 1956.
- Yerushalmi Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, University of Washington Press, 1982.

In Notes:

- LBIY *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*
- MGWJ *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
- PAAJR *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
- WZJT *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Jüdische Theologie*
- ZWJ *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THERE ARE at least two different approaches one can take in writing the biography of a towering intellectual figure such as Nachman Krochmal (1785–1840). One is to carefully track the events of his life, his friends, acquaintances and enemies, and try to integrate this material with his scholarly achievement. The second is to write an in-depth study of Krochmal's scholarly work, and its place in Jewish and general intellectual history. That is, one can write a biography of the mind that produced the great work, the *More N'vukhe ha-Z'man* (*The Guide of the Perplexed of the Time*). The first approach has already been taken by Simon Rawidowicz, in the introduction to his magisterial edition of Krochmal's work. Although occasionally marred by conjecture and uncritical devotion to his subject, Rawidowicz's work may be seen as the definitive realization of the first approach to writing Krochmal's biography.

This book takes the second approach; although I will pre-

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sent some of the more pertinent biographical details, this book aims to present the story of Krochmal's thought and its place in human attempts to comprehend the world about us. I do not mean to suggest that I am the first to adopt this approach; on the contrary, many have focused on some of the crucial elements of Krochmal's thought and its place in Jewish intellectual history. The present book, however, is the first attempt to take account of Krochmal's entire oeuvre while viewing it as a single and complete statement regarding the challenges facing the Jewish community in the modern period, and not as a series of loosely related independent studies regarding this and that.¹ It insists that Krochmal's mind was an integrated one, and that his reconstruction of the emergence of the rabbinic movement was as much intended to guide the perplexed as was his reconstruction of Jewish metaphysics. In both cases, Krochmal recognized the very basic confrontation between traditional and modern ways of viewing reality and attempted to dissolve it. In both cases, Krochmal recognized the extent to which modern thought and historiography were essentially the tools with which the modern Protestant intelligentsia oriented itself in a changing world, and tried to show Jewish intellectuals that they, through their own tradition, could do the same. In both cases, Krochmal insisted that a critical knowledge of Jewish sources was the *sine qua non* for coping with the whirlwind of intellectual changes. Thus, while we must begin with the life of the man, the real story I seek to tell is the life of the mind drawn against the backdrop of his time and his tradition.

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Krochmal's Life

The epoch in which Nachman Krochmal lived was a most decisive one in the life of Israel, in his native Galicia, as well as elsewhere. His youth coincided with the French Revolution, the waning of the *Aufklärung* in Germany, and the reign of the Habsburg monarch, Josef II (1741–1790), over newly acquired Galicia. All these factors brought major changes to Jewish life and thought.²

In Galicia, the logic of absolutism demanded an end to Jewish autonomy—the power the Jewish community had over the religious and economic lives of its members.³ In 1785, this autonomy was for the most part suspended, and the Jewish community exercised control only over some of its religious and charitable institutions. The most disastrous element of this suspension, from the point of view of Galicia's traditional Jews, was the transference of control over Jewish education to the Austrian authorities. More problematic yet, from this perspective, in 1787 it was decreed that Galician Jews were to serve in the army together with other Austrian subjects.

Despite lip service to the contrary these changes were not accompanied by any relief for Jewish political or economic difficulties. On the contrary, a number of truly oppressive measures were imposed on the community during Krochmal's lifetime. In an effort to change the Jewish economic profile, Jews in villages were forbidden to engage in trade; the so-called "Edict of Toleration" of 1789 banished Jews from these villages unless they engaged in handicrafts or agriculture. Jews were allowed to settle only in certain areas, and, in some of these, ghettos were introduced.

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In addition, many taxes specific to Jews were retained from earlier times or were newly imposed. A special tax on ritual slaughtering was introduced in 1784 and tripled over the next thirty-two years. In 1797, a candle tax was imposed, in which every married Jewish woman had to pay a tax on two candles whether she had money to buy the candles or not. Failure to pay meant that the tax collector could enter that person's home on Friday night and confiscate the household goods. In addition, there was a marriage tax, a residence tax, and an annual synagogue tax.⁴

Parallel to this economic exploitation of the Jewish community were the flagrant attempts by the Austrian government to germanize its Jews. Jewish children were prohibited from studying Talmud in a school until they had completed a course of study in a government school. Any voter in *kehillah* elections was required to demonstrate fluency in German, and Jews were prohibited from marrying until they had demonstrated such fluency.⁵

The political situation in Galicia meant that the Jewish confrontation with modernizing tendencies would travel a different course than it did in Germany, despite some superficial resemblances, principally in the area of educational theory. Max Wiener has pointed out the enormous effect the political changes in Europe and the emancipation (or, to be more accurate, the quest for emancipation) had on Jewish aspirations. These changes rendered Jewish life as it had previously been known "simply impossible,"⁶ as for the first time Jews could think of themselves apart from their communities, and were forced to ask themselves what role—if any—their ancestral faith was to play in their lives. The

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theories of Judaism produced by the Germans, from Mendelssohn on, were designed to deal with this question.

In Galicia, the loss of full autonomy did open the Jewish community to options it had never before experienced, but the hopelessness of its political and economic situation—illustrated by the very attempt at coerced enlightenment, an oxymoron if ever there was one, without real political amelioration—served to curtail the realization of these options. Jewish life in Galicia did undergo profound changes during Krochmal's lifetime, but for the most part, these changes were contained within the boundaries of traditional Jewish life and practice. Only the most radical of the *maskilim* (enlightened ones), as they were called, produced a program for even modest religious reforms outside the area of education. Most of the *maskilim* active in Krochmal's lifetime were, in fact, observant Jews, who opposed attempts to limit the authority of the Talmud or to suppress its study.⁷ They did, however, aspire to the intellectual modernization of their tradition and their communities—increased general education and awareness of the world around them and participation in the recent surge in historical consciousness—and greater toleration for, and interaction with, the surrounding gentile communities. (The latter objective was to remain, for the most part, a pipe dream, as there was no community on the other side willing to reciprocate.) Thus, both the essential conservatism of the Galician *haskalah* (enlightenment), at least in Krochmal's lifetime, and the political circumstances in which it was advanced served to differentiate it from Jewish intellectual life in Germany. The scholarship produced by the Galician *maskilim* never had the sometimes unmistakable

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political edge of that produced by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement in Germany.⁸

The *haskalah's* aspirations often stood at odds with the aspirations of other members of the Jewish community, and this fact influenced the program of the *maskilim* considerably. In particular, many of the *maskilim* regarded the expanding Hasidic community as their enemy, and some, most notably Joseph Perl, sought to limit if not eradicate this movement.⁹ The Hasidim were considered simply too anti-intellectual and superstitious for enlightenment to reach them; therefore, many of the *maskilim* themselves sought to create educational institutions, attendance at which would be mandatory, that would promote enlightenment and oppose Hasidism.¹⁰

For very different reasons, neither the government nor the Jewish population was overly sympathetic to the aspirations of the *maskilim*.¹¹ Thus, pursuit of *haskalah* was reserved for a very small group of what Jacob Katz has called the "Geisteselite," people whose vision extends beyond the world in which they grew up. Given the absence of communal or governmental sympathy, the path of this "Geisteselite" in Galicia was very difficult. As Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (1790–1867) put it in his necrology for Krochmal, written in 1841:

Understand denizens of Germany and be astonished! Among you it is easy for one to study in different areas, for there are many educational institutions and teachers in every field of knowledge. It is not the case in the northern lands until this day, and certainly not thirty or forty years ago. There is no teacher and there is no instructor and there is no one to support the Jew who wishes to obtain some betterment, and to know a bit more than what grows on him. He who wishes to embark on a new path, he, and no one else, shall blaze it himself. After he has found it there are many

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stumbling blocks on all sides, and many impediments from acquaintances and relatives to frighten him from this path. His loved ones come to him and pressure him to remove all books of [secular] knowledge from the house. They say to him: "Do you have any more?" And he says, "None." And they say, "Quiet, for you must not mention them, lest you and they—perhaps even we—be burned in fire. Do you not now that there are Hasidim in the country and city, and the frogs are swarming in every house and every room . . ." ¹²

Although we must allow for considerable hyperbole here, it is true that pursuit of general learning was quite dangerous, and required an enormous existential commitment on the part of the would-be maskil. As Rapoport concludes, there were very few such maskilim, and only those with the mightiest of souls succeeded. Such a one was Nachman Krochmal.

Nachman Krochmal was born in Brody in 1785. Unlike many other Galician cities, Brody was not overly impoverished. It was a "free city," meaning that it enjoyed trading privileges denied other locales. The Jews were the dominant group in the city, comprising approximately 88 percent of the population in 1820 (Mahler, p. 32). His father was Shalom Krochmalnik, a merchant who traveled often to Germany, and had apparently made the acquaintance of Moses Mendelssohn and other figures of the Berlin Haskalah. Brody at the time was the central city of the Galician Haskalah, counting among its inhabitants Mendel Lefin (1741–1826) ¹³ and Dov Ber Ginzberg, both of whom Krochmal was to come to know, as well as Yehudah Leib Ben-Ze'ev (1764–1811), whose work, if not whose person, would exercise a considerable influence on Krochmal's reading of the Bible. ¹⁴

Krochmal's education appears to have been the standard

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one for Jewish children at the time: Talmud and codes and little else.¹⁵ Yet, as Rawidowicz relates, there appears to have been less extremism in Krochmal's education than prevailed in other places, given the relatively open atmosphere of Brody. This may help account for Krochmal's open-mindedness and commitment to toleration. In any event, this education was to serve Krochmal in good stead, as it provided him with strong moorings in the Talmudic tradition when he later came to pursue studies in philosophy and history.¹⁶

As was the custom among East European Jews at the time, Krochmal married at an extremely young age; he was not yet fourteen when, in the fall of 1798, he took Sarah Haberman of Zolkiev as his bride.¹⁷ It appears that his well-to-do father-in-law agreed to take him in and support him while he pursued his studies. Even at this early age it seems that Krochmal's predilection for *haskalah* had already been developed, as he sought out the leading *maskilim* of his new city—Zolkiev—and, in particular, made the acquaintance of a Baruch Zvi Neiech, who is reported to have possessed a very impressive library, containing volumes in various languages. In 1803, Krochmal began to teach himself to read German by reading the newspapers.¹⁸

Upon mastering German, Krochmal began to read the philosophical works of the eighteenth century that had already achieved immortal status. He read Mendelssohn (1730–1786), Lessing (1729–1781) and Solomon Maimon (1754–1800). Subsequently, he turned his attention to Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel (Rawidowicz, p. 28). The letters that date from this period state that he studied continuously, and indeed he must have, as he also learned French, Latin, Arabic

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and Syriac during his years in Zolkiev; with his newly developed ability to read French, Krochmal read J. Basnage's *L'Histoire des Juifs*. While doing all this, he continued his studies of classical Jewish sources, and studied Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* with the commentary *Giv'at ha-Moreh* of Solomon Maimon, the *Zohar*, and the historical/critical work of Azariah de Rossi (c. 1511–1577), *Me'or Eynaim*.¹⁹ Further, in addition to the Jewish Aristotelianism of Maimonides, Krochmal was drawn to the Jewish Neoplatonism of Abraham Ibn Ezra, and the kabbalistic investigations of Nahmanides and his immediate predecessors and successors (Zunz, pp. 151–152). Each of them was to exercise a considerable influence on his thinking.

According to his son-in-law, by the year 1808, Krochmal was a fully developed scholar, already proficient in the many areas in which his work displays excellence.²⁰ Yet this intensive period of study took its toll on his health, and in 1808 Krochmal took severely ill. Indeed, a rumor had spread that the young man had died (Zunz, p. 152). That rumor, of course, was more than thirty years premature. Unable to procure the medical attention he needed in Zolkiev, he moved to Lemberg (Lwow), and there, very slowly, his condition improved.

While in Lemberg he made the acquaintance of that city's maskilim, whom he taught and with whom he studied; as Rawidowicz describes the situation, he became "the guide to the perplexed of Lemberg" (p. 32). Indeed, Krochmal seems to have found his niche as a teacher and guide of young maskilim. In Lemberg, he befriended Shlomu Yehudah Rapoport, who testifies "when I spoke with him a spirit of

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understanding and knowledge flourished within me, and I was practically transformed into a new man" (*Kerem Hemed*, vol. 6, p. 45). Similarly, Samson Bloch testifies that when he first met Krochmal he was "devoid of all reason . . . my soul was deprived of all wisdom, and sagacity was repelled by it." But, "like grapes in the desert and suckle in an arid land, I have found the one my soul loves, who nurses from the breasts of wisdom. . . . How excited I then became! How you attracted me! . . . From then on our souls were joined by a sense of attachment and with bonds of love they were united."²¹ It seems, then, that Krochmal, through the force of his wisdom and willingness to share it, exercised considerable influence on the Lemberg maskilim, and helped each of them find a place in the history of Jewish scholarship and belles lettres in the nineteenth century.²²

As far as his own *Bildung* was concerned, during this period Krochmal was forbidden by his physicians to study philosophy, which apparently was, for him, extremely strenuous. Thus he turned to a more systematic study of history than had characterized his earlier studies. In particular, he undertook a careful study of the *Me'or Eynaim* of de Rossi, together with other, more recent, historical works, including Isaak Markus Jost's multivolume *Geschichte der Israeliten* (Zunz, p. 152). With these studies Krochmal became acquainted with the data that he would much later come to schematize in his *Guide*.

His stay in Lemberg did not last long, although we have no precise information regarding when he returned to Zolkiev. When he returned he was no longer deathly ill, but his health was quite fragile and apparently was to remain so the rest of

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his life. According to the report of Letteris, the pious of Zolkiev saw in Krochmal's weakened health and apparently ghastly appearance the hand of God exacting punishment on one whose life had turned to *haskalah*.²³ In any event, despite his weakened condition, over the approximately twenty-six years Krochmal was to remain in Zolkiev, his life was divided between two distinct pursuits. He was a not particularly successful community leader and businessman on the one hand,²⁴ and a teacher and scholar on the other.

According to Zunz's report, upon his partial recovery Krochmal was overcome by a desire to "turn outward," and to have a spiritual influence upon his environment. Assuming the role of community leader was not an easy thing for someone of Krochmal's bent to accomplish. It became particularly difficult after 1815, when Krochmal had his most dangerous confrontation with the Hasidic communities of Galicia. Our knowledge of this affair derives from Zunz's necrology, based on a family report, as well as Krochmal's own more abbreviated report. It seems that Krochmal and an unnamed Karaite leader maintained a correspondence for some time.²⁵

The powerful Hasidic sect, to whom Krochmal must have appeared as a very dangerous person, was steadily intent on, wherever possible, rendering him suspected of heresy, which was not easy, given his strongly religious lifestyle. When they heard about this correspondence, and that Krochmal occupied himself with Karaite writings, one of them hastened to Kokusow, and persuaded the good-natured (Karaite) scholar to turn over some letters, ostensibly to show some of them to young students-in-training as an example of Hebrew style. Among these letters was found a missive from Krochmal in which he assured the [Karaite] scholar of his lasting

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friendship, and offered him hope for a future reward, despite his rejection of the rabbinic tradition. Many copies of this letter were sent to the biggest Jewish communities of Galicia and Russian Poland, to serve as proof that Krochmal was already estranged from Orthodox Judaism (*rechtgläubigen Judenthume*), and wished to join the Karaites. (Zunz, p. 154)

Krochmal was upset and he too released a circular, acknowledging that perhaps he was overly exuberant in his praise of the Karaite scholar, whom he calls "David"; the letter was written in haste and in rhyme, and thus subject to some hyperbole. He does not apologize for his contacts with the Karaites, however, and, in defense of his actions, refers to many earlier scholars, such as Maimonides, who permitted contacts with Karaites, and who were prepared to grant them the possibility of salvation. More than anything else, he argues that the Karaites are people who are now in a difficult state, and it would be heartless to cut them off and treat them as though they were unworthy of social contact. Further, Krochmal took the offensive against the Hasidim, and near the end of his letter proclaims, "May the merciful protect us from the persecuted sect that has become the persecutor" (*Guide*, pp. 413-16). In truth, Krochmal was deathly afraid of being the subject of a *Herem* (ban) which could have had serious repercussions for him. He thus did not pursue the matter further, and in time it died down. His hatred of Hasidism was, however, forever sealed.

Despite this brief period of notoriety, sometime before 1821 Krochmal assumed the position of community leader. Rawidowicz surmises that Krochmal achieved this position in spite of the opposition to his intellectual pursuits, because he

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was universally acknowledged to be fair and honest. Be that as it may, the position of head of the community, while devoid of many of the responsibilities that once came with it, did carry with it a number of duties. He served as an assistant to the tax collectors, as an intermediary between the government and the Jewish community when necessary, and, perhaps most onerous of all, was responsible for supplying the military with Jewish youths. He filled this role while also owning the only liquor sale franchise in the district of Zolkiev (Mahler, p. 35).

Neither of these pursuits—that of community leader and businessman—was marked by particular successes; indeed, by 1836 Krochmal appears to have been alone and destitute.²⁶ He did, however, succeed in distinguishing himself as a scholar and teacher. Often, he would go on walks into the hills surrounding Zolkiev with students and friends, and there would teach and learn about philosophy, history and Jewish law and lore. These walks into the hills made quite an impression on Krochmal's companions. Rapoport writes, "I still remember those precious times when I traveled to him from time to time for a day or two, or a week, or he came to me, and we went out to talk in the fields. How these trips were sweeter to me than all the pleasures of this world! I could never have enough of his wisdom, and with each word he added a new insight" (*Kerem Hemed*, p. 47).²⁷

Krochmal's last ten years in Zolkiev were to be very difficult ones for him. In 1826, his wife died, leaving him to raise the younger two of their four children. In addition, his economic circumstances took a turn for the worse; by 1836, when he left Zolkiev to return to Brody, Krochmal appears to

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have been destitute. His life was made more difficult yet by the awareness that many of his students had published various works and had established names for themselves, while he was yet walking through the hills of Zolkiev, giving of his knowledge, but writing virtually nothing. As attested by his letter to Samuel David Luzzato, written in the summer of 1836, he suspected his days were numbered. He very much wished to "proclaim his voice in public in the twilight of life, and to leave behind a blessing (it should only be so, and God knows that which is hidden), for the years of my senescence are approaching."²⁸

Thus it was that in the last four years of his life, two spent in Brody and two in Tarnopol where his daughter and son-in-law lived, Nachman Krochmal worked feverishly to complete his literary legacy. It was a race against time that he was destined to lose. Happily, he succeeded in producing enough that we can see the way this great scholar viewed the metaphysics and history of his tradition. While lacunae remain, in Krochmal's *Guide of the Perplexed of the Time* we have one of the great works of Jewish thought and jüdische Wissenschaft of the nineteenth century.

The Guide of the Perplexed of the Time

Krochmal died in the summer of 1840 with his work, *The Guide of the Perplexed of the Time*, unfinished.²⁹ Moreover, the materials that he had completed were not in a well-organized state; some studies were mere fragments, and on a couple of occasions the treatment of various issues is promised but never delivered. The exact sequence of chapters was not established,

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and many aspects of the work's intended form were unknown. This mass of inchoate material was sent, in accordance with the author's wishes, to Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), for redaction and publication. Although personally unacquainted with the deceased, Zunz agreed to take on the project, and after much heartache,³⁰ the *Guide* was published in Lemberg in 1851.

The finished product consists of seventeen chapters, with an anthology of Abraham Ibn Ezra's writings appended. The first four chapters consist of a general introduction, which describes the impetus for undertaking a new guide, and described the methods to be used in the work. The placement of these four chapters corresponds to the list of contents sent by Krochmal's family to Zunz. The fifth chapter addresses the question of teleology and intention; it seems likely that Krochmal did not intend the chapter to be here originally, although given the clearly hasty manner in which this chapter was penned, it is possible that Krochmal wrote the chapter long after its surrounding ones but actually did intend to insert it here.³¹ Chapters 6 and 7 deal with aspects of Jewish metaphysics and *Religionsphilosophie*; chapters 8 through 10 with Jewish history and its patterns. Chapter 11 provides Krochmal's critical analyses of biblical books, while chapter 12 presents a discussion of Alexandrian Jewish culture, in particular the writings of Philo. Most of this material consists of translations of two German works on the subject. Chapter 13 deals with the emergence of the rabbinic tradition, in particular its legal aspects, while chapter 14 discusses the history of the aggadah. Chapter 15 is a fragment devoted to early Jewish gnosticism; chapter 16 is a fragment devoted to

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culling from Hegel's work those concepts and definitions necessary for an understanding of Jewish metaphysics. Chapter 17 then provides a presentation of central Jewish metaphysical doctrines, refracted through the prism of the work of Ibn Ezra, but in many ways standing far closer to kabbalistic forms of Jewish Neoplatonism.

A description of the contents of this work scarcely does justice to the enormous learning evident on every page, nor does it even remotely suggest the extent to which this book represents an important window on the mentality of Jews living in Galicia, confronting modernity. It is the burden of the ensuing chapters of the present book to bring this out. In the remainder of the Introduction, I wish to focus on the distinct elements of the title, which will allow us to see the book in its proper context.

The Time

Studies of the process of modernization, and the confrontation of traditional societies with it, abound. The discussion of "The Time" in Krochmal's title will not be advanced by rehearsing the contents of this literature. Rather, I wish to focus on Krochmal's view of "the time." What were the circumstances that moved him to write? How did this Galician Jewish savant view the world about him?

In the first chapter of the *Guide*, Krochmal characterizes his own generation's religious problems. His discussion here resembles nothing so much as Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion*, in that Krochmal, like Schleiermacher, claims that religious life has descended into an extremism that causes continued

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adherence to appear ridiculous. Those who live within the traditions have displayed marked tendencies toward what Krochmal calls *Schwärmerei* (hallucinations)—imagining that they can attain some kind of magical creative powers, ultimately becoming partners with God; or *Aberglauben* (superstition)—imagining that creating intermediary beings will somehow lead to the curing of a sick soul—this may actually become idolatry; or *Werkheiligkeit* (literally, the holiness of deeds)—imagining that increasing the number of rituals, in particular nonrational ones, will somehow allow one to avoid the previous difficulties, thus producing a kind of mindless religious praxis. Though attachment to these extremes is presented as a phenomenon found in all religious communities, it is clear he is thinking of specifically Jewish manifestations of these tendencies. Thus, the first and second can be safely identified as characterizing the religion of the Hasidim, which Krochmal despised, and latter-day Kabbalists. The last can be identified with those mindless Orthodox elements for whom all of Judaism was reducible to the externals of *halakhab*, or Jewish law. This religious decadence represented an intolerable distortion of true religion, and had to be combated.

What made these distortions so utterly unacceptable was that each distortion called forth a corresponding distortion in the opposite direction. That is, corresponding to these caricatures of proper religious faith are three opposing positions that are equally obsessive and false. Those repulsed by the hallucinatory excesses of the first group have come to deny the existence of the spiritual realm altogether, feeling that strictly natural causal explanations are sufficient for all phenomena, including emotional and intellectual states. There can be little

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doubt that here Krochmal is referring to the argument of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and the highly mechanistic theories that characterized the anthropology of some of the *philosophes*. Those repulsed by the superstitions of the second faction ultimately lose their faith in such propositions as the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the possibility of prophecy as traditionally understood. Here, as well, one readily thinks of Spinoza, although he was hardly the only modern philosopher to deny these two propositions. The complete abandonment of the commandments—their efficacy as well as their morality—corresponds to the soulless piety of the third group. Krochmal may have the followers of Spinoza, Kant and Hegel in mind here. In any event, the attack on the commandments was widespread. While ultimately it is difficult to determine definitely whom Krochmal is opposing from what he presents here, it is safe to say that the major patterns of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe (Hasidism and Orthodoxy), as well as many of the atheistic and deistic trends of the time met with his disfavor. It is also clear that Krochmal felt that Judaism was strongly challenged by these trends and that the traditionalists within the Jewish community had no adequate response to them. Krochmal's *Guide* was written to provide the response, to indicate that the extremes that have taken root in the religious community are not "true" religion, and the antireligious extremes they have called forth are therefore not legitimate. Thus, "the time" is one of horrifying religious decadence.³²

The response of Western thinkers to this state of religious crisis was, for a traditional Jew, equally problematic. The response came in the form of a supposedly new discipline, the

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philosophy of religion. This discipline attempted to isolate the essential elements of the human religious impulse, and to determine the philosophically correct understanding of God. *Mirabile dictu*, it was discovered that Christianity alone—in its properly understood Protestant form, of course—was the only historical religion that in fact incorporated a philosophically acceptable theology, and that successfully accommodated the human religious impulse. This position is most characteristic of Hegel's thought, although quite different variations may be found, inter alia, in Kant, Schleiermacher, and Schelling.³³ Thus, for Jews, the response was no better than the challenge; continued adherence to Judaism was philosophically suspect, whether on Spinozistic or Hegelian grounds.

"The time" also brought with it an intensive historical assault on cherished Jewish ideals and ideas. The world of critical scholarship—of *Wissenschaft*—had succeeded in reordering the way people understood their pasts. The tools of criticism rendered traditional historical understanding implausible or impossible. Unlike the philosophical trends, this reorientation of the mind was not the result of distortion, but of the free and creative exercise of human reason. It therefore could not be opposed; it had to be accommodated. Thus, in the paragraphs that now serve as a preface to the *Guide* as a whole, Krochmal remarks that it was once to the benefit of traditional self-understanding to view, say, Psalm 137—which describes the angst of those exiled to Babylon—as the product of David's pen, although he lived many centuries before the events described. In this way, one's belief in the power of divine inspiration was enhanced. However, "as with the Spanish commentators, and how much more so in our day, this

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view is as unconvincing to a knowledgeable audience, particularly the young, given the state of our knowledge, as it was once convincing through hope and faith" (*Guide*, p. 5).³⁴ Not only does historical understanding demand that we view this Psalm as the product of the sixth century B.C.E., rather than the tenth; Jewish life in modern times would itself be enhanced if we accept such a dating, as it allows for greater understanding of the historical nature of Jewish commitments. "The time," then, demanded a reorientation of Jewish historical understanding; no longer could Jews attach themselves to demonstrably false claims. As we shall see, Krochmal was aware of the profoundly perplexing nature of such a reorientation. One goal of his *Guide* is to show that the Jewish tradition can accommodate it and remain intact.

"The time" then represents the fundamental challenges faced by Jews in modern times: atheism, deism, Protestant theology masquerading as universal philosophy of religion and historical criticism. Simultaneously, it represents Krochmal's view of the Jewish community in the early nineteenth century, a community ill equipped to respond to the challenges of modernity because of its pervasive anti-intellectualism.

The Perplexed

Who were Krochmal's "perplexed"? Clearly, they were not those who were at home with the patterns of life that prevailed in the traditional Galician Jewish communities. Such people were, for Krochmal, seduced by the corruption of religious life that characterized the times. Neither were they Judaism's "cultured despisers"; that is, unlike Schleiermacher, Kroch-

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mal was not writing for those who had abandoned their religious commitments in favor of atheistic, deistic or materialistic philosophies. They were, as he tells us, those who found the religious decadence of their times repugnant. While they were profoundly shaken by that decadence they were not prepared to adhere to the opposing trends. They were those who preferred a middle path between the extreme corrupting forces of their age.

But who were they really? That, ultimately, is a question that cannot be answered definitely. While it is easy to identify a few by name, we cannot isolate a historically identifiable group of people as Krochmal's intended audience. What we can do is look at what he imagines this audience to be in concrete terms. For one thing, his intended audience was people who were at home in the language of traditional Jewish thought. Krochmal's work is written in a clumsy, medieval style, suitable only for those who were schooled in the translations of the Ibn Tibbon family. These people were to be drawn from all over Europe. As he wrote to Luzzato, his problem was to come up with a language in which to address "the Italian Jew and the Eastern Jew; the scholars of Germany and the Hasidim of the northern kingdom."³⁵ That the Hasidim were really part of his intended audience we can scarcely take seriously. Further, the choice of Hebrew as his medium suggests that he was probably not interested in addressing the more assimilated part of the German-Jewish scholarly community, for whom Hebrew was long since considered a deficient vessel for modern scholarly communication.³⁶ Rather his "perplexed" seem to be limited to Galician, Bohemian, Moravian and Italian maskilim, for whom Hebrew was the lan-

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guage of choice, and more traditionally oriented scholars in Germany, who could be expected to read this work and take its message to heart.

Further, Krochmal fully expected his audience to be at home in the world of traditional Jewish learning. His text is filled with scores of oblique references to biblical, rabbinic, philosophical and kabbalistic texts, in addition to dozens of explicit references to these bodies of literature. Assuming that he wrote with some concern for his potential readership, we must say that he assumed his readers to be scholars of sacred Jewish texts.

Krochmal's intended audience, his "perplexed," were people who were aware of the new historical scholarship that was on the rise. In his discussion of Bible criticism, Krochmal assumes his readers are already familiar with many of the seminal works and central ideas of modern Bible critics.³⁷ He presupposes that they are at least vaguely aware that scholars, primarily Germans—both Jewish and gentile—have scrutinized rabbinic texts and found them, particularly the "strange" *aggadot*, to be filled with nonsense.³⁸ Further, he assumes that they are aware of the new philosophical trends of their day. As we shall see in chapter 2, his own philosophical discussions are addressed to an audience that has read—or gained familiarity second-hand with—the epistemological, metaphysical and ethical constructs in the works of Spinoza, Kant, Schelling and Hegel.³⁹ Finally, his work takes for granted that there are Jews familiar with the various philosophies of history that were, in fact, triumphalist Protestant apologia. That is, his treatment of the patterns of Jewish history makes sense only if the readership is assumed to be

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troubled by the works of Lessing, Herder and Hegel, among others.

“The perplexed,” then, are those who have experienced the profound intellectual disorientation of modernity without a loss of Jewish commitment, yet; they have not, however, successfully weathered the intellectual storm and successfully reoriented themselves. The young, in particular, who are being raised in this new world are particularly vulnerable to losing this commitment, if someone does not show them “the path between the extremes.”⁴⁰

The Guide

In the ensuing chapters, I will focus on the specific “guides” Krochmal provides for the problems of the age. Here I wish to deal with the general method of response Krochmal outlines in what he calls his “general introduction.”

The primary reason Jews have become so susceptible to the religious distortions outlined above is their ignorance of the esoteric doctrines that are contained in the two Talmuds and the various midrashim. These esoteric doctrines have traditionally been divided into three distinct categories, whose nomenclature Krochmal adopts. The first category is known as *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, identified as metaphysics. If Jews properly understand this branch of Jewish learning they would never fall prey to the distortions of the first corresponding pair, namely, *Schwärmerei* and the denial of spirituality. The second branch of learning, *Ma'ase Bereshit*, corresponds to what had come to be called in Krochmal's day the philosophy of nature. Thorough knowledge of this branch would prevent

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the onset of the second pair of distortions, *Aberglauben* and the loss of faith in the basic principles of Judaism. The third category is called *Sod Ta'ame ha-Misvot*, the esoteric reasons for the commandments. If one were well versed in this area, the third pair would present no threat. Thus, "the guide" entails instruction in the fundamental esoteric principles of Judaism. That is, avoiding the extremes requires a historical-philosophical comprehension of the Jewish "science of faith." In keeping with the style of Krochmal's work, he argues that the rabbis of old already anticipated the emergence of distorted interpretation of the Torah, and provided the solution: "This Torah is like two paths: one of fire, the other of ice and snow. If a man goes in one direction, he will die in the fire, in the other direction death from freezing awaits him. What then should he do? Go in the middle" (*Guide*, p. 10).⁴¹

In Krochmal's creative exegesis of this passage the advice to walk in the middle does not mean one should seek some point equidistant, as it were, between the corresponding distortions, but rather one should seek a point that represents a categorical rejection of them both. He claims the opposition between the distortions outlined previously, as well as various antinomies inherent within Jewish tradition, can be resolved not through compromise, but rather through historical-philosophical research, which will lead to "the main source and the beginning of things in such a way that the questions will be resolved, and the antinomies negated" (*Guide*, p. 16). The conflict that needs to be resolved for his generation is that which seemingly prevails between the rabbinic way to eternal truths, the way of faith, and the critical scholar's way, which is that of empirical demonstration. For Krochmal the middle

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path means the kind of research into Judaism, in all its variegated forms, which will discover the origins of things and thus allow them to be seen in their original clarity. The goal of this research is to show that there is no conflict between Judaism and modern historical and philosophical thought.

What are the appropriate methodological boundaries of such a recasting of Jewish thought? Or to put it another way, why should anyone find Krochmal's rereading of Jewish sources—his "guide"—at all convincing? In response to this concern Krochmal turns to the "science" of epistemology:

It is natural for the human mind to create its structures in a realm that is thoroughly cognitive, taking the material for this structure from the sensual world and then providing it with its essential form. That is, the mind transforms and raises the material from sensual stimuli to preliminary concepts—*Vorstellungen*—and from them to concepts of the understanding—*Begriffe*—and from them to purely cognitive concepts of reason—*Ideen*. (*Guide*, p. 12)

Krochmal is here developing a notion of symbolic expression; there are different degrees of abstraction and cognition in the formulation of thoughts. Most people never cognize sensual stimuli beyond the level of the *Vorstellung*, or the representational mode of thought. Given the broad base of any successful religious community, it is of the nature of religious communication to be formulated representationally. Such representations differ from the more abstract formulations of *Ideen* only descriptively, but they are no less an apprehension of truth. Thus, for Krochmal, while religions always communicate representationally, they are nevertheless focusing on

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speculative concerns, and convey no less truth than the abstract formulations favored by philosophy. In fact, there is always a direct correspondence between the two; every religious symbol or statement carries with it a latent philosophical claim. Abstracting the representations characteristic of Jewish religious expression will yield a philosophically sophisticated worldview. This method allows Krochmal to reconstruct the essentials of Jewish faith in philosophical terms, showing the latent philosophical content in the ideas of religiously highly conscious, but philosophically uninitiated holy men. As Nathan Rotenstreich has pointed out, Krochmal claims religion and philosophy are essentially identical, in that both represent processes of speculation, which are equal in their apprehension of truth.⁴²

Of course, much of this discussion parallels those of Kant and Hegel, who also claim that religions communicate representationally what philosophy does abstractly. The difference is that for them *Ideen* are superior not only by virtue of their philosophical clarity, but also by virtue of their conceptual necessity. *Vorstellungen*, on the other hand, can be interpreted in various ways, and are not always successful in imparting their speculative message.⁴³

In Krochmal's version, the relationship between representations and their corresponding ideas is governed by an inner necessity, and therefore each representation admits of one correct speculative interpretation. Thus, his reconstruction of Judaism's latent philosophical content can claim to be demonstrable and not merely arbitrary. This claim is based on the assertion that the relationship between representation and idea is like that of a metaphor to that which it represents. For

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Krochmal metaphors are not expressions of poetic genius and creativity; rather, they are rooted in the universal mind—the essence of human spirituality—and therefore virtually all metaphors are equivalent in many different languages. Thus, the meaning of a metaphor (or symbol) is not a subjective judgment on the part of the reader, but can be arrived at by applying objective criteria, based on an understanding of the human intellect. The argument for the universality of symbols and metaphors establishes the timeless quality of linguistic expression, and renders the Bible and Talmuds as comprehensible, *in their own terms*, to someone in the nineteenth century as they were to their original audiences. Once this point has been established, the way is open for an exegetical reconstruction of Jewish faith that will alleviate the perplexities of the traditional intellectual for whom Krochmal is writing.

Krochmal's interpretive method may be seen as a middle ground between the methods of interpreting sacred documents of Maimonides and Spinoza. For the former, prophecy, for example, represents a certain perfection in the nature of the human being, in addition to its dependence on the will of God.⁴⁴ The prophets, and, for that matter, the sages, are men of speculative insight, who speak in parables specifically designed to conceal the meaning of their words from those whom they might otherwise mislead.⁴⁵ Thus, for Maimonides, the biblical and rabbinic authors can be seen as philosophers who spoke in parables and riddles. For Spinoza, on the other hand, there can be no relationship between the content of philosophy and theology at all. The role of the latter is simply to instill beliefs necessary for obedience; those beliefs are far inferior to the insights of speculative philosophy, or

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intuitive knowledge. Thus, for Spinoza, there is no truth to be sought in Scripture.⁴⁶

Krochmal's position can be seen as a compromise. He accepts from Spinoza—in accord with Hegel—the notion that prophets and theologians cannot be considered philosophers, while accepting from Maimonides—again with Hegel—the notion that there is, nevertheless, an integral relationship between theology and truth. While religious speculation is not expressed with the logical clarity with which philosophical inquiry proceeds, it does grasp metaphysical reality in a more immediate manner, and, as such, is a source of truth. He may therefore define "Torahitic faith" as "the *knowledge* of the absolute truth—God, may He be blessed—and the *knowledge* of that which has reality and existence within Him—the spiritual essence—to the extent that it is implanted within the hearts and minds of all men, great and small, when the forces of their souls are aroused to such things" (*Guide*, p. 30; emphasis added). The fact that these ideas are impressed on the hearts and minds of their recipients representationally, rather than logically, does not detract from their truth, for, "with Torahitic concepts the truth is, in its essence, one, whether it be expressed as representations or rational concepts" (*ibid.*).

Krochmal of course was hardly the first to attempt a philosophical reconstruction of the Jewish faith. He was, I believe, the first to offer an epistemological theory which not only justified such an attempt, but absolutely mandated it. While his predecessors tended to focus on the intellectually troublesome elements within the Jewish tradition, Krochmal presents an argument that is universal in scope, claiming that

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one cannot grasp the true message of Judaism without discerning the abstract meaning of all its teachings, symbols and rituals. Of course, in the end Krochmal's work is no different than that of earlier Jewish scholars, focusing on those particular problems that beset his place and time. Still, to effectively guide his perplexed readers, he had to formulate his arguments in universal terms, for this was the demand of the time.

The Guide of the Perplexed

For any Jewish scholar in the nineteenth century to entitle a work "The Guide of the Perplexed" of anything is an act of audacity and daring, for such a title carries with it at least two highly controversial claims. The first claim is that the original *Guide of the Perplexed* by Maimonides is now outdated and no longer capable of addressing the religious needs of the existing community. The second claim is that the author of such a work is capable of addressing those needs in as profound a way as Maimonides could some six-and-a-half centuries earlier. The latter assertion is grounded in a rather high level of self-esteem on the part of the author; it also displays an appreciation of the power of Maimonides' work, in its day, and a belief in the essentially homologous nature of the twelfth-century and nineteenth-century religious crises. That Krochmal would like to do for his age what Maimonides did for his is stated explicitly and often in the *Guide*; this, despite the fact that in his view the problems of his age are much more difficult to deal with than were those Maimonides confronted. He seems quite convinced that his *Guide* would be equal to

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the task. On the other hand, the first claim—that Maimonides is now outdated—is never advanced explicitly, but is implicit not only in Krochmal's title, but throughout the book as well.

The need for a new "guide of the perplexed" was necessitated by the perceived obsolescence of Maimonides' Aristotelianism. As we shall see, the gist of Maimonides's metaphysics were viewed by Krochmal as part of the problem, as Jewish metaphysics were now compared to those emerging from Idealist circles. From such a comparative perspective, Maimonides' stark theological transcendentalism seemed to necessitate an incomplete conception of God, and an immature relationship with Him.⁴⁷ The answer, for Krochmal, was to turn to Jewish Neoplatonism, specifically the teachings of Ibn Ezra, Nahmanides and the Kabbalists,⁴⁸ from which a more comprehensive theology could be developed. It is from this perspective that the time had passed Maimonides by.⁴⁹

If the substance of much of Maimonides' philosophy was obsolete, his method remained exemplary. In Krochmal's view, Maimonides' *Guide*, while conceding much to Aristotle, was seen as championing the cause of traditional Judaism in the face of the ravaging effects of Aristotelianism. It is clear that Krochmal thought of Maimonides as the great savior of traditional Judaism, who rescued his generation from religious decadence.⁵⁰ Krochmal, in his *Guide*, will also concede much to modern thought and historiography. His goal, though, is to do what the great Maimonides had done—turn these concessions to the benefit of the traditional Jewish community, to pave the way for a comfortable reorientation in the face of modern challenges. His perhaps inflated view of the

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success of Maimonides in his pursuit of this same goal provided the inspiration and hope that it could once again be successfully accomplished.

Krochmal's use of Maimonides' *Guide* as his model helps to explain the essentially medieval nature of much of his own *Guide*, not merely from the perspective of style, but of substance as well. It appears that Krochmal seriously underestimated the nature of modernity and the extent to which it rendered the medieval solutions implausible. Krochmal thought that the needs of the time could be addressed by the medieval method of leaving all external structures of traditional religious life intact, but radically reinterpreting their religious and intellectual significance, and, in some cases, reassessing their origins as well.

In some measure, this underestimation may be accounted for by the distinction between Galicia and Germany. In the former, most Jews apparently felt little was to be gained from responding positively to the demands for religious reform. There was no outside world into which one could hope to assimilate, despite the fact that some maskilim wrote as if there were. Certainly, for Krochmal himself, the outside world in which he participated intellectually was German and not Polish; he admitted though that this world was not for him a living reality, it was not a world in which he could actively participate. He was a recipient of German culture, but, unlike the German Jews, could harbor no hope of participating in its shaping.⁵¹ Thus, his underestimation of the transformative character of modernity may be due to the fact that he experienced it from a distance and in strictly theoretical way. In any event, the adoption of the Maimonidean model in many ways

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ensured that Krochmal's project could not succeed in its entirety.⁵²

On the other hand, his conscious adaptation of Maimonidean methodology points to the crisis confronting Jewish thought in the modern period. Medieval Jewish thought proceeded from the premise that the sacred documents of Judaism incorporated truth. The task of the religious thinker was then to reveal what that truth was and where it was located. That is, medieval religious thought was perforce exegetical; it engaged the classical sources of the tradition, interpreting them in accord with the demands of that other source of truth, reason. The uniquely modern element in modern religious thought is its challenge to the fundamental premise of the medievals. The claims of a particular religious tradition *might* be true, but there could be no commitment to their truth a priori.⁵³ Therefore, Jewish thought in the modern age could not adopt a strictly exegetical (or eisegetical) approach and hope to fully succeed. The philosophy of religion and historical thinking had rendered the a priori claim that a particular religious tradition can fully embody truth an arrogant absurdity. On the other hand, "Jewish thought" that was not exegetical—that is, that did not fully engage traditional sources—would have difficulty advancing the claim to be "Jewish." Thus, modern Jewish thinkers have adopted, for the most part, a self-consciously selective approach to Jewish sources. Krochmal, on the other hand, while necessarily selective in practice, advanced the claim that Judaism is a complete religious totality, all of whose authentic sources contribute to the development of its speculative message. For this reason, Krochmal's *Guide* must take account of all kinds of

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Jewish texts, from those of the rabbis, medieval philosophers and mystics, to Philo, Jewish Gnostics and Essenes. All of them can be expected to reflect, in different idioms, the essential truths of Judaism, or, at least, some part thereof.⁵⁴

Krochmal's "medievalism" lends credence to the thesis of this book, that, ultimately, Krochmal's *Guide* is a reflection of a confrontation of cultures. Through this text we can view the understanding of modernity of a traditional but "gebildete" Jewish savant. This provides a new vantage point from which to view the confrontation of tradition and modernity. For implicit in Krochmal's text is the understanding that the modern age has provided the freedom and vocabulary to finally express metaphysical and historical truth directly and clearly; at the same time, the content of those truths are identical with previous, Jewish, indirect expressions. Of greater significance, implicit in Krochmal's text, as the ensuing chapters will clarify, is the understanding that a substantial portion of the modern philosophy of religion and history is nothing more than dressed up Protestant theology and historical triumphalism. Presumably "objective" philosophical metaphysics are in fact permeated with Christian symbols, and are supported by citations from and interpretations of the Christian Bible, especially the Gospels. The "objective" patterns of history turn out to be nothing more than reconstructions of the emergence of Protestant Europe, it being self-evident that this represents the height of culture. As we shall see, Krochmal challenges these assertions head-on, essentially exchanging one brand of triumphalism for another. It is Judaism whose religious tenets are founded on the "absolute" of modern Idealist philosophy. It is Judaism whose history has attained unprecedented spiri-

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tual heights long ago; it is only now that the rest of the world is beginning to catch up. It is in Jewish sources that modern truths are to be found. Thus, the inquiring student should not be led astray by the pervasive Christian imagery and symbolism that triumphantly undergirds the nascent modern disciplines, the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of history. Rather, the student should turn to his or her own tradition; with proper guidance (the *Guide*) he will be astonished by the realization that this tradition already encompassed—and built its religious edifice upon—the fundamental truths emerging from the world of modern thought. While not the only Jew in the nineteenth century to advance such a claim, Krochmal is unique in his commitment to halakhah as the means of maintaining this absolute religious community, and in locating the absolute nature of Judaism in a wide array of sources, including the rabbinic and “sectarian” writings rather than, say, in prophetic ethics alone.

The *Guide* demands of its readers yet one more thing. Unlike Aristotelian philosophy, whose challenges to Judaism were strictly those of an independent philosophical system, modern philosophy of religion and history presumes to make many assertions directly denigrating Jewish life and mores, and directly and specifically challenging many of its claims to truth.⁵⁵ This strong critique was internalized by many Jews, who, as minorities often do, looked to the dominant culture that was now beckoning as superior to their own. Again here, Krochmal’s text demands that its Jewish reader adopt a more critical orientation within his or her tradition. Such an orientation would reveal that those various challenges are not founded on deep knowledge of Jewish history or metaphysics, but on

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the self-confidence of German Protestants that their world is *the* world. Krochmal calls on his reader to walk with him on the path to self-knowledge. Such a path would reveal that modern philosophical and historical claims are fully compatible with the historical Jewish tradition and its self-understanding. In short, Krochmal's *Guide* seeks to instill in its reader the same self-confidence in the legitimacy of the Jewish way of life as is to be found in Krochmal's Protestant contemporaries. It is to the elucidation of this thesis that we now turn.

NOTES

1. A description of the contents of the *Guide* will follow shortly.
2. See Jacob Katz's *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken, 1973) where the importance of all these elements is discussed.
3. Of course, this must be seen within the context of the general politics of the time, on which see Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 170-94, esp. 174ff.
4. See the discussions of Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), pp. 3-7; Simon Rawidowicz, "Introduction," in his *Guide*, 23-24; Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1984). 2nd edition, pp. 13-14.
5. Mahler, pp. 3-7. The measures pertaining to education were never very successful, as Jews protested vigorously against surrendering control of the education of their children. As we shall see presently, Krochmal's education was not affected by these measures. Still, it is useful to be mindful of these regulations, as they illustrate the attitudes of the government authorities toward their Jews. In insisting on the political hopelessness of Galicia's Jews, I am not questioning the genuinely radical inclinations of Josef II in issuing his various edicts; he seems to have been truly committed to the integration of

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his Jews into the corresponding gentile social classes. I am simply suggesting that these inclinations died with Josef (1790), and, with the exception of Mendel Lefin, Joseph Perl and a few others, did not significantly influence the intellectual program of the maskilim into the nineteenth century. The maskilim aspired to reformed education, the removal of the burdens of the rabbinate on their lives, and the eradication of Hasidism, but not political integration. See Israel Bartal, " 'The Heavenly City of Germany' and Absolutism à la Mode d'Autriche: The Rise of the Haskalah in Galicia," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 33-42.

6. Max Wiener, *Dat ha-Yehudit b'Tequfat ha-Emanzipaziab* (Hebrew translation of *Jüdische Religion in Zeitalter der Emanzipation*) (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1974), p. 47.
7. See Mahler, pp. 41-44. Krochmal himself was in the forefront in insisting on the importance of Talmudic education. See his letter to his son Abraham, written in the spring of 1840, shortly before his death. He writes, "And know my beloved son, whatever you choose to do after thought and reflection, you shall pave your way, whatever it is, when you hold fast to the study of the Talmud and the decisors—in which you have already achieved a certain level of completion (*sblemut*)—together with proper diligence in the study of the holy tongue and the German language—writing fluently in both—and arithmetic. God forbid that you be slothful in this" (*The Guide to the Perplexed of the Time*, Simon Rawidowicz, ed., 2nd edition, [Waltham: Ararat Press, 1961], p. 452). (Throughout, page references to the "Letters" section of Rawidowicz's edition will be to "Guide.")
8. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is the scholarly study of Judaism. This is not to suggest that the Galician haskalah did not have its "politicians." To be sure, someone like Josef Perl is to be understood in terms of his political agenda: educational reform and the eradication of Hasidism. Nevertheless, the scholarship of people like Krochmal and Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport, not to mention many lesser lights, was not directed toward achieving political emancipation, but to broadening the intellectual horizons of their readers.
9. See Perl's *Über das Wesen der Sekte Chassidim*, Avraham Rubinstein, ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1977), which was written in 1816. Perl bitterly complained about the at-

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tachment of this sect to its leaders, its *zaddikim*, defining its fundamental principle as "Blinder Glauben und Anhänglichkeit an den Rebi" (pp. 78-79). He writes further "Wenn sogar der Zadik wieder das Gesetz handelt, so muss man doch alle Gefühle und Sinne unterdrücken, und nur das thun, was der Zadik befiehlt" (p. 107). Their alleged immorality is also vigorously denounced: "Alle ihre Werke sind voller Immoralität, Intoleranz und Verachtung alles dessen, was nicht chussid ist. Sie lehren öffentlich und ganz ungescheut, dass man den Akum [gentile] betrügen darf, die Ämter bestechen soll" (pp. 141-42). This book was sent to local governor Franz von Hauer for approval, accompanied by a letter that reads, in part, "Hasidism is comparable to a cancer that will grow from hour to hour, if it is not cut out at its roots" (ed. intro. p. 11). This work was apparently known to Krochmal, whose own descriptions of the spread of Hasidism are nearly identical; Krochmal's description can be found in English in Mahler, p. 9.

10. This is true already of Mendel Lefin, a disciple of Mendelssohn's, who as early as 1789 was inveighing against Hasidism and the damage it did to progressive tendencies. See N. M. Gelber's introduction to his "Mendel Lapin-Satanower's Proposals for the Improvement of Jewish Community Life Presented to the Great Polish Sejm (1788-1792)" (Hebrew), in *The Abraham Weiss Jubilee Volume* (New York: 1964), pp. 271-84; also Mahler, p. 122.
11. For discussion, see Bartal, p. 37.
12. This necrology was published in 1841, in the sixth volume of the Hebrew periodical *Kerem Hemed*. This excerpt was cited by Rawidowicz in his introduction, p. 23. Similar tribulations were described by Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843-1910) in his autobiography, *Hattot N'urim*; thus in Russia some twenty-five years later it was still dangerous, in some places, to attempt to educate oneself in anything other than traditional Jewish texts.
13. Most sources give 1819 as the date of Lefin's death. Gelber, in his study of Brody (see next note), provides 1826 as the date. In support of Gelber's date is the fact that Lefin's name appears among the subscribers to Levinson's *Teudah b'Yisrael*. This subscriber list was compiled in 1823-24, proving that Lefin was alive at the time, unless, of course, this list was put together by Richard Daley's machine in Chicago.

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14. For further discussion of the *haskalah* in Brody, see N. M. Gelber, *Toledot Yehude Brody*, in the series *Irim v'Imahot b'Israel* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1955), vol. 6, pp. 173–236.
15. This despite the efforts of Austrian government to compel the Jews to provide a general education. Rawidowicz relates that Krochmal's mother paid six ducats a year to the "German school," with the proviso that Nachman did not have to attend. In general, Galician Jewry fought vigorously against the government-sponsored schools, and they were abolished in 1809.
16. In a letter written a few months before his death to his son Abraham (who was then approximately fourteen; see Isma Schorsch, "The Production of a Classic: Zunz as Krochmal's Editor," *LBIY* (1986), p. 284, n. 16 and text thereto), Krochmal exhorts him not to cease learning Talmud and Codes, while also continuing his studies in the German and Hebrew languages. The goal of study, he wrote, was '*shlemut*,' comprehensive knowledge, which required knowledge of classical Jewish sources.
17. So Leopold Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Berlin: 1876), p. 151: "Im Herbst 1798, also noch nicht 14 Jahre alt, ward Krochmal verheirathet." Rapoport reports that Krochmal married at sixteen or seventeen, but Zunz's date, also reported by Letteris, would seem to be confirmed by the letter of Krochmal's son-in-law to Zunz, shortly after the publication of Zunz's necrology. See Schorsch, p. 285 and letter thirteen there, p. 303.
18. For the date, see Schorsch, *ibid.*
19. I will discuss the influence these works exercised on Krochmal's thought in the subsequent chapters.
20. Schorsch, *ibid.*
21. Quoted by Rawidowicz, p. 32. The rather flowery language derives from the biblical Song of Songs which Bloch quotes and paraphrases.
22. For further details, see Rawidowicz, pp. 30ff.
23. See *ibid.*, pp. 32–33.
24. Krochmal was drawn to business pursuits by the death of his mother-in-law, with whom he lived, in 1814, at the same time that his previously well-to-do father's circumstances had taken a turn for the worse. Thus, at the age of twenty-nine, Krochmal was forced to begin supporting himself for the first time.
25. Krochmal's report of the incident denies that he maintained a corre-

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spondence, although he proudly acknowledges acquaintance with two Karaite scholars; also, he provides the name "David" for the Karaite who figures in this story.

26. See his German letter, reprinted in *Guide*, p. 426, written in Zolkiew in 1836. It opens "Hier habe ich Nichts mehr zu suchen, noch werde ich von jemand gesucht." It closes, "Sollte ich die veranlassende, obschon unschuldige, Ursache zu Zwist und Parteiung werden, würde mich diess mehr peinigen als selbst der Hungertod, dem ich zu entfliehen suche." The occasion of this letter was, apparently, an invitation to fill a rabbinical post. (See Zunz, p. 156.)
27. Jost was to comment on this "weird" aspect of Krochmal's intellectual life in 1846, long before the publication of the *Guide*. Because Krochmal had published so little, but yet had a reputation as the greatest of Galician scholars, Jose referred to Krochmal's "Socratic" nature. See his *Neure Geschichte der Israeliten von 1815 bis 1845* (Berlin: 1846-47), p. 106, n. 2. Cf. note 28 below.
28. *Guide*, p. 425. Rapoport notes the absence of publication in his necrology. His words are instructive:

I will only further comment on the way of our ancient rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, who originally wished to prevent all writing other than the holy scriptures; other things—all halakhah, all aggadah and all wisdom was transmitted [orally] from sage to sage. In this way they kept this from the masses, lest each person become an arbiter regarding sublime matters. . . . Similarly, some ancient Greek scholars behaved this way, such as Pythagoras and his disciples—who wrote nothing, but secretly transmitted the teaching of sages to students—and other excellent scholars such as Socrates and those like him, who left no writings. Their words of wisdom were what was remembered by students. In this manner behaved a few Polish scholars, who are worthy to be called such. They expended more energy on their teachings (*imrotehem*) that others did on several books; among them was this wise man" [i.e., Nachman Krochmal]. (*Kerem Hemed*, vol. 6, p. 46)

29. That this title is Krochmal's and not Zunz's, as has been alleged, is now firmly established in Schorsch.
30. Now chronicled in the correspondence between Zunz and Krochmal's family and friends; see Schorsch, *ibid*.
31. For further discussion of this, see my "Rabbinic Judaism in Confrontation with Modern Scholarship: Nachman Krochmal's *Guide of the*

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Perplexed of the Time" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1985), pp. 21–25.

32. It is important to bear this in mind when we confront Krochmal's philosophy of history. Many of Krochmal's interpreters insist that Krochmal actually saw a revival in his own day, no doubt reading into him their own views of modernity. This is particularly the case with Jacob Taubes. "Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism" in *Judaism* vol. 13, 1963, p. 160. Taubes, primarily on the basis of Krochmal's use of the potentially eschatological phrase *acharit ha-yamim* to describe his own day, argues that Krochmal saw in his own time the onset of redemption, now appropriately secularized and subordinated to the historical process. This reading is unacceptable on many grounds, not the least of which is the fact that Krochmal uses the phrase *acharit ha-yamin* while actually referring to contemporary decadence in his letter to Luzzato (*Guide*, p. 425). There is no way to understand this reference as in any way extolling the virtues of the new age. Rather, Krochmal simply had no other word/phrase on hand that could refer to the modern age—an age that obviously differed from that which preceded it, but which was not to be seen as better. Further, it is not the case that this phrase always had an eschatological ring to it in traditional sources. See, e.g., Genesis 49:1, for a use that is not understood traditionally as eschatologically intended (see also the remarks of Samuel b. Hofni on this verse). For further discussion of Krochmal's view of history, see below chapter 3, and also my dissertation, chapter 3, where I develop the argument of this note at greater length.
33. The relevant details will be supplied at length in the following chapter; for now my purpose is simply to provide a general picture of the time.
34. Note that the rabbis—those responsible for the attribution of the Psalms to David—are presented here as serving the religious needs of the multitude in dating the Psalms. Note also the distinction between earlier times, when people's understanding was supposedly grounded in fideism, with modern times in which knowledge is decisive.
35. Both the term I have translated "scholar," *mitchakhme ashkenaz*, and the term I have translated Hasidim, *mitchasde malkhut tzafon*, can have pejorative connotations. In particular, Krochmal generally referred to

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- the Hasidim as *mitchasdim*, perhaps translatable as the “self-righteous ones.”
36. See the discussion of this in Michael Meyer's *Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1967), pp. 116–21. Even Abraham Geiger considered Hebrew to be deficient for modern scholarly purposes, although he was later to write some important articles in that language. See, e.g., Geiger's letter to Zunz in which he castigates Rapoport for wanting to create a Hebrew scholarly journal. Once this journal, *Kerem Hemed*, was actually created though, Geiger admitted that Hebrew was indeed the most appropriate tool with which to communicate with the intended audience, given that their knowledge of German was not yet sufficient. See *WZJT*, vol. 4 (1839), p. 471. Cf. Geiger's *Nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 2, pp. 286–88.
 37. At the very least, he takes for granted that his readers know the work of J. G. Eichhorn. For details, see below, chapter 4.
 38. See below, chapters 5 and 6.
 39. It is impossible to determine how many Jewish scholars actually fit this mold. In his response to Zvi Menachem (Hirsh Mendel) Pineles, who had asked him for an explanation of Kantian epistemology, Krochmal complains that among his many “students” none seemed interested in these issues before Pineles (*Guide*, p. 420). Allowing for some exaggeration, this still suggests that among Krochmal's friends and disciples the discipline of philosophy was the least popular. At the same time, it must be noted that Pineles published his question and Krochmal's response in *Karem Hemed* (vol. 2, pp. 108–13) under “pressure” from Shmuel Leib Goldenberg and Moses Hayyim Hakohen, suggesting that there was some interest in the issue among a very small group of Galician maskilim. Similarly, Chajes expressed interest in philosophy.
 40. See esp. the first paragraph on p. 158 of the *Guide*.
 41. The citation is from Y. Hagigah 2:1.
 42. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Ha-Mahshavah ha-Yehudit b'Et ha-Hadashah*, 2 vols. in one (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 154–55.
 43. It is nevertheless the case that both Kant and Hegel engage in a kind of “midrash” on their biblical sources, each attempting to show that behind the representations of the Bible stand sophisticated philosophical reflection on the nature of humans and their weaknesses. See Kant, *Religion, Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (New York: Harper

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- Torchbooks, 1960) throughout, and esp. pp. 50–72, 145–55; Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 3, pp. 301–4, 322–47.
44. See *Moreh*, 2:32. Throughout this work I refer to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* this way, so as to avoid confusion with Krochmal's *Guide*.
 45. *Moreh*, introduction to part 1.
 46. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (New York: Dover, 1951), introduction, passim, and chapter 14, passim. Cf. Arthur Hyman, "Spinoza's Dogmas of Universal Faith," in Alexander Altmann, ed., *Biblical and Other Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 183–95.
 47. For details and further discussion, see below, chapter 2.
 48. Again, see below, chapter 2, and Fishel Lachower, "Nigleh v'Nistar," in *Knesset le-Zekher Bialik*, 1941 throughout. See now, Rivkah Horowitz, "'Goyim v-elohav l'R. Nachman Krochmal u-m'qorotav ha-yehudi'im," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 7, no. 1, (1987) who emphasizes the connection between Krochmal's work and Nahmanides.
 49. Krochmal was undoubtedly conscious of the fact that, in attaching himself to Ibn Ezra, he was rejecting Maimonides. That is, he insisted that Ibn Ezra's thinking, which he thought he found in the *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (see chapter 2), was quite distinct from Maimonides'. See *Kerem Hemed*, vol. 5, p. 93.
 50. For further discussion, see my "Image of Maimonides in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," in *PAAJR*, vol. 54 (1987), pp. 127–33.
 51. He wrote, "Der Streit zwischen Leo und Hegels Schülern hat mir in Anfange wahren Verdruss, ein Schreiben besonders so viel Galle gemacht, dass ich endlich nichts Besseres thun konnte, als über mich selbst, den Fremden, vom gelehrten Markte so Entfernten, zu lachen" (*Guide*, p. 432). The truth of this statement is in no way compromised by its pathos. As for the conflict between Leo and Hegel's disciples, see John Toews, *Hegelianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 226–28. For further background, see Ernst Simon, *Hegel und Ranke, Historische Zeitschrift*, suppl. 15 (1928), pp. 93–101.
 52. I will address the issue of Krochmal's "success" and his continuing relevance in the concluding chapter.

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53. From this perspective the second part of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* may also be considered as inextricably linked to the medieval heritage even as the problems he is addressing are uniquely modern. For this reason, not even Mendelssohn's closest disciples were convinced by it. For an early denunciation of Mendelssohn's disciples for their failure to carry out the master's program, see Isaac Samuel Reggio, *ha-Torah v'ha-pilosofia* (1828), pp. 143–63, esp. 152–63.
54. Thus, Maimonides' theological transcendentalism, while ultimately a distortion of Jewish metaphysics, does successfully reflect one aspect of them, such that his work remains essential to an understanding of the latent philosophical content of Judaism.
55. This claim will be supported throughout the ensuing chapters. A significant literature has emerged regarding this in the last twenty to thirty years. Pride of place belongs to Hans Liebeschütz's *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967); see also Nathan Rotenstreich, *The Recurring Pattern* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1963) and idem, *Jews and German Philosophy: The Polemics of Emancipation* (New York: Schocken, 1984); Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Concept of Religion and Judaism as the Religion of Sublimity," *Tarbiz*, vol. 45, nos. 3–4 (April–Sept. 1976), pp. 303–26.

CHAPTER 2

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CONSISTENT WITH the method outlined above, in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 17 of the *Guide* we find Krochmal attempting to clarify the central metaphysical positions of Judaism in a way that allows for their latent philosophical content to be made manifest. The reason for Krochmal's clarification is the attack made on these propositions by the world of modern philosophy. Krochmal argues that traditional Jewish metaphysics remains as viable as ever, but could no longer be sustained in the manner in which its positions had previously been formulated. For the works of Spinoza, Kant and Hegel, among others, had challenged the concepts to which Jews adhered; a simple belief in prophecy was no longer possible for someone who took Spinoza seriously. Nor could such a one continue to sustain belief in God as a willing, intending creator. The moral content of Jewish law was at-

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tacked by Spinoza and Kant alike; the simple belief in God as a creator and communicator with humans paled in comparison to the rich vision of these aspects of the divine to be found in the Hegelian system. Krochmal's *Guide* comes to serve as a response to these challenges, to guide those perplexed by them to a philosophically grounded, traditionally compatible faith.

Teleology, Intention and the Existence of God

Krochmal opens his discussion of teleology and intention with the following citation from rabbinic literature:

It is comparable to one who was wandering about and saw a castle burning. He said, "is it possible that this castle has no overseer {*manhig*}?" The owner of the castle looked out at him and said, "I am the owner {*ba'al*} of the castle." Similarly, as Abraham our Patriarch said, "is it possible that this world has no overseer?" The Holy One, Blessed Be He looked out at him and said, "I am the owner of the world." (Genesis Rabbah, 39:1)¹

This story, which has many parallels,² is cited by Krochmal to illustrate the centrality of the argument from design in Jewish thought; indeed, the argument is, according to Krochmal, a cardinal principle of Jewish faith. Thus, Abraham is depicted as recognizing the existence of one transcendent deity from the fact that the world around him exhibits an order and design. This vision of Abraham finds its way into many Jewish sources, among them Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*.³ In addition to the Abraham material, Krochmal, following Maimonides' lead (Moreh, 2:19, p. 311), cites Isaiah 40:26 as a

proof text, designed to show that the argument from design is a part of the earlier prophetic worldview as well.

Of all the arguments in favor of the existence of God, the fact that the ordered world would be inconceivable without him may be the most powerful in Jewish literature. The argument is essentially a teleological one, as Kant understood, deriving its cogency from the view that the world as we now know it owes its existence to the telos envisioned by God in creating it—that is, the elements of existence are, in some sense, caused by their envisioned place in the whole system of existence. Such a system presupposes a willing being standing above it and setting it in motion, in order to achieve some purpose. In this sense the teleologically motivated view of the natural order leads to the affirmation of the existence of God, and, equally important, leads to the affirmation of divine concern for his creation, in that he remains its overseer. Further, this teleological view led to an important literature seeking to define the role and place of humanity within the created world. For all these reasons, the teleological view became an essential part of the world of Jewish thought.⁴

The problem, however, is that this central concept, as all religious concepts, was communicated in the form of a *Vorstellung*, a representation, by the prophets and sages. As such, it is presented in a way that, while incorporating speculative truth, does not successfully communicate the profundity it incorporates. The form of presentation makes it appear as though the posited teleology is nothing more than a post factum drawing of connections among disparate elements of nature that do not necessarily have anything to do with one another. That is, the teleological vision is often expressed as

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something like this: the world exhibits order which is visible in the hierarchy of being, in that plant life exists for the purpose of animal life, while both together exist for humans. Similarly, rain and other weather conditions serve the purpose of maintaining life and are, thus, indicative of a larger purposive system, in which nature provides for its charges (*Guide*, p. 19). Stated in this representational form, however, there is insufficient sense of the actual causality inhering in this hierarchy. Thus, that which we are wont to posit as a final cause may not be causal at all. Krochmal claims that one could justifiably assert that “these are not anything more than [the product of] mechanical causes, which simply correspond to the purpose which we ourselves, as sapient beings, have inserted or created, according to our wisdom, cunning or stupidity” (ibid.).

There can be little doubt that Krochmal is alluding to the argument against the affirmation of teleology to be found in the works of Spinoza. The latter asserts that there can be no assertion of final and purposive causality in nature as nature is propelled by its own, inner, necessity, and is not the product of any willing of intending agent. He argues that all apparent final causes are in fact nothing but efficient causes, made to fit a preconceived picture of nature:

For we have shown in the Appendix to the First Part of this work that nature does nothing for the sake of an end, for that eternal and infinite Being whom we call God or nature acts by the same necessity by which He exists; for we have shown that He acts by the same necessity of Nature as that by which He exists (Prop. 16, pt 1). The reason or cause, therefore, why God or Nature acts and the reason why He exists are one and the same. Since, therefore, He

exists for no end, He acts for no end; and since He has no principle or end of existence, He has no principle or end of action. A final cause, as it is called, is nothing, therefore, but human desire, in so far as this is considered as the principal or primary cause of anything. (*E*, p. 188; book IV, beginning)

Elsewhere, after denying the teleological explanation of nature, Spinoza writes:

We see, therefore, that all those methods by which the common people are in the habit of explaining Nature are only different sorts of imaginations, and do not reveal the nature of anything *in itself*, but only the constitution of the imagination. (*Ibid.*, p. 78; emphasis added)⁵

Spinoza is here claiming that there is no actual causality inhering in what we refer to as final causes; these “causes” are nothing more than the products of our imagination, in which we draw connections among things and assume causality. But such connections, real or otherwise, do not reveal any internal causality at all. For God cannot exist for an end, since such existence would make God in some way subservient to that end. All assertions of final causality are then merely statements reflecting the external relations among things. Thus has Spinoza destroyed the notion of a final cause, so central to the Jewish, and Aristotelian, views of the world, calling forth the need for a response.

The philosophical material for such a response was already developed by Immanuel Kant. Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment*, attempts to establish criteria by which we can judge the validity of assertions of final causality. He argues that to establish something as a purpose of nature:

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It is necessary that its parts mutually depend upon one another both as to their form and their combination, and so produce a whole by their own causality, while conversely the concept of the whole may be regarded as its cause according to a principle. . . . In this case, then, the connection of *effective causes* may be judged as an *effect through final causes*. (Kant, *CJ*,; p. 220; emphasis in original)

This criterion is met in an organized body whose parts not only exist “by means of the other parts, but is thought as existing for the sake of the others and the whole . . .” (ibid.).

Kant is well aware that in his presentation he is diverging from the more representational and unsophisticated assertions of final causality, recognizing, with Spinoza, that these assertions point to external relationships only; thus, the claim that rivers serve this purpose and mountains that provide “no sufficient warrant for using them as purposes of nature to *explain their presence*, and for regarding their contingently purposive effects as the grounds of their presence according to the principle of final causes” (ibid., p. 224; emphasis added). The example Kant provides of an organized body that may be seen as its own final cause is that of a tree, which produces itself generically, through reproduction, and individually, through generation (ibid., pp. 217–18).

Having established the possibility of internal final causes, Kant feels justified in affirming a “system of purposes” (ibid., p. 227), in which we do not need to be able to prove an internal causality for each part of the system to be able to nevertheless affirm the final causality that inheres within it. Thus, the existence of organized bodies establishes the validity of internal final causes, which in turn allows us to return to earlier conceptions of an overall system of final causes in nature.

What Kant specifically denies, however, is that we can progress from the claim of a system of purposes to the existence of God as architect of the system, for there is no internal consistency in such a claim. To reify nature and attribute intelligence to it would certainly be preposterous, but to speak instead of God as architect would nevertheless be presumptuous (ibid., p. 230).⁶ Furthermore, consistent with the results of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant declares that even the claim regarding purposes in nature cannot be seen as a “constitutive concept of understanding or reason, but it can serve as a regulative concept for the reflective judgment . . .” (ibid., p. 222).⁷ Thus Kant provides the argumentation for restoring the proof from design and purpose, but, given his denial of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, he himself refuses to grant his teleological judgment anything more than the status of a regulative idea. It is at this point in the philosophical dialogue that Krochmal steps in.

Krochmal begins by first restating the argument in its traditional form, as we saw it above. That is, in every effect in nature there is an efficient cause, and in addition there appears to be a final cause, or a purpose toward which this effect is directed. Thus, the existence of plants would be caused, not merely by whatever biological functions produce them, but also by the need of a willing designer to provide sustenance for his “higher” creatures. The traditional view, then, is that all things exist for a cause; many, although not all, of this argument’s adherents would claim that human beings are, in fact, the ultimate telos for which all other things exist. However, the argument in this form is not sufficient, Krochmal tells us, insofar as it merely establishes

an external final cause, which is not inherent in the effect, and without which the existence of the effect could still be adequately explained.

Krochmal, in arguing that the example of final causes which he had cited was in fact external, and thus not really causal, is accepting Spinoza's critique of traditional teleological arguments.⁸ Krochmal agrees that much that has passed for causal explanations in the past is the product of the human imagination, but goes on to argue that it is nevertheless possible to demonstrate that there are internal final causes affecting structured organisms, for which mechanical or efficient causes are not sufficiently explanatory.

Krochmal claims that in the case of structured organisms teleological explanation, rooted in the intention of a willing being, is unavoidable. The essential unity which makes up the bodies of such organisms cannot be sufficiently accounted for by positing efficient causes. The fact that each part of the body works for the sustenance of the others testifies to the final cause directing the activity of these parts, namely, the existence of the organism as a whole. The structured organism is, thus, its own end, and as a final cause produces various functions and characteristics.

These natural structures differ from artificial ones, which are after all their own ends—the building is the “cause” for the bricks being laid in a certain way—in that the mover in the creation of artificial structures is external to, and other than, the structure itself. Natural complex organisms, however, are through reproduction, their own creators, and each organism is its own end. The teleological principle being invoked here is internal, because the various parts of the body

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are not explicable, either in terms of their existence or their function, without the notion of the structure as a whole serving as the telos for which these parts came into existence. Until this point, Krochmal's argument is readily seen as directly dependent on that of Kant.

Krochmal, however, insists on one more step. He argues that one cannot separate the notion of a telos from intention, and that every internal—that is, “real”—telos is “accomplished through the intention of a thinking, willing, intending agent.” Thus the cause, as it were, for the existence of internal final causes is a willing, intending designer—God.⁹

Once it has been asserted that a thinking, willing God must be responsible for the creation of complex organisms, it follows naturally that the entire universe, having been created by God, must contain within it some plan, some ultimate purpose. That is, with Kant, Krochmal asserts that once we have the concept of internal final causes, the notion of final causes in general has been substantiated, so that we may speak of a system of purposes, without having to prove the internal causality of each component of the system. Krochmal, then, extends the teleological principle to all of nature, and claims that an entire series of ends, from the “lesser” ones to the “highest” ones, can be posited, culminating in humanity as the highest end.¹⁰ In this way the teleological principle is restored to its treasured place within Jewish culture.

Krochmal is aware that his discussion does not reach the height of sophistication here, in that he never justified the move from internal causality to God. This justification would require dealing with the issue on the highest level of philosophical discourse, the Idea. This he has not accomplished in

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this chapter, but promises that he will do it at some later time. Unfortunately, this promise was never kept. We do not have further discussion of this issue. We can assume, however, that the discussion would have been carried out along Hegelian lines, in which Krochmal would have justified the move on grounds that posit the actualization of that which is rationally necessary.¹¹ In any event, Krochmal is satisfied that he has here provided an adequate explanation, such that the existence of final causes and an intending and willing creator is viable.

The position taken here, that Krochmal's treatment must be seen as a polemic against Spinoza, will be buttressed by the discussion of the remainder of Krochmal's opus, but can also be justified by the comparison he draws here between himself and Maimonides. For, he claims, Maimonides also "did battle" on this point in a context that was presented as a polemic against the approach of Galen; Krochmal closes his chapter on teleology with a lengthy quotation from Maimonides' medical writings in which Galen's views on the "Mosaic" position with regard to the order of creation are summarized and strongly criticized for being totally confused. Krochmal compares his project to that of Maimonides. He too wishes to "seal the mouth of Epicurus and his followers" who affirm the necessity of all that exists (*Guide*, p. 19). The context is clearly polemical, and the addressee of the polemic would seem to be the modern-day Epicurean, at least regarding this issue, Baruch Spinoza.¹²

In this discussion of teleology, then, we see for the first time how Krochmal will seek to identify the new philosophical trends that serve to challenge traditional understanding,

and to combat them philosophically. Here he has, to his satisfaction, restored to Jewish thought the basis for believing in God's existence and his providence, by showing that a teleological vision of nature, which necessitates a supervising deity, is a philosophical necessity. To claim otherwise would be to render the existence of complex, organized beings totally incomprehensible. Thus, enlightened Jews should have no difficulty affirming the existence of God, and attributing personality to him, at least as a being possessing a will independent of intellect, and thus compelled by no necessity.

The Nature of God

Beginning with the Deists in seventeenth-century England and on to the Enlightenment, the Jewish concept of God came under frequent attack; this God was perceived as wrathful, vengeful and narcissistic. He was the commanding presence who "ruled" over his charges by instilling fear in them; on the basis of this fear, Jews went about engaging in many ridiculous ceremonies that they assumed were desired by God, in the hope of avoiding his wrath and placating him. In the mature work of Hegel we begin to find a far more philosophically sophisticated treatment of religion in general and Judaism, in particular, which, however, continued to portray Jewish theology in a negative light. As it is the works of Hegel and, to a lesser extent, Schelling, that provide the challenges to which Krochmal responds, we must first look at their own work on theology and metaphysics, and then outline Krochmal's response.

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1. *Hegel*. Perhaps the most philosophically sophisticated critique of Jewish theology is that found in the works of Hegel.¹³ Hegel argues that in Jewish sources, particularly the "Old Testament," we find a new conception of God that is prepared to acknowledge God as Spirit, that is, as infinite being, and, in this respect, Jewish theology represents a major advance beyond the pagan vision.¹⁴ Because of its emphasis on monotheism, on seeing God as the "absolute root of subjectivity, of the intelligible world, the path to truth" Jewish thought has made an "infinitely important" advance (Hegel, *LPR*, vol. 2, p. 425).¹⁵ What is, however, missing from this view in Hegel's opinion is the factor of development so that, despite the elements of truth in Jewish theology, "it is not yet the truth as truth" (*ibid.*).

This ostensibly Jewish vision is contrasted with the higher, Christian, understanding of creation in which "spirit generates itself, without stepping forth outside itself, at once the beginning and the result; then it is posited as spirit" (*ibid.*, p. 427). In contrast, Jewish theology remains totally abstract, resulting in the positing of an enormous gulf between God and the world, and the removal of divinity from nature and the natural world. The Jewish God is described as totally transcendent, and divorced from the living reality. He is manifest as sublimity, "which emerges as the appearance or relation of this infinite subject to the world. The world is grasped as a manifestation of this subject, but as a manifestation that is not affirmative; or one that, to the extent that it is indeed affirmative, still has the primary character that the natural or worldly is negated as unbecoming the subjective . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 677).¹⁶

As a result of this transcendent vision, God is conceived as the Lord, who is to be approached through fear. This sense of fear is now understood in a more sophisticated way than in previous works—both Hegel's and his predecessors'—in that it now represents a sublation of all dependence, and in this sense is a liberating fear.¹⁷ Yet again, however, this liberating sublation of all dependence results in an “infinite negativity,” in which one gives up what is particular and one's own, and immerses oneself in the Lord (*ibid.*, p. 444). Thus, despite a more profound understanding of the notion of “fear of the Lord,” Hegel ends up with the notion that for a Jew to approach God in a Jewish manner is to engage in an act of self-negation.¹⁸

This vision of God as sublimity is grounded in Hegel's reading of the creation story of Genesis from an ostensibly Jewish point of view, in which God is depicted as creating from nothingness, and thus of creating finitude apart from infinitude, “Himself” as it were, rather than as seeing finitude as dialectically related to and sublated by infinitude, as would be correct.¹⁹ Because of this, God is, ironically, conceived as the “wholly other,” who relates to the world as absolute power, sustaining the world to be sure, but also imposing upon it a Lordship that results in the deficiencies noted above.

Further, despite the implicit universalism of the Jewish God-cum-creator, the Jewish people limit the scope of divine attention to the one family of Abraham, which culminates in the people Israel. While Hegel became more sympathetic to this aspect of Jewish existence as time went on, the overall nature of his presentation is still quite critical.²⁰ For Hegel, it is a severe limitation of Jewish thought that it never achieved

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the universality of scope that would permit it to contribute more fully to world history and the movement of absolute spirit towards self-realization within history.²¹ Further, it was this exclusivity of spirit that caused the Jews to fail to appreciate the spirituality inherent within pagan religions; as a result, Jews sought the total negation of paganism rather than coming to terms with its most important characteristics, as ultimately Christianity was able to do. Hegel writes:

The God of the Jewish people is the God only of Abraham and of his seed: National individuality and a special local worship are involved in such a conception of the deity. Before him all other gods are false: moreover the distinction between "true" and "false" is quite abstract; for as regards the false gods, not a ray of the Divine is supposed to shine in them. But every form of spiritual force, and a fortiori every religion is of such a nature that, whatever its peculiar character, an affirmative element is necessarily contained in it. However erroneous a religion might be, it possesses truth, although in a mutilated phase. In every religion there is a divine presence, a divine relation; . . . This latitudinarian tolerance the Jewish religion does not admit, being absolutely exclusivistic. (Hegel, *LPH*, pp. 195-96)

Thus, Jewish self-awareness was grounded in a vision of the human spiritual quest that was fundamentally flawed, and caused Judaism to develop in a corrupt manner.

Juxtaposed to this view of Judaism in Hegel's work is his view of Christianity, which he entitles the "absolute religion" or "consummate religion" (*vollendete Religion*). In Christianity the opposition between the finite and the infinite, so characteristic of Judaism, is overcome, and is communicated through the representations of the Trinity. The act of creation is now

understood as an essential moment in the divine life itself, in which God is not merely producer but product. The finite world is created by God to set up another over against him, which will in turn be sublated back into a more profound infinity.²²

This vision of the overcoming of the opposition between the finite and the infinite is "not an achievement open to a single act of reflection made at any stage of human history. It is the ultimate product of the Christian religion and the development of the modern, autonomous self-consciousness."²³ It is the product of the Christian religion, for only there, in the image of the Trinity, do we find the resolution of the contradiction between finite and infinite in the idea, "i.e., in God's determining of himself to distinguish himself while remaining at the same time the sublation of the distinction. The distinction left as it is would be a contradiction" (*LPR*, vol. 3, p. 278). Christian representation of this aspect of God's existence, which moves beyond what we find in Judaism, is the speculative idea that stands behind the symbolism of the incarnation. Already in his discussion of Judaism, Hegel compares the concrete wisdom of the Christian God with the abstract wisdom of the Jewish God, and remarks, "Were God's wisdom concrete, then God would be his own self-determining in such a way that God himself would produce within himself what is created and sustain it internally, so that it would be created and known as sustained within him as his Son; God so defined would be known as truly concrete spirit" (*LPR*, vol. 2, p. 672). It is, then, within the symbolism of the incarnation, and only there, that we find an understanding of God that sublates the opposition between finitude and infinitude.

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It is true that only philosophy, as speculative reason, is capable of discerning this element of God's existence and making it known as the concrete Idea; still, of all the world religions it is Christianity (in its Protestant form, we should add) that communicated this content through its representations. Christianity is therefore the consummate religion, containing within itself the highest level of truth. It is further to be noted that for Hegel there is nothing contingent regarding the Trinitarian imagery; it is not as if this vision could have been expressed otherwise. Rather, the category of the triad is "the true category" (*LPR*, vol. 3, p. 286); a unitarian monotheism, on the other hand, is necessarily abstract and sublime. Thus, the flaw of Jewish theology and the superiority of the Christian vision of God are essential elements thereof, and do not represent contingent elements, such that one could argue that a reinterpretation would yield different results. Inherent in unitarian thinking is a flawed view of the relationship of God and the world, while inherent within Trinitarian thinking is the truth regarding God and the world, albeit in representational form. For the modern student of Hegel, then, there can be no value to continued attachment to Judaism, a defective religion.

2. *Schelling*. Julius Guttmann has pointed to the importance of Schelling's *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Prinzip der Dinge* for Krochmal's work, and indeed, this book does contribute to the philosophical context to which Krochmal's *Guide* is a response. For here, as with Hegel, we find lengthy reflections regarding the nature of the finite and the infinite and their interrelationship. For Schelling, the nature of the absolute may be divided into two elements, "essence" and

“form.” Essence is beyond all distinctions and may not be described by any predicate. The form of the absolute, on the other hand, represents Schelling’s concept of indifference or sheer identity in difference; it is both finite and infinite, and shares all other contrasting predicates. Schelling argues that individual finite things are included within the absolute’s form. In this sense, all finitude derives ultimately from the infinite; all reality is in fact part of an organic interrelation of all things. Again here, we find a strong challenge to a vision of divine transcendence.²⁴

Further, in Schelling’s work we find the same, if more oblique, dependence of Trinitarian imagery as in Hegel. In summarizing his discussion of the absolute, Schelling writes:

We will discern in the essence of that One, who is distinct from all antinomies—being neither the one nor the other—the eternal and invisible father of all things, who, while never stepping out from his eternity, comprehends the infinite and the finite with one and the same act of divine cognition. And the infinite is the spirit which is the unity of all things; the finite, while in itself the equal of the infinite, through its own will becomes a suffering God subject to temporal conditions. I believe that I have shown how these three could exist in one essence, and how the finite, although finite, eternally inheres in the infinite as well.²⁵

Elsewhere in this same work Schelling writes:

But the pure subject/object, that absolute cognition, the absolute ego, the form of all forms, is the only begotten [*eingeborene*] son of the Absolute, equally eternal, not differentiated from its essence, but rather united with it. Whoever thus possesses the son possesses also the father; only through the former does one arrive at the latter, and the former’s teaching [*Lehre*] is the same as the latter’s.²⁶

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The Trinitarian imagery here is pervasive and unmistakable. Through it Schelling offers the claim that implicit in Christian theology one can find allusions to the true nature of the absolute and its relation to the sensible world. Although not as directly as in Hegel's presentation, again here we find the essentially Christian roots of modern, philosophical metaphysics. Indeed, each philosopher is claiming, in his own way, that Christianity, through its representations, which is the manner in which all religious speculation is expressed, implicitly incorporates absolute knowledge. The task of philosophy is to conceptualize these representations and achieve a speculative expression of this absolute knowledge.

3. *Krochmal and Jewish Metaphysics*. Virtually all students of Krochmal's works agree that he was most impressed with the results of German philosophy in his time, although they may disagree on which thinker exercised the most influence. Less often noted however is that Krochmal's work is essentially exegetical, and is therefore dedicated to locating the concepts of German philosophy in Jewish thought and/or representations. Such a procedure is informed by the conviction that Judaism is in fact the absolute religion, and contains within it all the truths that modern metaphysicians are now first discovering. He writes:

We will often find in the words of the earlier thinkers from our people the essential results of the moderns in their investigations into the most sublime of truths. Indeed, the delving investigator will be astonished and forced to admit that the only superiority of the moderns lies in a more comprehensive and clear presentation. He will further give thanks and praise to the moderns for opening

our eyes to the existence of those ideas in the earlier thinkers who saw them in their totality with clear vision, but because of the lack of the requisite vocabulary were unable to elucidate the ideas and concepts fully. (*Guide*, p. 273)

Elsewhere, he writes that only now are the philosophers beginning to attain a purified concept of God, a concept that was commonplace among even the simplest of faithful Jews (*Guide*, p. 29).²⁷ Among Krochmal's tasks in the philosophical sections of the book is to prove this claim—that Jewish thinkers and sages already were aware of the true nature of God and his relationship with the world—and he turns to the philosophy of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164), as best he can reconstruct it, to achieve this purpose.²⁸

According to Krochmal, Ibn Ezra's method of analysis was to observe and reach conclusions in the various sciences, primarily various branches of mathematics, and to draw comparisons between the nature of these sciences and "the totality of existence in the essence of the Creator, may he be blessed, and in the essence of his worlds that were created from him" (*Guide*, p. 290). Thus "we find that often Ibn Ezra, before explaining some aspect of his metaphysical theories, states that from geometry we can learn x or from arithmetic y (*ibid.*).

For example, Ibn Ezra will ground an important metaphysical doctrine in an analysis of multiplication and the unique quality of the number one. On the basis of Ibn Ezra's comment to Daniel 10:21, Krochmal reconstructs the following argument: The number three, for example, represents the product of " 3×1 "; but with the number one the situation is different. To be sure, " $1 \times 1 = 1$." The final one in this equa-

tion is like any other number, the product of an equation. The second one in the equation represents the cognitive activity of the mind as it relates to numbers, or, in other words, it represents the basis of multiplicative operations. However, the one which comes first is perforce “devoid in its essence of any extension, measurement or divisibility” (*Guide*, p. 291). This one is known as the “simple one” whose nature cannot be apprehended by the mind. Yet without the assumption of this simple one there would be no basis for the multiplicative operations, or for anything else. Thus, we have three types of one: the one that is prior to all computation; the simple one, about which it can be said only that it exists; the one that is the basis of (*sibat*) all computation; the unique digit one which includes, conceptually, all the other numbers *ad infinitum*.²⁹

Ibn Ezra analyzes geometric forms in a similar manner. He begins with the open void, which precedes all things in thought; next, he examines the function of the midpoint and its extension into lines, which is an infinite process; and from the combination of the two, we derive the image of the circle, which is, in its universality, infinite as well, insofar as it has no discernible beginning and end, and in that it contains within it all other images of objects *ad infinitum*, although the latter are, of course, finite forms (*Guide*, p. 300).

These discourses serve Ibn Ezra, according to Krochmal, as analogues for a discussion of the nature of God and the world(s), and the relationship between them. Comparable to the simple one and infinite void is the hidden essence (*ezem ha-ne-elam*). This essence too is necessarily conceptually prior to all existing things that have form and shape, and of it

nothing may be said other than that it exists. The second component of the metaphysical triad is the form, that which acts on the essence, limiting and defining it so that all existing things are now conceivable with clearly recognizable attributes. This form corresponds to the one that is the identity factor, and to the function and extension of the midpoint in the previous triads. The activity of this form is infinite in that it encompasses all forms *ad infinitum*, since each form is encompassed by the form that proceeds it in the chain of being: The form of inanimate objects is included within that of plant life, and that of plant life within that of animal life, and animal life within that of human life, and so on up to the most elevated and transcendent form, that of the primordial wisdom (*hokhmah*).³⁰ From the combination of the two—essence and form—we get existence in general, which is the

infinite number of created things, each of which is finite. Conceptually defined, . . . existence [may be understood] as the universal essence come within the universal form, both of which are infinite—that is, the essence of all essences and the form of all forms, may He be blessed and exalted. [And this existence] is conceptually to be grasped in all created beings, which are defined in terms of the possession of essence and form. (*Guide*, p. 301)³¹

We are, thus, presented with Ibn Ezra's theory of the existence of all things within God. This is not pantheism *per se*, but rather panentheism, in that Krochmal insists that the theory does not actually limit God's transcendence, or attribute any quality to him that does not apply. This is because essence does not take on form out of necessity, and the form it *chooses* to take on is not identical with it. That is,

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the essence contains within it the potentiality to take on form; however, the form it takes on is not *the* actualization of that potential. The essence represents various forces in potentia, of which the eventually emerging form is *an* actualization. "All essences include more than what is actualized in their limited forms" (Ibid., p. 298).

The essence, in itself, remains unknowable and unlimited by the form(s) it takes on. However, while unknowable, the essence must be posited so that the predicates which we attribute to the object or being will not be attributed to absolute nothingness.³² That is, God understood as pure essence is the ground of all being. Form, in general, is defined as all that the mind cognizes in regard to the essence in order "to define it, recognize it, and to distinguish one thing from another" (ibid., p. 296). Thus, God's description as the "form of all forms," is the product of cognitive activity struggling to define him, but does not entail limitation that actually inheres within his essence.

According to Krochmal, the essence/form dichotomy serves as the basis of Ibn Ezra's entire metaphysical and cosmological theory. God as pure essence, or as primordial essence, as Krochmal now describes it, becomes the source for all other essences, which emanate from him; finite forms, on the other hand, issue from the primordial wisdom (*hokhmah q'dumah*), which is the infinite form of God. He explicates Ibn Ezra's comments to Exodus 3:16 as signifying that "both the essence that is to be found in everything and its true form (which is the definition of the essence such that there emerges an existing thing, for there is no existence without form) come from God and *emanate* from him, in such a way that their essences

exist within the primordial essence, which is infinitely unknowable, and their forms, which are finite, stand within the infinite form of the 'primordial wisdom within which existence was created from relative nothingness (*b'limah*)' " (*Guide*, pp. 297–98).

At this point the proximity of Krochmal's reconstruction of Ibn Ezra's thought and that of Schelling is readily apparent. In both we find the emphasis on an unknowable essence from which emerges an infinite form that is the source of all created existence. Krochmal is careful, however, not to take the argument too far and actually attribute corporeality to God, for this would truly make him a "suffering God subject to temporal conditions." He argues that while the view just presented appears to make God corporeal and subject to time and space once he has taken on form, this is not actually the case, because

The truth is that both space and the objects that fill it are not in their essence and truth that which is comprehended of them sensually, but rather that which is understood of them cognitively. And in this sense, insofar as they are cognitive terms, they are the thoughts of God, may He be blessed, and exist within Him. That is, they are the intellectual, cognitive definitions by which He cognizes His hidden essence, they are the forms for all that exists in the world, and in His primordial wisdom—through which He, may He be blessed, knows His essence. (*Guide*, p. 299)

Space, and time, are seen as cognitive forms, divine thoughts, through which God can come to be known to others and in turn to himself; there is, thus, no imputation of corporeality. The issue is, rather, that God, as essence, is pure subject

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incapable of bearing any predicate and thus incapable of meaningful self-knowledge. By "defining" himself in terms of space and time, God begins the process of coming to self-knowledge. As Hegel would put it, space and time are among the many ways through which God can achieve self-consciousness; Krochmal insists that recognition of this "divine drama" is already implicit in the thought of Ibn Ezra. Further, implicit in his disclaimer regarding corporeality is the claim that it is Christians whose religious symbols lead them astray here in that they are unable to conceive of space and time in relation to God without at the same time rendering God in some way subordinate to these categories as sensually understood. In this sense, Jewish thought is far closer to the speculative philosophy of the modern period than is Christian thought.

The next fateful step in this divine drama is the act of creation of the world. According to Krochmal, Ibn Ezra did not accept the position that God created the world from absolute nothingness, *creatio ex nihilo*.³³ This claim is crucial to Krochmal's project in that it was *creatio ex nihilo* that served as the basis for Hegel's understanding of the unbridgeable gulf that separated God from the world in Jewish thought, and led to the judgment that the relationship of God to his world is a negative one. Krochmal, in further "Hegelianizing" Ibn Ezra, provides the response to this reading. If the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* could not definitively be considered an essential element of "Jewish" faith, Hegel's critique is rendered impotent.

The question then becomes, if, for Ibn Ezra, the world was not created from absolute nothingness, from what then was it

created? The usual response to this question regarding Ibn Ezra and other Jewish Neoplatonists is that God limited and defined the primordial matter. However, in *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, which Krochmal incorrectly attributed to Ibn Ezra, this view is described as heretical. This provides the opening for Krochmal to argue that according to Ibn Ezra God created the world by limiting and defining his own being (*Guide*, p. 306). The process of creation is thus a twofold one in which God, the infinite, formless essence that is not subject to time and space, has through a spontaneous act of will accepted limitation by taking on form (time and space, inter alia), which was then further limited and defined by taking on matter, to ultimately produce the tripartite universe that stands as the centerpiece of Ibn Ezra's cosmology.

At this point in the argument the whole divine drama is recast in cosmogonic-cosmological terms, in which Krochmal reviews the emergence of the world according to Ibn Ezra. This discussion is particularly important to Krochmal's response to Idealist thinking. The first "world" in this tripartite universe is the transcendent one, the world of the intelligibles, in which God becomes recognizable as divinity. This world represents the actualization (the taking on of form) of potentialities or divine thoughts within the unknowable divine essence. The first thought to take on form, as we have seen, is that of *hokhmah* (wisdom), which represents God's first limitation of himself; from the form "wisdom" the rest of creation proceeds.³⁴ The next two divine limitations involve the granting of form to *binah* and *da'at* (understanding and knowledge). Now one will readily recognize that this reconstruction of Ibn Ezra's thought actually stands far closer

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to that of later Kabbalists, but this is of secondary importance. Of greater importance is Krochmal's attempt to locate in Jewish sources a vision of creation that parallels that of the Idealists. A further indication of this is that the threefold taking on of form is used to justify the basic epistemological foundations of Krochmal's entire enterprise, which are also the basis of Idealist thinking. He argues that the human process of intellection directly parallels the divine one manifest at the point of creation. For the term *hokhmah* corresponds to the human activity of forming *Ideen* (ideas). *Binah* corresponds to the faculty of *Verstand* (understanding), while *da'at* corresponds to the formation of *sinnliche Vorstellungen* (representations).³⁵ Human knowledge is based on ultimately transforming these representations into ideas, the human correspondent of the divine *hokhmah*. Thus, the human process of intellection is in a sense a reversal of the process through which God reaches out to humanity; in engaging in such intellection human beings ascend to that level on which God is recognizable as absolute spirit.

From the two-dimensional transcendent world—comprised of essence and form—the intermediate world, the first manifestation of the world as we know it, emerges by taking on yet another dimension, namely, matter. This world consists of the heavenly bodies, each of which is finite, but this world as a whole may be said to be infinite in that it includes the entire physical expanse of the universe, and it is subject to universally applicable, immutable laws (*Guide*, p. 321).

The third world is the lower one, the world of the four elements, in which human beings live. This world is finite, but is no less the product of the infinite wisdom of God, and

emerges from him, as do the other worlds (ibid.). Thus, all finitude and infinitude is genetically related and intertwined, although not identical. There is no basis for positing an alienation of the world from God in Jewish thought.

God as Spirit

The description of creation as a process in which God imposes limitation on his own being by virtue of actualizing his "thoughts" leads to the conclusion that for Jews God is conceptualized as absolute spirit, or as the overarching intellectual force at work in the world. Krochmal claims that while all religions are based on spirit, only Judaism incorporated this basic stance in its universality, and thus Jews developed a unique understanding of the nature of God as spirit. The burden then of this part of the argument is to establish both the positive and negative side of this claim.

Krochmal's discussion of God as spirit opens with his claim that all *religious* faith is in the *ruhani*,³⁶ or spiritual essence, so that even among primitives "their reverence is not for something physical in its limited and transitory physical particularity, but rather for the sustaining force, i.e., the spirit within it, which alone survives all physical metamorphoses, is universal and unlimited." Further, this essential point in the nascent philosophy of religion was already recognized by the rabbinic sages, with their claim that he who worships the mountain actually worships the spirit of the mountain.³⁷

Nevertheless, despite the common element present in all forms of religious worship, there can be no comparison between Judaism and pagan religions. While the latter involve

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recognition of spiritual forces, these forces are comprehended solely through sensual perception. However,

We, the group that first asserted the singularity of God in the purity of its truth, believe and know that all physical objects vanish and pass away, and are nothing in that they are not possessed of true reality. Even the spirit which we perceive as immanent in all physical objects, and which is most manifest in the human race and discernible through its characteristics, has no existence and no reality other than in God, may He be exalted, who alone is the perfect rock, who has been our God through all the generations, who is the cause that in its uniqueness encompasses all other causes, and is the true reality of all existing things. . . . This is the true meaning of the verse, "I am first, I am last, and other than myself, there is no God." (*Guide*, p. 29)³⁸

It is not at all surprising that this description of God as the all-encompassing essence from which all existence is derived, which differentiates Judaism from paganism despite the latter's claim to spirituality, corresponds to Hegel's notion of God. Yet, and this is the crucial point here, Krochmal goes on to state that this simple principle which "all who observe the commandments for the sake of heaven maintain, is the self-same principle which has caused so much difficulty for the giants of philosophy—sometimes they discerned it, sometimes not—who have finally attained it after deep philosophical investigation, after many generations of scholars had come and gone."³⁹ That is, according to Krochmal, it is Judaism, through its representations, that incorporates *and has always incorporated* the truth regarding the world and its existence, although Jews themselves did not achieve full awareness of this until their return from the Babylonian exile.⁴⁰ Jews con-

fronting Hegelian thought need to understand that, and to be brought closer to, rather than distanced from, their ancestral religion. Further, in recognizing the spirituality inherent in paganism, Jewish theologians of yesteryear are indicating that Judaism does not represent a total negation of paganism, per se, as much as a sublation of it. That is, Judaism negates paganism's spiritual deficiency by transcending it, rather than by casting it as a deficient mirror image, as Hegel would have it.

Krochmal first locates this understanding in the biblical notions of creation and prophecy. He notes that both creation and prophecy, as presented in the Bible, involve divine speech. This leads him to a discussion of the scope of the "major Torahitic concept" of speaking and saying (*dibbur, amirah*). Although Krochmal's interpreters do not seem to have recognized the point, it is clear that Krochmal's aim is not to clarify the notion of speech in general, but to defend the traditional usages that refer to divine speech, and to show that such references are grounded in a unique vision of God.⁴¹ He shows that the terms speaking and saying actually connote a far more sublime form of communication than actual speech, a form of communication that is not only possible for God, but is, in fact, mandated by God's existence as the ultimate spiritual being.

Krochmal differentiates four levels on which these terms can be understood, of which only the third and fourth are of interest here. On the third level, in which the *Vorstellung* has been abstracted into a *Begriff*, the realization is reached that the mouth, vocal chords and ears are not fundamental to communication, but are merely "instruments trained for the purpose of transmitting what is in one mind to another mind"

(*Guide*, p. 31). The human mind has already transcended the need for them with the development of a set of secondary symbols, such as letters and musical notation. The *Begriff*, then, that corresponds to the terms speaking and saying, as used in relation to God in the Bible, is that they connote communication in general; this communication involves the "revelation of what is within one cognitive being's mind to another cognitive being, through the use of sensual symbols" (ibid.). Thus, the notion that God has "spoken" is not in itself anthropomorphic, although, understood on this level, it has not totally transcended the element of sensuality.⁴²

Krochmal thus presents his readers with the *Idee* that corresponds to the terms under discussion. Using Hegelian terms, Krochmal states that the ability to form symbols is unique to spiritual beings, as is the ability to receive and interpret such symbols. Furthermore, it is through the activity of one's spirit, one's intellect, that one gains consciousness of oneself. One should understand, therefore, that "cognition [*baskalah*], which is the perfection of the internal speech, is the spirit attaining self-consciousness, just as the symbols in their wholeness are the perfection of external speech, i.e., becoming known to a spirit other than himself" (ibid.). It is further clear that for a being not possessed of spirituality the symbols are nothing, but for a spiritual being they

are transformed from their original physical nature—impressions, movements, letters—to a spiritual state—revelation, voice, speech—until, with the completion of these investigations, the concept is reached that for a spiritual being the essence is not one thing, consciousness a second, and self-consciousness a third, but that it is of the very essence of the spiritual being to become known to itself

and to reveal itself to another spiritual being with one action, just as physical light reveals and manifests itself and its surroundings with the same act. (Ibid.)

The Bible, then, in viewing speech as the medium of creation is indicating its understanding of God as spirit, acting out his own "personal" drama of coming to self-consciousness through reaching out to the other, namely the physical world in general and human beings in particular. Further, through prophecy, the divine drama continues to act itself out, as God communicates with humans and continues to gain knowledge of himself in the process.⁴³

Krochmal is arguing here that it is an essential characteristic of a spiritual being to communicate, to make itself known to others, as it becomes known to itself. He follows Hegel and Schelling in positing the essential identity of subject and object, although, as Klausner has already pointed out, there are roots for this discussion in the works of Ibn Ezra and Maimonides (Klausner, p. 181). Indeed, there is much overlap between Krochmal's presentation and that of Maimonides. For Krochmal's generation, however, the expression of these terms required a new idiom. Toward this end, the use of the ideas of the German Idealists, transplanted to his own context, served him well. Appropriating the term *Geist*, and using it in his own way, he focused on the common element in God and humans. By defining both as *ruhani'im* (spiritual beings) he removed the idea of revelation from its anthropomorphic and supernatural setting, and argued that divine-human communication of some sort is inherently rooted in the nature of the beings involved. Thus, if God exists (and chapter 5 of the

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Guide establishes that he does), he must “speak” to humans in some way.

In piecing together the dispersed elements of Krochmal’s discussion, we find that the act of divine self-limitation that resulted in the production of form and matter was in some ways an act of divine self-completion in that through it God can emerge with a higher level of self-consciousness.⁴⁴ Further, the polarity between the infinite and the finite is neutralized, in that God and humans, who are ultimately produced from God’s infinite being, are of the same nature, each being defined as a cognitive being. What Krochmal has “reconstructed” out of the sources of Judaism is a panentheistic position in which God’s ultimate transcendence is affirmed, while his immanence is acknowledged. By showing that these positions are mainstays of traditional Jewish thought, Krochmal is attempting to guide those attracted by the metaphysical richness of the thought of Schelling and Hegel back to Jewish sources, in which they will recognize the same richness in their own ancestral faith, and in no other religion, Hegel notwithstanding.⁴⁵

Absolute Spirit and Jewish Religious Consciousness

The next stage in Krochmal’s apologia is to “sociologize” this set of conclusions; that is, he moves to show that the knowledge of God as absolute spirit and the recognition of the partial spirituality of other peoples was a centerpiece of Jewish self-awareness throughout the ages. Thus, he moves from the theological implications of creation to the larger issue of the

place of God in Jewish life, culture and history. The move is from theology to sociology; Krochmal will attempt to show that throughout their history and literature Jews have carried with them a unique conception of God; that this unique conception of God is the product of a particular national consciousness; and that this particular national consciousness had crucial historical implications. The last of these issues will be the subject of the next chapter. We turn now to the first two issues.

The reality of God as the *yotzer ha-kol* (the creator of all things), in whom all things exist, but whose being is not exhausted by them, leads to the conclusion that for Judaism God is understood as *absolute* spirit. This also is alluded to in the Bible. From the verse "The Lord is the God of gods" (Joshua 22:22), Krochmal derives the *Idee* that God represents the reality of all *spiritual* things, which is what is meant by "gods"; the biblical phrase, "Lord, God of Hosts" (Psalms 80:5), indicates that God represents the reality of all *created* things, that is, all existing finite things.⁴⁶ Thus, argues Krochmal, the Torahitic concept of God envisions him as encompassing all reality, with nothing having true reality outside of him (*Guide*, 37–38).⁴⁷ Further, Krochmal cites a number of verses that refer to the existence of the divine *shekhinah*, obviously here understood as the accessible manifestation of God, and verses that refer to the existence of that *shekhinah* "within you," the people of Israel (*b'tokbekhem*). The *Idee* that corresponds to these verses is God's presence in nature, the world of finite things, and Israel. Further, the well-known rabbinic remark, "when the people [of Israel] were exiled to Babylon the *shekhinah* accompanied them" can

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only be understood as yet another indication of this aspect of Jewish faith (*Guide*, p. 38; BT Megillah 29a).⁴⁸ All these sources reaffirm Krochmal's insistence that the Jews *as a people* are the bearers of a unique and absolute faith, in that Jews and Jews alone avoid the pitfall of limiting God. What that means in this context is that we can no longer speak of a wholly transcendent God, a mere commanding presence to be feared but not approached. Rather, all reality, all finite things are infused with divinity, making God that much nearer. Thus, Krochmal argues that Jewish culture has successfully incorporated the implications of the doctrine of creation as he has reconstructed it from the Bible and Ibn Ezra.

To further buttress his case, Krochmal turns to a comparison of Israel and other nations—their theologies and historical destinies. He claims that no other nation ever arrived at the understanding that particular things, dependent as they are on time and space, possess no truthful existence in their immediacy, but rather only in God. All the other nations achieved only a fragmented vision of reality, generally giving pride of place to one aspect of spirit rather than to spirit's all-encompassing nature. Thus, the culture of the ancient Greeks was dominated by a concern for the arts and the pursuit of beauty, while Roman culture revolved around the practice of statecraft and the perfection of the political arts (*Guide*, p. 36).⁴⁹ Thus, these nations, having cultures only partially anchored in spirit, were unable to survive the course of time, while Jews, possessing a vital culture, have successfully made their way through the centuries.⁵⁰ This vision is presented as rooted in classical sources, in their discussion of the concept of *sar-ha-umah* (the celestial ministers assigned to each of the

peoples). In ascribing such ministering figures to each of the peoples of antiquity, the rabbis are differentiating their own culture—which has no ministering force, but partakes directly of divine providence—from that of all others. This indicates again the awareness of a culture whose underlying theological principle is wholly unified and absolute.⁵¹

That the primary focus of Krochmal's discussion of absolute spirit is sociological rather than theological may be seen from his discussion of the partial spirits of the other nations. Clearly, while "spirit" is an ontically discrete realm of existence—the *Idee* that corresponds to the transcendent world of Ibn Ezra—the "spirits" he discusses are metaphors for the way in which the reality of this realm has been appropriated by various religionational cultures. They are not themselves granted distinct ontological status. The Greeks did not appreciate the all-encompassing nature of the realm of spirit, nor did the Romans. Therefore, their "spirits," the forces that animate their culture, are described as fragmentary, as partial. Only the Jews understood the truly universal nature of spirit and produced a conception of God—as the creator and sustaining force of all things—that corresponded to this reality (see *Guide*, p. 35). Their spirit is thus described as absolute. Yet again, Krochmal is claiming that the Jews have transcended the spiritual achievements of other ancient peoples, and have not, as Hegel would insist, created a wholly negative response.

In his comparison of Jewish religious consciousness and that of other *nations* Krochmal is pursuing yet another polemic, this time challenging the prevalent rationalist-political views regarding the development of human culture. We must note that Krochmal speaks of nations rather than states as the

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bearers of culture, religious and otherwise. The state is an earlier stage of development, and apparently, may be superseded:

We see that it was the plan of divine providence not to scatter the human race so as to effect a total separation of individuals, as with the other living creatures, among whom solitude is natural and association merely incidental, but rather to consolidate the species into small and large groups, beginning with the nuclear family, then the extended family, then the city, followed by the state, and finally into the largest group, that of a complete nation, ordered in the direction of its affairs, and this is called a people and a nation. (*Guide*, p. 34)

In locating creativity in the nation, it seems that Krochmal is seeking to refute the universalist claims of Spinoza and the *philosophes*, among others, who asserted the possibility of developing a metanational rationalist culture, to be maintained through the development of rational political societies, on the one hand, and the apotheosis of the state that emerges from Hegel's philosophy on the other.⁵² Both approaches had deleterious effects on Jewish communal existence in the modern era. Indeed, responding to these challenges was particularly critical insofar as their representatives made concrete demands on the Jewish community, to which the latter, hopeful of achieving emancipation, were responding.⁵³

As a result, the national component of Jewish identity was being denied, and Judaism was being defined either as nothing more than revealed legislation, which had no greater claim to necessary truths any other rational system, or else as the development of the monotheistic idea in its ethical purity, which had outgrown the national identification that character-

ized its early stages. The former position, that of Mendelssohn,⁵⁴ ignored the historical development of Judaism, while the latter, despite lip-service to the idea of historical development, superimposed an unhistorical essence on Jewish history. In either case, for Krochmal, too much was deleted.

Ultimately, Krochmal's vision of the nature of the emergence of Jewish culture within the nation should be seen as grappling with the denial of Jewish nationhood that emerged with the Berlin Haskalah and later became a basic tenet of Reform Judaism. Borrowing his terms from the general philosophical environment, this time Herder and Hegel (although he, for obvious reasons, does not follow the latter in insisting that the *Volksgeist* can only be expressed through the *Staat*), Krochmal argues that the nation (*Volk*) is the highest form of social grouping, and, more importantly, all culture and spiritual creativity derive from it. He argues that the various religions and other cultural forms within a given society represent actualization of the *Volksgeist* (*ruah ha-umah*). That is, "all laws, mores, linguistic achievements, books of wisdom, and *conceptualizations of God*" are developed within the nation (*Guide*, p. 35). By arguing that the religious culture of the Jews, as of other peoples, can only develop through the nation, Krochmal demonstrates that the claim that Judaism is no longer a national form, but simply a religious one, is self-contradictory. Religion cannot develop without the spirit that emanates from the nation. Those committed to the proposition that Judaism is characterized by a unique vision of reality, one grounded in the conviction that all things exist only within God, that all reality is unified, cannot maintain the Jews had outgrown their national culture; with the loss of

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national culture comes the loss of the motivating spirit of that culture. It is through the awareness of themselves as the bearers of absolute spirit that Jewish culture remains vital and alive.

The Commandments

At this point, Krochmal has shown that Jewish sources reflect a unique spiritual consciousness, and that the Jewish people are the bearers of that unique consciousness. Yet, no discussion of Jewish theology and culture would be complete without some statement regarding the nature of Jewish praxis. This is particularly urgent in the case of Krochmal, as he remained fully observant throughout his life, and was clearly intellectually committed to the continued validity of the commandments. The modern age had raised a number of questions concerning ceremonial observance, and certainly perplexity abounded in this area. Krochmal's *Guide* provides a preliminary response to some of these questions.

Krochmal's metaphysic in itself contains an important element in the understanding of the nature of the commandments of the Jewish religion. Perhaps the most devastating philosophical critique leveled against the commandments is found in the work of Spinoza, who insists that God cannot be the source of positive law, as this would imply that God's intellect and will are distinct faculties. That is, for God to command an action without at the same time necessitating that this action be done requires the acceptance of the notion that God can will something and yet freely accept that this desired action not be realized; we would have to accept the

notion that God can compromise on the realization of that which he knows to be right. For Spinoza, such a position is an impossibility. He writes:

Hence the affirmations and the negations of God always involve necessity or truth; so that, for example, if God said to Adam that He did not wish him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it would have involved a contradiction that Adam should have been able to eat it, and would therefore have been impossible that he should have so eaten, for the Divine command would have involved an eternal necessity and truth. (*Treatise*, p. 63)

Because Adam and the subsequent Israelite prophets were ignorant of the essential identity of God's will and intellect, they came to view God as a potentate decreeing positive law; had they been more knowledgeable they would have understood as divine only those things that were in fact eternal and necessary. They would have understood that God cannot command ceremonies from which humans are free to refrain.

Krochmal's metaphysic provides the response to this position by agreeing with Spinoza that God, in and of himself, is devoid of personality, and thus not to be viewed as a commander of positive precepts or instructions. However, in Krochmal's view, the primordial wisdom, that highest manifestation of divine form, represents the first stage in God's reaching out to the other, and this taking on of form necessarily compromises the inscrutability of divine necessity. God, having taken on form, is now capable of willing contingencies, and can thus function as a source of law, or, to be more precise, as source of instruction.⁵⁵

There is yet another issue at work in Krochmal's discussion

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of the commandments; he insists that they are to be understood as symbols designed to arouse the mind to the existence of the spiritual essence, namely, God. In keeping with the essentially exegetical method he developed, it is not at all surprising that he cites a passage from Nahmanides' commentary to Exodus 13:16, which he summarizes as follows:

All these commandments allude to, arouse and educate the heart to the spiritual essence, or to an event which symbolizes a major testimony to the existence of the spiritual essence and its order in the world. And towards this end, these actions are essentially holy. That is, they are symbolic of the spiritual essence, which, expressed through the media of the tongue and the limbs, come to external existence *from the innermost depths of the soul*.

What is tellingly absent from Krochmal's summary of Nahmanides' comment is the presence of God as a commander, rather than as the passive referent of this divine service. This is no mere oversight. In the entire commentary of Nahmanides on this verse various forms of the verb *ziva* (to command) occur. Indeed, for Moses ben Nahman the relationship between God as commander and the act as fulfillment of the commandment is never blurred, even as he is willing to discuss the relationship between the commandment and its effect on the person, the commanded. However, in Krochmal's time the view of God as a commander of positive law came under strong attack, not only on the Spinozistic grounds outlined above, which Krochmal had effectively deflected, but on moral grounds as well.

From the middle of the seventeenth century onward, there developed a philosophical tradition which regarded the cere-

monial laws of the "Old Testament" extremely negatively, and in post-Christian terms. That is, the discussion no longer revolved around the question of whether the commandments remained efficacious for the attainment of salvation—or, in terms of their acceptability to God—but rather around whether they were moral—or, in terms of their acceptability to humans.⁵⁶ This theme is particularly prominent in the discussion of biblical commandments found in the work of Spinoza and Kant. The former adds to his philosophical critique the claim that the laws are totally devoid of any spiritual content, and their purpose is to be understood strictly in political terms.⁵⁷ Both stress the coercive, enslaving, heteronomous aspect of the biblical legislation that rendered it devoid of any moral content as well. Kant in particular argues that divine laws are perforce morally valueless.⁵⁸ For both of them, the purpose of the laws was to instill a sense of obedience, which was necessary for the political maintenance of the Israelite state. In addition, in Hegel's treatment of the "cultus" in Judaism, he too develops the notion that the cultus is a way of approaching God from fear and through the giving over of one's possessions, indicating that for him as well, Jewish praxis was an inferior expression of spirituality.

Krochmal's brief analysis should be seen as a preliminary response to these arguments. By stating that the commandments attain visible existence from the innermost depths of the soul, he is countering the argument that the laws of the Torah are heteronomous or coercive. In this respect God, as the author of the legislation, is seen not so much as the commander, but rather as a teacher instructing humans in the proper way of attaining spiritual heights. The commandments carry out their spiritual purpose by "purifying thought and

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instructing in faith." As is to be expected, Krochmal cites a passage from rabbinic literature that ostensibly supports his position. He cites the rabbinic law that "*tashmishe q'dusha* [implements of holiness] must be buried, while *tashmishe mizvah* [implements necessary for the performance of a commandment] may be thrown away."⁵⁹ The former, by definition, contain the name of God and are therefore holy, which to Krochmal means that they necessarily symbolize the existence of spirit. That is, their holiness derives from the fact that they always instruct one in the ways of the absolute spirit by virtue of their very existence. For this reason they may not be discarded disrespectfully, but must be buried. The latter, on the other hand, may be thrown away as they are merely the sensual objects necessary to fulfill certain commandments; it is the use of these objects in a prescribed ritual setting that imparts to them a degree of sanctity. When they are removed from this setting they have no sanctity and may thus be discarded as one chooses. This indicates that sensual objects used in the performance of divine service are not holy outside this service for they do not serve to purify thought and instruct the mind in faith. As such they cannot imbue the physical objects required for their fulfillment with holiness. Regarding both categories the conclusion that emerges is the same: ritual objects and ritual acts are designed not to coerce, not to allay fear, but to bring the human being closer to the absolute spirit. Thus, religious commandments are here understood as constant reinforcement of the consciousness of the true reality of God. It should be noted that they are, for Krochmal, essential to maintaining this religious posture and may not be compromised.

Further, the commandments, by constantly reinforcing faith,

in turn contribute to the survival of the people, and thus to the maintenance of their unique spiritual and historical destiny. He writes:

And God, may he be exalted, strengthened the solidarity of the nation in giving them, in a wondrous and sublime way, righteous and comprehensive teachings, statutes and laws, which perfect the individual and the collective in the most perfect way possible. He promised them that their true observance will sustain the nation, which will not die or perish; "for thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil etc." And this belief was always vital and strong within the nation, and it was ever aware of the absolute spirit that was within it.⁶⁰

The commandments, then, are an essential part not only of the individual's attachment to God, but of the national attachment to God. It is through the commandments that a Jew, and Jews as a people, realize the knowledge of the absolute that is the goal of modern philosophical thought.

In assessing the perplexities of the time, Krochmal arrived at the conclusion that Judaism suffered from the inability of its adherents to properly decode its latent speculative content. This is particularly manifest in the areas discussed in this chapter, namely: teleology and intention; the relationship of God and the world; the proper locus of cultural development; and the nature of the commandments. His guide to these perplexities returns to the variegated sources of Jewish culture, whether Maimonides, Ibn Ezra, the rabbinic writings, the Bible or Nahmanides, respectively. He is most daring in his discussion of the relationship of God and the world in Jewish thought, in which he essentially argues that the answer for modern Jews seduced by Idealistic metaphysics is a return

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to a demythologized kabbalism—which he creatively locates in the work of Ibn Ezra—that insists on the infusion of divinity into all reality, and which stands in proximity to the claims of German Idealism.⁶¹ In this way the Hegelian and Schellingian claims that only Christianity encompasses the correct understanding of God and the world are deflected.

Indeed, virtually every modern “philosophical” denigration of Judaism—by Spinoza and Hegel, in particular—is shown by Krochmal to be the product of ignorance, in that for Jews there is no gulf between the divine and mundane realms as Hegel implies, nor is there an unbridgeable distance between God and humanity. Jews do not serve God out of fear, but out of a thirst for his presence. Jewish national consciousness and religious exclusivity do not entail the denial of all other forms of spirituality. The Jewish sages are well aware of the universal quest for spiritual fulfillment; this recognition, however, does not lead to an acceptance of that which denies the true reality of all things, which can only exist in God. Thus paganism, seen as a comprehensive spiritual orientation, is to be combated, and Jews are to remain ethnically separate; it is only as this separate nation that Jewish spiritual culture, embodying truth as it does, can continue to flourish.

With this response to the pressing issues of the time, Krochmal believes he has effectively negated all the distortions of religion described in the previous chapter. By presenting the true nature of Jewish thought and practice, by demonstrating the philosophical sophistication inherent in Jewish sources, Krochmal has produced what he calls a “purified faith” that should guide the committed Jew on that narrow path between the extremes.

There were, however, other issues perplexing the modern

Jew, the philosophy of history in particular, and it is to his treatment of this area that we now return.

NOTES

1. I have translated in accord with Krochmal's citation, which is indeed the version as found in many editions. Cf. the apparatus for this passage in Y. Theodor and H. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965), vol. 1, p. 365. The text there reads "mover" (*manbig*) rather than "owner" (*ba'al*) in God's identification of himself. As to the meaning of the castle burning, most traditional commentators explain that it is easy to recognize that a well-kept building is being cared for; it takes greater powers of discernment to realize that even a burning structure must have someone who looks after it. Similarly, Abraham's powers of discernment are such that even in a world that is, from a moral point of view, a total disaster, the presence of God as overseer is manifest.
2. See Genesis Rabbah 38:13, and in general Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: 1910), vol. V, p. 210, n. 16.
3. See "Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim" 1:3, which, it is to be noted, is found in the ostensibly more philosophical *Sefer Madda*.
4. For a discussion of one aspect of this, see I. Heinemann, "Die Lehre von der Zweckbestimmung des Menschen im griechisch-römischen Altertum und im jüdischen Mittelalter," *Bericht des jüdisch-theologisch Seminars Fraenkelscher Stiftung für das Jahr 1925* (Breslau: 1926), passim. Heinemann's view that such thought is incidental in the Bible seems to me to be overstated. While it is true that the Bible rarely related explicitly to Heinemann's question—specifically, the teleological view of humanity—it nevertheless seems to be embedded within a wide range of narratives and prophecies, from the creation story through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

It should also be noted that Krochmal's view of the centrality of the argument from design stands at some odds with the view put forward a century later by Harry Wolfson, in which he contends that the argument occupied an insignificant place in Jewish thought, and, when invoked, served as the handmaiden of the cosmological proof.

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It seems to me that Wolfson exaggerates somewhat here in that the two proofs often function together, with neither of greater importance. Thus, in his citation from Albo that creation proves the existence of God, while design proves only purposiveness, there is a clear sense that the second claim is of lesser importance. Yet the reality of a willing and intending God is crucial to any theistic conception, and certainly Albo would not be satisfied with a God devoid of an independent will (such as Spinoza's God; see Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* pp. 151–56); the existence of such a God would scarcely be worth proving. Further, Wolfson pays no attention to rabbinic writings, in which the argument from design is prominent. It is further to be noted that for Maimonides, the fact of creation depends ultimately upon revelation (*Moreh* 2: 25; similarly, Yehudah Halevi, *Kuzari*, 1:67); prior to the revelation (i.e., Abraham's situation), the evidence for God's existence is most manifest in the natural order, attesting to design and designer. This, however, is not to deny the essential truth of Wolfson's claim regarding medieval Jewish philosophy. See Wolfson, "Notes on Proofs of the Existence of God in Jewish Philosophy," in *Studies in History of Philosophy and Religion*, Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 561–69.

5. For further discussion, see Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 422–40.
6. See also Kant's *Religion* (pp. 58–59, note) in which he again denies the tenability of the proof from design and purpose.
7. For further discussion, see Michel Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (London and Montreal: McGill—Queens University Press, 1973), pp. 68–75.
8. Klausner alone recognized the opposition to Spinoza in this chapter, but mitigated its centrality, claiming that the main opponent in this chapter is Schelling and his doctrine of absolute identity in nature. This is due to a misreading of Krochmal on the part of Klausner. The latter argues that in this chapter Krochmal attempted to prove that there is a teleological principle at work in the world but only within structured organisms, and not in the inanimate world; thus, Klausner finds in Krochmal a bifurcated view of nature that he feels opposes Schelling's *Identität* theory. In actuality, Krochmal merely used the structured organism, for which, he claimed, an efficient cause is not

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sufficiently explanatory, as a proof for the existence of final causes; once final causes have been shown to exist, however, the teleological principle can be applied to nature as a whole. Further, the notion that Krochmal opposed Schelling in this chapter loses sight of the chapter's purpose, which is not to establish that nature is bifurcated (assuming for the moment that is what Krochmal here argues), but rather that with some modification the teleological proof for the existence of God can still be maintained. Klausner is aware that Krochmal applied the teleological principle to nature as a whole, and thus he wrote that by the end of the chapter (which is only ten pages long) Krochmal had returned to Schelling's system. Is it believable that the author wrote this chapter to oppose Schelling, only to return to him at its conclusion? It must however be said that, despite the untenability of his discussion regarding Schelling, Klausner is the only investigator to have recognized the relationship between this chapter and Spinoza's philosophy. See Joseph Klausner, *Histor'ia shel ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem: 1953), vol. 2, pp. 178–80.

9. Krochmal will deal with the philosophical problem of God's exercise of a contingent will later on, and this will be discussed below.
10. It is interesting to note that Krochmal, in asserting that humans are the telos of creation, diverges from Maimonides, for whom the telos of nature, while it undoubtedly exists, remains unknowable (see *Moreh*, 3:13; cf. *Moreh* 2:22). As Heinemann points out, an anthropocentric teleology faces enormous difficulties, such as the existence of many natural forces that are inimical to the existence of the human species. Still, the human imagination is capable of wonderful flights of fancy. For example, Kant, in his early Leibnizian stage, was able to find room for the horrifying Lisbon earthquake of 1755 within his anthropocentric teleology by claiming that it had the salutary effect of opening a spring some miles away, and thus, serving the ultimate goals of humanity after all. See Despland, op. cit.
11. That is, Krochmal would have justified his movement beyond Kant's notion of a regulative idea to metaphysical reality. Krochmal presents his argument against the Kantian limitation of human intellect, in a different context, in *Guide*, pp. 314ff.
12. Luzzatto also attacked Spinoza vigorously on this point; see his *Meh-kare ha-Yabadut* (Warsaw: 1913; repr. Jerusalem: 1970), pt. 1, pp. 198–22, esp. 218–22.

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13. I ignore the *Early Theological Writings* completely, as they were not published in Hegel's or Krochmal's lifetime, and, apparently, were never intended for publication. They are, then, quite irrelevant to my discussion.
14. It is to be noted that Hegel will treat Judaism primarily from the perspective of the Old Testament, with little attention paid to later materials. Fackenheim claims that Hegel did, in fact, pay more attention to later Judaism; this seems correct only in comparison to others, such as Kant. As we shall see in the next chapter, given Hegel's view of the course of human history, there is little reason for him to attempt to come to grips with later Judaism, either in his philosophy of history or in his philosophy of religion.
15. I have here transcribed the version of the *Werke*, which was available to Krochmal. Thus, the citation is from note 515, rather than from the text which reads "The ground of absolute spirituality" instead of "the absolute root of subjectivity, of the intelligible world."
16. See also *LPH*, p. 196, and *Encyclopedia*, par. 112, Zusatz, where Hegel disparages Judaism—and Islam—for their "scant recognition of the finite."
17. Hegel's description of a liberating fear is part of his larger polemic against the views of Schleiermacher, for whom religion is to be understood in terms of an overwhelming sense of utter dependence on the part of the religious adherent. See his *Christian Faith*, par. 4.
18. See Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Concept of Religion and Judaism as the Religion of Sublimity" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, vol. 45, nos. 3-4 (April-Sept. 1976), pp. 303-26. Yovel seems a bit harsh in his judgments here, perhaps paying closer attention to the material that derives from Hegel's lecture ms. that dates from 1821 rather than to the later material in which his view softened somewhat. (See Hodgson's introduction to *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 48-51, 69-71.) Despite this harshness, Yovel's opinion seems to me to be essentially correct; Hegel never did overcome the bias of his early years, although he did indeed try.
19. See *LPR*, vol. 2, pp. 430ff. and 672ff. See also, Reinhard Leuze, *Die ausserchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 171-77.
20. In the lectures on religion delivered in 1827, Hegel acknowledges that Christians too understand their God in terms of a family—that

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is, in a restricted way, despite the ideal of a universal Christendom. In this version Hegel seems his least judgmental. Still, the passage from the lectures on history to be cited below became, I think, more dominant, particularly by virtue of being buttressed by the passage from the *Encyclopedia* mentioned above, note 16.

21. See below, chapter 3, passim.
22. Thus Hegel writes:

The finite is therefore an essential moment of the infinite in the nature of God; and it may consequently be said that God is the very being who finitizes himself, who posits determinations within himself. God creates a world, that is, he wills a world, and determines himself—outside him there is nothing to determine; that is, he determines himself, he posits for himself an other over against himself so that there is God and there is the world—they are two. In this relationship God himself is held fast as the finite over against another finite, but the truth is that this world is only an appearance in which he possesses himself. Without the moment of finitude there is no life, no subjectivity, no living God. God creates, he is active: therein lies the distinguishing, and with distinction the moment of finitude is posited. This subsistence of the finite must be sublated once more. . . . Thus the finite is a moment of the divine life . . .” (*LPR*, vol. 1, pp. 307–8)

23. R. Gascoigne, *Religion, Rationality and Community: Sacred and Secular in the Thought of Hegel and his Critics*, *International Archives of the History of Ideas*, no. 105 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), p. 17.
24. The discussion presented here is, I believe, adequate for my purpose. For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Schelling’s thought, see the very helpful introduction of Michael G. Vater to his translation of Schelling’s *Bruno* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), pp. 28–35.
25. F. W. J. Schelling, *Schellings Werke*, (Münchener Jubiläumsdruck), Manfred Schroeter, ed., vol. 3, p. 148. Cf. Philippians 2:6–8.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 223. The last sentence recalls 1 John 2:23, 1 John 4:15, and 2 John, 1:9.
27. He writes, “And know further that this great corner [stone] which the [Jewish] Godfearing have maintained through their tradition is the very same one that has caused such difficulty for great scholars—sometimes they see it, sometimes they do not—and they have arrived at it after intensive rational investigation, and after many generations, and many scholars, had passed” (*Guide*, p. 29).

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28. Almost all scholars who have discussed this chapter, whether from the perspective of Krochmal scholarship or from the perspective of Ibn Ezra scholarship, agree that much of what is contained therein does not represent the thinking of Ibn Ezra. (See, e.g., Julius Guttmann, "Y'sodot ha-Maḥshavha shel Rabbi Nachman Krochmal," in *Knesset l'Zekher Bialik*, [1941], pp. 276–78, and Hermann Greive, *Studien zum jüdischen Neuplatonismus: die Religionsphilosophie des Abraham Ibn Ezra* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973], pp. 21–22.) No doubt part of Krochmal's inability to successfully reconstruct Ibn Ezra's thought is due to the fact that he, along with many others in his time, attributed the book *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, written by Isaac Ibn Latif, to Abraham Ibn Ezra (see Sarah Heller Wilensky, "On the Question of the Author of *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* Attributed to Abraham Ibn Ezra" (Hebrew), in *Tarbiz*, vol. 32 [1963], pp. 277–95). In addition, Krochmal seems to have been unable—or unwilling—to distinguish among various forms of Jewish Neoplatonism, thus collapsing the distinctions between the thought of Ibn Ezra and later kabbalistic thinking. The result, as Greive points out, is that Krochmal's reconstruction of Ibn Ezra stands closer to that of the kabbalists than to Ibn Ezra himself (Greive, p. 22). I do not think that one would be unkind if one asserted that Krochmal tended to find in Ibn Ezra what he wished to find there.

Further, I believe that we are certainly justified in treating Krochmal's discussion of Ibn Ezra as an exegetical presentation of his own views, which is to say, those views he wished to present as the response to the disorienting effects of modern thought. Still, it must be said that he clearly claims to have done nothing other than reconstruct Ibn Ezra's thought, and to have taken care "not to add to his ideas that which never entered his mind at all, or even to present that which can be implied from his remarks but about which his ideas were not clear" (*Guide*, p. 284). Further his criticisms of Ibn Ezra's attachment to astrology make little sense unless we take this claim seriously. Further, as Rapoport testifies (*Kerem Hemed*, vol. 6, p. 47), early in life Krochmal became convinced of the attachment of Ibn Ezra to the identity of philosophy and religion, and the former encouraged the latter to commit his discussion to print, suggesting Krochmal truly believed this crucial point to be there. Finally, it should be said that Krochmal's attachment to Ibn Ezra may be related

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- to the latter's reputation among Jewish maskilim and gentile scholars alike. On this, see my "Ibn Ezra in Modern Jewish Perspective" to be published with the proceedings of a one-day conference on Ibn Ezra held at Harvard University, Oct. 25, 1989.
29. As far as I can tell, Krochmal did not recognize that this argument is rooted in Plato's *Parmenides*; it would appear that he thought Ibn Ezra was the originator of this line of reasoning.
 30. The primordial wisdom referred to here would seem to correspond to the rationality that stands behind all existence in German Idealist thought. Again here, we can see Krochmal explicitly affirming a crucial aspect of the teleological view of existence. Further, we should note that Krochmal considered the encompassing of earlier forms within later forms to be an example of *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense, which, as presented here, it need not be (see *Guide*, p. 290). That is, Krochmal apparently did not reject the dialectical method in toto (as Rawidowicz claims), but rather appropriated it as a formal-logical principle whose results could be extended beyond the realm of formal logic (that is, we can speak of things as being *aufgehoben*) *without* the full working out of the dialectical *process*. Thus anything particular could be considered *aufgehoben* by a more general or "higher" categorization. It is as if dialectical reasoning allows us to establish this general logical rule that can then be applied anytime we can discern a general/particular relationship between things. Krochmal attributes great importance to Ibn Ezra's concern for this relationship, and thus we can understand that it is the appropriation of this ostensibly dialectical reasoning that allows Krochmal to identify the philosophy of Ibn Ezra and other medievals (see p. 282) with the philosophy of his own day.
 31. At this point in his argument Krochmal provides yet one more analogy, this time from the science of logic. It adds nothing new to our understanding, and I will not summarize it; its importance lies in the fact that Krochmal claims, that "this, as with many things stated by the sage (Ibn Ezra), is what has been stated explicitly by the recent philosophers in Germany" (*Guide*, p. 301). We see again the attempt to establish the proximity of Jewish thought to the Idealism that came to prevail in Germany in the nineteenth century.
 32. *Guide*, p. 296. I have translated *ay'yin* as absolute nothingness in contradistinction to *b'limah*, which I have translated as relative nothingness.

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- ingness. It is relative because it is nothing only due to the fact that it is hidden from perception, and therefore to us it is no-thing. The term *b'limah* here refers to the fact that what is under discussion has no *mabut*, that is, it has no answer to the question *mah?* or "what?" See *Guide*, p. 274.
33. He derives this from the fact that Ibn Ezra argues that the Hebrew word *bara*, found in the first verse of Genesis and elsewhere throughout the creation story, means to limit, separate and define, rather than to create (*Guide*, p. 306). Krochmal proceeds to cite other authoritative Jewish sources that deny the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, among them the *Sefer Yetsirah* and its traditional commentaries, as well as Ya'aqob Ermden's *Mitpabat S'forim*. It is safe to say that Krochmal himself felt strongly that the doctrine was not correct and that his position was well grounded in Jewish sources.
 34. The use of the word first here represents a logical priority and not a temporal one, since time is not yet an applicable category. See *Guide*, p. 317.
 35. See *Guide*, p. 317. Krochmal's presentation here differs from that found on page 12 of the *Guide*, discussed above (p. 25), semantically, but not descriptively. That is, the terms have shifted somewhat, but the qualitative description of the process remains the same. There can be little doubt that in both places Krochmal is dealing with the epistemological assumptions of Idealist philosophy; the point here is that such epistemology is already implicit in a medieval Jewish source, namely, the work of Ibn Ezra.
 36. Krochmal's use of the adjective *ruhani* (spiritual) as a noun requires some discussion. There is no doubt that the term is intended to correspond to the German *Geist*; yet this term is itself sufficiently nebulous as to make this correspondence of little help in understanding Krochmal. Rather, we must examine the history of this usage and the contexts within which Krochmal uses the term. First, *ruhani* as a noun is not an innovation of Nachman Krochmal. It has a history. In the Hebrew translation of Maimonides' *Guide*, which became the standard edition for European Jews, the translator, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, uses the term as an appositive of *mal'akim*, or angels (*Moreh*, 2:14). Jacob Klatzkin lists a number of other locations in which the term is thus used, on the basis of which he defines it as a *geistiges Wesen* (Jacob Klatzkin, *Thesaurus Philosophicus* [New York: Feldheim,

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1968], vol. 4, pp. 29–30). It seems then, that in medieval Hebrew philosophy, *ruhani* is used to designate a specific spiritual or ethereal entity, while *ruach*, the noun for spirit, seems to correspond to the more amorphous use of the terms spirit and *Geist*. In Krochmal's *Guide*, the term is used synonymously with *atsmi* and *sikbli*, and contrasted with *gufani*, *chomri* and *z'mani*.

It seems, then, that for Krochmal *ruhani* is an essence that can only be grasped cognitively, since it is incorporeal, immaterial and nonephemeral. Krochmal calls the human mind a *ruhani* in that while it is, of course, dependent on its physical makeup for its existence, its thought-producing and interpretive activities are considered spiritual, in the sense described. He also uses the term to describe the essential, nonapparent, significance of a thing or idea. This can be seen in a translation Krochmal makes from August Ferdinand Dähne's German translation of a passage from Philo. In Dähne the passage reads: "Wir würden ja auch sonst den Tempeldienst und tausend anderes verwerfen müssen, wen wir uns bloss an Das halten wollen, was der geheime Sinn andeutet." (August Ferdinand Dähne, *Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrischen Religionsphilosophie* [Halle: 1834], pp. 66–67.) Krochmal translates this passage as follows:

Ha-kellal, 'im nahshov ki yaspiq lanu be- 'inyan ha-ruhani ha-mukhuvan be-rimze ha-torah be-hahziko levad ba-ruhani be-shum 'ot neged 'enenu, hine yevutlu ha-miqdash ve- 'avodato ve-khal ha-mitzvot be-khalalan.

In this translation the term *ruhani* corresponds to *geheime Sinn*, the hidden meaning of the commandments, knowledge of which does not negate the obligation to preform the commandments. Elsewhere, Krochmal describes a *ruhani* as the sustaining force of a thing. It seems, thus, that Krochmal has not been bound by the medieval usage entirely in that he has extended the term to include more than just celestial beings; nevertheless, he follows the medieval precedent in that *ruhani* refers to something ontologically discrete and real, as opposed to the more amorphous meaning of *Geist* characteristic of Hegel's philosophy.

37. BT Hullin 40a. It is true that Krochmal's claim that all religious faith is directed towards spirit is a virtual quotation from Hegel, as has been pointed out (Klausner, p. 180; J. Landau, *Nachman Krochmal: Ein Hegelianer* p. 26). Yet, his purpose here is not merely to

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register his agreement with the German philosopher on this point, but rather to demonstrate that this basic point in the philosophy of religion is something of which the rabbis were already aware. Landau correctly pointed out that the Talmud actually states that there is a distinction between those whose worship is directed to the mountain and those whose worship is directed to its spirit; thus, not all faith is directed towards spirit. For this reason Landau claims that Krochmal has no support in this Talmudic passage, and that therefore, one may discount the Talmudic reference, and focus on the Hegelian roots of Krochmal's claim. However, on closer analysis it will be seen that the passage does indeed support Krochmal, for he does not deny that there is such a thing as fetishism; he had merely claimed that it cannot be considered a religious faith. As a matter of definition, religious faith is only directed towards spirit. The Talmudic passage, in making a distinction between the two types worship, shows that only worship directed towards the spirit of the mountain can be considered idolatry, and thus, in some misguided sense, religion. The other form of "worship" stands outside the realm of religion altogether. Thus, Landau's conclusion that the rabbinic and Hegelian positions are irreconcilable, and that Krochmal preferred the Hegelian position, is incorrect. Rather, the purpose is to show that there is no novelty in Hegel on this point, and support for this interpretation is the trouble to which Krochmal went to find a Talmudic passage that would illustrate the fact.

38. The quotation is from Isaiah 44:6. This is a good example of Krochmal deriving sublime philosophical truths from biblical verses that are written in simple, representational fashion.
39. This claim is crucial, for it indicates what Krochmal is trying to do. By claiming that the truths finally unearthed by Hegel and others was already recognized and encompassed by Judaism, Krochmal is attempting to mitigate the potential damage that their thought could have on those Jews who encountered it. Thus, Hegel's recognition of the universality of the religious impulse was already known to the rabbis; they, however, recognized that there remained a world of difference between Judaism and paganism. Thus, Hegel's claim, quoted above, that Judaism is grounded in the denial of all spirituality to all other religions is shown to be false. In addition to the passage cited above (see note 36), Krochmal supports his claim by reference to

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various rabbinic passages, such as those that attribute to each nation a *sar ha-umah*, or (celestial) national overseer, to prove that the rabbis were aware of the spiritual quest of other peoples. What differentiates Judaism from other faiths is that it alone has attained a pure concept of God, recognizing him in all his universality. Of course, Judaism never presented its *Weltanschauung* in philosophical terminology, and thus the sublime truths of Judaism often go unrecognized. To remedy this situation, modern Jews require a guide which will engage in the method of interpretation outlined in the second chapter of the *Guide*, by which philosophical *Ideen* can be derived from the *Vorstellungen* and *Begriffe* which are the medium of religious expression.

40. For further discussion of this, see next chapter.
41. Cf. the recent article by Binyamin Ish-Shalom, "Ha-Mitzvot uma'andan b'filosofia ha-datit shel R. Nachman Krochmal," *Tarbiz*, vol. 56 (1987), pp. 373-83, *passim*.
42. Of course, Krochmal's battle is not really with anthropomorphisms; that battle had already been fought by Maimonides. (See *Moreh*, pt. 1, *passim*; for Maimonides' discussion of the terms *dibbur* and *amirah*, see *Moreh*, 1:65.) Rather, Krochmal is concerned to show that God's revelation is both possible and necessary by his very nature; under such circumstances, the philosopher could not possibly deny it.
43. This raises the issue of a cessation of prophecy, which Jewish tradition demands. Krochmal accepts that classical prophecy did in fact cease, although, he maintains, it continued a bit longer than is generally supposed (see below, chapter 4). It must be noted that according to tradition (and Krochmal) prophecy came to an end in the period in which Jews had finally achieved a clear recognition of God as absolute spirit. Given the partnership between God and humans, specifically Israel (see immediately below in the text), the recognition of God as absolute spirit may have obviated the need for God to communicate with Israel through prophecy. Rather, the onus of responsibility now turns to Israel to bring the rest of the world to consciousness of God as absolute spirit (*Guide*, p. 37). On all this, see immediately below in the text and chapter 3, *passim*.
44. One will note the similarity between this presentation and two of the central claims of Lurianic kabbalah, namely its doctrines of *ismitsum* and *tiqqun*. While obviously admiring the view that stands behind these doctrines, the Lurianic materials are far too mythological for

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- Krochmal's taste. (As we saw above, his rejection of Hasidism was grounded in similar concerns.) That is, in the highly mythological Lurianic version of the divine drama, religious speculation went beyond representations, which are after all ideas (used in the nontechnical sense), to direct sensual images devoid of any abstraction whatsoever. The same problem obtains with the early Jewish gnostics, who also went astray in their thought processes, and ultimately were attracted to Christianity (see *Guide*, chapter 15, passim, esp. p. 272). Such mythological thinking was responsible, according to Krochmal, for the low esteem in which genuine religious thought was held in his time. This distinction stands at odds with the presentation of David Biale on this subject, who will differentiate between "positive kabbalah" and "negative kabbalah" in Krochmal on the basis of time. In fact, as the materials he cites indicate, the difference is between speculative kabbalah on the one hand, and ecstatic or "feverishly imaginative" kabbalah on the other. Speculative kabbalah is a "science of faith," the equivalent of modern *Religionsphilosophie* (*Guide*, p. 30). The mysticism of the feverishly imaginative adept is wholly negative, whether in the second century or in the nineteenth. The confusion comes about because his representative of positive kabbalah turns out to be Ibn Ezra, whom he explicitly equates with the "early kabbalists" (*Guide*, pp. 306-7). See David Biale, "The Kabbalah in Nachman Krochmal's Philosophy of History," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 32 (1981), pp. 85-97.
45. For further discussion of Hegel and pantheism, see Raymond Keith Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), pp. 251-94.
 46. It is, I believe, most significant that neither of these verses occurs in the Torah; that is, neither is presented as direct divine revelation. Both, therefore, represent the incorporation of the lessons to be learned from creation into the religious consciousness of the people.
 47. Cf. Hegel's remark that "(t) rue knowledge of God begins when we know that things, as they immediately are, have no truth." G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 164 (= *Enzyklopädie*, par. 112, Zusatz).
 48. There can be little doubt that Krochmal, responding to Hegelian "provocation," has tended to overemphasize the immanent strand in traditional rabbinic thought. Nevertheless, his position does indeed

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serve as a good corrective to the view that the Jewish God remains fully transcendent. This caricature of rabbinic religion is found not only in the works of Protestant thinkers such as Hegel, but also in the work of Gershom Scholem, who claims that Jewish faith developed diachronically from polytheism to a dualistic (God-world) transcendent monotheism to a mystical unifying monotheism. (See his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York: Schocken, 1961], pp. 7–8.) Even a cursory reading of rabbinic sources would indicate that this schema is far too simplistic.

49. This formulation echoes the standard views of the time; it was a commonplace of Hegelian analysis, and was picked up by Eduard Gans in his discussion of the place of Jewish culture in general world culture. See below, chapter 3.
50. For a further elaboration of this theme and its context, see below, chapter 3, *passim*.
51. For a discussion of the development of this idea in medieval Jewish sources, particularly the work of Nahmanides, and of Krochmal's indebtedness to these sources, see now the important article by Rivka Horowitz " 'Goyim v'elohav' l'R. Nachman Krochmal u-m'qorotav ha-yehudi'im," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1987) (Pines Festschrift), pp. 265–87). I am grateful to Dr. Horowitz for sending me this article.
52. See Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (New York: Dover, 1951), *passim*, and esp. chapters 14–20; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*; Hegel, *LPH*, introduction, and *PR*, and also Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 176–93, 221–29.
53. This story has often been told. Jacob Katz's *Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation in Deutschland und deren Ideologie* (Frankfurt am Main: D. Droller, 1935), was one of the earlier works to focus directly on this, and it remains important, (esp. pp. 46–79), even as many of its conclusions have been refined in his many later works, esp. *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken, 1973). See also Simon Dubnow, *Divre Y'me Am Olam* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1958), vol. 7, pp. 41–86. Hegel's political philosophy engendered a distaste for rabbinic Judaism among its Jewish adherents. See next chapter, note 20.
54. See his *Jerusalem*, pt 2, *passim*. A word on Krochmal's relationship to Mendelssohn is in order here. Solomon Schechter long ago asserted

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- that Krochmal was a strong admirer of Mendelssohn; Simon Rawidowicz, correctly, challenged this view (see "Introduction," p. 19, note 1 and corresponding text). Given Krochmal's insistence on the essential identity of religion and philosophy, Mendelssohn's insistence that Judaism incorporates no necessary truths unique to itself would be totally unacceptable. Further, the notion that there are truths of reason that "exist" apart from a particular culture that produces and lives them would also be rejected by Krochmal.
55. It is this aspect of Krochmal's thought that is ignored by Rotenstreich in his pieces criticizing Krochmal for never properly working out the relationship between the absolute and the contingent. The self-limitation of God bridges the gap that would otherwise exist here. Further complicating his approach is the fact that he understands Krochmal's "absolute spirit" not as the consciousness of the people, but rather as an absolute, transcendent, ontically discrete being; within this definition the problem arises automatically. Yet this position cannot be supported, as Krochmal is primarily concerned to show that Jewish theology had achieved a level of sophistication unparalleled by the world's religious cultures. That is why he emphasizes the understanding of the *shekinah* as dwelling *within* the people, indicating that all along Jews have viewed God as accessible and near, and that this view is perfectly supported by what we know of God's nature as spirit.
 56. See Shmuel Ettlinger, "The English Deists on Jews and Judaism" (Hebrew), in *Zion* (1964), pp. 182-207; Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 1970), pp. 29-48, 268-313. Some of Voltaire's entries in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, such as those on "Civil and Ecclesiastical Law," "Religion," "Abraham" and "Moses" contain relevant material.
 57. See Spinoza, *Treatise*, pp. 38-39. He claims that Moses had to inculcate rules for right living, because the people of Israel were incapable of knowledge of the deity, and that inculcation involved Moses "compelling them to be moral by legal authority. Thus the rule of right living, the worship and love of God, was to them rather a bondage than the true liberty, the gift and grace of the deity" (p. 39).
 58. This position is a constant throughout all of Kant's later writings dealing with morality. As it pertains to Judaism in particular the

position is most developed in his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, pp. 116–17.

59. Among the *tashmishe q'dusha* the Talmud enumerates phylacteries and "mezuzot"—that is, those implements that have the word and name of God as their essential component. Among the *tashmishe mizvah* the Talmud lists the *shofar* (ram's horn), the *lulav* (palm branch), the *sukkah* (festival booth) and the *tsitsit* (showfringes). These items are necessary to fulfill certain commandments, but they do not carry the name of God, and could conceivably assume a secular purpose.

As is often the case, Krochmal has not cited the passage quite correctly; it seems that he tended to quote passages from memory. The difference here is of no significance and I have cited the passage as it is found in the Vilna printing of the BT at Megillah 26b.

60. *Guide*, pp. 43–44. The verse cited is from Deut. 30:20; the verse ends "that the Lord your God swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them."
61. The comments of Gershom Scholem are noteworthy:

In diesem Zusammenhang verlohnt der Hinweis, dass Nachman Krochmal, der erste bedeutende jüdische Geschichtsphilosoph der hebräischen Aufklärungsliteratur, der tief unter dem Einfluss der deutschen Idealismus stand, gerade diese Ansicht der 'alten Kabbalisten' Über das Nichts in Gott ausgesprochen billigend anführt, als ob er die Affinität zwischen der kabbalistischen Spekulation und der des deutschen Idealismus gespürt hätte. . . . Krochmal ist der einzige bedeutende jüdische Denker des 19. Jahrhunderts, bei dem ich Derartiges gefunden habe.

Gershom Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes," in his *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), p. 83, no. 50. See also David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 137.

CHAPTER 3

KROCHMAL'S THEORY OF HISTORY

KROCHMAL CLAIMED that his metaphysical speculation represents the metaphysical position that is at the root of Judaism, and of which Jews have been aware, in full or inchoate form, throughout their history. That Jewish metaphysics is so fully encoded within Jewish scriptures, laws, rituals, and folklore, and that all Jews are in some unarticulated way aware of God as the ground of all being—that is, as absolute spirit—is crucial for Krochmal in his understanding of the course of Jewish history. He claimed that the Jews survived through history as a creative force by virtue of their unique faith, which preserved their national and religious identity in the face of catastrophes. Stated this way, however, Krochmal's point is at best banal, at worst a complete tautology. In order to more fully appreciate what is at stake here it will first be necessary to look at the philosoph-

ical and historiographical issues that raise the question of Jewish survival in the first place. This requires that we first examine what view of history animates the Jewish tradition, as Krochmal seems to have recognized it, and what challenged that view, generically and specifically, in the early nineteenth century.

History as Tradition

It is by now a truism that the Jewish tradition is informed by a concern for history and its meaning, perhaps more than any other tradition. Its primary source, the Bible, is largely a series of narrative histories. In addition, many of the prophetic pronouncements found in the biblical books are reactions to historical events or predictions of future ones; in either case, they are based on the assumption that there is a direct correlation between historical activity and national destiny. As Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi has most eloquently described the biblical view of things, “[s]uddenly, as it were, the crucial encounter between man and the divine shifted away from the realm of nature and the cosmos to the plane of history, conceived now in terms of divine challenge and human response” (Yerushalmi, p. 8). In the Bible, then, it is on the plane of history that the human and the divine meet.¹

In the Bible much is assumed to be ultimately dependent on the pious and impious activity of Israelites, and, especially, their rulers. Yet, in this world, historical destiny is not entirely contingent upon the activities of the present; the patterns of the past are often the frames of reference for the subsequent events. There are a limited number of possible

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destinies, all grounded in the sacralized events of a sacred past. This is perhaps best illustrated in the historical narratives collectively known as the Deuteronomistic history. Whether the Bible critic John Van Seters is correct in considering this history the first of the biblical histories or not I cannot determine; but the significance of this history lies not in its chronology, but in the power of its vision and the coherence of its message. In the portion of this work that makes up the books of Kings, we can see most clearly how the success or failure of a given king, and thus, the destiny of the nation as a whole, is dependent on the degree of proximity of the monarch to the preferred, Davidic model.

In particular, the stories of Manasseh and his successors, including the "good" king Josiah, indicate the degree to which destiny is rooted in the patterns of existence established by the past. The continual repetition of the phrase "and king X did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father(s) had done" (2 Kings 21:20, 23:32, 23:37, 24:9, 24:19; see also 21:2, and compare 22:2) serves to indicate the accumulation of divine wrath that will ultimately come to visit destruction upon the community of Judah. Especially instructive is 2 Kings 23:26. After completing the story of Josiah with the encomium that his piety was unprecedented among the kings, the observation is inserted that for all of Josiah's piety and his returning of the people to God, it was simply not enough to sway the wrath of God instigated by the behavior of Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather. This wrath, which could not be deflected, would ultimately be the cause of the destruction of Judah (2 Kings 23:27). The remainder of the book serves to indicate the deep-seated nature of Manasseh's corruption of

the commonwealth, and the inability of his successors, save Josiah, to break out of the pattern, so that the destiny of Judah is sealed. As Van Seters argues, the author of this history is engaged in "rendering an account of the past in the sense of articulating the people's identity" (Van Seters, p. 320). That is, the very sense of self, both personal and national, is rooted in where the people came from—far more, I would add, than in where they are going.

Of greater import for our discussion is the whole cycle of patriarchal narratives, which Jewish tradition has generally seen as in some sense predictive of the future destiny of the people. The lives of the patriarchs and their descendants are interpreted typologically, to be seen as comprehending the essential possibilities of Jewish existence. The prescription for receiving divine blessing, and the understanding of that blessing as rootedness in the land, as well as the prescription for receiving divine disfavor and its apprehension as exile, are found, first, in the Adam and Eve story and run throughout the biblical record.² Further, the promises made to the patriarchs serve in some way as the assurance of the continued vitality of the people, an assurance most welcome in the wake of the exile in 586.³ Indeed, the theme of an eternal covenant rooted in ethnic ties is repeated elsewhere in the Bible and becomes fundamental in later Jewish thought. Again here, the crucial point is that the basic patterns of Jewish existence and destiny are rooted in God's original plan and are manifest in the earliest history of God's chosen people.

We must be careful to distinguish this claim from the far more banal notion that we are in some inscrutable way the products of our past, that our pasts contribute to our being.

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The view I am insisting upon here goes well beyond that to suggest that in the biblical histories there is a sense that the past does not merely contribute to what Israel is, but that the events of the past that have been sacralized by being revealed are *the* determining factors in what Israel is and in what it can and cannot become.

The biblical events that proved most determinative, both within the Bible itself and in subsequent Jewish tradition, are certainly the enslavement of Israel in Egypt and Israel's subsequent exodus therefrom, the wandering in the desert and the entry into the promised land. The miraculous exodus in particular was cited as the justification for many of the laws and rituals ordained by the Bible. The Passover and Sukkot holidays are presented as remembrances of this event and its aftermath. Even the incest laws of Leviticus 18 are grounded in the historical experience of the nation, as they are prefaced by the caveat not to be like the Egyptians in whose land you once dwelled—you have been brought out of their land, leaving behind their mores. The Sabbath rest as prescribed in the Second Decalogue is grounded in the memory of slavery and redemption (Deut. 5:15–16). Perhaps most telling of all is the confessional of the pilgrim bringing his first fruits to the place of the Lord, in which the pilgrim recounts the sacred history of his nation (Deut. 26:5–10) serving as the immediate cause of his turning over his first fruits to the Lord. The very relationship between Israel and God is grounded in the power of the divine redemption of Israel—a redemption that will continue to reverberate throughout time.

This reverberation extends to the hope for the future after the catastrophes of destruction and exile. Thus, we find the

prophet Isaiah promising those exiled by the Assyrians that they shall be redeemed from the hands of their enemies just as the Israelites were redeemed from the Egyptians, and this promised redemption shall be effected in the same manner (Isaiah 11:15-16). The prophet Micah delivers the same message (Micah 7:15). It is, then, in terms of this ever-present past event that subsequent hope can be articulated. It is part of the legacy of biblical thought to Judaism that it is the past manifestations of God's power, love and anger, the exodus and the exile in particular, that reveal the patterns and limits of subsequent (and consequent) existence.

Although it is notoriously difficult to reconstruct "rabbinic thought" on any given subject, and therefore any statement that one might make must be considered speculative, I do not see anything in rabbinic literature that calls for a different picture from the one we find in biblical thought. Here too we find a strong sense that the sacred national past already contains within it all that one needs to know about the working and boundaries of history. As Yerushalmi writes:

For the rabbis the Bible was not only a repository of past history, but a revealed pattern of the whole of history, and they had learned their scriptures well. They knew that history has a purpose, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and that the Jewish people had a central role to play in the process. They were convinced that the covenant between God and Israel was eternal, though the Jews had often rebelled and suffered the consequences. Above all, they had learned from the Bible that the true pulse of history often beat beneath its manifest surfaces, an invisible history that was more real than the world, deceived by the more strident outward rhythms of power, could recognize. . . . Ironically, the

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very absence of historical writing among the rabbis may itself have been due in good measure to their total and unqualified absorption of the biblical interpretation of history. (Yerushalmi, pp. 21–22)

It was this absorption of the biblical view of the determining nature of the past that allowed, for example, the stories and legends of the destruction of the Second Temple to be recounted as exegesis of the book of Lamentations, which “described” the destruction of the first,⁴ and, more generally, allows the rabbis to discuss contemporary and future events on the basis of biblical prooftexts. As all the possibilities are encoded within Scripture, there is no need, and in some sense it would be improper, to discuss the course of time and its meaning in anything other than an exegetical mode. Thus, the fate of world powers is delimited by scriptural verses; similarly Israel's fate is so delimited.⁵ To the skilled reader Scripture is a picture of all that did occur, which, in turn, is the blueprint for all that can occur.

Here again, the exodus is crucial and formative. The importance of keeping the memory of this constellation of events alive is crucial to Jewish ritual developed in the rabbinic period. As the Mishnah states, “in each generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt.” This memory provided both solace and hope; the reassuring element of the memory of the Exodus is visible in the discussion of the Mishnah regarding the blessing to be recited after the telling of the story of the Exodus on Passover night. First the participant recites part of the Hallel prayer (Psalms 113–18), itself a reenactment of what, according to one Talmudic tradition (BT Pesahim 117a), the Israelites did upon being redeemed. This is closed by a blessing:

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Rabbi Tarfon [second century] says [the blessing is as follows]: He that redeemed us and redeemed our father from Egypt and brought us to this night to eat therein unleavened bread and bitter herbs. But there is no eulogy [to this blessing]. R. Aqiba adds: Therefore, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other appointed times and festivals which are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the restoration of your city and are joyful in your service; there we shall eat of the sacrifices and Passover-offerings (whose blood has reached with acceptance the wall of your altar, and let us praise you for our redemption and for the ransoming of our soul).⁶ Blessed are you, O Lord, who has redeemed Israel. (Mishnah Pesahim 10:6)

The connection drawn by this mishnah between the past event and the "future event" is clear. There is no indication of any doubt about whether this future event will occur; its promised occurrence is guaranteed by the original redemption.

What is particularly noteworthy in this passage, and in the many like it, is the connection between the messianic age—the age of the renewed cult and rebuilt city—and the previous, glorious redemption. In this view the messianic age is not something apart from history, nor is it something new in history; rather, it is the restoration of the glories of the past to a nation bereft of them.⁷ In this view even the messianic age is subject to the basic, discoverable patterns—laws, if you will—of divinely ordained history.⁸ This passage demonstrates the power of the vision of a completed past, for whose renewal the present and, alas, the future desperately await, and its incorporation into a ritual, liturgical setting.

Similarly, the morning prayer services as they developed through the centuries also accentuate the connection between the redemption from the Egyptians and the expected redemp-

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tion in the messianic age. Thus, while there were other rabbinic views regarding the messiah and his age, the connections drawn in the liturgy exercise considerable power in shaping the expectations of Jews; here again we find that the vision of the present and future configured by the patterns of the past is fundamental.⁹ As we shall see, this view is quite different from that of modern historical thinkers.

There ought to be nothing surprising in this view that came to predominate in rabbinic thinking. After all, rabbinic Judaism understood itself as the tradition par excellence, and traditions in general understand themselves as defined by their pasts. As Edward Shils describes the characteristics of "tradition," it is "the large residual category of persistences arising from attachments to past things, to past persons, past societies, past practices, the performance of actions practiced in the past, the adherence to modes of perception, belief and appreciation received from those who observed them previously" (Shils, p. 123). For a community to adhere to what it knows as its tradition, it must necessarily assume that its own set of historical circumstances does not radically differ from those of earlier generations, or, at least, that such differences as there may be are irrelevant to the fundamental legitimacy of the tradition. Further, it cannot assume that it has progressed, qualitatively, beyond the time in which the tradition took shape, or that this time has been in some way transcended, for to then submit to the authority of the tradition anyway would be enslaving.¹⁰ Rather, the traditional community must assume that it is, at best, the spiritual equal of the original bearers of the tradition in order to adhere to it in a coherent way.

Now, in rabbinic documents we see that many rabbis ap-

parently found least dissonance in the proposition that adherence to the dictates of the past is grounded in the conviction that the past represents some kind of spiritual golden age, qualitatively superior to their own time. To cite but two examples that could readily be multiplied, in the Tosefta Hagigah (2:9) we find the statement that in the beginning (whenever that would have been, but certainly prior to the destruction of the Temple) there were no disputes in Israel; however, when the "students of Hillel and Shammai who did not serve [their masters] properly [*kal zarkhan*] increased, so too did disputes increase in Israel." As we move from the end of the Temple times and beyond, the capacity of students to properly understand and transmit the law waned, with the result that a once unified legal system—capable of achieving definitive closure in conducting its business—became the fragmented accumulation of conflicting opinions we now know as rabbinic literature. This view is buttressed by the well-known statement in the Babylonian Talmud, attributed by Raba b. Zimuna to R. Zera,¹¹ "If the earlier scholars were like angels we are like men, and if the earlier scholars were like men we are like asses, and not [even] like the asses of R. Hanina b. Dosa and R. Phineas b. Yair, but like other [lesser] asses."¹²

Thus, subordination to the rabbinic tradition was, in some ways, justified by the claim that Jews of the rabbinic period and beyond are not the spiritual equals of their forebears, and can best achieve solace and salvation by submitting to the traditions received from them, their superiors, who had the good fortune to more fully apprehend the power of the divine word. Once again, we see here a vision of a completed past, which must be allowed to inform the present.

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Modern Historiosophy and Judaism

Against this vision of a completed past that reverberates throughout time we must juxtapose the views on the course of history that were becoming increasingly common in modern reflections on history, in order to fully understand the perplexity addressed by Krochmal. For in the area of the philosophy of history, modern thinkers presented Judaism with a formidable challenge.

Although there are, of course, significant differences among modern thinkers who addressed the question of history, there is a common thread that runs through the thought of virtually all of them—certainly those with whom Krochmal would have been familiar. That common thread is the acceptance of the idea of a human species that is in some way progressing throughout the course of history.¹³ This vision became the foundation of much that is new in nineteenth-century political thought, and had a significant impact within the realm of religion as well. With the conviction that we as a species are progressing, one is justified in attempting to overcome whatever traditions have held the social group together, some would say back, and to proclaim that a new and better age is dawning. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were filled with people animated by this conviction (or by the more cautious formulation that we as a species are fully *capable* of progressing beyond our past), from Kant to Lessing, to Herder and Hegel. As we shall see, this conviction often had direct and important implications for the understanding of Judaism.

In G. E. Lessing's work, "The Education of the Human Race," for example, we find the conviction that human history

can be understood as a process of providential education, and, reflecting a rather clear Protestant point of view, this process can be divided into three periods. The first corresponds to the period of the Old Testament, in which God, as the grand instructor, offered the Jews a primer to make this "rude, crude people" aware of the reality of the one God. "But," he continued,

every primer is only for a certain age. To delay the child, who has outgrown it is harmful. For to be able to do this in a way that is at all profitable, you must insert into it more than there is really in it, and extract from it more than it can contain. . . . This gives the child a petty, crooked, hairsplitting understanding: it makes him full of mysteries, superstitious, full of contempt for all that is comprehensible and easy. The very way in which the Rabbis handled *their* books. The very character which they thereby imparted to the spirit of their people! A better instructor must come and tear the exhausted primer from the child's hand. Christ came!" (Lessing, *WS*, p. 91)

Thus, with the advent of Jesus, Judaism is superseded. A new "textbook," the New Testament, with its teaching of the immortality of the soul has replaced the old one.

Eventually, humanity will come to depend less on this text as well, as it will finally learn the sublime truths through reason rather than through revelation. While less overtly political or nationalistic than were other apostles of progress, Lessing's schema betrays a certain triumphalism regarding the spirit of the modern age and its superiority over that which comes before it. Particularly of note for our purposes is his clear sense that the "educational" value of the first period has been superseded by the later periods. Since, after all, human

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history is nothing more than a lengthy educational process, this supersession of the Old Testament by the New—now argued in ostensibly secular, philosophical terms—consigns the former to the historical wastebasket. Whatever value this period once offered humanity in its educational endeavor has been incorporated into that which came later.¹⁴

In his perhaps better-known play, *Nathan the Wise*, Lessing advances an argument whose nuances seem to be different but whose essential point is the same. It is only when we get beyond the age of religious communities and the divisiveness they offer to a more ecumenical and universal view will we have successfully realized the latent content of the message of the human religious impulse. As such, history can be seen as the progressive movement from particular communities to a universal human brotherhood, in which the historically distinguishable elements of the religious communities will be overcome.

Lessing's "Education" exercised a considerable influence on the rather unusual figure of Johann Gottfried von Herder. He, too, took an interest in the course of human history, and, unlike Lessing, was aware that a philosophy of human history required a broader sweep than those represented by the biblical communities. Thus, Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* examines the history of the "Oriental" and Greco-Roman worlds as well as that of the Christian Occident. Yet he, too, while much more aware than most of the dangers of "Eurocentrism," ultimately constructs a view of the course of human history that is distinctly oriented toward envisioning its culmination in the development of the culture of modern Europe. Thus, he concludes his work with

an answer to the question, "How, therefore, did Europe achieve its culture, and the rank it thereby obtained above other countries?" (Book XX, chapter 6).

Herder argues that all of human history is a unified struggle toward the ideal of "humanity," to which each world-historical culture makes its contribution; however, each particular state, and nation, goes through a life cycle comparable to that of organisms, after which it perishes, as do all organisms, while human culture lives on, moving from one center to another. Here again we find the image of past civilizations being superseded, dying out to make room for the contribution of others in this human struggle for self-realization. The merits of Herder's argument cannot concern us here; our question must address the import of this argument for general historical understanding and Jewish self-understanding.

What Herder's view of human history means from a Jewish perspective does not require any insight or detailed exegesis, for the author is quite content to spell it out for us. He treats Jewish history in the twelfth book of his *Ideen*, entitled "Near Eastern Beginnings." For him the positive contribution of the Jews, or Hebrews, to the development of humanity is reflected in the Pentateuch and some of the other poetic portions of the Hebrew Bible. However, even in the pre-exilic period of Jewish history (pre-586 B.C.E.) that saw the emergence of these documents, the great Mosaic constitution, which should have been a "law of political liberty" became, according to Herder, a "law of bondage" (*Sklavengesetz*). When the Persian monarch Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their land, and reestablish their commonwealth, matters did not improve; legalism remained endemic:

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Their religion was Pharisaism; their learning, a minute nibbling at syllables, and this confined to a single book; their patriotism, a slavish attachment to laws misunderstood, so as to render them ridiculous or contemptible to all the neighbouring nations. Their only consolation—and their hope—rested on some ancient prophecies, which, equally misconceived, were supposed to promise them the illusory sovereignty of the entire world. (Herder, *WE*, p. 62)

To be sure, there was one more positive element that derived from the continuation of Jewish history past the Babylonian exile, and that, of course, was Christianity. Other than that Jewish culture was barren and Jews could contribute no more to the development of "humanity." The fact that the Jews continued to exist until Herder's own day did not challenge his notion that their culture was dead:

Let no one, however, from this, surreptitiously infer a revolution, at some period or other to be wrought by these people on all the nations of the Earth. All that should have been accomplished has probably been accomplished; and neither in the people themselves, nor in historical analogy, can we discover the foundation of any other [possible accomplishment]. The continuance of the Jews is as naturally to be explained as that of Brahmans, Parsees or Gypsies. (Herder, *WE*, p. 66)

Thus, not only do the Jews have nothing more of significance to accomplish, this situation is the product of the (presumably divine) intention that guides humans on their course toward their destiny. The Jews have made their contribution to the greater totality Herder calls humanity, and their continued maintenance of a separate religious and national identity has no value.¹⁵

Finally, describing the lessons to be learned from the study of civilization's Near Eastern beginnings, Herder writes:

Finally, from the whole region over which we have wandered, we perceive how transitory all human structures are, indeed, how oppressive the best institutions become in a few generations. The plant blossoms, and withers; your fathers have died and decayed. Your temple is fallen; your tabernacle, the tables of your law, are no more: language itself, that eternal human bond has grown old. (Herder, *WE*, p. 88)

Clearly, for Herder, Second Commonwealth Judaism and beyond should be seen as a relic, a fossil; the Hebraic spirit had run its course and was no more.

While Hegel's understanding of the process of human history differed markedly from Herder's, seeing it as dialectical rather than organic, his notion of its course was actually quite similar. For Hegel, world history is the process of the development of spirit and the consciousness of freedom, which progresses dialectically; this process passes through its "Oriental" beginnings, moving on to Greek culture and beyond. The Jewish contribution to this process is subsumed under that of the Orient, Persia in particular (Hegel, *LPH*, pp. 195-98). That is, Jewish creative vitality reached its height of expression during the sixth and fifth centuries before the Christian era, after which these creative forces ebbed and disappeared. Thus, while Hegel would grant the Jews an extra century or two of creative existence, his judgment is ultimately no different from Herder's: Jews have had their world-historical era, and the rules of the game are that no people experience more than one such era.

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It is further of note that for Hegel only nations that are constituted as states can contribute to the world-historical process of maximizing freedom. The reasons for this claim are grounded in Hegel's views of the state as the projection of the ethical core of a civilization, in which each individual who participates may be said to be truly free, as opposed to the freedom of acting from individual maxims grounded in individual autonomy (the position of Kant). This position is grounded in Hegel's conviction of the superiority of what he calls ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) to morality (*Moralität*), and is in no way directed toward anything Jewish. Nevertheless, approaching this position with the highly sensitive antennae of Jews convinced of the vitality of their culture, this vision represents a challenge that also required a response. If a national culture can only be developed through its political institutions, then Jews, possessing no state for nearly two millennia, once again may be considered historically irrelevant.¹⁶ Ultimately, in the works of these three scholars and others, Krochmal was confronted by a Protestant philosophy of history that could not imagine history as anything other than a process culminating in its own emergence.

Whatever we may think of such musings, the organismic, evolutionary model of human history was accepted among many as scientific.¹⁷ Even those who might reject the model in all its particulars were nevertheless drawn to the essentially Pauline conception of Jewish history that resulted; in particular, this view exercised considerable influence on modern biblical scholars, who tended to view the Babylonian exile as a cultural watershed.¹⁸

Further, despite the fact that there is much in such theories

that can be seen as having a strong link to the traditional Christian reading of world events, because the *Tendenz* of the modern philosophy of history was less obvious, and was argued in terms of the advance of rational processes, there were Jews who accepted the model, and with it its judgment of the ossification of Jewish culture. In particular, Jewish intellectuals were drawn to Hegel's philosophy, and found their own tradition primitive by comparison. Consider, for example, the following statement regarding the emergence of modern Europe, advanced by the president of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, Eduard Gans, in a speech to that organization:

In order to bring forth this totality, the Orient contributed its monotheism; Hellas—its beauty and ideal freedom; the Roman world—the gravity of the state vis-à-vis the individual; Christianity—the riches of universal human life; the Middle Ages—the stratification into sharply defined classes and estates; the modern world its philosophical strivings; within that [totality] they all reappear as moments after their temporal domination has ceased.¹⁹

To subsume Judaism under the rubric of the ancient Orient, and to identify the Orient as merely the first rung on the ladder that leads to the more important totality of modern Europe, is to acquiesce to the judgment that Judaism is nothing other than a relic. It is not surprising that Gans, less than three years after delivering this speech, abandoned Judaism altogether.²⁰

In looking at the theories of history that prevailed in the two worlds that are of importance to an understanding of Krochmal, we find that they are irreconcilably opposed to one

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another; the traditional manner of thinking about time insists that the (selected) past—as it is sacralized and remembered—exercises a controlling function regarding all future possibilities. For modern historical thinking, as Krochmal would have recognized it, while the present and future cannot escape from the past entirely, the movement of time is a movement upward, in which the past is largely superseded. To put it another way, for Jewish tradition, and indeed, traditional thinking in general, we have a picture of a completed past, which reverberates throughout all subsequent time. Modern historical thinkers, and Hegel in particular, would view the past as incomplete, as steps toward the coming to consciousness of absolute spirit.

It is of more than passing interest to note that this dichotomy was noted by Krochmal's contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Salomon Formstecher, who, in his *Die Religion des Geistes* (1841) treats the rabbinic view of time, with its insistence on the superiority of the past, as one of the truly archaic elements in rabbinic Judaism, standing in opposition to what is modern and therefore positive.²¹ It is to these apparently irreconcilable views of the past, and the place assigned Jewish culture within the various historical schemata that emerged in modern philosophy, that Krochmal's treatment of history is addressed.²²

In light of recent work in this area, however, some evaluation of the claim of disjunction between modern and traditional approaches to history is in order. In the last forty years there has been a parade of scholars, with Karl Löwith in the vanguard, who would insist that, in fact, there is minimal disjunction between traditional and modern historiosophies,

as the two views converge in the eschatological commitments of "Judeo-Christian" thinking. That is, they argue that the progressive program of modern historical thought is essentially a "secularization" of traditional eschatology, the latter leading naturally into the former.²³ It seems to me, as Hans Blumenberg has argued, that Löwith underestimates the radically unhistorical nature of both Jewish and Christian eschatology.²⁴ Regarding the former—the only thing of interest here—the eschaton can in no way be seen as the culmination of the historical process, if by "process" we understand some set of causally linked preparatory events, that actually bring about the end of time. Rather, the concept of an eschaton represents a rebellion against history; it is the "great and terrible day of the Lord" on which history will be overcome, and a new era of human existence will be ushered in. The pre-eschaton is the age of history, of tradition with all that that entails.²⁵

The Guide

Krochmal does not challenge this Eurocentric triumphalism head-on.²⁶ He prefers instead to demonstrate that Jewish tradition is insulated from the inevitable demise modern historical thinking demands, by virtue of its unique conception of God as absolute spirit. In his treatment of Jewish history he insists this unique faith serves as a historical preservative, allowing the Jews to continue to survive with cultural vitality beyond the one period of world-historical significance that the regnant theories would grant them. In the process he demonstrates that the concept of progress is, for the most part,

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irrelevant to a comprehension of Jewish history. Thus, his treatment of Jewish history is carried out on both the theoretical and historical planes. It would be useful for the discussion that follows to cite Krochmal's theoretical statement at some length:

In the natural course of events, there are three periods which transpire for each nation of antiquity, from the time that they first form a nation until they vanish and perish.

1. The period of blossoming and the birth of the [national] spirit which we have already mentioned, characterized by the emergence of its inchoate matter into limbs ordered in various ways, and their efforts [operating in] unison as [do those of] an individual man, ready to accept all elevation and perfection. And this is called the nation's period of blossoming and growth.

2. Afterward, all the good systems and spiritual portions to which we have previously alluded are fully actualized, perfected and exalted; through them all, the nation matures to fame and splendor for a long or short time; this is known as the period of strength and activity.

3. But just as all natural organisms incorporate the cause of their degeneration and death, so too, during the second stage the causes of destruction and disappearance will be created; later, these [destructive elements] will grow and spread to loosen all ties and do away with all good law[s], until the honor of the nation will gradually dwindle and diminish, that is, until it disappears entirely. And this time is known as the period of melting away and perishing.

Now this is the way it is with all nations whose spiritual essence is partial and thus finite and destined to perish. However, with our nation—though with relation to material and sensual things we too are subject to this natural order—it is as our sages, may they

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be blessed, have said, "when they were exiled to Babylon, the divine presence was with them, when they were exiled to Elam, the divine presence was with them, etc."; that is, the general spiritual essence within us will shield us and save us from the fate of those who vanish. All this follows readily from what was said above. Thus, we have seen fit to review the periods of our history from the time of our blossoming until this day, *so as to clearly show how the three-period cycles which we have mentioned were duplicated and triplicated with us, and how with the completion of the period of withering away and vanishing, there always emerged a new and reviving spirit; and if we fell, we arose and were fortified, and did not abandon our God.* (*Guide*, pp. 40-41; emphasis added)²⁷

Krochmal's position here is both organismic, in that nations follow the same patterns as living organisms, and, with Jewish history, in some sense cyclical, in that the patterns of organic development are duplicated and triplicated. We must, however, carefully attend to Krochmal's stated purpose. He will not try to prove the basic three-period pattern of Jewish history. This he already knows; what requires demonstration is the *repetition* of the three-period pattern. Offering this demonstration is his only stated purpose, and it must be seen as a polemical response to the conception of a superseded Judaism that prevailed in Protestant historiography in the modern period.

Thus, the entire historiographical section (some seventy pages in length in the Rawidowicz edition) that follows this statement is designed to prove that Israel undergoes revivals that are beyond the ken of other ancient peoples; it is not designed to prove that Jewish history recapitulates the organismic patterns per se, as this is taken for granted, both with

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respect to Jewish history, and general history as well. While his historical chapters do—*en passant*—attempt to demonstrate that Jewish history proceeded in accord with the expected organismic pattern, this is not their primary purpose. Indeed, as the above citation makes clear, Krochmal takes the pattern for granted; he does not prove it in his history, but rather imposes it on the events he describes.

Furthermore, Krochmal's theory of history does not derive from an inductive investigation of the Jewish past; he presents this theory as a general one, applicable to all ancient peoples. Yet, again, at no time does he attempt to prove this general claim.²⁸ Krochmal takes the organismic-biological historical model for granted since it was very much a commonplace in modern historical thought. For our purposes this may be most easily illustrated by the fact that a scholarly dispute has arisen as to which of various thinkers—Lessing, Herder, Vico, or Hegel—was the primary influence on Krochmal's approach. Resolving this dispute seems to me to be hopeless, and certainly pointless.²⁹ The fact that competent scholars can find elements of all these thinkers in Krochmal's work suggests that we take a different approach—one that follows Krochmal's text and argument closely, which will show that Krochmal was not overly interested in resolving the distinctions among these thinkers, but rather in pursuing a response to their common elements.

Finally, we must note that nowhere in Krochmal's presentation does he attempt to develop the philosophical significance of his organismic-cyclical theory. This significance is hardly self-evident; a full discussion is mandatory if we are to understand what this ostensibly novel view demands. In fact,

in no way should this position be seen as a “philosophy of history,” for there is no philosophy here, there is no statement pertaining to ultimate meaning. Rather, the problem must be viewed as follows: the organismic side of Krochmal’s discussion is not part of the answer, but rather part of the problem—it demands the death of all cultures; the cyclical side represents part of the response, but not through the affirmation of true cyclicity, which, with its implications of meaninglessness, can represent a profound philosophical reflection on the nature of human endeavor. Rather, Krochmal’s advocacy of cycles is to be seen as a stratagem—the means through which to establish the eternity of Israel, without contesting the historical rules demanded by the age. The organismic-cyclical model provides the appropriate “historical” tropes through which Krochmal can affirm that most unhistorical of notions, the eternity of Israel, and contest the equally unhistorical claim of progressive human development toward the emergence of modern European life.

*Metaphysics, History, the Supersession
of the Jews*

Evidently, Krochmal believed that Jews defy the “laws” of human history because they, unlike all others, do not partake of partial spirituality, but rather have developed an absolute metaphysical position. Since they do not view God as bound by anything, they are capable of surviving the vicissitudes of history that destroyed the spiritual essence of other peoples, whose view of the spiritual forces animating their culture and religion was only partial.³⁰ He acknowledges that the exter-

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nals of Jewish culture do indeed develop within history, and are therefore subject to the normal pattern of growth, development, and decline; Jewish spirituality, on the other hand, stands at the culmination of the historical process. Therefore, while Israel is also subject to the ineluctable decay that completes the cycle, it is not subject to the demise that ensues because of its consciousness of God as absolute being. Its attachment to its culture's animating spiritual force remains unbroken. Israel, then, will not disappear but will begin the process anew. It is important to point out that in this picture the absolute being is not described as the active force ensuring Israel's survival;³¹ rather the people, having been brought to the awareness of the unity of all existence in God, are capable of weathering circumstances, such as exile, that other cultures, due to their incomplete spirituality, are not.

The essence of Krochmal's response to Hegel, then, is that the Jewish people cannot be seen as superseded by others in the movement of world history toward absolute spirit, for Jews have already inculcated this position into their religious texts and rituals. The corollary to this position is that Krochmal, supposedly the most historical of early nineteenth-century Jewish thinkers, is in fact claiming that the "essence of Judaism," although revealed in history, is actually beyond history; it cannot develop in time because it is already absolute.³² In viewing Judaism against the context of other world cultures, Krochmal claims that it alone has achieved the understanding which everyone else can first achieve after traversing a lengthy, cumulative process.

Thus, the basic understanding of the course of human history found in Herder and Hegel, in particular, is actually

quite correct. They are in error, however, in believing that Jewish culture was only a lower rung on the world-historical ladder leading to either a self-realized humanity or the consciousness of the absolute. In fact the Jews have already, early in the history, completed the process; their historical role now is to "return to the cave," as it were, and lead the rest of humanity to the recognition of the totality of all existence in God (see *Guide*, p. 38). In response to the triumphalist reading of history that we find in Hegel, which claims, inter alia, that the train of history has passed Jews by, Krochmal's equally triumphalist claim is that, in fact, Jews are the conductors of that train; it is they alone who are capable of leading humanity to its promised land.³³

It remains for Krochmal to demonstrate this claim within the realm of history; for claiming on philosophical grounds that Jews are exempt from the "laws" of history accomplishes nothing if the historical facts seem to support the reading of Herder and Hegel (not to mention dozens of others). That is, Krochmal undertakes a review of Jewish history to indicate—historically—that the Jews do not undergo the demise that the philosophy of Hegel and others requires; only with a successful execution of this plan can the claim to unique Jewish spirituality, grounded in absolute spirit, be substantiated.

If this interpretation is correct, Krochmal need only demonstrate that the Jews defy the rule once. That is, Krochmal need not survey all of Jewish history; a successful demonstration that Second Commonwealth Judaism (from the sixth century B.C.E. to the second C.E.) was at least as vital and creative as that of the First Commonwealth will suffice. Were

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he attempting to construct an overarching theory of Jewish history, Krochmal would have to present evidence from its entire expanse. A glance at the structure of Krochmal's presentation will show that he follows the first pattern, focusing almost exclusively on the Second Commonwealth period.

He begins his historical survey with the three periods (growth, maturity, decline) of pre-exilic Jewish history, commencing with the patriarchs and concluding with the Babylonian exile. This review of over thirteen centuries of history (by Krochmal's calculation) is accomplished in nine pages in the Rawidowicz edition (*Guide*, pp. 41-49). The next cycle of three periods (750 years, extending through what is generally known as the Second Commonwealth period, according to Krochmal), takes up sixty-three pages (*Guide*, pp. 50-112), while the next cycle (over 1,500 years) is dispensed with in half a page, for "we cannot complete the recounting of, and research into [midrash], the ensuing generations." Although the *Guide* as a whole is unfinished, the historiographical section is brought to a definitive close, indication that Krochmal's point was not dependent on a review of Jewish history beyond the year 135 C.E. Were it crucial to his argument to deal with the third cycle, he would not have abandoned his historiographical presentation. However, his procedure makes sense if his point is to establish the "revivability" of the Jews in principle; it would not were he trying to present an overarching theory of Jewish history.

Furthermore, the following four chapters of the *Guide* (covering another 140 pages) also deal with aspects of Jewish life during the second cycle, and attempt to demonstrate the vitality of Jewish spirituality during this time. In all, there

are 290 pages in the *Guide* (out of a total of 334 pages) that deal with topics that are chronologically definable. Of these, approximately 230 are confined, exclusively or primarily, to the second cycle.³⁴ Clearly, then, Krochmal's primary historiographical goal is to establish the renewed spirituality of Second Commonwealth Judaism.

Given that the guide to the perplexities created by modern historiosophy is to show Jewish defiance of its central law, it would be instructive to see how Krochmal demonstrates this. The first cycle extends from Abraham to the death of Gedaliah. The first period within it—extending from Abraham to the death of Moses—is the period of birth and generation. It is characterized by the emergence of monotheism. The second period in the cycle extends from the entry into the land after Moses' death until the death of Solomon (920 B.C.E.); it is difficult to see why this should be understood as a period of maturity, except, of course, the theory demands it. Krochmal, relying on the biblical narrative, describes it as a period of political and spiritual turmoil, whose high point is reached at the end, with the construction of the Temple in the reign of Solomon. Here we see the rejection of "particular" worship and a commitment to a national, centralized worship. This, however, never firmly took root within the people, and therefore with the death of Solomon and the division of his kingdom the period of decline begins. This period is characterized by particular and foreign worship; together with the Deuteronomist, Krochmal castigates the monarchs of this epoch for not realizing that fortune cannot be achieved by mimicking gentile kings, as "there is no survival or salvation for Israel other than by cleaving to the Lord their God, and by preserv-

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ing the principle of monotheism as it was handed down to them, free of all idolatry and any semblance of idolatry" (*Guide*, p. 49). The first cycle as a whole may be described as one in which the monotheistic idea emerged among the "Jewish" people, but it did not sufficiently take hold within the entire community. The monotheistic idea, representing but one element in the spiritual marketplace of the time, could not yet be described as "absolute spirit," as there did not exist a *community* that had committed itself to it. Absolute spirituality is grounded not only in the emergence of the correct metaphysics, but in a community of believers "to whom it is clearly known" (*Guide*, p. 44). Nevertheless, there remained sufficient commitment to the reality of the universal God that this religio-national group did not disappear from history, but reemerged with a more profound religious understanding in the next cycle of its existence.

It should be noted that in his reconstruction of this lengthy period Krochmal remains attached to traditional language and concepts; in particular, Krochmal retains the concept of chosenness as traditionally understood. God chose Abraham—after the latter rejected idolatry—and his progeny to be his people, and revealed his law to them that they may succeed. Similarly, the entire history of this period is described as the result of divine providence. God directed the children of Israel to Egypt, there to be enslaved and ultimately redeemed. So too, Krochmal remained committed to the essential program of the Deuteronomist, insisting on the relationship between one's faith in God and historical destiny. Nevertheless, the approach here is quite different, as historical failure is not grounded in God's wrath but in the inevitable immanent

forces of decay that result from religious and cultural degradation. Thus, Israel's idolatry does not lead to divine retribution, it leads to historical retribution, in that Israel, as a people, becomes the cause of its own inability to creatively respond to the world around it.

With the dawn of the second cycle comes a major shift in Jewish religious consciousness. The period of growth in the second cycle, extending from Cyrus to Alexander, is characterized by a great renewal of spirit, manifest in the fact that the Jewish people, dispersed though they were, were able to unite into a nation with a common identity and purpose—something they never could do during the first cycle (*Guide*, p. 50).³⁵ Jewish spiritual identity now transcended territorial boundaries (p. 51). Despite the loss of many of its spiritual treasures, the Jewish community—in its entirety—was instilled with “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord” (*ibid.*; this is a paraphrase of Isaiah 11:2).³⁶ This new-found spirit enabled the people to recognize the treasure that was their patrimony; to establish a community based on principles of the Torah; “to collect, write and copy what was preserved of the Holy Books, to study and understand them clearly and intelligently, until the Torah was established in each diaspora community, and they studied, understood and observed it, each in accordance with his ability, throughout the various lands of (Jewish) domicile” (*ibid.*). Further, the Jews of this time were free of idolatry, thus showing the spiritual *advance* of the people as a whole.

The first period of the second cycle was highlighted by the prophecies of the second Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah, by the

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work of Ezra, who was comparable to Moses in his time, and the establishment of the Great Assembly, about all of which Krochmal will have more to say in his biblical and rabbinic studies. In contradistinction to the first cycle, it is a period in which all the people were spiritually uplifted—in varying degrees, of course—by the new spirit of the nation; indeed, spirit is here understood as the collective mind of the Jewish people as a whole, as fashioned by the leadership.³⁷ Also in contradistinction to the first cycle, political factors, while contributing to the shaping of the destiny of the people, are not ultimately critical. During this first period of the second cycle Jews did not enjoy political independence—although they did enjoy quiescence—and yet they were able to realize the prophecies of the second Isaiah (*Guide*, p. 54).

During the second period of the second cycle—the nation's maturity—the Jewish people, as a whole, further develop those spiritual blessings manifest in the first period. Indeed, for Krochmal, it is at this time that Jewish history reaches its height, as “the daughter of Jeshurun has not had as precious a time as this from its inception until this very day” (*Guide*, p. 60). Jewish spirituality was, and would remain, absolute, while, throughout most of this period, historical circumstances were favorable as well, allowing for unparalleled creativity in the diaspora and the Holy Land.

The spiritual heights of this period—which extended from Alexander to Pompey—were manifest in the activity of the Jews of Ptolemaic Alexandria who “were not inferior to the Greeks in wisdom and skill, and *were their superior in ethics and morals*” (p. 61; emphasis added).³⁸ In Judea, there emerged a “Great Assembly” whose activities in developing Judaism's

sacred texts and traditions continued unabated for over a century. (We will discuss this more fully in chapter 5.) Their cudgels were taken up by "the teachers of halakhot," whose activity began with Simon the Just, around the year 200 B.C.E., and continued to the end of the cycle. Thus, this period saw the beginnings of rabbinic Judaism; it also saw the completion of the Bible, a number of Psalms, as well as the books of Daniel and Esther.³⁹ Moreover, the Maccabean uprising (165–161 B.C.E.) led to a rededication of purpose, as Jews renewed their devotion to the universal God.

In all, for Krochmal, the time was one of great spiritual vitality for the Jewish people, demonstrating their ability to revive from decline and achieve world-historical significance once again. What Krochmal has cleverly done here is to use the conclusions of modern biblical scholarship, and the conclusions he developed regarding the emergence of the rabbinic tradition, to argue against those who would claim that Jewish creativity ceased with the closing of the biblical canon, or even before.

While the substance of Jewish spirituality is absolute, according to Krochmal, its outward manifestation is dependent on material structures that are subject to all the vicissitudes of history. As such, Jews, like all peoples, are unable to sustain a period of strength and maturity indefinitely; decay must set in. So it was with the Jews after the death of Alexandra Salome and the arrival of Pompey (63 B.C.E.). A spirit of contentiousness, already apparent during the second period in the cycle, overcame them; imminent eschatological expectation was rampant, and suicidal zealotry carried the day. As a result, the institutions that tended to the spiritual needs of

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the people—Temple, priesthood, house of study—were no longer able to do so properly; the spiritual standard of the people declined. I must stress, again, that for Krochmal the absolute nature of the Jewish spiritual message was not in itself compromised; only the institutions that carried that message degenerated, leading to a decline in Jewish spiritual activity, such as study and contemplation (p. 91). Given that the essence of Jewish faith remained intact, Jews were once again able to rebound from decline, and begin anew. Indeed, even during this period of decline which extended until the fall of Betar, in 135 C.E., there was a remnant, led by Yohanan ben Zakkai, that was able to begin the process of reinvigoration, dedicating their lives to Torah and its dissemination, even in the face of catastrophe (pp. 103ff.).

When we combine Krochmal's metahistorical and historiographical claims the following understanding of Jewish history emerges: Jewish faith is unique and absolute; as such Jews are exempt from the law of demise, to which all other nations are subject, although not from the organismic process as a whole; Jews are not entirely exempt from the organismic course of human history because they—being human—remain subject to the laws that pertain to all physical things; as such, as far as their material existence is concerned, they have a history as do all other peoples; however, their spiritual essence remains beyond time, even as their external spiritual institutions are subject to it.

This view of Jewish history provides a partial apologia for the traditional view of the past, while at the same time conceding much to modern sensibilities. What Krochmal retains is a view of a completed past, a past rooted in divine

providence, in which the Jewish people achieved a level of religious sophistication that could not be transcended. Thus, the tradition speaks to modern Jews just as it had to premodern Jews. Further, the patterns of the past, as established by divine providence and as discovered by modern philosophy, remain in some way formative for subsequent existence, as, from the period of decay in the first cycle forward, the essential patterns of Jewish belief and survival are firmly implanted. However, from the middle of the first cycle forward, Jewish history is understood as an immanent process of spiritual development or decay, in which God does not serve as the central figure in determining the destiny of the people. That role is played by their own religious consciousness. Further, the notion of steady generational decline that became so prominent in Jewish tradition has no place in Krochmal's schema; this view is simply too antithetical to the modern spirit to be retained. It is, however, replaced by the view of inner stasis. Given Krochmal's views regarding the achievements of Second Commonwealth Jewry, however, the rejection of generational decline would not lead to the dissonance that probably produced such a doctrine in the first place, as this Jewry achieved a spiritual height that has been equalled by its successors, but not excelled (see the discussion of progress below).

Krochmal's view of history also responds fully to the view that prevailed in the modern period. How this vision responds to the specific reading of Jewish history in Herder and Hegel is clear; in particular, Krochmal turns the tables on Hegel, as it were, arguing in Hegelian terms for a different view of Jewish history, a view that sees this history as existing in a

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state of being rather than becoming, having arrived at the telos toward which general human history is yet traveling. Moreover, Krochmal has placed Jewish spirituality beyond time, and in some sense outside of history. That is, if history is viewed as the development of spirit in time, Judaism must be seen as insulated from this process, from the time of the exile (supposedly the beginning of Israel's degeneration) forward. In this way Krochmal neutralizes the relativism inherent in historical thought; the absolute nature of Jewish faith renders its spiritual essence beyond history, and it therefore cannot be compared to or compromised by any other history. It is true that for Krochmal, to the extent that Jews are subject to the physical laws of history, their experiences can be fitted into a larger framework of human experience and thereby elucidated (see esp. *Guide*, p. 167). However, Jewish faith cannot be viewed as merely another manifestation of the human religious impulse, for it is absolute, and thus distinct from all other religious cultures by definition. Ultimately, then, we can say that Krochmal's historiography attempts to historicize without relativizing; this is achieved by distinguishing between external manifestation and inner, essential core.

Progress

If the specific, Western, reading of Jewish history could no longer be sustained, there remained the general problem of history as progress, which, if it could not demand Judaism's supersession any longer, still seemed to demand that Judaism undergo its own internal movement forward. Needless to say,

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such a theoretical demand was antithetical to traditional patterns of thought. Thus, at this point further discussion of both the doctrine and Krochmal's response to it are in order.

As Robert Nisbet has pointed out, there are two related but distinguishable views of human progress in the Western philosophical tradition. The first is that humanity is progressing in its accumulation and improvement of knowledge. The second is a vision of human spiritual and moral progress, or, I would add, at least the potential for such progress, leading toward an "ever-greater perfection of human nature" (Nisbet, p. 5). Although philosophers have addressed both views, it seems to me that the first relies on history to discover the pertinent data, which the philosopher may then use to address the second view; it is, thus, ultimately philosophically trivial. The second, on the other hand, relies on philosophy to discover the rational—usually metaphysical—workings of the process; while historical events may be cited to demonstrate a particular point, ultimately the vision is metahistorical.

Despite the claims of some of Krochmal's interpreters to the contrary, it seems to me that Krochmal did not espouse a vision of sustained progress in the second sense—at least not as far as Jewish history was concerned.⁴⁰ To be sure, in Krochmal's reading, Jews (Israelites) undergo an enormous, progressive change between the first and second cycles; thus, Krochmal claims, not even those Israelites who witnessed the theophany at Mount Sinai were able to achieve an understanding of God comparable to that achieved by the Jews of the second cycle, as the latter were simply better prepared (p. 39). This progress, however, came to a halt with the second cycle, when the Jews achieved full awareness of the absolute

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spirit, for a people cannot progress beyond this level of consciousness, the telos of the historical process. Speaking of the Jewish recognition of absolute spirit, Krochmal writes, "From thence forward [the beginning of the second cycle] it was as imprinted on our hearts; throughout the generations we never strayed from it, and we were its teachers to many nations, and with it we remain to this very day, and through it we shall survive and enjoy eternal redemption" (ibid.). Further, as we have already seen, during the period of maturity of the second cycle, Jews reached the pinnacle of human spiritual development, which—obviously—they have never surpassed. "The daughter of Jeshurun has not had as precious a time as this from its inception to this very day" (p. 60). Indeed, the very notion of an absolute faith precludes the possibility of further progress.

This does not mean that Jewish spirituality does not *change*; as a religion, Judaism's absolute spiritual content had to be concretely conceptualized and externalized. The external manifestations were (and are) obviously not immutable. Thus, Jews, influenced by their interaction with other peoples, are constantly adopting new forms of spiritual *expression*. However, although Jewish spirituality undergoes external changes, it does not *progress*.

Given Krochmal's attachment to Jewish tradition, his rejection of the doctrine of progress—as it relates to Jews—is not surprising. For the notion of an all-encompassing tradition that is the vehicle of absolute spirit is antithetical to a vision of sustained progress. If Jewish spiritual nature is always progressing, rabbinic tradition, the great bearer of Jewish spirituality, will ultimately prove inadequate and merit

supersession; the whole point of Krochmal's *Guide*, however, is to prove that rabbinic tradition remains the epitome of religious consciousness, as we have already seen, and shall see yet again. Further, progress is basically a doctrine designed to describe the human spiritual condition; as we have seen, for Krochmal, Jewish spirituality remains beyond history. Sustained progress is thus irrelevant to the movement of Jewish tradition through time.

It seems likely, however, that Krochmal did not reject the doctrine of progress as it applies to humanity in general. With Jews in the vanguard, humanity slowly progresses through history, ultimately to achieve the recognition of the absolute spirit together with their Jewish brethren (pp. 38–39). That is, the course of human history is very much as Herder and Hegel described it. They erred, in Krochmal's view, regarding the Jews; the *Guide* attempts to correct the error.⁴¹ The result is that Krochmal has found a philosophico-historical basis for the very traditional notion that Jews and gentiles have entirely different historical destinies, brought about by distinct processes. He has used modern historical thinking, rather than traditional thought, to elucidate what that destiny is, and what process will lead to it. Despite this minor concession, Krochmal's discussion here must be seen as an attempt to justify traditional Jewish understanding of the Jewish place in the world.

Krochmal was by no means alone among modern Jewish thinkers in recognizing the conflict between traditional and progressive thinking, and in rejecting progress. The doctrine had already been rejected in no uncertain terms by Moses Mendelssohn in his *Jerusalem*. Responding to Lessing, Men-

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delssohn claims that he can see no basis whatsoever for the claim that humanity is progressing. Alexander Altmann has correctly pointed out that Mendelssohn is philosophically precluded from accepting the doctrine because of his commitment to the position that "eternal truths of natural religion are accessible at all times and in all places" (Mendelssohn, pp. 95-97, 212-13). It seems to me that equally at issue is the accessibility and applicability of the "revealed legislation," and the traditional interpretation thereof, whose authority Mendelssohn upholds. This revelation and interpretation could not morally demand the allegiance of a people who had progressed religiously beyond the time of the original revelation and tradition; the revelation retains authority only to the extent that it can continue to address the needs of its "subjects." Thus, Mendelssohn and Krochmal both understood that the philosophical approach to human history that views it as a progressive, universal, teleological process is inimical to a tradition for which the teleology of world history is inextricably bound to the destiny of a given people throughout all time, whose guide toward this telos is itself millennia old. Torah—God's revelation in time—is seen as perfect and complete; it prescribes to all ages (equally for Mendelssohn, progressively and then equally for Krochmal), implicitly ruling out the notion of historical progress. For both, times change and therefore needs change; there can be no vision of human progress, however, explaining these changes.

We should note, though, that Krochmal's attempt to insulate tradition from modern historical claims, based as it is on a partial concession to its central doctrine of progressive development, actually produced a vision of tradition that was

quite untraditional. In attempting to defend the vitality of Jewish life beyond the First Commonwealth period, Krochmal develops a doctrine of limited progress within the Jewish tradition that effectively dates the true origins of that *tradition* to the Second Commonwealth period;⁴² in effect, Krochmal argues that what we know as Judaism originated after the Babylonian exile. This position was becoming a commonplace among historians, both Jewish and gentile. It was, of course, anathema to the Orthodox. Krochmal, despite his allegiance to Jewish tradition, obviously feels that modern historians had credibly made their case. It would be sheer obstinacy to demur.

This leads, then, to subtle reworkings of traditional material. To better illustrate this, recall the passage quoted above to the effect that not even those who witnessed the theophany at Sinai were able to achieve an understanding of God comparable to that achieved by the Jews of the second cycle; to this compare the following passage from the Mekilta:

“This is my God and I will glorify him” (Ex. 15:2) R. Eliezer says: Whence can you say that a maidservant saw at the sea what Isaiah and Ezekiel and all the other prophets never saw? It says about them, “And by the ministry of the prophets I have used similitudes” (Hos. 12:11). And it is also written: “The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God” (Ezek. 1:1). . . . But as soon as they (the maidservants at the sea) saw Him (without similitudes) they recognized him, and they all opened their mouths and said: “This is my God and I will glorify him.” (Laut. pp. 24–25; slightly modified)

Now, to be sure, the Mekilta passage is scarcely normative, and may merely represent a rabbi drawing connections be-

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tween verses in Scripture without necessarily intending to state anything at all regarding the course of Jewish history or anything else. Still, this well-known passage, implanted within an authoritative text, suggests that there was no greater awareness of the reality of God on the part of the Jewish people than at the Exodus from Egypt. Both the historian and the polemicist in Krochmal lead him to disagree. As we shall see in our discussion of Krochmal's biblical work, he is aware of the fact that the needs of the time—that is, his desire to save tradition—necessitate compromising on some aspects of traditional self-understanding. As he puts it in the Introduction to the work as a whole, there was a time in which Judaism was better served by the assumption that everything was early. Times, however, have changed, and there is nothing more important to the integrity of the tradition as a whole than to establish the actual, and more gradual, historical sequence of the unfolding of the tradition. It remains his profound conviction, then, that such compromise in the end will yield a tradition better able to cope with the challenges of modern (Protestant) culture, and better able to survive with self-assurance and commitment. In this case, it allows him to affirm that Jews achieve their height of cultural creativity at precisely the time Protestants insisted they ceased to possess a vital culture.

Krochmal's treatment of Jewish history, like his metaphysics, can only be understood from the perspective of the basic *Kulturkampf* engulfing Jews in the modern world. The *Guide* attempts to address the profound discord between the traditional Jewish and the modern Protestant and/or secular ways of ordering reality. He concedes much to the latter, always,

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in his own mind anyway, in the service of the former. It is from this perspective that the treatment of Jewish history may be understood as part of a guide of the perplexed of the modern age.

NOTES

1. As the previous chapter makes clear, however, for Krochmal the location of the divine-human encounter in history does not involve a negation of the natural realm as yet another locus of this encounter. For Krochmal, all reality, historical and natural, derives from the "one shepherd."
2. For more on this, see Arnold M. Eisen, *Galut* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), chapter 1.
3. This point is made by John Van Seters in his *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), esp. pp. 263–78. Van Seters's approach to the emergence of the text is far more critical than was that of Krochmal or almost any other Jewish scholar of the 1830s. Still, Van Seters's conclusions are quite relevant since the *function* of the Abraham stories is not necessarily dependent on their origins. Thus, for Van Seters the story recounted in Genesis 15 was *created* for the purpose of providing solace to the exiles, whereas for a traditional Jewish scholar the story was an accurate portrayal of a past event that had implications for the whole course of history. My reliance on Van Seters is not an endorsement of his approach to the historical texts. It seems to me that the critique of his approach by Baruch Halpern is right on target. (See Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 192–94 and throughout.) Nevertheless, while I would agree with Halpern that the writers of these narratives are writing history and not what he would call romances, it seems to me that Van Seters may still be right regarding the function this history served, which is to understand the present in terms of the past.
4. See in particular, Lamentations Rabbah, chapters 1 and 2, which also contain stories pertaining to the Hadrianic persecutions, esp. at 2:2.

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The assimilation of the destruction of the Second Temple is to be found in the earlier documents as well. Indeed, we find in the Mishnah the statement that both Temples were destroyed on the ninth of Av (Ta'anit 4:5); the Talmud (Ta'anit 29a) states that we know that the Second Temple was destroyed on that day because it was already established as a day of "obligation"—that is, as the day on which Israel would pay for its sins. It then proceeds to describe other similarities between the two events. The process of assimilation works both ways, however. Thus the same mishnah states that the city of Jerusalem was breached on the seventeenth of the month of Tammuz. This, however, does not accord with the biblical "evidence" which gives the date as the ninth of this month (Jer. 39:2, and 52:5–6). In the Bavli (Ta'anit 28b), we find attributed to the Amora Rava the statement that the biblical date refers to the First Temple while the Mishnaic date refers to the Second Temple. However, in the Yerushalmi we find the claim that the biblical calculation was simply erroneous, that in fact, the seventeenth was the date for this event. It seems to me that here we may have a case in which the assumption of patterns prevails, but the biblical evidence is made to conform to the later, and traditionally sanctioned date for the breach of the city. In general, there are many catastrophes assigned to the two dates, the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Av. See Mishnah Ta'anit 4:5.

5. See, e.g., BT Sanhedrin 96b–99a and BT Avodah Zarah 2b–3a.
6. The passage in parentheses is omitted in many versions of the Mishnah, which reads simply "etc." (*v'khule*).
7. Its emergence does, however, represent a divine "intrusion" into history. That is, the messianic age is not the culmination of some historical process, but is rather the subversion of that process. See below.
8. Now to be sure there are other points of view represented in rabbinic literature regarding the messianic age, and it is my view that we cannot speak at all of a rabbinic messianology. In the various documents that make up the construct "rabbinic literature" we find all kinds of sayings regarding the messiah, what he shall effect, under what circumstances he shall come, what, if anything, Jews can do to hasten his arrival, to what extent Jews are responsible for his tarrying, etc. It is, thus, in my view impossible to speak of a messianic *idea* in

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rabbinic Judaism as Scholem does, although his basic typological distinction between utopian and restorative messianism seems to be supported by most of the variegated evidence. In any event, Neusner, in his *Messiah in Context*, also rejects the notion of a messianic idea, but he too tends to construct systematic visions, not, as does Scholem, by generalizing from all rabbinic literature, but rather by generalizing regarding the positions found in each of the documents he examines. Given his *assumption* that these documents represent, at the redactional level, systematic statements, he is quite justified in doing this. I do not, however, share this assumption, and I do not see how we can speak even of the messianology of the Bavli or the Yerushalmi.

9. Quite obviously, I am arguing here against those who would insist that Jewish concepts of history are essentially linear; in some trivial sense I suppose this is true in that history has a beginning and an end. But the process of history—that is, the movement of historical time—is scarcely linear. As Jews awaited the messianic age, there was no sense that history was *progressing* toward it; if rabbinic Jews living later than others were closer chronologically to the messiah's advent, this was an accident created by the flow of time—they would not have claimed that their time was somehow qualitatively distinct. For them all time since the destruction of the Temple was known as “this time.”
10. To a large extent, it is this issue that separates Burke and Paine in their “debate” regarding the value of the French Revolution and its overthrow of the ancien régime.
11. The printed texts have the names in the other order, but this is apparently a mistake; cf. Yerushalmi Sheqalim 5:1, and Hanokh Albeck, *Mavo la-Talmudim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1969), p. 314n.
12. Again here, I am not claiming that this idea was unanimously accepted, nor that it represents *the* rabbinic concept regarding the issue. Rather, I am claiming that later post-Talmudic Jewish culture was, to a large extent, convinced of the correctness of this appraisal; it thus represents “rabbinic thought” in its appropriation by later generations. For a partial list of other sources that disseminate this idea, see the important essay by S. Z. Havlin “On ‘Literary Closure’ as a Basis for Halakhic Periodization” (Hebrew), in *Researches in Talmudic Literature* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1983),

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- p. 170, n. 98. Havlin's claim that the doctrine of generational decline does not adequately explain why greater authority is granted to earlier "periods" of halakhic activity seems essentially correct, if perhaps overstated. Still, the fact that greater authority was granted to earlier periods (say, tannaim vs. amoraim) served to reinforce the notion of generational decline, helping thereby to reinforce it as an important doctrine of the rabbis.
13. I do not intend by this to challenge Peter Gay's nuanced reconstruction of Enlightenment thinkers, in which he denies that their view of history should be seen as strictly committed to progress. However, since virtually all the *philosophes* would have agreed that humans have both the capacity and existential need to progress beyond the world of the ancient Orient and beyond the Middle Ages, it matters little to the Jewish traditionalist that they located their models of humanity in the ancient Greco-Roman world. The doctrine still champions the capacity of the species to distinguish itself *qualitatively* from past manifestations. (See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment* [New York: Norton, 1966], vol 1, pp. 31-71, esp. 31-38.)
 14. See, in particular, paragraphs 72ff. See also Hans Liebeschütz, "Mendelssohn and Lessing in ihrer Stellung zur Geschichte," in Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe, eds., *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1979) pp. 167-82, esp. 170-79; Michael Graetz, "'Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts' und jüdisches Selbstbewusstsein im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung*, vol. 4 (1977), pp. 273-95; and particularly Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 182-233, esp. his penetrating remarks on pp. 190-96.
 15. I do not pretend to have exhausted Herder's views on this subject. His approach to history is richer than I have sketched, and certainly his views regarding Jews and Judaism are more diverse. (See Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* [New York: Vantage, 1976], pp. 159n, 160n, 182, 186, 192, 214, and the monographic treatment of the subject by Ze'ev Levy, "The Place of Judaism in Johann Gottfried Herder's Philosophy of History" (Hebrew), in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 1, no. 4 [1982].) I have touched on those points in Herder's most significant work on human history, points which seem to me to have shaped the way that Krochmal viewed the development of

- human history, and which certainly played a role in Hegel's thought as well.
16. See the section entitled "Absolute Spirit and Jewish Religious Consciousness" above, chapter 2, where I have dealt with the philosophical side of Krochmal's response.
 17. I should clarify my use of the term "organismic" to describe Hegel's view of history. The organismic model is decidedly nondialectical, and Hegel specifically denies that human history as a whole can be viewed in an organic way (*Reason in History* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953], p. 69). Still, while the process of history as a whole is not organic, the fate of the given states resembles that prescribed by the organismic model, in that states, embodying a particular national spirit, are destined to develop, mature and then disappear (by being *aufgehoben* by the ensuing bearer of spirit). It is for this reason that Hegel can speak of a state's *Greisenalter*, a decidedly organic formulation. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, paragraphs 341–360 (esp. 344, 346, 347 and 360) support my description of his thought.
 18. Foremost among these was W. M. L. de Wette, who viewed the exile as the point of transition from "Hebräismus" to "Judentum," the latter a derogatory term.
 19. This speech is cited by Siegfried Ucko, "Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums," reprinted in Kurt Wilhelm, ed., *Wissenschaft des Judentums in deutschen Sprachbereich*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), vol. 1, p. 345. This entire speech and two others by Gans are available in a Hebrew translation done by Zalman Shazar in his *Orei Dorot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1971), pp. 356–84.
 20. I cite this speech because it is, I think, as clear a statement as one can find regarding the influence of Hegel on Jewish thinkers—as it relates to their self-understanding as Jews—in the early decades of the nineteenth century. I am not claiming that Krochmal actually was familiar with this speech; I can see no reason to think that. He was, however, familiar with Gans (see below, chapter 5), and certainly knew the attraction that Hegel's philosophy of history had for him, insofar as Gans was the editor of the first edition of Hegel's lectures in this area. Another example of the influence of Hegel's thought on Jewish intellectuals is the following story regarding Moses Moser, another founder of the *Verein*. "Allein er [Hegel] bezog Wol-

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len und Handeln auf den Staat als die 'Wirklichkeit der sittlichen Idee.' Die Idee des Staats erhielt damit eine quasi-religiöse Weihe. Moser zog persönlich daraus die radikale Konsequenz. 'Wenn Du beten kannst' schrieb er am Vorabend der hohen jüdischen Feiertage später einmal an Wohlwill, 'so tue es auch für mich. Ich dagegen werde für Dich *Philosophie studieren.*' " See Günther Reissner, *Eduard Gans: Ein Leben in Vormärz* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1965), p. 53.

21. Formstecher writes:

In der Form herrschte bei den Geistesproducten jener Zeit das objective [which for Formstecher is bad] und in dem Inhalte das, ihm entsprechende, antike Element vor. Der Kampf zwischen antiken und modernen, so wie der zwischen jüdischen und heidnischen Elementen erscheint auch in diesem Zeitabschnitte mit vorherrschender Objectivität, doch nur mit dem Streben nach religiösem und nicht politischem Separatismus. . . . So wie in der äusseren Erscheinung, so musste auch in Innern des religiösen Lebens das antike Element dem modernen immer mehr weichen, trotz seinem Streben, sich in der Theorie sowohl wie in der Praxis zu behaupten. In der Theorie wurde behauptet, dass die Geisteskräfte der Menschen immer tiefer von der früheren Höhe herabsänken (Sanhedr. 11. Sota 45.), und dass somit spätere Geschlechter stets unvollkommener als frühere (Sabbath 112. Schekalim 5, 1 . . .), deshalb auch nicht in Stande seien, frühere religiöse Bestimmungen zu modifizieren.

Thus, for Formstecher, there can be little doubt that rabbinic thinking, at least as it relates to this issue, is archaic and antiprogressive. Formstecher's book appeared one year after Krochmal's death, and therefore, obviously, the latter did not know it. He would, however, have agreed with Formstecher's description, if not his value judgments, regarding rabbinic historical thinking. See Salomon Formstecher, *Die Religion des Geistes* (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1980), p. 311.

22. This point has already been made by Nathan Rotenstreich in his *Tradition and Reality*, chapter 1.
23. See Löwith's *Meaning in History*, throughout.
24. See Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1983), pp. 37-75, esp. 41ff.
25. For an attempt to mediate the dispute between Löwith and Blumenberg—actually to save Löwith from Blumenberg—see Panajotis

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Kondylis, *Die Aufklärung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), pp. 56–57, n. 10.

26. Thus, he does not deny the general understanding of the emergence of Europe; he simply challenges the notion that Jewish history can be understood in terms of its contribution to it. Although Krochmal seems to allow for progress in the spiritual development of the rest of the world (on which see below), in his treatment of legal history, with which he opens his study of rabbinic literature, it is clear that he was drawn to the more conservative “Historical School” of Savigny, which is predicated on the denial of transnational progress necessitating new legal enactments. Given Krochmal’s commitment to the continuity of rabbinic Judaism, this is in no way surprising. See below, opening section of chapter 5.
27. My translation of the final sentence requires some comment. The sentence reads:

ve-’im nafalnu, qamnu ve-nit ’odad ve-lo ’ZVNW ha-shem eloqenu

Steven Schwarzschild has translated the latter part of this sentence “and the Lord our God did not forsake us.” (See his “Two Modern Jewish Philosophies of History: Nachman Krochmal and Hermann Cohen” [Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew Union College, 1955], p. 54, and similarly Michael Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History* [New York: Behrman House, 1974], p. 203.) This translation is grammatically possible, perhaps even preferable given the absence of the accusative particle “et.” Nevertheless, it seems to me to be incorrect. Clearly, the subject of the first two verbs is “we,” and thus it seems likely that the subject of the third verb is also “we,” although this is scarcely decisive. More important, the first half is clearly a paraphrase of the Psalmist (20:9). It seems to me that the latter half is a paraphrase of the Chronicler (2, 13:10), where the reference is to the fact that Israel did not forsake its God (“As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him”). This kind of almost unconscious paraphrasing is very common in the *Guide*. Finally, my translation better suits the rest of Krochmal’s argument here. Israel survives through history because of its *recognition* of the universal, absolute God. See, in particular, *Guide*, p. 44, where Krochmal writes, “And this faith was vital and strong within the nation at all times, and it always knew the absolute spirit within it. For this is the great principle; although

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a certain spirituality manifests itself within a particular nation, this is not sufficient until it becomes clearly conscious of it, realizing that what is emerging from among them is a spiritual matter which upholds and sustains the nation." As for the "divine presence was with them," clearly, for Krochmal, this refers to the representational way in which the rabbinic sages gave voice to their comprehension of the fact that God is a universal and absolute spirit, bound by neither place nor historical circumstance; further, this is the way the rabbis give voice to the conviction that the people of Israel remained committed to their God even in exile.

28. It cannot be claimed that Krochmal does not deal with the history of other peoples because it is beside his point. The proper understanding of the history of other peoples is fundamental to his purpose. For, only if the other nations go through the process he describes and then disappear is there anything unique about the Jews. He does not need to deal with the course of general history because it is, for him, a settled matter. The historiography of his time had taken care of that. We must take him very seriously when he states that he is trying to prove the repetition of the pattern among the Jews, rather than attempting to prove the veracity of the pattern itself.
29. See, for example, Rawidowicz, Introduction, pp. 117-21; Lionel Kochan, *The Jew and His History* (New York: Schocken, 1977), p. 74; Jacob Taubes, "Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism," *Judaism*, vol. 13 (1963), throughout. The issue cannot be decided because Krochmal simply does not sufficiently elaborate on his historical model. The fact is that Krochmal's approach resembles that of each of these thinkers in certain particulars, indicating that Krochmal was quite satisfied to incorporate the common denominator among these various positions. Such a laconic and eclectic presentation would have no place in a work designed to present an original theory of history, for it could not hope to convince; it does quite well, however, in a work designed to respond to the common thread in modern historiography. Rawidowicz has argued for a connection of Krochmal's theories with those of Vico's, and in one respect—maintaining the eternity of Israel and its exemption from "normal" patterns—they are extremely close. But, as opposed to the organismic pattern of national histories, Krochmal can scarcely treat this eternity as established, and in any event, his attachment to this most traditional of notions is

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hardly dependent on Vico's articulation of it. For example, see another Catholic philosopher of history, Bossuet, albeit in the more traditional Catholic manner of viewing the Jews as a witness, in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, part 2, chapters 20–21 (I have used the 1874 Hachette repr. where the relevant pages are 271–98). The connection between Krochmal, Vico and Bossuet is commonality of larger purpose: negating any commitment to progress, affirming the reality of providence and the exceptional nature of the biblical histories.

30. A similar argument is advanced by Krochmal's son Abraham in an essay, "Y'ridat ha-Umah, Hit'alat ha-Emunah," in idem, *Aggudat Ma'amarim*, p. 13ff. See *Guide*, pp. 50–53. Krochmal's view of Jewish survival does not seem to me to be consistent with attempts to see him as a proto-Zionist. While Krochmal was far more of a Jewish nationalist than was his son, he would not have defined that nationalism as deriving its vitality from a place rather than from a culture that had transcended geography by virtue of its absolute spirituality. Cf. Most recently, Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 14–22. For other works, see the bibliography in Klausner.
31. Cf. Rotenstreich, *Ha-Maḥashavah ha-Yehudit b'Et ha-Ḥadashah*, vol. 2, pp. 161–63. (See also his "Muhlat ve-Hitrahshut be-Mishnato shel Ranak," in *K'nesset le'Zekher Bialik*, no. 3, [1941]). The problems raised by Rotenstreich result from a "Hegelianized" reading of Krochmal. That is, Rotenstreich makes the argument that for Krochmal God, as absolute being, is devoid of all personality, and thus, the activity of God in the contingent historical process is philosophically problematic. Yet, Krochmal affirms on a number of occasions, as we saw in the previous chapter, that God as absolute being is capable, on the basis of a free act of will, of a self-limitation, which would allow for—indeed demand—his activity in history, and we find such activity in prophecy and in the original providential act of election of Israel (see *Guide*, p. 38). Still, here Krochmal does not argue for divine activity in Israel's revival, for this would fail to address the historical issues raised by the philosophy of history. Here he must, and does, argue that Jewish survival is grounded in the immanent forces of history as they would have been recognized in his own day.

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32. This essence is, however, discernible in history. In a celebrated passage, Krochmal writes:

And know, it is a fundamental and honored principle that it is proper, indeed, obligatory, for us to investigate the ideas, mores and characteristics that have emerged from within our nation over the course of time, through our past. [We must study] the unions and associations we have developed with others to a greater extent than any other people, albeit with limitations. [We must study] the way we have related to—and been transformed by—these ideas, mores and characteristics, and how, on their basis, we have interacted with others—those who were distant from us and have come closer to some extent, borrowing from our ways, such as the Greeks at the time of Plotinus and Proclus, and, in a different way, Mohammed, as well as those who were close to us and distanced themselves such as the early Christians, or Spinoza and his followers. It is obligatory for all who are wise and prominent among us to delve into these things and to achieve a fundamental understanding of them. All this is for the purpose of arriving scientifically at clear impressions, and, ultimately, to a clear recognition of our essence and being—the general soul of Israel—and how that essence has revealed itself through various events and through changing eras. (*Guide*, p. 167)

33. The prophetic roots of this position are obvious.
34. In addition to chapters 9 and 10, which contain the survey of Jewish history in the Second Commonwealth period, chapter 11 deals with biblical books, every one of which Krochmal dates to this period (on this, see the next chapter). Chapter 12 deals with Alexandrian Jewry in general and Philo in particular—again, the focus is on the Second Commonwealth period. Chapter 13 is a discussion of the emergence of the rabbinic tradition up to the time of the Mishnah—again, almost exclusively focused on this period. Chapter 14 treats the nature of rabbinic *aggadah*, with a substantial concern for the “tannaitic period,” most of which overlaps with the period of the second cycle.
35. It is to be noted here, that Krochmal, in contradistinction to Hegel, claims the nation is the primary bearer of culture rather than the state. That is, the *Volk*, rather than the *Staat*, the external political projection of the *Volk*, can retain vitality and creativity apart from political institutions. It is, of course, not surprising that a Jew would offer such a claim, and it is certainly consistent with the position of Herder, for whom a literature and especially a language are determining factors in culture.

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36. It should be noted that this verse, viewed in its original context as traditionally understood, refers to the qualities of the messiah. In some sense it is the people who redeemed themselves through their renewed spiritual commitment.
37. See, e.g., *Guide*, p. 60. This distinction can be illustrated by Krochmal's treatment of the pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets. The former are seen by Krochmal as individuals who stand above the rest of the community which is still practicing idolatry. The latter by contrast preach to a community that is ready to hear their words. The former issue admonitions that fall on deaf ears; the latter issue consolations that the people take to heart. For this reason, the heyday of pre-exilic prophecy is seen by Krochmal as a period of decline; the spiritual heights attained by these select individuals cannot change the overall status of the people. The post-exilic prophets are seen as operating in a period of great rebirth, not because *they* are spiritually superior to their predecessors, but because the people as a whole are superior.
38. I have emphasized this last phrase as an illustration of Krochmal's desire to show that Jewish culture is, in fact, morally superior to other surrounding cultures, to whom Jews need not feel inferior. In chapter 12 of the *Guide*, Krochmal discusses the work of Philo of Alexandria, and attempts to show that at the core of Philo's thought is the same commitment to absolute spirit as is manifest in other Jewish cultural movements. See Lachower, "Nigleh v'Nistar," pp. 307-21, esp. 315.
39. The implicit message is that there is no real distinction between the community in which the prophetic writings and some psalms originated, on the one hand, and the traditions preserved in the rabbinic writings on the other. See below, chapters 4 and 5.
40. Cf. Eliezer Schweid, *Toledot ha-Hagut ha-Yehudit* (Jerusalem: Hakkibbutz Hameuchad and Keter, 1977), pp. 178-90; Schwarzschild, pp. 36ff.
41. Some critics have argued that Krochmal did indeed believe that Judaism is subject to the same progressive process as humanity in general. It seems to me that this error is due to one of two possibilities. The first is the interpretation that all subsequent cycles stand in the same relation to one another as do the first and second. That is, clearly Krochmal believed that Jews had progressed spiritually from the first cycle to the second; interpreters, such as Schwarzschild,

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simply assume that this pattern is carried forward. It is clear, I hope, that this approach is simply not correct. The second source of error here is the imposition of the interpreter's understanding of the course of Jewish history onto Krochmal's. This is particularly characteristic of Schweid, who sees in Jewish medieval philosophy an advance beyond what preceded it, and in modern philosophy a further advance yet. Whatever the merits of this understanding of Jewish history, it has no foundation in Krochmal's work. In the first place, for Krochmal religion and philosophy are essentially identical in content; thus philosophy adds nothing but clarity to religious expression. As such, there would be no essential distinction between the representational mode of rabbinic thought and the philosophical mode of medieval and modern thought, as we saw above in chapter two. In the second place, there is no circumventing the fact that Krochmal claims the second cycle was the pinnacle of Jewish spiritual achievement, and that virtually all the historiography in the *Guide* is geared toward proving precisely that. All this rules out a doctrine of progress as Schweid would reconstruct it. Finally, as I have just argued, adherence to the notion of sustained progress in Jewish history undermines Krochmal's view of the rabbinic tradition.

42. This claim stands in strong contradistinction to Mendelssohn, who, in the introduction to his Bible commentary, *Netivot ha-Shalom* (better known as the *Biur*), "Or la-Netivah," stresses the immutability of the Torah text and implies that the tradition as a whole, particularly as regards the biblical text, originates with Moses. This is also implicit in *Jerusalem*, pp. 127–28. As we shall see in chapter 5, Krochmal regards the traditional laws as being the product of a much lengthier process, in which the implicit is made manifest over time.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL STUDIES

THE ONSET of historical thought and scholarship touched on virtually all aspects of traditional self-understanding, but perhaps none more than on the place of the Bible within traditional culture. From the time of Hobbes and Spinoza, through the works of Voltaire and Reimarus, the Bible emerged as a document that must be understood as all other human documents are: as a product of a time, place and point of view.¹ In the century or so that separated Spinoza from Mendelssohn, however, this point of view gained little currency within the Jewish community, and certainly cannot be said to have exercised influence on the development of Jewish culture. Indeed, while Mendelssohn was certainly aware of these new trends, he himself seems to have been, for the most part, unaffected by them;² he states unequivocally in the introduction to his *Netivot ha-Shalom* (the *Biur*), "And behold, Moses our teacher, may he rest in peace, wrote the entire Torah from 'In the beginning' to 'before all Israel' (the last verse in

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Deuteronomy), including the last eight verses from 'And Moses died' to the end . . ." Further, "we, the entire community of Israel believe that just as Moses, our teacher, may he rest in peace, wrote the Torah, that is how we now possess it, no changes have occurred to it from then until now, *nor has it undergone the processes that profane books undergo*" in which changes occur (Mendelssohn, *Biur*, vol. 1, pp. vii–viii; emphasis added).

During the eighteenth century, biblical scholarship was pursued and its attendant problems were confronted primarily by Protestants in Germany, with some important contributions from French Catholics, lapsed and otherwise.³ While this century may be said to have planted the seeds of the revolution that was to follow, the issues of Pentateuchal authorship, the understanding of prophecy and miracle, and the authorship of the other biblical books were dealt with by individuals here and there, but did not lead to a profound revolution in historical understanding until later. At the end of the century, certainly, far more biblical scholars affirmed the traditionally ascribed Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch than would have denied it.⁴

However, already by the last two decades of the eighteenth century major changes were becoming evident. More and more Christian Bible scholars and historians were overtaken by the passion for critical research. A new vision of the emergence of the Bible came to dominate in scholarly circles. Of particular relevance to our discussion is the proliferation of the view that the eighth-century B.C.E. prophet Isaiah could not have authored the second part of the book bearing his name, beginning with chapter 40. This had been noted by

others earlier, but now received its most complete expression in the work of J. G. Eichhorn (1752–1827), to which we shall refer in greater detail below. The book of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes), traditionally ascribed to Solomon, was now seen as a post-exilic, pseudepigraphic work. Many Psalms, traditionally ascribed to David, were now seen as having been authored by many different people from many different time periods, perhaps as late as after the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.).⁵ These shifts were based on the conviction that prophecy could not be understood as anything more than human poetic inspiration; it could, therefore, have no predictive value. Thus all references to historically later occurrences must be the product of writers living either at the time of or later than the event. The traditional view that imagined that prophetic figures could foresee events yet to occur was no longer tenable.

From the time of Mendelssohn onward this area of research began to make greater inroads into the Jewish scholarly community. While few Jews dared engage in critical research on the Pentateuch—the document was simply too central to Jewish life and law,⁶ and a critical stance required more distance than most Jews could muster⁷—Jewish scholars did allow themselves greater freedom with the other books of the Bible. In particular, in 1810, Mendelssohn's disciple Yehudah Leib Ben-Ze'ev published his *Mavo el Miqra'e Qodesh* (Introduction to Holy Scriptures), modeled after Eichhorn's *Einleitung*. Here he argues for the composite nature of Isaiah, among other critical observations. Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), in his *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt*, published in 1832, advanced daring new theses regarding the books of Chronicles, and the Psalter, the former based

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partially on researches of his teacher W. M. L. de Wette (1780–1849). Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784–1855) and Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (1790–1867) also advanced critical theses regarding Isaiah and Psalms. While one cannot say that unanimity had emerged among Jewish scholars regarding these books, as we shall see, certainly many Jewish scholars engaged primarily or occasionally in biblical research were endorsing the conclusions, particularly regarding Isaiah, that were becoming commonplace among gentile scholars. Among these Jewish scholars, perhaps none is identified with biblical criticism more than Nachman Krochmal.⁸

The truth, though, is that Krochmal can scarcely be considered a Bible critic, if by that term we mean someone firmly committed to uncovering the truth behind the emergence of the various biblical books. For Krochmal's program is overtly historiographical and apologetic—not critical, per se. We must note that he presents his biblical studies, which are gathered in chapter 11 of the *Guide*, as mere notes to and amplifications of the historical presentation of chapters 8 through 10. He thus tells us that these studies must be seen in terms of the larger historiographical program of those chapters. We will recall that the central purpose of the historical chapters was to prove the vitality of the Jewish revival after the Babylonian exile. The purpose of the eleventh chapter of the *Guide* is to provide the basis for using various biblical books as historical sources for the Second Temple period. Krochmal makes this particularly clear concerning the book of Qohelet, which, as we shall see, he dates to the Persian period, prior to the Greek conquests. He writes that seeing this book as the product of this time provides us with a unique historical

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source for a period for which we have virtually no other sources, and it “casts light and knowledge on the exalted state of our nation during these generations that have been forgotten as if they never were” (*Guide*, p. 149). Similarly, in this chapter Krochmal provides the basis for using the second part of Isaiah as a historical source to demonstrate the spiritual revival of Judaism in the earlier part of the period.

That Krochmal wishes to support the claims of the previous chapters of the *Guide* may be seen from the fact that only those books that he can date to the Second Commonwealth period are included in his discussion of the Bible. Thus, the Pentateuch, which Krochmal considers Mosaic, is not discussed. Similarly, the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—treasure troves all, for the committed critic—are not mentioned. Most of the books that were always considered products of the exile, or its aftermath, such as Ezekiel, are left uncriticized. Finally, there is the book of Joel, whose Second Commonwealth provenance is affirmed by Krochmal, but it is not analyzed because he feels that such an analysis is not “necessary to achieve the desired goal” (*Guide*, p. 132). It is clear, then, that Krochmal’s agenda demands studies of those books, and only those books, that can advance his historiographical agenda—something that books dating from the First Temple period obviously cannot do.

Krochmal has cleverly recognized that there is much in the biblical-critical program of the early nineteenth century that stands at odds with many of the prevailing views regarding Jewish history that saw a precipitous decline in Jewish creativity with the exile. If the results of critical research suggest that the Bible came together over a much longer period than was previously assumed, the historical claims grounded in

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earlier assumptions must fall. By focusing on these books, and accentuating their post-exilic provenance, Krochmal obtains important ammunition in his fight against the alleged fossilization of Judaism.⁹

Krochmal's desire to use the claims of biblical scholarship to buttress the standing of Jewish tradition, clever though it was, confronted an obstacle that, as time went on, ultimately proved insurmountable. Traditional Jews simply had a much greater existential stake in the received traditions concerning the Bible. Most traditional Jews were horrified by the claims of modern biblical scholarship, not merely those that pertained to the Pentateuch, but those that dealt with the other books as well. The problem here was twofold: one, the claims advanced by scholars stood at odds with the view of the emergence of the Bible put forth by the rabbis in various places (most prominently in BT Baba Batra 14b–15a). A significant portion of traditional exegesis was based on the assumption that one can locate the book and its author in a time and place—such assumptions being based in turn on the “traditions” reported in rabbinic documents.¹⁰ If it now emerges that the rabbis did not have a sound idea of the origins of these books, if the rabbis can be led astray by a forger of the likes of the author of Qohelet, then the moorings of Jewish exegesis are shaken.

Although written in a slightly different, yet related, context, the words of Mendelssohn are instructive:

For the Christian translators—given that they do not possess the traditions of our sages, may their memory be for a blessing, and they do not heed the dictates of the Masorah—do not accept vocalizations and punctuations that we possess; therefore, they make the words of Torah as a breached wall, each will ascend it according

to his strength and will do with it what he wishes. They add and delete and change the Torah of God, not only the vocalizations and punctuation, but also, sometimes, letters and words (for what is there to restrain them?) according to their whims and abilities. Sometimes they will not read in the Torah what is written there, but rather whatever occurs to them. I do not look down on these scholars for this, for what forces them to pay heed to a tradition they did not receive from their fathers, or to a Masorah that was not given to them by people they consider reliable? They do not accept the obligation to observe and perform all that is written in the Torah, but rather, treat it as a work of history, to know what happened in antiquity, and to discern the ways of providence and the supernal supervision manifest in each generation; for this purpose there is no damage in sometimes changing a few details, through the addition or deletion of letters and words, as *they do with prominent profane books*. . . . If this is acceptable for gentile scholars and their students, for us, the House of Israel, it is not; for us this Torah is an inheritance, but only to serve the already-mentioned [historical] purpose, but also to know the commandments which our God has commanded us, to learn and teach, observe and perform, for it is our life and the length of our days. And so that our lives should not hang by the hair of logic and the thread of discernment alone, our sages, may their memory be for a blessing, ordained for us the Masorah, and defined the boundaries of the Torah and its commandments, so that we should not stumble as the blind in darkness. Therefore, we may not budge from the path that has been paved . . . (*Biur*, vol. 1, pp. xxv-xxvi; emphasis added)

While Mendelssohn is discussing the application of profane textual techniques to the text of the Torah, the absolute centrality of the rabbinic tradition he demands carries over to his understanding of the other books of the Bible as well. It is

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reasonable that gentile scholars should engage in this enterprise; their religious orientation is not shaken by the exercise of textual criticism.¹¹ Similarly, so many Jews thought, with historical criticism; it is fine for gentiles, but not an acceptable practice for Jews. I should add that the view that biblical scholarship not grounded in rabbinic tradition is somehow only a gentile enterprise is not unique to Mendelssohn; many Jews were of the opinion that to engage in this discipline was somehow a betrayal of one's heritage.¹²

The second difficulty Krochmal confronted was most forcefully stated by the Lutheran biblical scholar, Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890). The application of the tools of criticism to the Bible presupposes that it is not different as a document from any other piece of literature from antiquity. That is, it presupposes that there cannot be prophecy as understood in the traditional sense, as a direct and often predictive communication from God, but only poetry. For example, the claim that the eighth-century prophet Isaiah could not have written the second half of "his" book is grounded in the assumption that he could have foreseen neither the traumas of exile in such detail nor the emergence of the Persian Empire two centuries later. All ostensibly predictive statements automatically arouse critical scrutiny and explanation.¹³ Thus, attachment to historical, or, higher criticism meant a denial of the ancient traditions on which a Jew's religious orientation was founded, and also required a denial of the divine origins of the text.

It is these two problems that bring us to Krochmal's second agenda. His biblical studies, in addition to arguing for the continuity of Jewish faith, represent an attempt to shield the tradition from any of the potentially deleterious effects of

modern biblical criticism, so that its influence on Jewish self-understanding in the modern period would be wholly positive. This comes clearly into focus if we separate Krochmal's original contribution to his discussion from that which was already established elsewhere. When this is done, we see there is little original criticism in the *Guide*; most of the fundamental claims pertaining to the Bible advanced there had already been stated by other scholars, and Krochmal explicitly relies on them. What is original to Krochmal is his insistence on the inevitability of religious esotericism.¹⁴ This allows him to argue that the rabbis were already fully aware of many of the discoveries of modern Bible scholarship. They chose to conceal this knowledge as it did not serve to bolster faith in the canonical texts *during their times*.

After affirming some rather daring theses concerning the Psalms, for example, Krochmal writes that the esoteric tradition already encompassed this knowledge; this esoteric tradition must now be revealed because modern biblical theories may come to the attention of Jews, particularly young ones, who may accept them "without delving into the matter, and combine truth with falsehood. They will then hastily publish strange and uncritical histories; all this because they see that things are not as they originally thought, and that the sages of their people did not know it [modern theories] or were not willing to accept what was true or thought to be true" (*Guide*, 158). In Krochmal's view, Judaism could not survive the impression that the rabbis could not read the Bible correctly. Disabusing his readers of the impression that the rabbis were unsophisticated students of the Bible—with all the negative results this impression would bring—was the primary goal of

Krochmal's biblical studies. For not even the historiographical benefits of critical conclusions would be acceptable at the cost of commitment to the rabbinic tradition.

Thus, here again Krochmal presents his arguments in an exegetical mode, using the classical texts dealing with the emergence of the Bible as his point of departure.¹⁵ The very implausibility of much of his argumentation is perhaps the best indicator of the existential urgency he attached to resolving the problems presented by modern Bible criticism.

The Book of Isaiah

"Hezekiah and his collaborators wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Qohelet"; so declares a *baraita* found in the Babylonian Talmud. The reference is, presumably, to Hezekiah, king of Judah from 727 to 689 B.C.E. As the medieval commentator Rashi (1040–1105) explains, the prophet Isaiah could not write "his" book himself because his life ended violently and prematurely, and prophets set about writing their books only at the close of their natural lives. The issue is somewhat more problematic, as the Tosafists¹⁶ (ad loc.) point out, since, according to the same tradition that serves as the basis of Rashi's comments, Isaiah was killed by Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, after Hezekiah's death. That is, Hezekiah died before Isaiah; thus, the inclusion of "and his collaborators."¹⁷ In any event, what emerges unmistakably from the passage is that according to the most prominent rabbinic tradition regarding the authorship of biblical books, the entire book of Isaiah was authored by one person, or group of persons, living in close proximity to the eighth-century prophet

Isaiah ben Amoz. This tradition would seem to have been firmly established; for this reason, when confronting the obvious differences between the first thirty-nine chapters and the remainder of the book, a range of traditional commentators explained them as rooted in different intentions. The first part of the book was intended for the contemporary audience and addressed the issues of the day, whereas the second part offered consolations for the destruction and exile that were yet more than a century away.¹⁸ The fact that there were stylistic and linguistic differences between the parts, and that the second part referred to specific events, such as the rise of Cyrus, were not, apparently, considered problematic.

In Spinoza's *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, we begin to find doubts expressed about the authenticity of the prophetic books and the traditions pertaining thereto.¹⁹ He argues that an examination of the prophetic books will indicate that "the prophecies therein contained have been compiled from other books, and are not always set down in the order in which they were spoken or written by the prophets . . ." (*Treatise*, p. 147). In dealing directly with the book of Isaiah, he argues that it is composed of material from various sources, but does not invoke the distinctions between the two parts as evidence.

Approximately a century later, under the influence of Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesi hebraeorum*, scholars began to think of prophets as artists and poets rather than as seers; as such, they addressed the issues of their own day, using the data available to them, and not some future time.²⁰ Thus, the second part of Isaiah could not be understood as consolations, provided for a calamity that was yet to occur; rather, if the background envisioned by these prophecies was the Babylo-

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nian exile and its aftermath, then the prophecies must date from this time (sixth century B.C.E.) and not from the eighth century.²¹ For our purposes, the most important statement to this effect is to be found in the work of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, which Krochmal at times paraphrased.

It is obvious, then, that the Jewish tradition and modern biblical scholarship had conflicting views regarding the origins of the book of Isaiah. If the critics were right, then rabbinic interpretation—and Church traditions—which saw predictions of future consolation and restoration in the latter half of Isaiah, is grounded on false assumptions, and such flawed exegesis must be rejected. Krochmal, far more interested in resolving this problem than in presenting original theories regarding Isaiah, attempts to show that the rabbis shared the assumptions of the critics.

Krochmal's study of the prophecies of the second Isaiah is presented as a note to the earlier discussion in the historical chapters of the Babylonian exile and the Persian conquest. It was during this time that a prophet arose offering comfort, and from these prophecies one can observe the "higher intellectual level of this diaspora" (*Guide*, p. 53). Since, however, affirming the existence of a second Isaiah conflicts with the tradition as generally understood, which ascribed the entire book to one prophet, it is necessary for Krochmal to explain his claim, and show how the tradition remains undamaged, and ultimately enhanced.

Regarding the reality of a second Isaiah Krochmal preferred to rely on the proofs of "recent scholars" whose ideas on the subject are already well known through all the "books of

introduction," and "do not require repeating" (*Guide*, p. 114).²² In all likelihood, Krochmal is referring to Eichhorn's *Einleitung*, to which he refers on another occasion (*Guide*, p. 156), and to Yehudah Leib Ben-Ze'ev's *Mavo el Miqra'e Qodesh*, both of which argue for a second Isaiah.²³ The proofs adduced by them involve an analysis and comparison of the historical setting, the language and introductory phrases of the first thirty-nine chapters of the book and its remainder. While finding their arguments convincing, Krochmal adds another, based on the conviction that prophecy, as traditionally understood, remains a viable concept in modern times.²⁴ He argues that while the eighth-century prophet Isaiah could have prophesied regarding general aspects of the sixth century, he could not have predicted particular events such as the kingship of Cyrus. Such a thing is not impossible theoretically, for given the divine origins of the prophetic message nothing is impossible. Rather, such an occurrence is ruled out by the function of prophecy, for such prophecies would have been totally meaningless to the generation that heard them, and surely God would not send a messenger to deliver an incomprehensible message.²⁵

Krochmal has thus established to his satisfaction that the second part of Isaiah dates from the early Persian period, and is a product of the exile; he is therefore justified in using these prophecies as an illustration of the spiritual level attained by the diaspora community during this time. What remains for him to do in this note is to show that the tradition can withstand the acceptance of this new discovery. The strategy he employs is to demonstrate that this information is in fact not new at all; he proposes that the esoteric tradition incor-

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porated hints to indicate to the initiated that not all prophecies included in the book of Isaiah were actually uttered by the eighth-century prophet. The exoteric traditions, intended to minister to the needs of the masses, reveal no such awareness, as the rabbis wished to keep this information from them. However, it is now critical, Krochmal argues, that this esoteric tradition be revealed, since, in modern times, the existence of a second prophet, whose works are included within the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah, was a generally known and accepted proposition. Maintaining the hidden nature of this "tradition" would lead to the unacceptable result that people would think that the rabbis were unsophisticated Bible scholars (*Guide*, pp. 143-44).

Krochmal's first proof that the ancients knew of the lateness of the second half of Isaiah is that the baraita in BT Baba Batra (14b), discussing the order of the biblical books, states that the order of the prophetic works is "Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve"; the order runs contrary to the traditional chronology, and indeed is reversed (Isaiah first) in the Masoretic texts of the Hebrew Bible.²⁶ Krochmal wants to deduce from this chronological deviation that the rabbis placed Isaiah after Ezekiel because they knew that the last part of the book was late, and considered this fact, rather than the greater antiquity of the first part, decisive.²⁷

The other proof Krochmal advances is somewhat less clear. He refers to the passage in Wayiqra Rabbah (6:6) that states that two verses in the first part of Isaiah (8:19-20) were actually stated by another prophet (Be'ari), but were inserted into Isaiah because these two verses comprise the only prophecy of Be'ari, and were not sufficient for a separate book. This

“proof” seems to be intended in a more general way to show that the rabbis knew that the title of a book did not mean that everything in the work derived from that prophet, for they knew that two verses in Isaiah were from a different prophet. Therefore, while the rabbis do not indicate here that they knew of a different prophet whose work comprises the latter portions of the book of Isaiah, the fact that they did not consider the book’s title as decisive regarding the provenance of all of its contents makes the first proof’s contention more likely.²⁸

Krochmal goes on to demonstrate that at least one of the medievals, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and perhaps others as well, also knew of a second Isaiah. While Ibn Ezra nowhere states that the second portion of the book is much later than the first, it is, believes Krochmal, implicit in a number of comments that he has made to various verses. In all, Krochmal cites more than a dozen comments that he believes provide hints that Ibn Ezra did not consider Isaiah one complete book.²⁹

It is clear that Krochmal went to great lengths to show that modern conclusions regarding Isaiah are compatible with traditional sensibilities. For, certainly as regards the ancients, Krochmal’s arguments are quite forced, and not entirely transparent. Yet, it is precisely this fact that indicates the importance of this reconciliation. Implicit throughout his presentation is Krochmal’s firm conviction that the ancient rabbis were the equals of modern biblical scholars, and thus there is nothing that modern scholarship can uncover that either was not known to the rabbis, or, as we have yet to see, could not be readily assimilated by them (and, therefore, by open-

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minded adherents of their tradition). Thus, their messianic reading of the latter part of Isaiah was developed with full awareness of the later provenance of this material, and is not grounded in ignorance. In any event, for Krochmal, there can be no superiority attributed to the moderns save for mode of expression, which results from the greater freedom that derives from historical changes.

Ultimately, then, from the study of the book of Isaiah we can see the contours of Krochmal's program. He wished to guide those perplexed by the regnant philosophy of history, by showing that this philosophy did not properly take account of Jewish history, without, at the same time, creating more problems. He directs his argument to the traditionalist, aspiring "maskil" whom Krochmal wished to educate and whose adherence to tradition he wished to strengthen.³⁰

Here again we find the same apologetic tendencies at work as elsewhere in the *Guide*. Krochmal recognized the basic conflict of modern and traditional culture as each was understood at the time, and sought to dissolve that conflict, in this case by showing that the intellectual boundaries of the tradition were far wider than previously assumed. He does this by appealing to the esoteric tradition, which provides the means of stretching the borders of the acceptable without abandoning the authority of the rabbinic tradition. His conclusion is that the tradition could not be damaged by modern discoveries regarding Isaiah because they were not really modern at all. In this way, the integrity of the tradition is left largely intact, while the freedom to search for the truth is also affirmed.

Qohelet and Psalms

1. *Qohelet*. As we saw above, the baraita in BT Baba Batra attributes the book of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) to Hezekiah and his collaborators. However, based on other rabbinic traditions, this passage has generally been understood to mean that while Hezekiah and his collaborators gave the book its written form, the content originated with the wisdom of King Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E.³¹ Indeed, the book itself appears to attribute its authorship to Solomon, as the author identifies himself as Qohelet, the son of David, king of Jerusalem, and this has been understood as Solomon, as he was the son of David to carry the title "king."

However, modern scholars, again led by Eichhorn, refute the notion that this book could have originated with Solomon, or, for that matter, in the time of Hezekiah. The arguments advanced by Eichhorn include the fact that the language of the book includes many Aramaisms, as well as apparent borrowings of Persian and Greek usages. This betrays a time in which these linguistic cultures had already had extensive contacts with the Jews—that is, a period after the exile. Further, even the Hebrew of the book betrays a tiredness and clumsiness indicative of a language grown old. Further, the subject matter and quality of thought and expression are quite different from what is known from the earlier period.³² It is, then, quite clear that the book of Qohelet derives from a period long after the Babylonian exile.

Again here, the confrontation between the tradition and modern scholarship is clear. In the longest, and probably most significant, of the studies in the eleventh chapter of his *Guide*,

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Krochmal begins by endorsing Eichhorn's conclusions, at times practically verbatim. At the same time he once again attempts to reconcile these conclusions with the tradition as he understands it. Acknowledging that his views regarding Qohelet are not as easily reconciled with the traditional approach as were the views expressed in other studies, since here he is opposing an explicit rabbinic affirmation, he nevertheless tries very hard to achieve this reconciliation, and, where this is impossible, to show that he has done nothing that can in any way be construed as damaging the tradition.

The reconciliation offered here follows the pattern established in the Isaiah material and need not, therefore, detain us long. First, he argues that dating the book to the Persian period means that it can be used as a unique historical source for a period for which we have virtually no other, and it "casts light and knowledge on the exalted state of our nation during these generations which have been forgotten as if they never were" (*Guide*, p. 149). Thus, once again the findings of biblical criticism can be appropriated to prove the vitality of the Jewish revival, and the continuity of Jewish religious speculation—what would appear to be, in Krochmal's estimation, the single most important issue perplexing modern Jews.

At the same time, Krochmal explicitly states that he believes that research into the origins of this book cannot do any damage, even if the conclusions appear to contradict what the rabbis said, so long as the conclusions are established beyond any doubt (*Guide*, p. 140). For if we moderns can discern the lateness of the book we must then suspect that the rabbis were also aware of this fact, and indeed, Krochmal undertakes an

examination of rabbinic sources to divine what it is that the rabbis must have really thought.

Krochmal marshals three arguments designed to show the rabbis knew that Qohelet was not Solomonic. The first revolves around the statement in the same baraita that we have seen before that Qohelet, together with Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Isaiah, was written by Hezekiah and his colleagues. This implies that the rabbis considered the contents to be Solomonic but not the actual written form, which was established by Hezekiah and his colleagues. Thus, we see that the rabbis did not attribute the composition of this book to Solomon, but, at most, he was viewed as the originator of the thoughts contained therein. Now it is impossible that the words of Solomon (d. 920 B.C.E.) could have survived all those generations in oral form until Hezekiah (late eighth century) finally wrote them down. Presumably, the rabbis also realized this, and thus it seems that Krochmal wants to say that the rabbis did not regard this as part of the Solomonic corpus at all.³³ In implausibly attributing the book to Hezekiah, the rabbis were furtively indicating that they knew full well that Qohelet was not of Solomonic origins. As to why they would have chosen this particular attribution when they knew that the book was in fact far later than Hezekiah, we must accept on faith that they had their reasons in concealing from the masses the truth regarding Qohelet.

The second rabbinic passage that Krochmal considers in this connection is one from Qohelet Rabbah (1:12), in which the rabbis interpret the corresponding verse to mean that the book was written by Solomon after he had abdicated his throne. Yet, all the references to Solomon's career agree that he reigned until his death, and thus this view could hardly

have been the accepted rabbinic opinion on the subject. Rather, the author(s) of this enigmatic remark are indicating their awareness that this book is not the product of a real and reigning king, such as Solomon, but must rather have been produced by some other figure.

The third allusion that Krochmal finds in rabbinic literature is the well-known dispute recorded in the Mishnah (Yadayim 3:5) regarding whether Qohelet renders the hands unclean. This case is regarded as one of the leniencies of the House of Shammai, while the House of Hillel offered the stricter opinion that it does render the hands unclean. The issue here is whether or not Qohelet is to be seen as holy and canonical or not. It is apparent that the House of Shammai considered the book to be simply the wisdom of Solomon, and not an inspired text.³⁴ It is particularly significant for Krochmal that it was the Shammaites who held this opinion, for he regarded them as the far more conservative force (*Guide*, p. 143). The implication here is that the Shammaites, in rejecting the canonicity of Qohelet, are undauntedly maintaining a line of tradition, while the Hillelites accept the canonicity of the book, and abandon the tradition, because of the demands of the times or for some other motive. Thus, as far as the canonization of the book is concerned, the position of the House of Shammai is correct. That stand is further supported by the claim attributed to Rabbi Yosi (second-century *tanna*) in the same passage of the Mishnah that there was no dispute at all regarding whether Qohelet renders the hands unclean; it does not, and is therefore not to be considered a canonical text, but is rather to be considered “merely” the wisdom of Solomon.

For Krochmal the issue cannot stop here. For all that he

has proven at this point is that there were those who did not regard the book as canonical, and that they were, in his opinion, maintaining an age-old tradition. What he would like to prove, however, is that the rabbis knew that Qohelet is not the product of Solomon, and thus he adds another step. Acknowledging that all the positions discussed were openly in accord with the traditional notion that Solomon authored this book, he continues, "But if this is truly the opinion of the Sages, and they did not conceal something esoteric in this [claim that Qohelet does not render the hands unclean because it is only the wisdom of Solomon], one cannot resolve the difficulty of their words against wisdom when it is explicitly stated that it derives from God . . ." (*Guide*, p. 143).³⁵ What Krochmal is here arguing is that wisdom, and specifically Solomon's wisdom, is acknowledged to be a gift from God, and therefore the rabbis could not have denigrated Qohelet for being simply a product of Solomon's mind, for this would, in fact, confer upon it sufficient status to be worthy of canonization. Thus, this is not the rabbis' real opinion on the subject, but merely the exoteric one. They must have had something else in mind when they denied this book canonical status, and that was, presumably, the fact that this book is not Solomonic at all, but rather the product of a much later time.

In any event, the Hillelites carried the day and the canonization of the book was accepted; this fact—the acceptance of a less than "orthodox" text as canonical—created many of the problems that traditional scholarship was to face, for later scholars had no choice but to interpret this canonized book in some manner that was compatible with the true faith.³⁶ This apparently means that they had no choice but to attribute it

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to Solomon so that its readers would realize that this work was the product of one of Israel's heroes, indeed, its supposedly wisest man. For this reason, even among the moderns the attempt was made to maintain the Solomonic authorship of this book.³⁷

Nevertheless, however necessary the attribution of the book to Solomon may once have been, the exoteric traditions must be abandoned, for they do not do justice to the book, and do not allow for an interpretation that will convey its true message. We must rather have recourse to the esoteric tradition, which was aware of the true provenance of the book. Further, Krochmal makes clear that he regards it as absolutely imperative that the contents of this esoteric tradition be revealed if traditional sensibilities are to find their orientation in the modern world. For,

just as in earlier generations the danger was to reveal the concealed, so and even more in our generation the danger is to conceal that which has already been revealed by others, which is a vain task, and in no way helpful. What would truly be helpful is that we continue to search and investigate, while seeking the true God who will not abandon those who seek him, for they shall be guarded forever. We are delighted, how great is our lot, for the word of God and the true Torah are with us, and it (the Torah) need not fear scholarly investigation from any perspective. (*Guide*, pp. 143–44)

Thus, Krochmal's eloquent plea for scholarly investigation is accompanied by the claim that it will help the tradition face the challenges posed by modern scholarship, and remain undamaged. Abandoning scholarly research, on the other hand, will result in a tradition that appears stubborn and indeed

foolish, for it insists on that which others have effectively disproven.

Krochmal is much less confident here than previously that his specific conclusions regarding the rabbis are correct. He claims though that they seem correct, and in any event *it is necessary that something be said* on this subject. However, other scholars should not regard the matter as closed, but should rather continue to study and seek the truth regarding this book.³⁸ It seems that Krochmal's lack of confidence is grounded in the fact that the (exoteric) tradition attributing authorship to Solomon is so firm. In the case of Isaiah, for example, it was the silence of the exoteric tradition that was problematic, not the fact that it explicitly affirmed one Isaiah. With Qohelet, however, Krochmal is not simply adding something about which the tradition has been silent, but rather is denying that which has been explicitly affirmed by the tradition. He is further suggesting that the rabbis, at least some of them, knew that the tradition was incorrect, but chose to allow this deceptive tradition to stand.

We can see that his claims regarding Qohelet are, from one perspective, bolder than are those regarding Isaiah, or other books that he has studied, while on the other hand, he makes clear that he does not have a strong stake in his specific conclusions, but is rather adopting them for they seem correct, and more important, they seem the only way that the tradition can be left relatively unscathed by the work of Eichhorn and others.

2. *Psalms*. Krochmal's study of some of the Psalms differs from the pattern somewhat in that some of his conclusions

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were the subject of much scholarly controversy in his own day, although some of them are to be found already in the work of the German scholar Hitzig, as well as in Zunz and Rapoport.³⁹ His pattern of apologetic does hold up here, however. Krochmal seeks support for his attributions in rabbinic sources. The purpose again is to support the image of the rabbis as the equals of the moderns in biblical scholarship, and the integrity of the biblical tradition itself.

The main critical thrust of Krochmal's presentation is his claim that a number of Psalms are products of the second century B.C.E. These late Psalms revolve around the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean victory. Specifically, Psalms 44, 74, 79 and 83 were written during the persecutions.⁴⁰ This judgment is based on the content of these Psalms; Psalm 44, for example, describes the mass slaughter of the people of Israel. "Prior to this time [i.e., that of Epiphanes] we do not find that many Israelites were killed because of their faith."⁴¹ It thus seems likely that this Psalm was written "at the beginning of the persecution in the year 143 of the Seleucid era (169/8 B.C.E.)" (*Guide*, p. 153). Psalm 85 was sung after an important victory that took place, in all likelihood, in the time of Jonathan, the son of Mattathias.⁴² Psalm 132 was first sung, according to Krochmal, in the time of Judah Maccabee, after his conquest of the Temple. Psalms 149 and 150 (which Krochmal considered one) were first sung in the time of Simon, after total liberation of the land from foreign forces. These two Psalms, together with some of the other "Hallelujah" Psalms that precede them, make up what Krochmal calls the Greek Hallel (song of praise), which is modeled after the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-18).⁴³

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Here again, Krochmal is concerned lest he be judged as damaging the tradition, and thus justifies his enterprise once more:

. . . that in truthful studies, done with a pure heart, such as this and thousands of others, there is not the slightest concern of danger or loss to the faith. On the contrary! It is to the credit of Israel and exalts the Torah of their fathers. . . . [W]hat danger can there be if it turns out: that even in the twilight of our kingdom, and in the passing of the shadows of our success, the holy songs and the exalted pietists who were tested and found worthy did not cease; that the spirit rested upon them as they poured out their hearts in supplication and gratitude before their king and their God for whom they were killed throughout the long and arduous war, and it became known that they composed some of the hymns which were *openly* attributed until now to their predecessors? (Ibid., p. 157, emphasis in original)

Thus, once again, the reality of late biblical books can serve to indicate the continued vitality of the Jewish spirit, even as the nation was entering a period of overall material and cultural decline.

As we would expect, Krochmal goes on to argue that he is certain that the lateness of the Psalms was known to the sages, for even in their exoteric teachings the Psalms are attributed to ten elders, rather than David alone, although in other "aggadic" teachings the book is attributed almost entirely to David.⁴⁴ If there are traces of this knowledge even in their exoteric teachings, it stands to reason that this fact was transmitted with greater precision in their esoteric teachings which were reserved for certain students, but which now must be revealed for all to see.

3. *The Problem of Pseudepigraphy*. In Krochmal's study of Qohelet and Psalms, there is little departure from the pattern found in his treatment of Isaiah. Regarding these books, however, there emerged yet another problem, that of pseudepigraphy.⁴⁵ By showing that the author of Qohelet was not Solomon, modern scholars essentially argued that the book was a pseud-epigraphon. That is, the book claims to have been written by a man named Qohelet, who was the son of David, and who was the king of Jerusalem. Not only do we not know of any son of David name Qohelet, but we now know that the book could not have been written in the time of David, or any of his sons. This is problematic from a perspective such as Krochmal's because his times were far less tolerant of pseud-epigrapha than are our own (which is not to say that they do not cause religious problems today).

Pseudepigrapha were regarded as total frauds, written by people of low moral stature, who intended merely to aggrandize their own works on the basis of false pretenses. Thus, it was assumed that the author of Qohelet was attempting to take advantage of Solomon's renown, by associating his own creation with this great king from the Israelite past.⁴⁶ This, at the time, was a serious charge, and could not help but lead to questions regarding the appropriateness of this book in the Bible, and of the insight and rectitude of a tradition that would confer such status on a forgery.⁴⁷ Those perplexed by this problem would have found a guide in Krochmal's work.

Krochmal argues that the author of Qohelet could not possibly have intended to take advantage of Solomon's renown, for, as Eichhorn already pointed out, he has done a very poor job of disguising himself; further, if it were the

author's intention to identify himself as Solomon, he would have used that name rather than "Qohelet," a name which has no necessary connection with Solomon at all. Further still, it is difficult for "us, the house of Israel," to believe that the men of the Great Assembly, whose superior intelligence "we" affirm, did not recognize its correct provenance; thus, if they, who were close in time to the formation of the book, believed it was an attempt to deceive its readers, they would never have considered it for acceptance as Scripture.⁴⁸ Therefore, we cannot regard the book as pseudepigraphic, but must rather attempt to understand its origins differently.

Krochmal argues that while in Hebrew it is quite acceptable to have a masculine proper noun inflected in the feminine form (as is Qohelet—we could thus assume that Qohelet is a simple proper noun), the fact that this name is sometimes accompanied by a definite article (e.g., 12:8) indicates that in fact it is a title which has been used as a proper noun. This proper noun, having been formed from a title, would indicate a certain station or position. After considering two alternatives, Krochmal seems to settle on the claim that the name indicates that this person was the head of, or a member of a convention of scholars, deriving the name from *qabal*, meaning "assembly" (*Guide*, p. 146).⁴⁹ This supposition is supported by the fact that the Greek Jews called this book "Ecclesiastes," that is, one of the members of the "ecclesia." This title may even indicate that the author was actually a member of the Great Assembly.

As to why the author referred to himself as the son of David when he lived so much later, this simply means that he was a descendant of David, and does not involve any attempt at deception. Descent from David would not have been a diffi-

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cult fact to establish, for the author of the book would have lived a mere four or five generations after Zerubbabel, whose line of descendants was easily traceable. In fact, Krochmal claims, descendants of David were commonly known in this period, and indeed referred to themselves as the "son of David," as, in fact, the Mishnah, whose language was similar to their own, often did (*Guide*, p. 146).

The title "king of Jerusalem" is, at first glance, somewhat more difficult to explain, but, Krochmal claims, if one carefully examines what the author says of himself and his greatness, it becomes less problematic. For the author of Qohelet does not brag of the homage and tributes paid him by his subjects and by other nations, as would be fitting for someone such as Solomon. Rather, he takes pride in his wealth, his flocks, and his actions, such as building houses and planting gardens. Now, at no time in Jewish history, including that of Solomon, were such things only the province of kings. Thus, we can understand the title referring to someone who was one of the rich nobles who lived at the end of the Persian period, who are mentioned numerous times in Nehemiah. The use of the word "king" is not problematic for we know that "in those lands and those times every noble and possessor of large amounts of property and slaves was sometimes called 'king.' " ⁵⁰

There is, then, no pseudepigraphic intent in the title whatsoever. The author of the book of Qohelet was a "nobleman, of the seed of David, who was the head of a group of scholars who studied and debated together; and this group may well have been a branch of the Great Assembly which flourished at that time" (*Guide*, p. 148).

A similar problem presented itself with regard to the late Psalms. The problem with the claim that these Psalms are

from the Hasmonean era is that five of them carry superscriptions; two are ascribed to the sons of Korah (who would have lived one or two generations after Moses), and three are ascribed to Asaph, who according to Chronicles 6:24ff, was a contemporary of David, a Levite serving in the Tabernacle. If they are, in fact, Hasmonean, these superscriptions would appear to be unfounded, and, thus, pseudepigraphic. Krochmal claims, however, that the composers of these Psalms must have been Levites, "for we know, independently, that all Torah and spiritual virtuosity resided only in the priests and Levites"; therefore, here, as with the "son of David" attached to Qohelet, the superscriptions can be understood as referring to the family lines of the particular Levites who composed these songs. The genealogies of the priests and Levites were well known and guarded, and it was common for them to call themselves after their ancestors (*Guide*, p. 155). There is, thus, no attempt at deceit inherent in these superscriptions.

This assumption serves Krochmal as a stepping-stone for his next claim:

And hear now, pleasant reader, our further conjecture. That is, given that what occurred to Judah and his brothers and the rest of the pietist leaders was very similar to what happened to David, may he rest in peace—both he and they were persecuted by the nations and the wicked within Israel; he and they hid and concealed themselves in the wilderness and in caves; he and they were betrayed by those who loved them and were denounced by their brethen even more than they were oppressed by their enemies in battle—it is possible, indeed likely, that some of the pietists sang some of their hymns, pouring out their hearts, in the same manner as David, when a particular event [from David's life] resembled that which occurred to them at that time.

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And with this [assumption] we have opened the door to solving a great difficulty that accompanies the superscriptions "of David," which are found at the beginning of certain Psalms whose content render it most unlikely that they were actually the work of David. And the commentators have exhausted themselves [trying to explain these psalms], until most of the Gentile philologists and critics have derided the superscriptions and considered them worthless; while others truly considered these Psalms as ancient as the superscriptions indicated. But [if we date them] from the time that we are discussing, the content of the Psalms is sweetened for us, and they are readily understood; further the superscriptions are also quite justified in the manner we have presented. (Ibid.)

Thus, even the ascription of a Psalm to David does not preclude its having been written much later by the Hasmonean Levites and priests, since the ascription should be understood as the identification of a later age with the life of the great king.⁵¹ Having resolved this problem, Krochmal feels free to add four more Psalms to his list of Hasmonean sacred songs: Psalms 59, 60, 69 and 144, all ascribed to David, are identified as Hasmonean based on the perceived correspondence between their content and the events of this period. Again here, critical conclusions are confirmed while pseud-epigraphic intent is denied.

Krochmal's argument here is, it need hardly be said, totally unconvincing. In particular, Krochmal's claim regarding the phrase "king in Jerusalem," dubious in its own right, becomes altogether unacceptable in light of Qohelet 1:12, which reads "I Qohelet was king over Israel in Jerusalem." Now certainly this verse does not mean to imply that the speaker was a nobleman exercising control over a limited domain within Jerusalem. Similarly, Jews of the second century were

certainly able to distinguish between their own time and circumstances and eight centuries earlier. Rather, Krochmal's attempt to resolve the problem is, on the one hand, essentially an act of desperation, one brought about by his traditionalism and his concomitant commitment to modern scholarship. His treatment of this problem is perhaps the best indication yet of the mentality at work.

On the other hand, Krochmal has touched on a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry in trying to discern the mentality that produces works we call pseudepigraphic. Indeed, many scholars since his time have attempted to resolve the problem. This attempt is not unique to Krochmal, nor, certainly, is it unique to Jewish scholarship. As recently as 1971, the president of the Society of Biblical Literature, Bruce M. Metzger, an evangelical Christian, addressed the Society on the subject "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha." He stated:

It must be acknowledged that the inspiration of the Scriptures is consistent with any kind of form of literary composition that was in keeping with the character and habits of the speaker or writer. . . . If, indeed, an entire book should appear to have been composed in order to present vividly the thoughts and feelings of an important person, there would not seem to be in this circumstance any reason to say that it could not be divinely inspired. . . . In short, since the use of the literary form of pseudepigraphy need not be regarded as necessarily involving fraudulent intent, it cannot be argued that the character of inspiration excludes the possibility of pseudepigraphy among the canonical writings.⁵²

Metzger's solution to the problem is to remove it altogether from the realm of moral judgment, and to treat pseudepigraphy as just another literary form used by biblical writers. As

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we have seen, this rather tolerant view of the practice was not in vogue a century and a half ago. It was therefore necessary for Krochmal to resort to his desperate reconstruction in order to deflect the devastating claim that the Bible contained forgeries, and that these forgeries were good enough to fool the ancients responsible for canonizing the book, but are not good enough to fool us today.

Krochmal has shown to his satisfaction that the book of *Qohelet* is a product of the late Persian period, and that it is not pseudepigraphic. Similarly, the book of *Psalms* came together over a much longer period of time, and again, there is no pseudepigraphic intent discernible in the collection. Further, these facts may well be consistent with the esoteric tradition; and even if they are not, the tradition is not significantly damaged by their exposure. Indeed, the tradition would be more adversely affected if Jews failed to take account of this new information. Again here, I believe that the *Tendenz* is clear and beyond dispute. Nachman Krochmal is to be seen as an apologist for the Jewish tradition; one who refuses to take refuge in a fideistic approach, and one who insists on that which his intellect affirms. He is able to proceed by claiming that there are subterranean elements within the tradition whose revelation would have been inappropriate at an earlier time, but is absolutely necessary in his own time. What motivates him throughout is his sense that Jews have been abandoning, or are in danger of abandoning, their tradition out of ignorance and an overly narrow view. A proper understanding of the tradition will show it to be completely compatible with what is accepted in modern scholarship. Thus, the apparent conflict between traditional and modern ways of looking at the Bible is dissolved.

This position is grounded, I believe, in the theory of history presented in the previous chapter. The fact that in the period of the Great Assembly Jewish spiritual history reached its summit makes it quite impossible for us to be more discerning readers of Scripture than were the members of that Assembly. In matters of the spirit, what becomes known to us must have been known to them; therefore, if compelling evidence emerges concerning the origins of a particular biblical book that appears to differ from the traditional view, we must return to the traditional sources and seek out what esoteric knowledge is hidden within them, it being assumed a priori that the knowledge is there. To do otherwise would be to accept the judgment of modern philosophers of history regarding the inferiority of the Oriental—in this case, Jewish—mind, with all the repercussions such acceptance would bring.⁵³

Reviewing Krochmal's biblical studies a number of patterns emerge. The first, and perhaps most critical, is that there is very little original material in the *Guide*; in most cases Krochmal readily admits this fact. What this indicates is that the *Guide* is to be seen primarily as a reactive work, rather than as an attempt to present original research. Modern biblical scholarship had, by Krochmal's time, produced a new understanding of the Bible and its emergence, which, according to Krochmal, Judaism could not ignore; the consequences of such a course of action would have been disastrous. Thus, Krochmal's studies can be seen as an attempt to place the conclusions of modern scholarship into a context compatible with the enlightened, but traditional, perspective.

Second, Krochmal's acceptance of the conclusions of mod-

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ern scholarship was by no means reluctant, for, in his mind, Judaism had much to gain—and little, if anything, to lose—by incorporating them. This is so because modern scholarship assumes a much longer period for the emergence of the Bible than was previously acknowledged; this, in turn, supports the central contention of Krochmal's historical survey, which was that Jewish creativity and vitality, while experiencing lulls, never exited from the stage of world history. The literary creations of the Second Temple period are ample proof that Judaism rebounded from its nadir, reached at the time of the Babylonian exile; this is particularly evident in the consolations of the second Isaiah and the hymns of triumph and despair characteristic of the Psalms from the Hasmonean period. In addition, the later books of the Bible can serve as historical sources for periods and places about which there is otherwise very little known; this is particularly so with regard to Daniel and Qohelet. Finally, by discerning the times and places of the various books, modern scholarship has provided certain information regarding the canonization process, which, according to Krochmal, displays the greatness of spirit and intellect of the men of the Great Assembly.

The third pattern that emerges from Krochmal's biblical studies is reflected in the notion that all, or almost all, of the conclusions of modern scholarship are not to be considered new or challenging to the rabbinic tradition. For, despite the rabbis' insistence that, say, the book of Qohelet was written by Solomon, there are sufficient indications that they in fact knew otherwise, just as modern scholars did. At times the "indications" that Krochmal claims to have found are quite far-fetched; one would not, under ordinary circumstances, be

inclined to interpret these phrases as Krochmal does. Yet, it is precisely this fact that illuminates how important it was to the author to establish that the rabbis really did know the Bible critically. Indeed, I believe that the passages Krochmal cites are not to be seen as the basis for his claims; they are rather designed to support—and perhaps convince others of—what he considered necessarily true a priori. For Krochmal, the rabbis studied the Bible more intensely than anyone, and were no less intelligent and discerning than anyone else. It is therefore inconceivable to him that the rabbis would not have known what seems obvious to modern scholars.⁵⁴ Further, Krochmal sincerely believed in the esoteric tradition, and, in fact, argues that such a tradition is necessary, since the leaders had to accommodate their teachings, particularly in matters of faith, to the uneducated masses (*Guide*, p. 242). Thus, given the rabbis' knowledge of the Bible, and the "fact" of an esoteric tradition, extensive proof that the rabbis knew the Bible critically is not necessary, for it can all be readily presumed. The passages that Krochmal cites should be seen primarily as supporting this claim, not establishing it. In any event, it is clear that advancing this claim is one of the primary goals of Krochmal's biblical studies, for it shows that modern scholarship does not challenge the tradition when properly understood. Therefore, overall, there is much to be gained by pursuing critical Bible study, and little to be lost.

The patterns that have been described help to confirm the emerging portrait of Krochmal and his *Guide*. He is to be seen as one who is fiercely loyal to his tradition, but is convinced that an unsophisticated understanding of that tradition would lead to its demise, given the advent of critical

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philosophy and historiography. His biblical studies are an attempt to enhance that tradition by helping to reaffirm its continuous world-historical significance, while at the same time demonstrating that the findings of modern scholarship are already known to, or, at least, are compatible with the Jewish intellectual tradition. This is, in fact, the overarching theme of the entire *Guide*.⁵⁵

NOTES

1. See Hobbes's *Leviathan*, book 3, chapter 33, and Henning Graf Reventlow's lengthy chapter on Hobbes in his *Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*; Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, chapter 8; Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, pp. 251–68; on Reimarus, see Hans Joachim Krauss, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982 3rd edition, pp. 103–4.
2. I do not mean to mitigate the revolutionary character of Mendelssohn's project, nor do I mean to deny the influence of contemporary scholarship (particularly that of Lowth) on Mendelssohn's work. I simply mean to suggest that the *historical* criticism of the Bible is not to be found in Mendelssohn's *Biur* (reprint, Jerusalem: Makor, 1974). See Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), pp. 368–420 and 486.
3. Krauss, *Geschichte*, pp. 6–132.
4. This is not to suggest that all who affirmed Mosaic authorship followed traditional teaching regarding how Moses "authored" the Pentateuch. Starting with Jean Astruc the theory developed that Moses used earlier sources to put together the Pentateuch, thus explaining some of the problems identified by Hobbes, Spinoza and many others. In a sense, Moses was seen more as an editor than a writer; still, the entire Pentateuch was viewed as having come forth with the imprimatur of Moses, even in the third edition of Eichhorn's *Einleitung* (on which see below).

5. Indeed, Hitzig argued that the entire second half of the book dates from the post-exilic period.
6. This centrality may be illustrated by the mishnah in Sanhedrin (10:1) that states that among those denied a portion in the world to come are those who deny the divine origin of the Pentateuch. Further, at Sifre Numbers 112, we find the view that even one who says that Moses wrote something on his own, rather than on the basis of a communication from the Holy One, fits the category of one who despises the word of the Lord (Numbers 15:31), a capital crime. (On this, see the discussion of Meir Ish-Shalom in *Beit Talmud*, vol. 1, pp. 234–39.) Clearly, the rabbis considered the tradition that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch with divine direction as absolutely central to the Judaism they were fashioning. Similarly, the eighth principle of Maimonides' famous thirteen insists on this view and its centrality within Jewish life. For a recent reaffirmation of this position and its legal ramifications, see Moses Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe*, "Yoreh De'ah," vol. 3, nos. 114–15.
7. It seems to me that the need for critical distance helps explain why the field of biblical studies was dominated by Protestants, primarily Lutherans, and not Catholics and Jews. The traditions that Protestant biblical critics challenged were not their own, but were rather the bequest of the Roman Church or the synagogue. (That the issue was the integrity of church or synagogue traditions and not necessarily the text itself was well understood by Voltaire, who writes, "It is not said in the Pentateuch that Moses was its author: it would therefore have been permissible to attribute it to another man to whom the divine spirit might have dictated it, if the Church had not decided that the book is by Moses" [*Philosophical Dictionary*, p. 401]. Voltaire's sarcasm notwithstanding, there is much insight here.) For this reason, Luther and Calvin could make claims in the sixteenth century that Jews found difficult to accept in the nineteenth. On this, see Krauss, *Geschichte*, pp. 16–18. See also J. C. O'Neill, "The Study of the New Testament," in Ninian Smart et al., eds., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), vol. 3, pp. 143–78, esp. 143–47, for a discussion of how the buffer of church and synagogue fertilized Protestant inquiry into the New Testament. Nevertheless, there were Jews who did deal critically with the Pentateuch, among them Isaak Marcus Jost, who was a devotee of

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- the so-called "fragmentary hypothesis," particularly for Genesis; see his "Anhang zum Zehnten Buch" in his *Geschichte der Israeliten*, (Berlin: 1821) vol. 3, pp. 121–32; and Lazarus Bendavid, in his "Über geschriebenes und mündliches Gesetz" in *ZWJ*, pp. 472–500.
8. See, e.g., Moshe Leib Lilienblum's *Hattot Neurim*, in Shlomo Breiman, ed., *K'tavim Autobiographiim* (Jerusalem: Dorot, 1970), vol. 1, p. 149. See also the discussion in Solovietchik and Rubashof, *Toledot Bikoret ha-Miqra*.
 9. In truth, Krochmal's discussion leaves much of the biblical-critical program untouched, as many critics argue that the post-exilic books were of far lesser quality than the pre-exilic books. This view was to become crucial in the dating of biblical books.
 10. See, e.g., the arguments of Isaac Abravanel regarding the relationship between Kings and Jeremiah and the difficulties that pertain thereto in his introduction to his commentary on the Prophets. In general, Abravanel's two introductions to the Prophets (former and latter) are fascinating documents, in that he displays bold independence in places, denying that Joshua could have written the book that carries his name, or that Samuel could have written the entire book that carries his, while at the same time attempting to defend the larger contours of the rabbinic understanding of the emergence and ordering of the Bible. As Richard Simon pointed out, had Abravanel applied the same standards and techniques to the Pentateuch, he would certainly have had to deny Mosaic authorship. See Simon, *Histoire critique du vieux testament*. (Rotterdam: 1684), p. 45.
 11. For full discussion, see now Edward Breuer, "In Defense of Tradition: The Masoretic Text and its Rabbinic in the Early German Haskalah" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1990), chapter 3.
 12. One will find elements of this even in Luzzatto, who castigates Krochmal for his reliance on Eichhorn rather than the rabbis. See also the opening paragraph of Yehoshua Heshel Schorr's "letter" dealing with biblical criticism in idem, ed. *He-Halutz*, (reprint, Jerusalem: Makor 1972) vol. 1, pp. 97–98, in which Schorr responds to an unnamed writer who had written him a letter in which he apparently castigated Krochmal, together with Reggio and Luzzatto, for not resisting this gentile criticism in order to rescue the precious treasure, the Bible, from them. See also Zvi Hirsh Chajes's *Imre Binah*, in *Kol Sifrei MHRZ Chajes*, (Jerusalem: 1958) p. 872b

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13. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über den Prophet Jesaia* (Leipzig: 1866), pp. 22–25. See the comments of Eichhorn cited below. This view of prophecy as poetry is rooted in the thesis of Herder in his *Vom Geist der hebräischen Poesie*. See Krauss, *Geschichte*, pp. 118–23, 144–47.
14. This claim of esotericism, in addition to its use by Jewish philosophers in the Middler Ages, is defended by Krochmal on practical grounds in his discussion of rabbinic texts (see text below), and is also necessitated by Krochmal's epistemological views in which, of necessity, religious ideas are expressed representationally, cloaking the speculative content of the idea. For Krochmal, this apparently applies to historical claims as well as philosophical ones. There is no other way to explain his sense that one can, indeed should, make claims that are not literally true, such as that David wrote Psalm 137. This claim, prudently but inaccurately advanced by the tradition, carries with it some other lesson which is of value, and the rabbis were correct in cultivating it then; its continued cultivation in the modern period would, however, be counterproductive due to changed circumstance.
15. In addition to the examples that will be brought below, Krochmal's exegetical technique may be seen in his discussion of the biblical books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel and Zechariah. His critical conclusions are in all cases presented as an explanation of a *baraita* (an ancient rabbinic source), as though hidden within the *baraita* are all the critical findings of modern research. For further information regarding the specifics of Krochmal's argument as it pertains to these books, see my dissertation, "Rabbinic Judaism," pp. 117–33.
16. "Tosafists" are medieval Franco-German commentators on the Talmud, who flourished during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many of their comments are included in virtually all printed editions of the Talmud.
17. On the basis of this consideration, Schorr advanced one of his boldest—and most absurd—claims; he argued that the Hezekiah referred to must be the Hezekiah, or the son of Hezekiah, referred to in the Mishnah (Shabbat 1:4), who lived, presumably, in the time of Hillel and Shammai (see Schorr, *He-Ḥalutz*, vol. 1, pp. 98–99).

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18. See the comments of Rashi and Kimḥi on the first verse of chapter 40.
19. In this Spinoza was preceded by a number of scholars, among them Thomas Hobbes; indeed, already Luther had raised the question. Nevertheless, Spinoza's place in the history of Bible criticism is secure, since it was he who established it as a "science"; in particular, Spinoza's text was no doubt the most significant one as far as the origins of Jewish criticism are concerned.
20. See John Rogerson's discussion in his *Biblical Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), pp. 22–24.
21. It is at this point that the interests of traditional Jews and Christians converge, albeit for different reasons. Jews understood the prophecies of Isaiah in terms of the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E., although affirming the eighth-century origins of all of the material. Christians, too, affirm the eighth-century origins of the material but see much of it—and certainly what was important—as referring to the birth and ministry of Jesus. Thus, both took umbrage at the claim that the materials must date from the time they address, and *only* address the time from which they date. Recognizing this convergence of interest, Franz Delitzsch recommended the commentaries of the Jewish exegetes Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865) and Meir Leibush Malbim (1809–1879) to his audience, stating that each is an important exemplum of commentary rooted in the correct appreciation of prophecy. See Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar*, p. 29.
22. It is very important to note that Krochmal takes for granted that his readership will be familiar with the claims from these "introductions," or, at least, that it will have ready access to them. This supports the argument that Krochmal is engaged in apologetic reconciliation of the traditional and modern biblical study, and that he is not interested in actually schooling his readership in the fine points of biblical criticism. His readers will already know that some people claim that the latter part of Isaiah derives from a different prophet; it is his intention to give sanction to such views, while also resolving the attendant difficulties.
23. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 5 vols. (Göttingen: 1824), 4th edition, vol. 4, pp. 88–108. Yehuda Leib Ben-Ze'ev, *Mavo el Miqra'e Qodesh* (Vienna: 1810), repr. 1967, pp. 29b–32b. Krochmal would seem to be referring to Ben Ze'ev when

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he states that the scholars refer to the rabbinic statement regarding the order of the prophets (cited in the text below). Ben Ze'ev does not merely argue for the existence of a second Isaiah; he divides the last twenty-seven chapters of the book into three discrete sections. Krochmal does not deal with this question at all. This is in keeping with the portrait of Krochmal presented here; given that scholarly opinion at this point was far from unequivocal, there was no reason to deal with the issue. Krochmal's main goal is achieved simply by positing the post-exilic origins of this part of the book, and the less deviation from the tradition, the better.

24. It will be recalled that in chapter 2 we saw Krochmal defending the possibility of prophecy on philosophical grounds. He argued there that what the ancients described as "prophecy" should be understood as a representational expression of the corresponding *Idee*: the divine acting on the natural impulse to communicate in order to achieve self-consciousness. For this reason, we must take Krochmal seriously when he affirms the possibility of prophecy but constrains it by logical considerations. His presentation is no denial of the reality of divine communication, which can include general facts about the future; therefore, Dimon, Klausner and others are incorrect in reading into Krochmal a more critical position than he actually presents. See, in particular, M. Dimon, "Rimze Bikoret ha-Torah b'Sifro shel Ranaḳ," *Tarbiz*, 18 (1947) who argues that Krochmal harbored doubts about the Mosaic origins of the Pentateuch. While it would not be at all surprising if Krochmal felt, together with many other Jewish scholars, that an occasional passage or two was a later interpolation, he nevertheless insists that the Torah is to be seen as a Mosaic document, and I can see no references, cryptic or otherwise, to suggest differently. See also Avraham Greenbaum, "Bikoret ha-Miqra b'Mishnat Ranaḳ: Iyyunim," in Avraham Greenbaum and Alfred L. Ivry, eds., *Hagut u-Maaseh: Sefer Zikaron l'Shim' on Rawidowicz* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 5743), pp. 101-5.
25. There is some proximity between this position and that enunciated by Eichhorn (*Einleitung*, pp. 90-91). However, the difference between the two regarding the nature of prophecy, and the reason that specific arguments are impossible, is striking. For Eichhorn, prophecy is to be considered as poetry, and while it is possible for a poet to imagine himself in another place and time, he cannot achieve a

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literary creation that does not betray his own time. Further, the images in such a vision must be general, not specific. In the case of the second Isaiah, however, "das Exilium und die dasselbe begleitenden Umstände sind bis in die tiefste Einzelheit herab verfolgt, und in so zufälligen, oft unbedeutlichen Zügen nach einer historischen — nicht dichterischen — Wahrheit dargestellt, die sich erst erreichen lässt, wenn man das Elend, das man zu schildern hat, nicht erst ahnet, sondern schon fühlt" (p. 90–91). Krochmal clearly wished to avoid the notion that he is denying the essence of prophecy; certainly God could provide an eighth-century B.C.E. prophet with specific images of the sixth century, although one would be hard pressed to explain for what purpose. (Krochmal's version of this argument has been restated in a recent discussion of some of these issues by a Christian scholar, David G. Meade, in his *Pseudonymity and Canon* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], p. 31, n. 51.) In any event, Krochmal states that the "self-proclaimed pious" should not think that he is denying the traditional notion of prophecy. Luzzatto thought that this was a reference to him, and responded sharply. See his *Mehkerei ha-Yahadut*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 30–48.

26. See the interesting remarks of Abravanel at the beginning of his introduction to the latter prophets.
27. *Guide*, p. 114. This argument had already been advanced by Ben-Ze'ev, *Mavo*, p. 27a. Luzzatto strongly condemns this "counterfeit" proof, arguing that the author of the baraita must have used a standard of arrangement other than chronology (Luzzatto, *Mehkerei*, pp. 34–35). The BT is also perplexed by the divergence from chronological sequence and answers as it deems appropriate.
28. Luzzatto is particularly vociferous in claiming that this passage, if anything, proves the opposite of Krochmal's claim, for it shows that if there were sufficient materials a prophet's legacy would not be attached to another's, but would rather warrant a separate book. Thus, according to authoritative rabbinic thinking, one prophet's work will not be intermingled with another's unless there were insufficient material to warrant its own book. The rabbis, therefore, clearly would not have considered the possibility that the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah were the work of a different prophet. See Luzzatto, pp. 35–36. I do not deal with the issue of whether this rabbinic passage, or any rabbinic passage, can provide evidence for the claims

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- advanced here, because this issue is irrelevant, since for Krochmal and Luzzatto there can be no doubt that it can.
29. Krochmal's speculations regarding Ibn Ezra were known to Franz Delitzsch, who cited Krochmal's work on this point; see Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar*, p. 24n. I should also point out that Delitzsch was obviously not impressed with Krochmal's argument that the ancient rabbis already knew there were two Isaiahs. Indeed, one of his arguments against the proposition that there were two or more Isaiahs is that "(d)ie synagogale, später die kirchliche Wissenschaft hat, abgesehen von spurlos vorübergegangenen Grillen Einzelner, bis in vorige Jahrh. hinein überall vorausgesetzt, dass die kanonischen Bücher des A.T. den h. Geist zu dem Einen *auctor primarius* und übrigen diejenigen Männer zu Verfassern haben, unter deren Namen sie überliefert sind" (p. 24).
 30. There are those, such as Luzzatto, who maintain that Krochmal's appropriation of rabbinic materials is directed apologetically at the ultra-Orthodox, by whom he did not wish to be considered a heretic. Yet Krochmal would have to have been remarkably naive to believe that the ultra-Orthodox would forgive him for accepting Eichhorn rather than the traditional explanation, no matter how many hints he could find in the rabbinic literature; this is particularly true when one considers the troubles he endured at the hands of the Hasidic community of Galicia (see Rawidowicz, "Introduction", pp. 41ff.). Further, thinking that Krochmal addresses the Orthodox misses the point of Krochmal's work; he is not interested in addressing those forces he considered anti-intellectual, and, in any event, he knew that they would not be impressed by his appeal to esotericism grounded in modern epistemology. Rather, he addresses those Jews who were impressed by the claims of modern scholarship, thinking that he can reinterpret Judaism in accord with modern thought. In his attempt to address the needs of the Galician maskilim, he is similar to Meir Leibush Malbim, who also sought to address the maskilim on their terms, in this case grammar and philology. Clearly, we find in Krochmal a much greater sense of the needs of his intended readership, as he is much more open to the demands of modern scholarship, whereas the work of Malbim quickly became the possession of that part of the Jewish world that would not permit the intermingling of critical research techniques and Holy Scripture.

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31. See Tosefta Yadayim 2:14, Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:12, the Targum to Kohelet 1:1, *inter alia*.
32. See Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, vol. 5, pp. 253–67.
33. Krochmal argues that this is not to say that the rabbis did not regard Proverbs and Song of Songs as being Solomonic. For, with these two it is far more credible that the proverbs and songs were part of the consciousness of the people and they could thus survive in oral form through many generations. Furthermore, Krochmal claims that it is clear that these books are composites; therefore, the Solomonic elements, being less than the entire books, could easily have been passed down from generation to generation, while others would imitate these literary forms. They were appended to the Solomonic compositions and made into one book in the time of Hezekiah. This is clearly not the case with Qohelet, which is undoubtedly the work of a single author (*Guide*, p. 142). This last claim, too, follows Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, pp. 267ff. Krochmal's attempt to limit the thrust of his remarks to those areas established by Bible critics again indicates that we do not have disinterested Bible criticism in Krochmal, but rather an attempt to mitigate the degree of confrontation between traditional and modern scholarship—a confrontation that traditional scholarship was destined to lose if its latent sophistication was not made manifest.
34. This explanation is offered in accordance with the Tosefta, Yadayim 2:14, ed. Zuckerman, p. 673, and BT Megillah 7a.
35. This claim is no doubt based on the story found in 1 Kings 3:5–14, specifically verse twelve, which states that God endowed Solomon with a wise and discerning heart, the likes of which no human ever had or will have.
36. Luzzatto in particular agonized over the acceptance of this work into the canon; see his "Divre Qohelet" in *Ozar Nebmad* vol. 3 (1860), pp. 17ff. and vol. 4, pp. 47ff.; see also Heinrich Graetz's "Das Buch Kohelet, seine Entstehungszeit und sein Charakter," in *MGWJ*, vol. 18 (1869), pp. 481–507.
37. *Guide*, p. 143. Among this group Krochmal mentions only Moses Mendelssohn. Ben Ze'ev, the latter's disciple, also affirms the Solomonic authorship of Qohelet, attempting to refute some of the claims of Eichhorn. See Ben Ze'ev, pp. 93b–95a. Indeed, long after Krochmal's death there remained those maskilim who attempted to maintain this rabbinic tradition and explicitly took issue with Krochmal's

- discussion. See Binyamin Ze'ev Weiler, "Al Sefer Qohelet," in *Ozar ha-Sifrut* (1888), pp. 95–103.
38. *Guide*, p. 149. Krochmal here quotes a verse, Psalms 119:26. This verse has a long history in Judaism as being a sanction for occasionally breaking the tradition in order to serve the Lord. See, e.g., the Mishnah, Berakhot 9:5 and the corresponding section of the BT, 63a. See also the traditional commentaries on this mishnah, and BT Yoma 69a, Gittin 60a and Temurah 14b. Maimonides, in the introduction to his *Guide*, acknowledges that he is revealing things that have been concealed, and cites this verse to justify his breaking from previous tradition. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 16. Obviously, Krochmal is here saying that even if his attempts at reconciling traditional and modern scholarship should prove unsuccessful, and he is thus violating the tradition in making his assertions regarding Qohelet, he is justified because the times demand it, and he may therefore "break Thy law." If, however a better solution than his can be offered, he is certainly prepared to accept it. Again here, the profile of a traditionalist struggling to appropriate modern culture and remain a committed Jew becomes clear.
39. For review of the *status quaestiones* and his own views on the subject, see W. M. L. de Wette, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen und apokryphischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: 1829), 3rd edition, pp. 378–87.
40. Zunz, in his *Vorträge* also argues that Psalms 74, 79 and 83 date from the encounter of the Jews with the Syrians, while Psalm 44 he considers as originating "im Exil." See Zunz, p. 16, notes "e" and "f." Cf. de Wette, p. 385.
41. *Guide*, p. 153. Krochmal bases the claim that they were killed because of their faith on verse 23 of this Psalm.
42. He reigned from 161–143/2 B.C.E. For the details of his reign, and the possible referent of Krochmal's claim, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. by Geza Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1973), vol. 1, pp. 174–88. Again, Zunz claims this Psalm originates "im Exil."
43. That is, Psalms 146–50 = Greek Hallel. The name Egyptian Hallel for Psalms 113–18 is found in the BT, B'rakhot 56a, and seems to be based on the position, accepted in BT P'sahim 117a that these

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- Psalms were recited by Moses and the Israelites upon their miraculous rescue at the Red Sea.
44. The distinction between exoteric and aggadic here is Krochmal's and demands some comment. The exoteric tradition to which Krochmal refers is found in the baraita in Baba Batra. As we have seen, such traditions can be expected to allude to hidden truths. This is the case, for example, with the baraita's listing of Isaiah after Jeremiah and Ezekiel. "Aggadic" here seems to be a derisive term; this is understandable in light of Krochmal's attitude to some portions of the aggadah, and his claim that many of them originate outside rabbinic circles, and find their way into the sacred texts of Judaism without rabbinic sanction. On this, see below chapter 6. Thus, aggadic teachings here may well refer to matters that one can safely ignore altogether; this is not the case with the exoteric traditions. In the exoteric tradition under discussion here, the fact that the rabbis attribute the Psalms to ten elders and David is seen as indicating that the rabbis recognized the composite nature of the book of Psalms. I should point out, however, that the ten elders to whom the baraita attributes this book all lived prior to David's time, and David is depicted as having anthologized their work. Thus, one would have to try very hard to find an allusion to Hasmonean Psalms in this baraita.
 45. Of course, such a problem was present with the latter part of Isaiah as well, as it appears that a second prophet passed his work off as that of the "first Isaiah"; Krochmal did not seem to be aware of the problem. Perhaps he felt the identification was simply an error, or perhaps he would have conceptualized it along the lines of Meade in *Pseudonymity and Canon*, and seen it as an issue of pseudonymity rather than pseudepigraphy, the former carrying with it no moral questionability.
 46. Thus, Eichhorn can write: "Es scheint also, dass ein Schriftsteller aus den spätern Zeiten des Hebräischen Alterthums diese philosophischen Betrachtungen unter Salomo's Namen niedergeschrieben habe, um seinen Weisheitssprüchen mehr Ansehen, Eingang und Gewicht durch einen berühmten und allgemein verehrten Namen aus dem goldnen Zeitalter des Hebräischen Staats zu verschaffen." Elsewhere, he explicitly states that this was an effort at fraud (*Täuschung*): *Einleitung*, vol. 5, pp. 261–62, 263, 266. While it is true that Eichhorn perhaps mitigated the harshness of this judgment with his question, "Und

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warum hätte der Verfasser dieses Kleid nicht sollen wählen dürfen, da sich doch offenbar mehrere Schriftsteller des A.T. poetische Dichtungen erlauben?" (p. 263), it still seems to me that Eichhorn felt that the author was a man of questionable moral stature. De Wette refers to the supposed Solomonic authorship of the book as a "gar nicht verdeckte fiction" in *Lehrbuch*, p. 406. For Voltaire, the issue was not so much one of moral turpitude, but rather of the stupidity of the author in not being able to carry out his deception. He writes:

Critics have trouble persuading themselves that the book is by Solomon. It is not natural for him to say: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child!" The Jews hadn't yet had such kings. It is not natural for him to say; "I observe the face of the king." It is much more likely that the author wished to have it that Solomon was the speaker, and yet, by that mental lapse of which all Jewish works are full, he often forgot in the body of the work that a king was supposed to be speaking. (*Philosophical Dictionary*, p. 459)

(Regarding the first verse Voltaire cited, 10:16, see Graetz, "Das Buch Kohelet," p. 499.) Krochmal was obviously aware of the Eichhorn passages, and probably knew what Voltaire had written as well; yet he somewhat disingenuously states that he does not know what the "Christian scholars" have to say on this issue, but imagines that they would say we have here an attempt on the part of a later writer to "disguise himself in the wrap of Solomon who was renowned as a wise" king (p. 145). Krochmal may well have wanted to downplay this position lest he succeed in inadvertently convincing his readers that the book of Qohelet did indeed originate in these morally questionable circumstances.

47. Again, Voltaire: "What remains surprising is that this impious work should have been consecrated among the canonical books. If we had to establish the canon of the Bible today, we certainly wouldn't include Ecclesiastes" (op. cit.).
48. *Guide*, p. 146. Krochmal makes clear that he is referring to the main part of the Assembly and not its remnants, for this book was written prior to the infiltration of Greek influence into Jewish society. (See next chapter for an explanation.) This is important for him because the period of the main assembly was a "golden age," in which the Assembly was inspired by the holy spirit, and was not subject to the tribulations that political upheavals caused in the time of the remnants of the Assembly. There is thus no possibility of error on the

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part of the Assembly in accepting Qohelet into the canon. The contradiction between this claim and his third proof that the rabbis knew the correct provenance of Qohelet is clear, and stands without need of further comment.

49. This was, and remains, a commonplace. See de Wette, *Lehrbuch*, p. 406, and literature cited there. Cf. Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, vol. 5, pp. 250–53.
50. *Guide*, p. 147. Krochmal provides a number of prooftexts to buttress this assertion.
51. The solution of “contemporizing,” as it were, was to be reiterated in recent times by D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic 200 B.C.–A.D. 100* (London: SCM, 1964), p. 136, cited in Meade, *Pseudonymity*, pp. 6–7.
52. Bruce M. Metzger, “Literary Forgeries and Canonical Perspectives,” cited in Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 110. I cite this work because of Metzger’s standing in both the scholarly and religious communities. In fact, there have been dozens of attempts at resolving this “problem,” many of them reviewed in Meade, pp. 4–12; the remainder of Meade’s book represents yet another attempt at resolving the problem. It is interesting to note that, for the most part, recent attempts to deal with the issue derive from scholars of Protestant background.
53. Students of biblical scholarship may well be interested in Krochmal’s conclusions regarding other books and issues. His work deals with Daniel, Esther, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Zechariah. As my interest here is in drawing an intellectual portrait of him, I do not intend to deal with this further, other than to say that the patterns discussed obtain throughout. The interested student may consult my dissertation, chapter 4, for the details.

I do wish to mention one issue, though, since it relates to Qohelet and to the question of pseudepigraphy, and that concerns the closing verses of the book. Already Voltaire realized that the closing verses of this text must be the product of a different hand: “The whole work is by a materialist, at once sensual and disgusted. A few edifying words about God were inserted into the last verse, it would seem, only to diminish the scandal that such a book might have caused” (*Philosophical Dictionary*, p. 459). Krochmal argues that these verses (12:9–14)

were in fact added by those responsible for closing the canon, not for the purpose of making the book canonically acceptable (as indeed Luzzatto argued, referring to a different set of verses); this is based primarily on 12:12 which warns against the making of too many books. This represented a fitting close to the canon as a whole; their addition is thus not intentionally pseudepigraphic. They are rather an appendix. This argument was accepted by Graetz, and brought to the attention of the larger reading public by virtue of its endorsement in his German book *Qohelet*, (Berlin: 1871), p. 47. Ewald rejected this view out of hand in his review of Graetz (*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, [1871], Stück 11, pp. 428–29; I am grateful to Prof. Ismar Schorsch for directing me to this reference), stating that it is achieved “durch die beliebten Willkürlichkeiten.” Recently, Brevard Childs has briefly dealt with the issue, again dismissing Krochmal’s claim. (See his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], p. 586.)

54. This is particularly clear with regard to the late Psalms, where Krochmal simply states that he is certain that they knew about them, but hid this knowledge. It would be inconceivable to him that they would not know such a thing. Again here, it is clear that we cannot think of Krochmal in strictly historicist terms, as it is inconceivable to him that the rabbis were simply the products of a different age and a different mentality. Such a concession would have justified all the trends he was combating.
55. A similar *Tendenz* is at work in the biblical studies of Graetz, who, in fact, extends the so-called “biblical period” until the time of Herod, during whose reign the book of Qohelet was supposedly compiled. Heinrich Ewald understood well—if not sympathetically—what the issue was:

Denn weiter hängt damit die Frage über die Pharisäer zusammen: diese müssen untadelig sein, weil sie im N.T. nicht so gelten; und nicht die erhabenen Urzeiten des Volkes Israel noch auch die Zeiten der leuchtenden dichten Schar seiner unsterblichen Propheten, sondern nur die letzten Zeiten welche unmittelbar zum Talmud hinführten müssen die herrlichsten und von allen Vorzügen strahlendsten sein. Also müssen in diesen letzten Zeiten auch erst durchgängig die schönsten Bücher geschrieben sein, und es ist nicht wahr, was man meint, dass das Hohelied in das zehnte Jahrhundert vor Chr. gehöre: es muss in die Pharisäischen Zeiten herabgerückt werden, auch damit

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die Pharisäer in Bausch und Bogen als die vortrefflichsten aller Menschen gerühmt werden können. (From his review of Graetz's *Schir ha-Schirim* in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* [1872], Stück 1, p. 27; again, I am grateful to Prof. Schorsch for directing me to this source.)

The existential capital invested by people like Krochmal and Graetz in this historiographical structure was substantial, and must be understood if we are to appreciate the issues animating Jewish biblical and Talmudic histories produced in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 5

THE RABBINIC TRADITION

IN TRADITIONAL Jewish self-understanding, the Torah, the basis of Judaism, is actually comprised of two Torahs, one written, the other oral. This fundamental claim represents the basis of rabbinic Judaism. The history of Jewish thought, however, is replete with attempts to determine precisely what this means. One strand of thought insists that together with the written revelation—that which God communicated to Moses, and the latter committed to writing, or that which God himself actually wrote—God communicated to Moses further amplifications and explanations. The latter, in turn, transmitted them to Joshua who transmitted them to the elders, and so on, down to the first centuries of the Christian era when they began to be committed to writing, or at least to emerge as a series of definitive texts. In this version, the claim that there was an oral torah is a clear historical statement, claiming that most of the material comprising oral Torah came into existence at one time, more than a millen-

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nium before the Christian era; such a claim is inherently subject to the scrutiny of historical verification.

Another strand sees the oral Torah, for the most part, as the result of a process of authoritative exegesis, emerging over time, through the application of authorized exegetical techniques by learned sages. This claim is also historical, but is of a very different quality. It acknowledges human participation, not merely in the development of secondary ordinances, but in the very creation of the oral Torah. It claims that what we know as oral Torah emerged over many centuries, but may be dated by the names of sages, and biblical figures, associated with its given provisions. This version is prepared to allow for a much longer period of development of the rabbinic tradition.

As one would expect, the two strands are ideal constructs, with neither existing in total separation from the other. The first strand is the far more frequently articulated position, particularly in works of Jewish "philosophy" and history, while the second strand dominates actual halakhic discourse.¹ Fundamental to both strands, however, is the notion that the completed product is Torah, an articulation of God's will, and in that sense transcends whatever historical circumstance may have occasioned its emergence. Further fundamental to both strands is the centrality of tradition, whether it be a tradition defined by its content (first strand) or by its method and results (second strand). Both presuppose that "rabbinism," whether defined by content or method, extends far back into antiquity, perhaps as far back as the revelation at Sinai, and it has successfully transmitted its content throughout the ages. Both presuppose that there is a basic, organic continuity that

obtains in the relationship between the two Torahs, as they each, in one way or another, derive from "one shepherd." Rabbinic Judaism rests on this set of fundamental assumptions.

Throughout the ages, the claim that rabbinic Jews were in possession of a unique, authentic and reliable tradition was the object of vigorous challenge. For Josephus, the very distinction between Pharisees and Sadducees revolved around this issue; thus, over two millennia ago, the possession of a tradition and the denial of such possession were crucial issues to the Jews of that day.²

The nature of the Karaite challenge to the rabbinic tradition is better known and more readily verified. Karaites, who in fact developed a rather extensive legal system based on exegetical techniques similar to rabbinic ones, dismissed rabbinic laws as commandments created by men, rather than as the product of any set of traditions deriving ultimately from God or God's word. Similarly, in Marrano communities and in other times and places as well, there emerged what Shalom Rosenberg has called a Jewish Protestantism, in which once again the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition came under attack. Rabbinic interpretations and practices were dismissed as the product of humans and in no way reflective of the divine will.³

Karaimism in particular, and "Jewish Protestantism" generally, posed strong challenges to rabbinic Judaism, and Karaites succeeded in creating a rival community that survived with vigor into this century. On an ideological level, however, neither the Karaites, nor the other "Protestant" groups succeeded in creating a sufficient historical hermeneutic to make

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their rejection of rabbinic tradition overwhelm the rabbinite communities. The many defenders of rabbinism felt that a detailed restatement of the chain of tradition was sufficient to counter the Karaite challenge. In more or less detailed restatements of the chain recounted in the first mishnah in tractate Avot, these defenders filled in the centuries between Moses and Simon the Just (for more on him, see below) in broad strokes, with no sense that the lack of historical evidence was a problem. The whole matter became one of conflicting authority, with devotees of each position passionately affirming or denying but rarely convincing.

Simultaneously, the Karaite challenge also occasioned a legal-philosophical argument, pertaining to the nature of the Torah as a legal source. Championed by many, most forcefully by Yehudah Halevi, the argument maintained that given the numerous legal lacunae in the Torah, it is inconceivable that God could have communicated this document to Moses without further explanation. Exodus 12:2, for example, traditionally believed to contain the first commandment, commands the Israelites to observe "this month" as the first month. Such a statement would be meaningless without some further information regarding the calendrical system the commandment envisions. Thus, claims Halevi, it is clear that God must have provided Moses with the information that the system envisioned was not the Egyptian or Chaldean system, but rather the mixed lunar/solar system that prevails in Jewish law to this day.⁴

To be sure, Karaism represented a strong stimulus to rabbinic historical reflection—indeed, the history of rabbinic tradition dominates Jewish historiography up to the modern

period—and certainly the repeated efforts to combat it suggest that Karaism and Jewish Protestantism represented significant cultural challenges to the authority of the rabbinic tradition. Yet, for the most part, the center of the rabbinic universe was able to hold. While halakhists and kabbalists in different locations and times developed varying preferences and hermeneutics in their interpretation, the sacred documents of the rabbinic canon remained essential sources of praxis and thought. Jewish life and thought continued to revolve around them and their message(s).

In the late eighteenth century, and continuing into the nineteenth, there emerged among Jews a kind of enlightened Protestantism that was qualitatively distinct from the earlier forms of protest that agitated Jewish culture. Both the historical and legal-philosophical arguments came under severe challenge. By the late 1820s, it was a commonplace of much Jewish historiography that biblical and rabbinic religion were two distinct religious orientations with little if any direct connection between them.⁵ This protest against the authenticity of rabbinic tradition was not based on competing scriptural hermeneutics that recognized scripture as Scripture, that is the direct word of God, nor was it based directly on a competing claim to communal authority. Rather, this new protest employed the results and methods of early Bible criticism, legal history (*Rechtsgeschichte*) and *Religionsgeschichte* in its reconstruction of early rabbinic history.

To a very large extent, the success of the defense of rabbinic tradition depended on the credibility of the chain of tradition in the mishnah tractate Avot. To medieval historians, its credibility was beyond question. Indeed, as Abraham ibn

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Daud asserts in a different but related context, the traditions of the Mishnah and Talmud must be deemed authentic when they conflict with gentile historians for the rabbinic traditions "did not distort anything."⁶ The near total reliance of other "historians" of rabbinic tradition on this source suggests that they all agreed on this point.⁷

In the modern period, the reliability of this tradition was dealt a powerful blow by Lazarus Bendavid's essay, "Über geschriebenes und mündliches Gesetz." Bendavid (1762–1832), one of the most outspoken of the maskilim of the post-Mendelssohn era,⁸ published this essay in the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* ([1823], p. 473) a short-lived but important journal that was the publication of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden. Here Bendavid outlines his understanding of the concepts of a written law and an oral one.

Bendavid begins his essay with the assertion that it is necessary to define what the terms written and oral law mean since this has not yet been done, and without an exact understanding of these terms one cannot know what comprises the essence of the Jewish religion (*ibid.*, p. 474). He argues that one who does not wish to scorn the credibility of all history must admit that Moses left behind some written laws. Nevertheless, the current document of Mosaic law owes its present form to a much later time. For beyond all doubt, what was written by Moses was lost prior to the time of Samuel, the prophet. The Mosaic law was first recovered by the priest Chilkiahu, some fifty years before the Babylonian exile, during the reign of Josiah (c. 630 B.C.E.). From this Bendavid concludes that the "Mosaic teaching was cultivated only orally

in the 460 years between Samuel and Josiah, that is for virtually the entire duration of the First Temple" (ibid.). Thus, the proper understanding of the concept of an oral tradition is that the Mosaic law itself was transmitted orally, throughout the First Temple period, and only later became known in its written form, with many additions. Thus, "written" and "oral" tradition do not refer to two distinct bodies of material, but rather to the sequential development of the same material.

Incredibly, Bendavid finds support for this radical claim in the first mishnah in the tractate Avot:

In fact, if one understands the sense of that which the Tannaim, the authors of the Mishnah, have imparted to us in an impartial way, not only does it confirm our assertion, but even seems to entirely deny any written law deriving from Moses. [This mishnah] seems to be of the opinion that the priest Chilkiahu fashioned the book, which he allegedly found, from an oral tradition known to him. They say as much: "Moses received the Torah on Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua . . ." (Ibid.)

Bendavid asserts that this mishnah could not be referring to the written law because the Tannaim were very exact in their use of language, and the word used is "masar" (*überliefern*), and not "natan" (*übergeben*), and only the spoken word can be thus transmitted ("nur das Geistige, das gesprochene Wort, überliefert man").

Of course, Bendavid is well aware that his understanding of the terms written and oral law is not consistent with the traditional conception of these terms. According to Jewish tradition, as Bendavid understands it, the written law refers

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to the Pentateuch, while the oral law includes those laws that were transmitted by Moses orally, which do not appear in the Pentateuch; those laws that are derived through one of the accepted hermeneutical rules; those laws not derived from the Bible but considered necessary by the Sanhedrin for the proper observance of the law and the well-ordering of society; and those laws that serve to prevent transgression against the laws. Bendavid argues the inadmissibility (*Unstatthafte*) of this understanding. First of all, it takes no account of the 400-year loss of the original document, and assumes Chilkiahu genuinely found the document he produced, rather than having created it on the basis of the tradition. This, it will be recalled, contradicts the statement of the mishnah, as Bendavid understands it. Secondly, the traditional view is based on the arbitrary and historically unprovable assertion that Moses imparted explanations to Joshua orally, a claim the medievals had no difficulty digesting, but which required some verification before a modern historian could affirm it. Finally, the mishnah in Avot teaches that with the men of the great synagogue the oral tradition became superfluous, because the law, which had previously existed only in oral form, had been written down. Thus, the language shifts from "masar" (*überliefern*) to "qibel" (*empfang*), indicating the onset of a break. That this meaning of the text was not recognized prior to Bendavid's time was due to later rabbinic ignorance, and lust for respect and power (*Unkunde, Ehr- Hab- und Herrschsucht*).

The oral law became the written law many centuries before the emergence of the rabbinic tradition. Thus, what was produced by the rabbis was not part of any tradition and

represented a gross misuse of the notion of an oral law. What the rabbis produced was designed to enhance their own power, not to faithfully impart an ancient oral tradition. What made Bendavid's argument different from Karaite diatribes against rabbinic authority was the interesting adaptation of recent biblical scholarship to the history of rabbinism. If, in fact, the Torah in its entirety was not known throughout the First Temple period; if its content emerged over these many centuries and first became generally known in the late seventh century; if it did not achieve final, fixed form until the time of the Great Assembly, then it is clear that the Torah itself is the product of an oral development over time. Thus, the history of the text and its interpretation could not possibly be as traditional rabbinic historical thinking insists. In good Enlightenment anticlerical fashion, one can then understand rabbinic historical claims only in terms of authority and power.

A similar claim is to be found in the work in Isaak Markus Jost, the author of the first comprehensive history of the Jews of the modern era, to whose *Geschichte der Israeliten* Krochmal refers (*Guide*, p. 126). Ismar Schorsch has written of the "antireligious animus" which permeated this work and the "extent to which Jost had internalized the negative critique of Judaism leveled by the Enlightenment."⁹ Schorsch discusses the extremely negative approach of Jost to rabbinism, and his claims that rabbinism rested on deceit and manipulation.¹⁰ Indeed, for Jost, the primary goal of the rabbinic scholars flourishing after the destruction of the Temple was not to realize the word of God, but rather to "discern the means through which the people could find consolation for their suffering, and hope in the destruction."¹¹ The rabbis became

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distant from the people to the point that "they comprised a guild, into which could enter only those who gave proof of their scholarship."¹² Religious sensitivity was meaningless in this world. Only the ability to engage in casuistic rabbinic study mattered.

For Jost, rabbinic Judaism was nothing more than a way of institutionalizing certain power structures in favor of the scholars and to the detriment of the other members of society, regardless of the virtue of the latter.¹³ Jost tends to see rabbinic Judaism almost entirely from the perspective of the need for self-aggrandizement on the part of the rabbis, a need that exacted a heavy price from the Jewish people.

Given this point of view, it is not surprising that Jost accepts as a matter of course that there is no connection between early biblical religion and the religion that was to emerge after the exile. Further, he takes for granted that there is little connection between rabbinic Judaism and any religion; for him rabbinic Judaism represents nothing more than the ideology of a guild intent on gaining power at the expense of the people. This they were able to do so long as they fulfilled the needs of the populous for consolation and hope, as we saw. Combined with the political power invested in the office of the patriarch, and the ambitious use of this power by the patriarchs, Judah ha-Nasi in particular, the rabbis became a most oppressive force in the lives of the Jews.

One will readily recognize the rather unsophisticated attachment to Enlightenment anticlericalism here; yet as the first comprehensive history of the Jews produced in over a century, Jost's work was read, and taken quite seriously, by many Jewish scholars. In any event, there is, in addition,

another side to Jost's work, directly related to our issue, that indeed deserved, and deserves, to be taken seriously.

Appended to volume 4 of the *Geschichte* is a very intelligent and judicious excursus (quoted with approbation by the abbé Chiarini, by the way),¹⁴ in which Jost addresses the extent to which one can use the Talmud as a historical source. He concludes that the Talmud is an important historical document, but it cannot serve as a historical source. The distinction is that a document communicates important information about its framers and their times to us; from this information we can then reconstruct "history." A source, on the other hand, would itself be a history of earlier events that we can reliably draw on in creating our own historical picture. The practical distinction is that while late rabbinic writings may include useful historical information, in no way do rabbinic documents tell us anything reliable about pre-rabbinic historical realities. He writes:

The book has only historical value, and depicts the customs of the Jews *at the time of its composition*, and its content can perhaps authenticate the contemporaneous progress of Jewish scholars in the various branches of scholarship; but for the previous period {*Vorzeit*} it remains insignificant, a shallow piece of tradition, in which even the "tradition" itself is dubious, and the question overtly remains, whether the allegedly tradited thing should not be considered as recent scholastic speculation. (Vol. 4, p. 272; emphasis added)

With this excursus Jost brought to the Jewish world the source-critical skepticism that characterized the revolutionary Bible scholarship of W. M. L. de Wette. The latter took for granted that later generations sought legitimacy by retroject-

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ing their ideas into their own antiquity. It was this awareness that allowed him to identify the book of Deuteronomy as distinct from the rest of the Pentateuch, and to view the books of Chronicles as anachronistic retrojections of post-exilic conditions.¹⁵ However, Jost's skepticism does not lead him to conclude that the only thing reflected in the Talmud is the customs of the period of the documents' final redaction, primarily because a number of fourth-century Christian sources affirm the existence of a rabbinic "tradition." Thus, the Talmud, completed in the fifth century, must comprise a two-hundred year-old tradition beginning in the third century, rather than being strictly a product of the fifth century. The events recorded in the Talmud are reliable for the time in which its component parts were first given expression—that is, somewhere between the third and fifth centuries. Jost's crucial claim is that one cannot, on the basis of Talmudic statements, reconstruct pre-Talmudic, that is, pre-third-century, history.

Given this historical position, there is no way to ground rabbinic Judaism in antiquity; all claims to such antiquity in rabbinic documents must be considered legends and fables. There is then no (pre-third-century) rabbinic "tradition," but rather the deceptive claim to such a tradition by power-hungry politicians and lawyers. Once again, it is the impetus of biblical scholarship—here the method more than the results—that casts the central claim of rabbinic Judaism into disrepute.

Another important contributor to the shift in Jewish understanding of rabbinism was Eduard Gans, whom we met in chapter 3. It will be recalled that Gans, a founder of the

Verein, stated that one of its main objectives was the destruction of rabbinism.¹⁶ This attitude of Gans's was essentially programmatic; he wished for the elimination of the influence of the Talmud on the lives of contemporary Jews. At the same time, Gans was a student of law and its history, and as such wrote pieces on the development of Jewish law and its relationship to Roman law, with which Krochmal was familiar, and to which he responded in the *Guide*.¹⁷

Gans's attitude toward rabbinism is also reflected in this scholarly work. In his important multivolume history of inheritance law, Gans devotes a chapter to Jewish, that is, rabbinic law. In this piece he argues that Jewish law is not to be seen in the context of Mosaic law *at all*;¹⁸ rather, rabbinic law, or at least what is of value in it, represents substantial borrowing from Roman legal institutions.¹⁹ I do not read this chapter, as Ismar Schorsch does, as an attempt by Gans to show the advanced nature of rabbinic law in that it incorporates Western elements. In my view, it is designed to demonstrate the totally moribund state of Jewish jurisprudence, and the recognition on the part of the rabbis themselves of the superiority of Roman, and, thus Western, law.²⁰

This reading dovetails nicely with Gans's introduction to the work, in which he makes clear that the history of jurisprudence cannot be divorced from the history of *Ideen*, the march of spirit through world history. For Gans, in its path through the ages, world spirit passed Jews by and next came to rest in the Greco-Roman world. It stands to reason that the supersession of Judaism would be reflected in its legal system. Thus, in presenting Jewish marriage and inheritance law as derivative, Gans is supporting his programmatic commitment to rabbinism's elimination from contemporary religious life.

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The treatment of Gans as an important contributor to the discussion requires some justification. After all, he was scarcely a figure of major importance in the world of *jüdische Wissenschaft*. However, Gans made one particularly important contribution to this *Wissenschaft* in his essay on Jewish inheritance law. It was he who first chose to deal with rabbinism in the context not of *Religionsgeschichte* or biblical study, but rather in the context of *Rechtswissenschaft*. It was he who claimed that rabbinism was an essentially legal culture and therefore must be seen within the context of historical legal study. He was likewise the first to attempt to deal with rabbinic law within the context of a broad-based, comparative study of human legal systems. While his conclusions appealed to a limited audience, the area of academic study he introduced was to reemerge in the work of Krochmal, and Zechariah Fränkel as well, as each, quite self-consciously, attempted to respond to his claims. In his turn to *Rechtswissenschaft* Gans provided more conservative elements of the *Wissenschaft* movement, Krochmal included, with an academic field in which to operate. In his own version of legal history, however, the premises of the discipline once again consign rabbinic Judaism to the margins of religious history, and once again demonstrate the distinction between biblical and rabbinic institutions.

Each of these historical positions attempts to directly dismantle the historical argument of the ancients and medievals. The results of historical research, the historical hermeneutics that dominated one academic discipline, and the content of rabbinic legal materials all served to indicate that rabbinic Judaism could not be seen as the product of an unbroken tradition deriving from long before the Roman era. Of course,

along the way the traditional legal-philosophical argument is deflected as well, since none of these positions actually envisions the emergence of the Bible in a traditional manner—a *sine qua non* for maintaining this line of Jewish thought.

The legal-philosophical argument was not to be spared a direct assault, however. Michael Creizenach (1789–1842), operating with traditional assumptions regarding biblical origins,²¹ attacked the argument directly, as he attempted to mitigate the effects of rabbinism on contemporary Jewish life.

Creizenach, a significant figure in the early Reform movement, attacked this position in his four-volume *Schulchan Aruch*, and more succinctly in an essay entitled “Beiträge zur Beurtheilung des Thalmuds,” published in Geiger’s *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie*.²² Creizenach acknowledges that the Torah is filled with lacunae and incomplete information. Yet, he asks whether the admitted lack of definitions, and the ambiguities of the Torah render its laws beyond observance without an orally transmitted explanation, or even whether “such an explanation is suitable to remedy the defect in the composition of the text.”²³ Responding directly to Halevi’s argument regarding the calculation of the months and the absence of specificity pertaining to the calendar, Creizenach acknowledges that the text does not provide important information, but this is not sufficient to mandate a divinely revealed oral tradition because

It would be most natural here to assume that when this commandment was imparted, a system of reckoning time already existed among the Israelites . . . and that this commandment presupposed the retention of this system. . . . The customary system of reckoning time did not need to be communicated in the text of the Pentateuch, for it was well-known to the people.²⁴

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Creizenach acknowledges there must have been some details too trivial to be written with the laws, and, since the written word never suffices in a legal code anyway, these must have circulated in an oral form. But this is hardly worthy of the title "oral tradition."

Creizenach's reading insists on seeing the Torah as emerging in a specific historical setting—albeit a traditional one—rather than attending to the putatively intended timelessness of the text envisioned by the medieval (and modern) traditional thinkers. Viewed this way, the lacunae in the text simply presuppose information that is common coin, and do not necessitate the communication of any further information by the divine lawgiver. Thus, much of rabbinic tradition, far from representing an oral Torah, or a historically justifiable exegesis of the biblical text, in fact represents an increasingly severe distortion of the text that, more than anything else, positively necessitates reform. The point of the reform would be to restore the observances of Judaism to their pre-rabbinic grandeur, when they still conformed to the divine intent.²⁵

In the face of all this the world that we would today call Orthodox was ill-equipped to respond in a relevant way. Heated restatements of the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition abounded, reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Yet, while the Orthodox recognized the stakes and that a significant shift had taken place, they were not sufficiently attuned to modern historical thinking to offer a relevant response. One interesting attempt, though, is a short work by Solomon Pressner of Breslau, who straddled the fence separating the traditionally committed maskil from the old-style rabbinic world. The work, first published in Breslau in 1826, carried the Hebrew title *Edut l'Yisrael* and the German title *Wort zu seiner Zeit oder*

*die Autorität der jüdischen Traditionslehre, als des mündlichen Gesetzes: Sendschreiben an seine Glaubensgenossen.*²⁶ The main body of the short book was a translation of gentile sources supportive of the rabbinic tradition from Latin to German, with a separate section in which these materials were excerpted and translated into Hebrew. Plessner bemoans the fact that so many Jews have come to doubt the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition and thus to abandon its precepts.

Their doubts may be assuaged not only by reference to internal Jewish sources, but also by recourse to gentile sources. While the latter are replete with antirabbinic pronouncements, these may be dismissed as religious polemic, whereas the prorabbinic statements had greater legitimacy, as they could scarcely advance the interests of the authors. Thus we are treated to citations from the works of Jerome, the two Buxtorfs,²⁷ Johannes Meyer, John Selden (1584–1654), Cartwright, Heinrich Reizius and Wilhelm Surenhusius (1669–1729), all of which in one way or another, support the Talmud as an indispensable source of Hebraic knowledge, and/or as the repository of important and authentic ancient traditions. The German section closes with the hope that this work will strengthen the faith of Jews, and that, as a result of reading this work, they will be more convinced of the divine origin of “our tradition” (p. 34). The Hebrew section closes even more forcefully, bemoaning the fact that contemporary Jews despise the Talmud, and contrasting such Jews to gentiles who, according to Plessner, loved it (Hebr. section, p. 23).

Perhaps more interesting than the existence of this work is the reaction to it of Rabbi Akiba Eger of Posen, one of the

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leading rabbinic figures in Europe at the time. While acknowledging that the work is superfluous for people like himself, he proclaimed that nevertheless it may lead to greater respect for the Talmud, and may enhance the importance of Talmud study. This became particularly important in light of attempts on the part of maskilim to implement educational reforms that would limit the amount of time devoted to Talmud study. In his battle against this reform, Eger thought Plessner's book would pave the way for the acceptance of his view, and requested that he send him twenty more copies which he would try to sell in Posen.²⁸ Thus, in a stunning admission that gentile approval of the Talmud would likely exercise more influence on a portion of his community than his own exhortations, Eger acknowledged that he was ill-equipped to address the modernizing elements in a language they could understand. Indeed, he was right in this; for most of the nineteenth century intellectually sophisticated modern arguments for the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition would not emerge from Orthodox circles, but from traditionally inclined modern scholars such as Nachman Krochmal. For, ultimately, a work such as Plessner's, for all its erudition, could not stem the tide, for it merely collected interesting references, but made no attempt to see them in their appropriate historical context. Jost too was aware of what Jerome had to say; his treatment of it as a piece of historical evidence, however, was far more sophisticated, and Jost was prepared to grant it far more limited weight.

By the 1830s then, traditional but intellectually aware Jews were facing a crisis of confidence in the historical veracity of their tradition. It was this perplexing loss of confidence that

Krochmal sought to address. In doing so, he acknowledged the difficulties outlined above in broad terms, and conceded that there were yet more problems. For, in addition to all the novel, modern challenges to the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition discussed above, Krochmal alludes to one age-old difficulty that lingered on, and in fact became yet more troublesome in the modern age. The problem is that the legal status of rabbinic materials was not always clearly determined. Krochmal hints at this problem when he mentions the famous dispute between Maimonides and Nahmanides regarding the legal status of those laws that are derived from the Torah using the accepted hermeneutical principles.²⁹

The dispute arose because there is no clear statement in the sources regarding the status of these laws.³⁰ Maimonides is quite emphatic in arguing that all laws derived from the basic hermeneutic principles are to be considered rabbinic, unless specifically designated otherwise. Nahmanides is equally emphatic in rejecting this claim, and insists that the Talmud considered all such laws to be Torahitic. Throughout the generations, a number of apologists for Maimonides have tried to defend the master's position, by arguing that the term, used by Maimonides, that I have translated "rabbinic" does not in fact mean that at all. That is, their legal status is the same as all Torahitic laws, but because they are derived from the biblical text are not to be included in the enumeration.³¹ It is obvious that they actually agreed with Nahmanides, and were merely trying to defend the reputation of Maimonides. It is equally clear that Krochmal did not accept this line of argument, and indeed it has been definitively rejected.³²

This dispute should not be viewed as some minor, esoteric debate. Rather, this disagreement strikes at the very core of

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the rabbinic system. For the modern and skeptical mind it is crucial that the system of classification be clearly determined. Otherwise, the ability of the tradition to derive the practical law is impaired.³³ Perhaps of even greater importance, this dispute reflects doubts on the part of the adherents of the rabbinic tradition as to the exact nature of the system, and provides grist for the mill of the skeptic who would maintain that the rabbis really made it all up as they went along. The rabbis themselves seem not to know what is actually part of the Torah, in the legal sense, and what is not; nor do they know for certain what is the relationship between the oral tradition and the written law—what is the product of the human mind and what is encompassed within the divine revelation.³⁴ Krochmal considered the resolution of this confusion to be one of his primary goals.

Finally, Krochmal acknowledges that the rabbinic histories are not sufficiently critical in their use of talmudic materials. While he would not support the position of Jost, who would insist that virtually all rabbinic pronouncements regarding pre-rabbinic times are historically valueless, he would insist that many of the "historical" claims of the Talmud were never intended to be taken seriously as history. For example, the Talmud attributes to biblical figures the institution of various halakhot; the traditional historians have taken such pronouncements as historically accurate. Yet, Krochmal claims, these attributions are obviously false; they are to be treated as *aggadot*, designed for some heuristic purpose. He states:

It never dawned on the rabbis that such stories, taught for homiletical purposes, were to be accepted as true. The great destroyer of faith is the integration of that which is very dubious with that which is totally clear, and perhaps even falsehood with truth. There

is nothing more damaging than to confuse the times and events so that there is no distinction among them. This would open to everyone who disagrees [with a particular point] a wide gate to deny everything.³⁵

Thus, Krochmal is driven to a new approach because the earlier histories were not critical at all, while the new ones were hypercritical. Krochmal seeks an approach that will incorporate the indisputable findings of recent historical scholarship, that will properly categorize the legal materials of the rabbinic corpus, and that will use the critical historical method to affirm the basic integrity of the rabbinic tradition.

The Guide

In seeking to create this portrait of rabbinic Judaism, Krochmal turned first to the discipline of Rechtswissenschaft, which, at the time, was acrimoniously divided between two schools, the so-called Idealist school (of which Gans was a member) and the so-called Historical school, led by Friedrich Karl von Savigny. The latter more conservative school was to serve Krochmal and Zechariah Fränkel in their historical reconstructions of the emergence of the rabbinic tradition. It is ironic that the academic model adopted by traditionalists to respond to the vision of a superseded Judaism was developed by Friedrich Karl von Savigny, one of the more vociferous of anti-Semites in the nineteenth century. Although a full discussion of this irony is beyond the scope of this work, one aspect demands discussion here.

Fundamental to Savigny's rejection of the Hegelian model of legal development was his rejection of the belief in sus-

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rained albeit dialectical progress that was the heart and soul of Hegelian philosophy of history. Explaining his rejection of the plan, developed at the beginning of the restoration, to create a general code for all of Germany that would fully adumbrate universal rational principles, Savigny writes:

It is connected with many plans and experiments of the kind since the middle of the eighteenth century. During this period the whole of Europe was actuated by a blind rage for improvement. All sense and feeling of the greatness by which other times were characterized, as also of the natural development of communities and institutions, all, consequently that is wholesome and profitable in history was lost. Its place was supplied by the most extravagant anticipations of the present age, which was believed to be destined to nothing less than to being a picture of absolute perfection. . . . Men longed for new codes, which by their completeness, should insure a mechanically precise administration of justice; insomuch that the judge, freed from the exercise of private opinion, should be confined to the mere literal application; at the same time, they were to be divested of all historical associations, and in pure abstraction, be equally adapted to all nations and all times.³⁶

In this rejection of progress and the romantic insistence on the unique development of individual peoples, we find the roots of Savigny's anti-Semitism—his rejection of the Jew as alien—and, somewhat paradoxically, we find his appeal to the more conservative voices in the scholarly Jewish community, who also rejected the notion of historical progress, which stood at odds with any meaningful understanding of tradition.

The specific contribution of Savigny that shaped the way Jews thought about the rabbinic tradition was his discussion of the origins of positive law in his famous polemic "On the

Vocation of our Age for Legislation and Jurisprudence." Here Savigny developed the notion that law develops organically, over time, "supplied by rules communicated by writing and word of mouth" (p. 26). Of course, the law must change as the people to which it is organically linked change. As a result, law necessarily becomes more complex; thus, a new class of people—jurists and lawyers—comes into existence. The sum of this theory is that "*all* law is originally formed in the manner, in which, in ordinary but not quite correct language customary law is said to have been formed: i.e. that it is first developed by custom and popular faith, next by jurisprudence—everywhere, therefore, by internal silently operating powers, not by the arbitrary will of a law-giver" (p. 30). This organically growing law will come in time to necessitate the legislation of its experts, since particular rules may be doubtful or poorly defined, while administration of the law requires precise definition. "Here a kind of legislation may be introduced, which comes to the aid of custom, removes these doubts and uncertainties, and thus brings to the light and keeps pure the real law, the proper will of the people" (p. 33). This legislation, then, does not come to change law, but to define it and render it useful. Certainly, one cannot create a code in the hope that it will contain all necessary legal provisions, for there are "positively no limits to the varieties of actual combinations of circumstances" (p. 38). Indeed, for a living legal system, "no code was discovered to be necessary, not even at the time when circumstances were most favorable to it" (p. 50).

Savigny's view of the slow, organic process by which law is produced proved most useful to traditionalists in the Jewish

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community because it provided a model that not only justified the notion of a lengthy oral tradition—it necessitated it. Thus, despite Krochmal's attraction to Hegel's metaphysics and to the critical techniques in modern Bible study, we find him turning to *Rechtswissenschaft* in reconstructing the emergence of the rabbinic tradition. He opens his discussion with a paraphrase of Savigny's notion that legal materials must undergo a lengthy organic process of emergence, only following which legal experts will emerge. For him this came to mean that from the giving of the Torah, which outlined the basic contours of the legal system, until the coming of the scribes and then the tannaim, the teachers of the Mishnah, the halakhah must necessarily have undergone development, rooted in the needs and desires of a living community.

Thus, the notion of an oral tradition is not a piece of rabbinic propaganda, but is a requirement of every legal system. When that legal system is a religious one as well, the imperative to preserve its material is viewed as that much greater. Further, now working backward as it were, the existence of rabbinic legal documents itself belies the notion that rabbinic Judaism is a fossilized culture, for the very presence of rabbinic jurists is proof of a living and developing legal system. Let us turn to the specific details of Krochmal's reconstruction, in order to discern more fully the issues of the day, and how he approached them.

Krochmal begins his treatment of the rabbinic tradition with a theoretical justification of the notion of an oral tradition. He claims that logic dictates that the biblical legal system be accompanied by an oral tradition. This is so because *all* written codes—when they do exist—cannot be totally

self-contained or else would not be able to move through time. Reason demands that every law that is designed for a community, in its entirety and its constituent parts, cannot possibly be promulgated in the necessary detail, because contingencies are almost limitless. It is therefore necessary that a code include general principles, under which the various particulars that will arise in the future can be subsumed. This is particularly true if the code is a written one from its inception. For, in such a case, the code must relate to the specific circumstances of the community for which it is promulgated, and must also contain within it the potential to accommodate changing historical circumstances. Furthermore, logic dictates that whereas the written code should be publicized as much as possible, and copies be available to all who live within that legal system, the interpretive extractions be oral, and vouchsafed to the leaders of the community, presumably to avoid anarchy. They will thus be maintained among the people as customary practices not yet given official promulgation.³⁷

With the expansion of the need to extract particulars from the general principles, scholars, primarily linguists and lawyers, become necessary. It is their role to help the leaders maintain the legal system. As circumstances and language develop further, and the need for interpretation increases, individual scholars give way to groups of scholars. It is their role to interpret based on the exegetical norms previously established. They must use legal reasoning and comparative linguistics (to discern the meanings of the words in the original code which may be obsolete and unintelligible to the average speaker of the language); they must compare the general rules and the particular circumstances, and know how

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to make allowances for the changes in historical conditions (*Guide*, p. 190).

To Krochmal it was a universal truth that every politically oriented legal system—including those that did not change greatly, those that were intended for a limited time frame, and those that did not require punctilious observance—requires an “oral tradition,” or a body of customs that maintained the integrity of the legal system, exactly as Savigny had claimed. Clearly, the divine law, which is designed to be eternal and comprehensive, and to create a bond between God and humans requires an oral tradition of interpretation and exegetical norms in order to function (*ibid.*). Krochmal states:

It is one of the cornerstones of our faith that the Torah which we possess in written form was accompanied by an oral tradition, which is equal in value, and which is also Torah. The primary principles of this tradition were communicated to Moses at Sinai, and were transmitted by him to Joshua, and after him to the elders . . . until the time of the scholars of the Mishnah and Talmud who lived during the time of the second Temple and up to four-hundred years after its destruction. The main part of this tradition and its offshoots, as well as all things that were innovated by and agreed to by the premier scholars of the generations during this time of more than 1800 years, all of this is given by our sages the general name of “Torah shebe’al peh” [oral Torah]. (*Ibid.*)³⁸

Thus, here Krochmal is arguing that indeed Jewish traditional claims correspond perfectly to the way a legal system must be, particularly a divine legal system. The central claim is drawn—at times almost verbatim—from Savigny’s understanding of the movement of legal materials through time,

although, unlike Savigny, who skips the first step, Krochmal begins with an existing code that is in turn the object of customary development, culminating in the production of jurisprudential materials.³⁹ Given the particular historical and religious circumstances of these two scholars, this distinction is obviously necessary and requires no comment. The important point is that Krochmal adapted Savigny's line of reasoning to a Jewish context in a way that justifies the notion of an oral Torah, albeit one that emerges gradually over centuries, that is rooted in the spirit of the people.⁴⁰

Krochmal, of course, is here addressing the same point as Halevi, but the shift between Krochmal's argument and that of Halevi is subtle and important. Halevi argued that because the Torah was not self-contained there must be an authentic oral tradition as well. This argument was sufficient for Halevi's purpose, since he was combating the claims of the Karaites, who acknowledged the authority of the Torah, but denied the authenticity of the tradition. This, however, is not the case with Krochmal. For him the argument that the Torah is not self-contained could be seen as a defect in that document, but could not, by itself, support the need for an oral tradition. Rather, Krochmal must first demonstrate that it is the nature of all legal systems to be fluid, to develop fully over time and to do so orally. It would therefore be natural for the Torah to follow this pattern. Thus, an oral tradition is mandated by the nature of legal systems. The advantage of this argument from Krochmal's perspective is its universality and rationality.

Even in this preliminary statement Krochmal can be seen as responding to the claims of Bendavid and Gans. Implicit in the claim that the Torah must, by the very nature of

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things, have been accompanied by an oral tradition means that the Bible cannot be considered the exclusive source for an understanding of Israelite religion; all comparisons of rabbinic and biblical Judaism based on the assumption that it can could thus be dismissed as ill-informed. Further, since Krochmal had no doubt that the rabbinic writings are the authentic repository of this tradition, the entire distinction between the biblical religion and rabbinic Judaism could be seen as formal, external but not essential. In addition, in this opening statement Krochmal sidesteps the issue raised by Creizenach; while not denying that the term "month" would have been clear to the first generation of Israelites, he would claim that future generations would have had to perpetuate this understanding within an oral tradition. Otherwise, as the nation became aware of different calendrical systems and removed in time from the establishment of the ancient one, the term would have been subject to controversy.

Having dealt with the larger theoretical issues, Krochmal turns to the actual historical unfolding of the rabbinic tradition. It is here that we can see both his desire to write critical history and his naive credulity; each is apparent in his claim that he wishes to rationally explain the tradition by discerning its laws and boundaries, and that this is achieved by "studying the writings of, and observing the evidence available to, the ancient scholars, with greater authority granted to the earlier authorities than to the later ones, as is fitting given the nature of our quest" (*Guide*, p. 191). The notion that early authorities are ipso facto more reliable in transmitting the data of the tradition than later ones is naive, in that there is no recognition that the particular source in question may have had an

agenda that did not entail the transmission of historical truth. To be sure, Krochmal is aware that in ancient times it was regarded as beneficial to date biblical books as early as possible; he also realizes that the tradition attributes certain ordinances to an unacceptably early date.⁴¹ We would therefore expect him to treat claims to chronological priority with a grain of salt. However, Krochmal's work is primarily contrapuntal. He is not really interested in writing a dispassionate account of the oral tradition; his is a highly partisan presentation. Thus, his suspicions are aroused only when the claim does not correspond to the results of philological and historical research or reason, for here he had little choice but to question its veracity. For Krochmal all rabbinic historical claims are considered true until "proven" false; this was, he apparently believed, the best way to counter the historical presentations of rabbinism that were leading many of his coreligionists astray.

The sources that Krochmal uses to write his history are almost exclusively derived from the rabbinic literature itself. What the Talmud, particularly the Babylonian, reports regarding the lives of the sages, the history of a tractate, or the composition of the Tosefta is the primary evidence used. In addition, Krochmal seems to have drawn rather heavily from the so-called French version of the "Epistle of R. Sherira Gaon," and from other traditional histories such as the introduction to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. Josephus's works are cited for background information.⁴²

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The Period of the Soferim

Krochmal begins his analysis of rabbinism's history in earnest with the period of the so-called "Soferim" or scribes. Although he claims there are already traces of the interpretive tradition to be found in the Pentateuch itself, and certainly in the prophets, the history of the tradition in the First Commonwealth remains too obscure for scholarly discussion. Nevertheless, the few traces that survive are sufficient to establish the authenticity and antiquity of the oral tradition, which is, in fact, the point of the chapter as a whole.⁴³ It is, however, in the period of the Soferim that the interpretive activity of which we can speak with some confidence begins. For Krochmal this period begins with Ezra (fifth century B.C.E.), and the function of the Soferim (literally, scribes; the word also seems to be etymologically related to the Hebrew word for "to count") was to write Torah scrolls for the nation, and to undertake the job of counting, defining and interpreting the laws "on the basis of the tradition and the intensive study of the Scriptures" (*Guide*, p. 194).

To be more precise, the function of the Soferim was to clarify everything in the Torah that was not immediately clear. Krochmal argues that they were uniquely qualified to do this in that they lived, chronologically and qualitatively, close to the prophets, and thus had a thorough understanding of the language of the Bible. The proof that the Soferim engaged in clarifying and defining the words of the Torah is adduced, quite dubiously, from the fact that the rabbis, authentic bearers of the authentic tradition, ascribed a number of laws to them; these laws are described as *divrei soferim* (the

words of the Soferim). Perhaps more important, a logical and rational analysis of rabbinic sources demands that the Soferim be seen as having engaged in this clarifying enterprise, as the Mishnah, in a number of places, seems to make certain assumptions that demand a previously accepted explanation of a given verse.⁴⁴

In addition to these interpretations of the Soferim, which are to be considered as scriptural injunctions,⁴⁵ the Soferim also ordained "enactments." These are decrees, and preventive measures that the Soferim instituted to meet the specific needs of the community. Their legal status is equivalent to rabbinic laws.

Beyond the various allusions to Soferic activity preserved in rabbinic literature, Krochmal claims the Soferim left behind their own literary legacy. For as writers of Torah scrolls, the Soferim determined the spelling, pronunciation and positioning of words in the biblical text.⁴⁶ It was in making these determinations that the Soferim were able to combine their roles as writers of Torah scrolls and as interpreters, for they often provided hints of their interpretations in the written form of the biblical text.

This was accomplished, *inter alia*, through the use of the "qeri" and "ketiv" (although written one way, the word[s] should be read another way, which does not affect the external text at all), and defective and plene spellings of words.⁴⁷ These devices, Krochmal claimed, enabled the Soferim to encode the proper interpretation within the verse's graphic representation. Most of Krochmal's examples are quite technical, and, at times, quite ingenious.⁴⁸ What is important for our purposes is his proposal that the canonical text of the

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Bible, whose antiquity was acknowledged by almost all, actually reflects important interpretive activity that may be considered oral law. In this way the antiquity of the oral law is definitively established. Thus, the notion that the oral law is some kind of self-aggrandizing myth created by the rabbis is rendered unacceptable.

We may learn much regarding Krochmal's motives by the characteristic apologia he appends to this discussion. Recognizing that his proposal regarding the activities of the Soferim is quite bold and venturesome, Krochmal addresses his reader:

But this reader must remember that in all that we have suggested here there are no practical legal consequences, and that we are not dealing here with the laws or the midrash on which they are based, nor with the sayings and disputes of the Talmud, but rather with the traditions of the early Soferim and its basis, and here we may conjecture . . . and thus, if to any reader our thoughts are deemed unworthy, or entirely without foundation . . . so be it. But he must not accuse the author, or in any way suspect him, and repay the intended good with evil, *when our only intention in this work, and particularly in this chapter, is to give honor to our sages and their memory, to make peace between the two Torahs and reason, and to discover the root and the source of these things that are the objects of overwhelming scorn on the part of the nations of the world and the foolish among our own people.* (*Guide*, p. 202; emphasis added)

Thus Krochmal sees his presentation as enhancing the credibility of the traditional belief in an oral law. His approach to the Soferim was to try to understand their activity—establishing the biblical text—in such a way as to render harmless the scorn of Jews and gentiles alike. This was particularly necessary in regard to the role of the Soferim as many saw the

changes and discrepancies on the text as evidence of the unreliability of the Jews as caretakers of this text.⁴⁹ To counter this attitude Krochmal imputes sacred concerns to the Soferim, and claims that their work in no way affects the authenticity of the Torah as the true revelation of God's word, for in its content and essential spiritual message the Torah text remains unaltered.⁵⁰

For Krochmal the period of the Soferim was one of great activity in the transmission of the oral tradition. The Soferim interpreted the Torah, wherever it was necessary, and often provided hints of these interpretations in the textual traditions which they established. This discussion of the Soferim became one of Krochmal's great "discoveries," and he was followed in his conclusions by Zechariah Fränkel,⁵¹ and Isaac Hirsh Weiss, among others. Yehezkel Kaufmann has shown, however, that the claims of Krochmal and the others regarding a period of the Soferim are without foundation.⁵² Still, while they tell us little regarding the Second Temple period that remains of value, the construct, and the discomfort that led to it, tell us much concerning what was perplexing Jews in the nineteenth century.

*The Period of the Tannaim and
the Nature of Oral Torah*

Once the task of the Soferim was completed, and all the necessary definitions were supplied, Krochmal asserts that a new period began; that of the learners (or repeaters) of halakhot, or tannaim, which began approximately in the year 210 B.C.E. His description of this period is actually a partial

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phenomenology of rabbinic learning, dedicated as it is to defining categories and modes of learning and putting them in historical perspective. It is unfortunate that Krochmal was so motivated by resolving the challenging elements in modern understandings of rabbinics that he did not devote his considerable philosophical skills to a complete phenomenology, but rather chose to address only those issues that were acutely problematic.

Unlike the Soferim, whose task was primarily to define terms and write scrolls, often including allusions to their definitions and limitations in the scrolls themselves, the tannaim began to examine the logic of the Torah. Thus, while the authority of the Soferim derives from their linguistic skills, due in large measure to their chronological proximity to the use of biblical Hebrew and their position as heirs of the prophets, the authority of the tannaim derives from their skill as logicians and their position as heirs of the Soferim. The truth of the tannaitic interpretations is based on the fact that they represent logical, rational extensions of the principles of the Torah; the latter already encompassed, for them, the definitions and interpretations of the Soferim. The tannaim, then, continue the chain of tradition, while at the same time changing its form. We should not underestimate the importance of Krochmal's claim that the tannaim's authority derives from the logical extension of the words of the Torah, for, as we shall see, it is central to his resolution of the problems referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

The tannaim's logical interpretation of the Torah means that they created new laws and limitations which did not correspond to the simple meaning of the scriptural text. Rather,

they were derived on the basis of reasoning from the text, or, on the basis of one of the accepted hermeneutic principles, themselves thoroughly in accord with reason (*Guide*, pp. 204–5). Specifically, their interpretive activity involved comparing the meaning of words in different contexts, the extrapolation of particulars from general formulations, subcategories from categories, as well as the independent use of reason (which, for Krochmal, will not result in arbitrary enactments, but rather in truth). Regarding the latter, Krochmal acknowledges that some of these laws, derived independently of Scripture, are based on Roman Civil Law, as well as a sense of equity, but even here authority derives from Scripture, and the interpretations are based on scriptural imperatives.⁵³

The classical formulation of the tannaitic interpretations was a short sentence divorced from the scriptural context; they began as three- and four-word sentences, and were eventually expanded (*ibid.*, p. 208). This form was necessitated by the oral nature of the tradition; the Tannaim could not repeat the verse, the Soferic commentary on it, and their own innovation. They therefore simply stated the innovation, with the scriptural and Soferic contexts assumed. Thus, for Krochmal, the “halakhic form” preceded the “midrashic form” (the former being just the law, the latter beginning with a verse, which is then followed by the derived halakhah).

It would, however, be an egregious error to conclude on the basis of the Mishnah’s form that the halakhic system of the Tannaim was developed independently of Scripture. For, while the halakhic form preceded the midrashic form historically, the midrash always preceded the halakhah theoretically. That is, the halakhah was always based on a derivation from Scripture, except for certain civil laws.⁵⁴

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Krochmal's discussion of the different forms leads to his interesting reflections on the relationship among the Mishnah (halakhah), Midreshei Halakhah and the Gemara (Talmud):

And given that the halakhah in and of itself is quite abbreviated in its language and form, the midrash, which is its source and foundation, complements it; midrash is in turn complemented by: the argumentation involving conflicting midrashim and the choice between them; the decision regarding the similarities and differences between one law and another; everything that pertains to clarifying the given issue in all possible ways; this is given the Aramaic name Gemara, and it means completion, for it complements the halakhah and its midrash with respect to the practical requirements. And given that this is so, the halakhah, its midrash and its gemara are in truth chronologically equal, for all halakhot, or, at least, the overwhelming majority, were arrived at in this manner—that is, they were derived on the basis of midrash from Scripture and their clarification was achieved through argumentation. But, in their establishment in language and form they differ chronologically greatly. For there are many clear proofs that the halakhot were the earliest in respect of a fixed form, and afterwards their midrash, and lastly, the Gemara, which did not achieve a fixed form until very late. (*Guide*, p. 206)

The statement that the halakhot, their midrash and gemara are chronologically equal (*shavim b'z'man*), means that they are qualitatively equal. That is, they are three different moments of one intellectual process, and thus, although the midrash and gemara *texts* crystallized later, they are nevertheless true reflections of the basis and extensions, respectively, of the halakhah. This is an important example of Krochmal's attempt to historicize without concomitantly relativizing. He grants that the texts have a history in respect of one another

—indeed, with the Mishnah and Gemara, at least, one could hardly deny it—but argues that despite this textual history the *intellectual* process of Torah is in no way historical. Rather, this process represents the rational extension of the divine word to a totally developed and articulated form. The textual history merely reflects the formalization of this process over time. The historical process does not, however, grant qualitative superiority to any of the three moments, for they are all equal participants, as it were, in the same intellectual process.⁵⁵ The formulation is reminiscent of Hegel's notion of the Idea, itself beyond history, but actualized through history, and to be sure, this is not accidental.⁵⁶

Perhaps the strongest challenge to the picture that Krochmal presents is the existence of unresolved disputes, which were “canonized” by their inclusion in the Mishnah. For the existence of such disputes weakens the claim that the rabbinic literature reflects the authentic tradition passed on from the Soferim, and the rational extensions of Scripture. For the possession of a tradition negates the possibility of dispute (assuming the heirs respect the tradition, which we must assume here, or else the claim of possessing the tradition becomes irrelevant), while before the bar of reason there is but one right answer. Thus, the disputes seem to indicate that, in fact, the rabbis are not the legitimate heirs of the oral tradition, nor are they expert logicians, capable of discerning the true scriptural approach to a given question. Rather, they would seem to be no different from any other group of legislators, at times insightful and wise, at times arbitrary and capricious.

The traditional sources themselves show awareness of the

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problem, and the Mishnah records a question regarding the transmission of rejected opinions.⁵⁷ But this mishnah only deals with part of the problem. For there are many disputes recorded in the Mishnah that are not accompanied by a decision, and are not resolvable on the basis of the rule "in a dispute between the individual and many, the law follows the opinion of the many." Later generations generally did develop means of deciding these disputes, but the basic problem remains. Also recorded in the traditional sources is the idea that in such a dispute both opinions are the word of the living God; whatever the intent of this phrase, it too does not really address the problem.⁵⁸ Either rabbinic writings contain the true word of God, or else the means to extract it. In either case, disputes have no place.

Krochmal begins his treatment of this problem on the basis of a quotation from a baraita.⁵⁹ The baraita states "in the beginning there were no disputes in Israel." Krochmal interjects his comments: "in the beginning [of the time when the halakhot were achieving fixed form] there were no disputes [sustained and fixed for generations] in Israel" (*Guide*, p. 206). For Krochmal, the point of this baraita is not that there were no differences of opinion in Israel at all, but rather that these differences were not of a lasting nature, and did not find their way into the Mishnah. This is because in the early tannaitic period, there existed the means of resolving these disputes; they were brought before the Sanhedrin, if need be, which consisted of the experts in the field, and the matter would be decided. In all cases the decision would be based on the position of the majority. Krochmal's assumption here seems to be that the majority decision of the premier scholars

and logicians of the day was sufficient to establish the rational and true meaning of the Torah.⁶⁰

The apologia continues, as the Jewish nation experienced strife both from within—the political struggles and the Pharisee/Sadducee schism—and without—the wars and persecutions at the hands of Rome—the Jewish scholarly world was split, and, particularly after the generation of Hillel and Shammai, Jewish learning took place in individual yeshivot; the Sanhedrin, and all other authoritative conventions of scholars, became a thing of the past.⁶¹ As such, the authoritative, universally acknowledged mechanism for resolving disputes correctly and rationally within the rabbinic system was no longer available. Nevertheless, contingent historical circumstance cannot detract from the intrinsic, metahistorical, integrity of the system. Thus, so long as the existence of continuing disputes in rabbinic sources can be explained by recourse to historical contingency, the system remains unshaken. Disputes thus do not undermine the integrity of the system's self-understanding; they merely represent a flaw in the historical unfolding of this authentic system.

We have seen that Krochmal identified the beginning of the formulation of halakhot with the beginning of the tannaitic period. He is aware that this is not at all in accord with the traditional understanding, and that he may be attacked for his position. The rabbis had claimed that some halakhot are very early; some were already forgotten during the mourning period after Moses' death (*Guide*, p. 209).⁶² Nevertheless, according to Krochmal, the evidence demands that the existence of halakhot in a fixed form cannot be dated earlier than the tannaitic period. In articulating this position, Krochmal

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is undoubtedly guided by what he considers the needs of his own day, given the prevailing attitude to the rabbinic tradition:

And know, my friend, . . . that our intention in this chapter, and in the work as whole, is to refine and clarify our articles of faith from a rational perspective, within the boundaries of scholarly investigation, on the basis of trustworthy evidence, and thereby determine the facts against the skeptics, challengers and deniers, and against all who stray from the truth excessively in any direction, for this is the great need of our generation. And we have already repeated that our goal here is the same as that of Maimonides' in his *Guide* for this generation. . . . And thus here our desire is to determine definitively the latest time in which one can claim that the halakhot began [to be fixed, and transmitted in this fixed form]. (*Guide*, p. 209)

The formulation of the halakhot must be considered later than the tradition claims for two reasons. The first is that the term *halakhab* is an Aramaic word, and, in a piece of dubious reasoning, Krochmal claims halakhot, as fixed formulated norms, could not precede the emergence of their name. Secondly, formulated norms must postdate the beginning of the public reading of the Torah and the accompanying explanations of the Soferim on which the halakhot are based. These considerations indicate that the halakhot could not predate Ezra, when Aramaic became prevalent in Judea, and the Torah, according to tradition, was read regularly in public. Furthermore, the language of the halakhot contained in the Mishnah is not the language of the Bible, but is rather a later Hebrew, unique to the Mishnah, and thus, the halakhot found in the Mishnah could not have been formulated prior to

the Second Commonwealth period.⁶³ As for the traditional attributions of certain halakhot to First Commonwealth figures, these were in all likelihood stated as aggadot, and the "aggadic stories cannot by themselves confirm anything unless it is already confirmed elsewhere" (ibid., p. 210).

In dating the formulation of halakhot as he does, Krochmal challenged a fundamental methodological assumption of previous traditional historians, but has not succumbed to the—to him—irresponsible dating of recent historians. He has explained the attributions of certain halakhot to ancient figures as being mere aggadot, serving an honest, heuristic purpose. But this problem is relatively minor. There are other issues he feels he must deal with before his task is complete. Whole categories of laws that ostensibly emerged prior to the tannaitic period abound in rabbinic literature. These categories are too central to be dismissed as mere aggadot, yet the historical structure established by the tradition cannot be maintained.

Particularly troublesome was the category of "early" halakhot known as the *halakhab l'Moshe mi-sinai* (the law of Moses from Sinai). It cannot be claimed that the attribution of these laws to Moses at Sinai was not meant to be taken seriously; it is clear that such halakhot were accorded special status due to their attribution to Moses.⁶⁴ It can also not be claimed, for the same reasons detailed above, that these laws actually derive from Moses at Sinai. As much out of desperation as anything else, Krochmal claims that this title was given to those laws that were lost during the tumultuous period toward the end of the Second Commonwealth. After a time some of them were rediscovered incidentally, while their midrashic

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source remained lost, so that the scriptural sources which the law undoubtedly had was unknown. They nevertheless retain special status as they were never subject to disputes; further, the necessity of these provisions for the observance of the scriptural laws was acknowledged by all.

Therefore they called laws like these, sometimes quite exactly, and sometimes altogether metaphorically, *halakhah l'Moshe mi'sinai*; that is, it is a halakhah that is not included in the comments of the Soferim, has no midrash attached to it, and is ancient in its establishment, with a chain of tradition going back to the "pairs" or to an unknown time in antiquity. It is universally accepted and never disputed; . . . from the perspective of its value and necessity, it is equal to the comments and definitions of the Soferim. Therefore, such a halakhah is from Sinai, or *as if it were from Sinai*, not subject to investigation, examination, dispute, judgment on the basis of majority opinion or a tradition from one's teacher as is the case with all other halakhot. (Emphasis in original)⁶⁵

Thus the title "halakhah l'Moshe mi'sinai" is not the product of any attempt at deception on the part of the rabbis, nor is it the product of rabbinic ignorance of historical reality; the term should be understood as a functional description rather than as a historical one. That is, the laws so designated functioned as if they were imparted by Moses from Sinai, in that the observance of the Torah without them is inconceivable.⁶⁶

Krochmal concludes his discussion of the early attributions⁶⁷ with a general statement that whenever one comes across historical claims in rabbinic literature that seem to be impossible, one must examine them carefully for the essential message, it being understood that one cannot accept such claims

at face value. This in turn leads him to a philosophical discussion of the core of rabbinic self-understanding. He turns to the famous rabbinic dictum, “everything which a diligent student shall innovate⁶⁸ in the future was already communicated to Moses at Sinai” (PT Pe’ah 2:4). Obviously, the simple meaning of such a saying must be rejected; yet there is something quite deep here as well. The key for understanding the meaning are the words “diligent” (*wattiq*) and “innovate” (*l’hadesh*). For these words indicate to Krochmal that the innovation was done on the basis of rational examination and comparison. Thus,

the speaker felt that it is the nature of the Spirit, [being] total unity and complete intelligence, to encompass all the offshoots that are united within it, from it they came and to it they shall return, just as the simple idea of the circle . . . already includes all the concepts and properties that were explained by the geometers. . . . Everything was included in the simple definition of the circle, such that one who defined it already mandated all the wondrous definitions and properties that are known to us today, and which shall be discovered in the future. All the time that they have not been elucidated they are contained within the idea of the circle in potentia only, and when one discovers them through investigation they become, for him, part of the idea of circle in actu. From here there is a source for the saying above, both in relation to the finite recipient [i.e., Israel], although only in potentia, and in relation to the giver, may He be blessed, in actu as well, as for him there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality. (*Guide*, pp. 215–16)

Krochmal here argues that it is natural for the word of God to include within it all that will eventually be derived from it—provided that the derivations are achieved in accordance with

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reason—and it is therefore legitimate to say that everything that will be innovated, through reason, was already included in the original revelation. Until, however, this innovation is actually brought forth, it is included in the revelation, for human beings, only in *potentia*, and therefore it is equally legitimate to say that it was the diligent student who actually taught the innovation, since he was the one who transferred it from potentiality to actuality.

Krochmal here returns to the theme that he developed earlier, in discussing the relationship of halakhot, midrash and gemara, but in a more philosophical form, and with one important addition. Here, it is not merely the various genres of the oral tradition that must be seen as intellectually simultaneous and historically developed, but the entire Torah, written and oral, is to be seen as an intellectual monument, encompassing everything that can be derived from it *rationaly*. The movement of the derivations from potentiality to actuality takes place within history, but the process itself is beyond history; thus, again, the facts of history, undeniable though they be, do not relativize the tradition, or any aspect of it. For that which is elucidated later is every bit as much a part of Torah as that which preceded it into actuality. The Torah is the Idea, brought to light through history, but qualitatively untarnished by it.⁶⁹

Thus does Krochmal challenge Bendavid's and Gans's claims that Judaism must be seen as a religion distinct from that of the Israelites—by showing the qualitative irrelevance of history in the sphere of the absolute. That is, halakhot may be late in form; their formulation, however, merely makes manifest what had been latent all along. They are thus part of

Torah, no less than are the laws of Exodus and Leviticus. To claim otherwise is to succumb to a philosophically immature historicism—one that fails to take account of the inner workings of cultures as they develop over time.

A more mature understanding of the development of cultures—one that knows to take account of the unfolding of latent potentialities—and a learned appreciation of the absolute nature of Jewish spirituality leads Krochmal's perplexed inexorably to the conclusion that Jewish culture is one lengthy unified process of actualizing the latent teachings of Torah. In his discussion of the early halakhot, Krochmal contributes the philosophical justification of this essentially traditional position, in the hope that it would become more palatable in the modern age. In this endeavor, the philosophy of Hegel served him in good stead.⁷⁰

The Formation of the Mishnah

Having dealt with all the theoretical issues that concern him, Krochmal proceeds to a discussion of the formation of the Mishnah. The specific details are at times quite technical, and need not detain us here. However, here, as elsewhere, we are interested in discerning the general historiographic concern that led to the inclusion of this discussion in a guide of the perplexed of the nineteenth century. The problem, after all, would seem to be more in the realm of theory, namely, the nature of the oral tradition, than in the specifics of Mishnaic history. Here again, as elsewhere, the answer to our question can be discerned in Krochmal's treatment of the subject. For Krochmal's history of the Mishnah is designed to support the

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overall claim of the antiquity of, and the continuity within, the oral tradition. In Krochmal's version, the central figure of the Mishnah is not Yehudah ha-Nasi, its anthologizer, who is, at best, the third most significant figure, but rather Hillel, who died more than a century and a half prior to the completion of the Mishnah. Indeed, for him, even Hillel's work was largely organizational, the bulk of the material having preceded him.

It will be recalled that according to Krochmal the learning of halakhot in fixed form begins with the tannaitic period; Shimon ha-Zadik, a transitional figure between the Soferim and the tannaim,⁷¹ was the first to begin the teaching of the halakhot in fixed form. Thus, the learning of halakhot begins at the very end of the third century B.C.E. (approximately 210), while Hillel flourished two to two and a half centuries later. By Hillel's time, therefore, hundreds of halakhot had been formulated. In addition, there already existed some principles of organization; halakhot were grouped together based on some structural or linguistic similarity. Each grouping of halakhot was known as a *masekhet*, or an "interweaving." Thus, the rabbinic claim that prior to Hillel there were six or seven hundred orders of mishnah (an order = numerous masekhtot [plural of *masekhet*], or tractates) attests to the fact that there were very loose principles of organization prior to Hillel, although the numbers are undoubtedly exaggerated.⁷²

It was Hillel who established the six orders that are found in the Mishnah, and it was he who assigned each tractate to an order, divided each tractate into chapters, and the chapters into individual halakhot. Within each order, however, the tractates were not fixed; their order was determined by Rabbi

(= Yehudah ha-Nasi). As established by Hillel, the original tractates were filled with laws that were cited anonymously, and without disputes.⁷³ This is the general schema; however, not all of the tractates were established by Hillel. There are a number of tractates that were established by other scholars, such as "Middot," which was established as a separate tractate by R. Eliezer b. Jacob, as reported by the Babylonian Talmud.⁷⁴

For Krochmal, the great challenge to this dating of the Mishnah is the fact that large portions of the Mishnaic material are attributed to second-century (C.E.) scholars. How then can it be maintained that most of the material is far older? Once again Krochmal seeks refuge in his *deus ex machina*, external historical circumstance beyond the control of the framers of the system. Here he explains that with the stormy political conditions that prevailed in Palestine in the first and second centuries (C.E.), and the destruction of the Temple came the second great "forgetting" of the halakhot.⁷⁵ Not all the laws were lost, for "God in his mercy provided the cure prior to the disease in that a firm and unwavering foundation was laid for the halakhot and the learning of them in the one-hundred years between Hillel, the establisher of most of the tractates, and the destruction" (*Guide*, p. 227).

During the Hadrianic persecutions (132–135 C.E.) the third "forgetting" took place. In addition to the loss of the Mishnaic material, the "learners of halakhot" were divided into various schools and factions; this division was responsible for the spreading of disputes, as we have seen. All these events led to a situation in which certain halakhot were learned in one center, but were unknown in another; halakhot were

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taught as the accepted opinion, when they were actually the minority opinion; additions to halakhot were made in one location that were not known elsewhere, and so forth. Often, therefore, the names attached to a given halakhah indicate that the halakhah was taught by the particular tanna, meaning that it was preserved by him and his school, but not that he was necessarily the originator of the halakhah.

The role of Rabbi in the formation of the Mishnah was to sift through the enormous mass of material handed down through the various schools. By his time there were many orders of Mishnah; there were those that correspond to the divisions instituted by Hillel, and those that did not. Some of the collections were ordered on the basis of the biblical sequence of their midrashic foundations. That is, laws derived from verses in Exodus preceded those derived from Leviticus, and the same method was maintained within the biblical books as well (*ibid.*). Rabbi retained the method devised by Hillel, but there were many additions to Hillel's Mishnah, particularly by the school of R. Akiva, that had to be represented in the Mishnah. Thus, Rabbi chose the Mishnah of R. Meir, a student of R. Akiva, as his main source in compiling his Mishnah.⁷⁶

Krochmal completes his discussion of the formation of the Mishnah with an explanation of the redundancies, inconsistencies, the sometimes stilted language and the non sequiturs found in the Mishnah:

And know that were it within the power of Rabbi and his assistants to totally abandon the order, context, and ambiguities that preceded him in the Mishnah collections, in order to melt down and dissolve all the halakhic material into parts and pour out a new

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arrangement in consistent and clear language, even if it included the distinction between what is universally accepted and that which remains controversial, *as is done in all other areas of scholarship*, and as was done by Maimonides in his code, it would have been much easier for them, given the group of scholars and their wide-ranging knowledge, and from one perspective there would have been a great benefit in it. But, for a number of reasons this was undesirable to these scholars, and indeed, they could not have done it. The main reason was the great need in the oral Torah, which includes ancient traditions, that it be unique, treasured and extraordinary—not only in the preservation of the names of the transmitters of the traditions, but even more in the preservation of the style, language and manner of its transmission from antiquity. For all of these are prominent indications that, in its foundation it is an unbroken tradition from generation to generation. Thus, in their fashioning of a comprehensive Mishnah, these scholars chose to retain the context, intellectual and linguistic, of those that preceded them, and to impose as much unity, consistency, clarity and order *as was possible*. But they were perforce left with contradictions, as well as difficult and unintelligible passages; they left them to later generations to complete and close the work, as we shall explain. And they were satisfied with the remedies and benefits that were achieved through their activity, in accord with the needs of their times. Blessed is He who chose them and their Mishnah. And know this and understand it. (*Guide*, p. 232; first emphasis added)⁷⁷

This passage is quite remarkable from a number of perspectives. We shall focus on the claim that the rabbis could have produced a document in accord with accepted modern scholarly standards, but deliberately chose not to do so, in order to preserve the pristine forms of their tradition. Thus, the peculiar nature of the Mishnah in no way indicates lack of sophis-

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tication on the part of the rabbis, but rather, a deep-seated and laudable respect for history. Establishing the plausibility of this argument is the primary motivation of Krochmal's treatment of the Mishnah. While not denying that the document seems undisciplined and chaotic by modern standards, Krochmal turns this feature into a virtue, a virtue that indicates the framers' honesty and religious sensitivity and their reverence for tradition and the past. Further, it is this chaotic nature that supports the antiquity of the document's contents. A more active redactor, creating and reformulating material at will, would never have produced such a document. Thus, qualities that made the Mishnah the object of Jost's scorn, became for Krochmal and—he hoped—his readers, a source of renewed confidence in the authenticity of this central religious document.

In Krochmal's treatment of rabbinism, viewed against the backdrop of his time and place, we see once again the extent to which the *Guide* must be seen as an apologetic and polemical work, designed to combat both the negative approach of modern scholarship to Judaism, and the intellectual cowardice of the dogmatists. In the thirteenth chapter of the *Guide* we are not presented with detached historiography, but rather, a bold defense of traditional claims on the basis of modern scholarly standards, as Krochmal understood them. This meant that no negative claim could remain unchallenged. Yet the response had to conform to the perceived needs of the time. Dating the halakhot too early, as the tradition had done, had deleterious effects, for it branded rabbinic claims as nonsense; too late, as modern scholarship tried to do, challenged the very notion of a tradition.

The only way that rabbinic Judaism could be maintained, and the authenticity and antiquity of its tradition acknowledged, was to tread the middle path, described in Krochmal's fourth chapter; this is the path that searches for answers through scholarly investigation, and seeks to determine the true nature of phenomena by examining their origins and history. Here, that path demands that we evaluate traditional claims critically, but also sympathetically; otherwise we cannot hope to discern their meaning and purpose.

To place Krochmal's work within the context of earlier Jewish thought on this subject, it may be said that he radically restates the second strand identified above, while almost wholly rejecting the first strand, except in one rhetorical flourish. For him, oral Torah is rooted in the religious consciousness and sensitivity of a spiritual collective led by its talented religious virtuosi. It is the expression of the bearers of absolute spirit, and derives its religious value from this fact. It is the creation of a religiously highly charged human community logically and rationally reflecting on the revealed divine message.

Its antiquity, the mark of its authenticity, is established by the *rechtsgeschichtliche* model, selectively drawn from the work of Savigny, by the few references found in the Torah itself and the more frequent occurrences in which the Soferim encoded their interpretations within the graphemes of the text. Historical studies that show rabbinic texts and ordinances emerging over time are no problem, for correct as such studies often are, they cannot undermine the essence of the system, which remains outside history, even as it is touched by it at every step. Neither disputes nor Roman ordinances diminish the *essential* grandeur of the rabbinic accomplishment.

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When we combine the results of Krochmal's study of rabbinism with those of his biblical studies, we see that all attempts to distinguish between biblical and rabbinic religion are doomed to fail. Such attempts fail on historical grounds, for the latest portions of the Bible, the Hasmonean Psalms, emerge half a century after the onset of the period of the tannaim. More important, many of the books of the Bible were either written or achieved fixed form in the period of the Great Assembly, the same period that saw the historically verifiable onset of oral Torah. Thus, the attempt to drive a wedge between these two cultures is historically unacceptable. The movement from biblical to rabbinic religion represents not a break or essential shift, but the creative unfolding of a single cultural monument. Understanding this would lead, Krochmal hoped, to a renewed commitment to this absolute religious edifice, and would relieve the perplexities of those who came to doubt the authenticity and genius of the rabbinic achievement.

NOTES

1. With this latter statement I mean to point to the centrality of scriptural exegesis—midrash—in early halakhic discourse, and the application of similar exegetical techniques to rabbinic texts in later halakhic discourse. That is, in response to question, “Whence does he know this,” a question repeated thousands of times in the two Talmuds, the initial response is virtually always a verse; should the exegesis of the verse be shown to be inadequate the Talmud may on rare occasions state that the sage in question knows the stated law by virtue of it being simply a halakhah. Already third-century rabbinic sages are quoted in disagreement over what this means, with R. Yohanan stating that this means it is a tradition from Moses, while Samuel states that it is a customary law. Similarly Rashi takes the

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term *halakhab*, or the Aramaic equivalent, *hilkheta*, to mean a tradition from Moses, while Maimonides apparently did not understand the term this way. (See the discussion in the *Havot yair* of R. Yair Bacharach [d. 1702], responsum 192.) The point is that in the actual dynamic of halakhic discussion, recourse to traditions from Moses play a small role, whereas creative exegesis plays a fundamental role. In this sense, the first strand, while frequently articulated, plays a much greater role in Jewish apologetic than in the actual working out of the halakhic tradition.

2. Josephus's construct is inherently suspect, as it is not confirmed by other sources. This, of course, can be said for most all statements pertaining to ancient Jewish sectarianism. In any event, Josephus's construct has become classic, and even if not an accurate portrayal of what divided the Pharisees and Sadducees, it does suggest that the pharisaic claim to be the guardians of the tradition was challenged.
3. See Shalom Rosenberg, "Emunat Hakhamim," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 285–341. Yosef Kaplan takes issue with Rosenberg's claim that there was an abortive movement of Jewish "Protestants." This strikes me as correct; my use of the term is an endorsement of the name of the phenomenon, not Rosenberg's claims regarding the social reality. See Kaplan, "The Karaites' of Amsterdam in the Early 18th Century" (Hebrew), in *Zion*, vol. 52 (1987), p. 284, n. 20.
4. *Kuzari*, 3:35 (Even-Shmuel edition, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1972), p. 125). He continues there with other examples of this kind. This argument is not, to my knowledge, explicitly used by Maimonides, but would seem to be implicit in his remarks in the introduction to *Commentary on the Mishnah*, 3 vols., Y. Kafih, ed. and trans. Jerusalem; Mossad Haravkook, 1976, pp. 1–9. There Maimonides claims that God gave every written law together with its explanation, thus acknowledging that the very nature of the Torah as a legal source requires oral amplification.
5. We have already seen, in chapter 3, that this was a commonplace of gentile historiography.
6. Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, Gerson D. Cohen, ed. and trans. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), p. 21.
7. To be sure, many chroniclers of tradition attempted to fill in the

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- lacunae in the mishnah's chain, from Maimonides to Zadok ha-Cohen of Lublin in this century. All work within the framework established by the mishnah in Avot, however.
8. For discussion of other maskilim on this issue, see the conflicting views of Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay, "The Treatment of the Jewish Religion in the Literature of the Berlin Haskalah," in *PAAJR*, vol. 24 (1955), and Moshe Pelli, "The Attitude of the First Maskilim in Germany towards the Talmud," in *LBIY*, vol. 27 (1982). While I would not dispute Pelli's claims regarding the maskilim's respect for the Talmud as a source of scientific and historical knowledge, it seems to me that Barzilay is still correct that there was little appreciation for the Talmud as a religious document, and a general denial of the Talmud as the embodiment of the oral law.
 9. The editor's introduction to Heinrich Graetz's *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, trans., ed. and intro. by Ismar Schorsch, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, N.Y., 1975 (Moreschet Series, vol. 3), pp. 6-7. This introduction is an excellent discussion of the general problem engendered by the ideology of the early Wissenschaft scholars for the traditionally oriented Jew.
 10. *Ibid.*
 11. Isaak Marcus Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, vol. 3 (Berlin: 1822), p. 120.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
 13. See his vol. 4, pp. 133ff., for his attacks on the person of Yehudah ha-Nasi for his concern with personal respect and honor. Also, vol. 3, p. 123 for his condemnation of rabbinic *Ehrgeiz* and *Herrschaft* (a term used by Bendavid, as we saw above).
 14. For more on him, see below, chapter 6, and the literature cited there.
 15. See his *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 2 vols. (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1972), throughout.
 16. Reissner, *Eduard Gans: Ein Leben in Vormärz*, p. 52.
 17. Among the correspondence between Krochmal's family and Zunz there is a letter from Abraham Krochmal to Zunz which included his father's discussion of the similarities between Jewish and Roman law. In this letter, Krochmal specifically refers to Gans's work. (See Schorsch, "Production of a Classic" pp. 287, 304.) This letter was included by Zunz in a note in the *Guide* (p. 205 in Rawdowicz), with the sentence in which Gans's name appears quoted verbatim except for the refer-

- ence to Gans. Why Zunz deleted the reference to Gans is a matter of speculation. Certainly, the latter's conversion created a rift between the two erstwhile colleagues; Zunz may have considered it inappropriate to publicize Gans's existence. I cannot help but wonder what other references were deleted by Zunz. See Zunz's "The Publisher's Introduction" included in the Rawidowicz edition, pp. 2, 3 (*bet, gimel*).
18. Some of the specifics of Gans's argument are as follow: In discussing the means of entering the state of marriage, Gans states "dass der Gedanke der Eingehungsweise der Ehe, mit der Mosaischen Grundlage nur noch scheinbar in Berührung gebracht, ein vollkommen Anderer geworden ist" "(Die Grundzüge des mosaisch-talmudischen Erbrechts" (*ZWJ*, pp. 434-35). Later he claims that the rabbis erred in interpreting Deuteronomy 24:2 as indicating that intercourse is the definitive biblical way of effecting marriage (*ibid.*, p. 439). This challenge is potentially devastating. If the rabbis cannot be relied upon to discern the simple meaning of the text, the entire edifice of rabbinic Judaism cannot stand. Further, the relationship between the talmudic laws of inheritance and their purported biblical foundation is also explicitly denied, resulting in the same challenge (*ibid.*, pp. 453ff.). Thus, for Gans, Mosaic religion and Judaism are two distinct phenomena. Indeed, Gans begins his article with the rather matter-of-fact claim that the Hebrews "der mosaischen Urkunden" were a "ganz verschiedenartiges Volk" from the Jews, and supports this claim with a reference to Zunz's article in the same *Zeitschrift* (*ibid.*, p. 419). There Zunz also describes the Jews as a new people who, while descended from the ancient Hebrews, are quite different in most respects (*ibid.*, p. 114). Zunz enumerates Sprache, Sitten, Tendenzen and Meinungen as areas of difference.
 19. For a critique of this position, see the remarks of Juster quoted in Boaz Cohen's *Jewish and Roman Law* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1966), vol. 1, p. 348.
 20. This interpretation is supported by Immanuel Hegel's notes on Gans's lectures on "Naturrecht" and "Universalgeschichte." Here, rabbinic law is treated as a not very significant commentary on "mosaisches Recht," which, while contributing many ordinances to Western law, was superseded long ago. The lecture on Roman law makes clear that, for Gans, Roman law reached the pinnacle of legal development in

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- the ancient world. In the notes to this lecture rabbinic law is nowhere mentioned. See Eduard Gans, *Naturrecht und Universalgeschichte*, Manfred Riedel ed., (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), pp. 128–32, 145–47.
21. See the introduction to volume 4 of his *Schulchan Aruch* (Frankfurt am Main: 1840) p. v. There he clearly affirms the revelation of the Torah at Sinai.
 22. I will cite from the article, which more briefly rehearses some of the arguments contained in the third volume of *Schulchan Aruch*. This article is immediately followed by one of Rapoport's contributions to this journal, and was, therefore, almost undoubtedly known to Krochmal.
 23. Michael Creizenach, "Beiträge zur Beurtheilung des Talmuds," in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1837), p. 36.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. As we have seen and will yet see, the programmatic nature of scholarship pertaining to rabbinism in the nineteenth century was ubiquitous. This is no less true of gentile scholarship. The main works produced by gentiles challenging the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition were overtly reformist and missionary, respectively, in their intent. I refer to Luigi Chiarini's *Theorie du Judaïsme*, which was clearly reformist, and with which Krochmal was certainly familiar (see next chapter) and Alexander McCaul's *Old Paths*, with which Krochmal was almost certainly not familiar, which was overtly missionary in purpose. The book appeared in English in 1837, after having been serialized in a weekly over the previous two years. It was translated into Hebrew (!) and German in 1839, a year before Krochmal's death. Here McCaul reviews various Jewish superstitions that figure prominently in rabbinic literature, and whose importance in rabbinic culture is confirmed by their appearance in the liturgy, for the purpose of showing that such superstitions could not be the product of an authentic tradition originating from God. In addition, one finds here the usual complaints regarding rabbinic exegesis and its obvious distortion of the meaning of the biblical text. McCaul's work created quite a stir, and was the focus of several Jewish responses, perhaps most important being Isaac Baer Levinson's *Zerubabel*. Given the year in which the translations into languages Krochmal could read appeared, it is most unlikely that this work exercised any

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- influence on Krochmal's sense of urgency in dealing with the question. Still, such influence is not impossible; in any event, the existence of this work remains important to our understanding of the stakes and issues that dominated Jewish historiography from the 1830s on.
26. The first edition of this work appeared in 1826; a second edition was published in Breslau in 1850. Only the second edition was available to me, and references are to this second edition.
 27. Father and son, each named Johannes; their dates are 1564–1629 and 1599–1664. Each served as a professor of Hebrew at the University of Basle.
 28. Also interesting, incidentally, is the request by Eger that Plessner consider translating the *Hizzuk Emunah* of Isaac Troki into German and seeing to it that it be reissued in Hebrew; his hope was to make it available to "women and the masses." Eger seems to have been unaware that Troki was a Karaite. See Shlomo Sofer, ed., *Iggrot Soferim*, section one, letters 19 and 20, pp. 23–27. According to a Plessner family tradition, reported in the notes to letter 19, the *Edut l'Yisrael* was actually commissioned by Akiba Eger to use as a weapon in his fight before the Prussian king against the educational reforms. The content of the letters themselves do not support this claim, and the absence of a *haskamah* by Eger (given that he in fact wrote so many) renders it that much more dubious. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Eger regarded the publication of this work as an exciting turn of events that could only redound to the benefit of Orthodoxy.
 29. Many of Judaism's laws are presented as being derived from the Bible by means of various hermeneutic principles. These establish standards for acceptable logical inferences, for resolution of textual anomalies (repetitions and the like), for appropriate generalization from particulars, etc. For further discussion, consult virtually any introduction to rabbinic literature.
 30. This lacuna becomes particularly glaring in the "enumeration of the laws" literature. That is, in the Babylonian Talmud (Makkot 23b) we find the statement, attributed to R. Simlai, "613 precepts were communicated to Moses, etc." In Gaonic times there developed various enumerations of these 613 precepts. The variations occurred because there was some doubt as to whether this number included

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only Torahitic laws or also some rabbinic ordinances. It was the contention of Maimonides that rabbinic laws were not to be included in this count, and he was rather critical of Simon Qayyara, author of *Halakhot G'dolot*, who had, in fact, included a number of rabbinically ordained observances in his enumeration. While Nahmanides defends Qayyara at some length, he, in the end, agrees with the Maimonidean position. The whole question made the determination of legal status that much more pressing. For further discussion, see the introduction of Yeruham Fischel Perla to his *Sefer ha-Misvot l'Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon* (Jerusalem: Keren S'forim Toraniim, 5733), pp. 5–62.

31. See the commentaries *zohar be-Raki'a* and *Megillat Ester* on the second principle of Maimonides in his *Sefer ha-Misvot*, and, in general, Yekutiel (Ya'akov) Neubauer, *Ha-Rambam al Divrei Soferim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1954).
32. See the article of Yosef Kafih, "mi-Divrei Sof'rim," in Y. D. Gilat et al. eds., *Studies in Rabbinic Literature, and Jewish History* (Hebrew), dedicated to E. Z. Melammed, (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan Press, 1982), pp. 248–55. See also Ferdinand Rosenthal, "Die Kritik des maimonidischen 'Buches der Gesetze' durch Nachmanides," in Wilhelm Bacher et al., eds., *Moses ben Maimon: Sein Leben, seine Werke und sein Einfluss*, repr. (Hildesheim: George Olms Verlag, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 475–95. For further clarification of Maimonides' position, see especially pp. 482ff. There Rosenthal provides the various distinctions introduced by Maimonides, which are not of concern here, and discusses the relationship between the second principle in the *Sefer ha-Misvot* and the introduction to the Mishnah commentary.
33. It should be pointed out that the classification of the laws has practical consequences in cases of doubt. That is, should a doubt arise regarding a Torahitic law, the more severe position is taken, while should a similar doubt arise regarding a rabbinic law, the more lenient position is adopted. Thus, the practical operation of the system, as well as its theoretical underpinnings, depend on the ability to identify which laws are rabbinic and which Torahitic.
34. Nor should this dispute be regarded as originating in the Middle Ages. It seems far older. For example, already the tannaite midrashim raise the issue of "onshin min ha-din" or "ein onshin min ha-din"—whether punishment can be administered on the basis of an argument a fortiori, which is one of the basic hermeneutical principles—which

Epstein claims is actually a dispute between the schools of R. Ishmael and R. Akiva (see his *Mavo'ot l'Sifrut hat-Tannaim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1957), pp. 525–27). It would seem that this dispute reflects different attitudes regarding laws derived from logical principles; the position attributed to R. Ishmael seems to consider such laws rabbinic, while the ostensibly Aqiban position considers them Torahitic. (My own view, which I hope to develop elsewhere, is that the phrase “ein onshin min ha-din” actually did not reflect this issue in the tannaitic literature, although it did come to reflect the issue in the later talmudic materials.) For a discussion of the differing views of these two scholars regarding biblical exegesis, see Abraham Joshua Heschel's *Torah min ha-Shamaim b'Aspaklaria shel ha-Dorot* (London: Soncino, 1962), throughout, and esp. vol. 1, pp. 3–23 and 199–219. (More recent scholarship in this area has come to question the sharp dichotomy between schools and methodologies. This tendency seems wholly justified to me. However, for my purposes, here it matters little whether we are confronted with different schools, or simply two different opinions; the point is that the system itself seems to contain some undefined principles.)

There are also some talmudic passages that seem to reflect indecision regarding the status of certain laws. One such law is monetary betrothal. See, e.g., BT Qiddushin 9b, where the question is raised how the betrothed maiden who is put to death for her infidelity could possibly exist. There is no need to get involved in the details of this passage; suffice it to say that the question, and the response, seem to presuppose that monetary betrothal is not Torahitically sanctioned (but see the comments of Nahmanides in his stricture to the second principle of Maimonides in his *Sefer ha-Misvot*). Also the question of Ravina regarding the annulment of betrothal on the part of the rabbis (Ketubot 3a, Gittin 33a, Yevamot 110a, which seems to be the source of the question, and others) seems to suggest that he did not regard monetary betrothal as Torahitic (but see the comments of Rashi, Gittin 33a and those of the Ritba on Ketubot 3a). Other talmudic passages seem to reflect the opposite view. This could be because the *gezarah shawa* from which monetary betrothal is “derived” is actually quite late, and was not known to the Amoraim. For a discussion of the consequences of this confusion in Maimonides work, see Kafih, pp. 250–52.

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35. *Guide*, p. 211. Krochmal is discussing claims that it was Samuel the prophet who taught that the prohibition against marrying an Ammonite or Moabite applied only to the males and not the females of these nations (BT Yevamot, 77a) and that there were laws ordained by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (BT Hullin, 137b). It is worth noting here that Krochmal's stated concern is with faith and not with an independent interest in historical knowledge.
36. Friedrich Karl von Savigny, *Of the Vocation of Our Age for Legislation and Jurisprudence* (London: 1831), pp. 20-21.
37. *Guide*, pp. 189-90. For a critique of this view of the relationship between the written and the oral Torah, cf. Chaim Tchernowitz, *Toledoth ha-Halakhah* (New York: 1945), vol. 1, pp. 101-4.
38. The formulation here is quite traditional; the justification for this traditional stance is, given its time, place and polemical purpose, quite novel. There is a certain amount of tension between what Krochmal claims here and his reconstruction of Jewish history in the Second Temple period. Given the further reconstruction that is to come, we can say that Krochmal is here posturing a bit.
39. Compare Savigny, pp. 28-30 and *Guide*, pp. 189-90. The major difference is that for Krochmal the many details and developments are vouchsafed to an elite, although they are political leaders; students of jurisprudence emerge later. Once again he has adapted Savigny to the facts of Jewish history as he understood them.
40. This former element is consistent with the second strand of Jewish apologetic identified above, whereas the latter is an innovation of conservative Jewish scholarship. As we shall see in greater detail below, antiquity and rootedness in the spiritual greatness of the people become the justifying characteristics of rabbinism to Krochmal and the conservative scholars who followed in his footsteps.
41. See *Guide*, pp. 5 and 214, and the discussion in chapter 4 above.
42. They are used almost exclusively in chapters 9 and 10, in which Krochmal presents the political and historical background of the rabbinic period.
43. *Guide*, pp. 191-94. Krochmal cites a number of examples in which the Bible itself reflects the need for an oral tradition. For, already in biblical times there was a need to extract specific laws from the general principles contained in the original legal code, or to appeal to

God for answers. Among these are the laws of inheritance in a case in which a man dies leaving no male offspring; the laws pertaining to the case in which one is prevented from offering the Passover sacrifice at the appointed time; the law of the wood gatherer on the Sabbath. Examples of the interpretive tradition in the Prophets and Writings include the question of Haggai to the priests regarding contact with sanctified flesh, the exact nature of which is obscure, and the laws of sales and mourning among others. There are not many traces of interpretation in the prophetic books because the prophets never had legislative authority. For a recent discussion of "tradition" within the Bible that deals with a number of Krochmal's examples, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

44. Perhaps the best known instance is the first mishnah in the tractate Berakhot, which begins with the question, "From what time may one recite the Shema prayer in the evening?" This mishnah already assumes that the prayer must be recited, and that one knows the content of the prayer. Logic demands that this law is based on an ancient definition of the biblical phrase "when you lie down and when you rise up," and that there was a tradition that determined which biblical verses were to be included in the prayer. The BT, ad loc., notes this peculiarity, and explains that the tanna is referring to the verse which mandates the prayer (Deuteronomy 6:7). Krochmal, of course, knew this talmudic explanation (p. 196) but claims that this answer can only be maintained if the Soferic interpretation is already presupposed. That is, the verse merely maintains that one must "teach [these words] diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (RSV). In order to maintain that the tanna is referring to this verse, one must assume that he already knew that the "words" mentioned in this verse are identical with the Shema prayer. This must mean that the equation of the biblical words with the Shema prayer predates the tanna, i.e., dates from the period of the Soferim. Similarly, the Mishnaic treatment of the law prohibiting the carrying of objects on the Sabbath presupposes the "Soferic" interpretation of a biblical verse.
45. That is, all cases of doubt are decided in favor of the severe alternative, and corporal or capital punishment may be imposed. Thus, one

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- who carries on the Sabbath has violated a biblical commandment, and may be so punished. Similarly, the fact that the tefilin contain four biblical portions is a Soferic commentary, but once established, carries the weight of a biblical commandment.
46. One should not infer from this that Krochmal assigned to the Soferim any role in determining the content of the Torah. This preceded them by centuries. Nevertheless, while the Torah was spared tampering that affected its meaning, he claims that one cannot deny that certain changes have taken place regarding the external form of the text. Rabbinic sources themselves report that a shift in script took place in the time of Ezra; further, there are various places in which the text is written one way, but is, according to Jewish tradition, to be read another way. In addition, there are those passages that the rabbis refer to as "the embellishments of the Soferim." To Krochmal, these facts indicate that there were changes imposed on the text of the Bible, but one should not assume from this conclusion that the biblical text came about as the natural result of the historical process, affected by the contingencies of history. Rather, these changes were, first of all, strictly external and in no way detracted from the meaning of the text, and, second, were not implemented haphazardly, but rather represent the efforts of a group of scholars, the Soferim, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to meet the needs imposed by the long history of the text. See text below.
 47. In Hebrew, certain consonantal letters, particularly the "vav" function occasionally as vowels. However, no Hebrew word requires the presence of the consonant to achieve the vowel sound. A Hebrew writer has a choice of indicating the vowel through the use of the "vav" (=plene), or he may choose to write it without the "vav" (=defective). It is generally assumed that such choices represent personal or scholastic preference and are not allusive. Krochmal challenges that notion as we shall see presently.
 48. For our purposes, one example will suffice. The Hebrew word *moshvotekhem* (your dwellings) sometimes occurs in the Bible with a plene spelling (with a "waw" after the "mem") and sometimes with a defective spelling. There is some doubt, reflected in a dispute in the Talmud (Qiddushin 37), whether this term means "all your dwellings," in which case all laws that are said to be valid in all your dwellings are valid everywhere, and for all generations; or whether it

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refers to the period after the process of inhabiting the land of Israel, in which case the laws valid in all *moshvotekhem* are restricted to the land after the conquest of the native populations, but are not applicable elsewhere. Krochmal suggests that the word, in fact, sometimes means the one and sometimes the other; the key to understanding which, in a given situation, is to determine whether the spelling is plene or defective. For the Soferim already provide the means to determine which law applies through their spelling of the word. Thus, when the word appears with a defective spelling, it indicates that the normal understanding of the term "dwelling" is intended, and that the law is applicable in all places. When it is spelled plene, the law is applicable only in the land. There are, however, five places in which the spelling is plene, and the law is applicable everywhere. Krochmal provides various reasons why exceptions were made in these cases; the theory, as a whole, is maintained.

49. Spinoza and Chiariani, in particular, mock the "q'ri" and "k'tiv" technique and the "embellishments of the Soferim"; see Spinoza, *Treatise*, pp. 139–44 and Chiarini, vol. 1, pp. 59–61.
50. *Guide*, pp. 199–200. Of course, to be convincing to his audience Krochmal's presentation must be (or at least seem to be) "wissenschaftlich." Here he discusses the development of language in general, and states that in all primitive orthographic systems vowels are absent; they therefore need silent letters, to partially fulfill the function of vowels. One example, taken from the Hebrew, is the word *ish*, which contains the silent letter *yod* to differentiate it from the word *eish*, something that becomes unnecessary once vowel points are introduced. Thus, words may be spelled with a defective spelling without in any way affecting the integrity of the text. This argument, based on supposedly universal linguistic principles, applicable to European languages as well, is designed to show the truly external nature of discrepant spellings, as they pertain to the authenticity of the text. At the same time the Soferim were free to make use of their authority to establish the orthographic form of the text to encode traditional interpretations within it.
51. Frankel certainly knew of Krochmal's work prior to the publication of his own *Darkei ha-Mishnah*, as it was reviewed in his *Monatsschrift* in 1851.
52. Yehezkel Kaufmann; *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisraelit* (Jerusalem and

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- Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik and Dvir, 5736), vol. 4 (section eight), pp. 481–85.
53. *Guide*, p. 205, note. The scriptural verse is Deut. 16:20, which contains the imperative to pursue justice.
 54. Krochmal does not explain why the midrashic texts developed at all, although one can assume that, for him, it was because the connections between the halakhah, which was always based on a midrash, and its midrashic basis were being forgotten.
 55. The process is not totally beyond the vicissitudes of history. The existence of lasting disputes is due to historical circumstances. On this see the text below.
 56. Krochmal will return to this theme later, where a fuller discussion can be found. See the text below.
 57. Mishnah Eduyot 1:4–6. We know the opinions are to be rejected because they involve the position of the one against the many; in such a situation, the majority prevails. The mishnah explains that even though the minority opinion is to be rejected for practical purposes, another (perhaps later?) court may choose to rely on the rejected opinion. There is a great deal of disagreement as to what these mishnah passages actually mean, and a great deal of ink was devoted to this subject throughout the historiography of the nineteenth century.
 58. See the reaction of Chiarini, vol. 1, pp. 20–21.
 59. For a definition of this term, see above, chapter 4, n. 15.
 60. In a number of places the Talmud seems to reject the notion that the decision of the majority ensures correctness. Rather, the decision in favor of the majority is a necessary procedural device, whose authority is legal, but not necessarily philosophical, and does not relate to correctness of the given positions. See, e.g., BT Baba Mesia 59b, the famous “oven of Aknai” incident. The “facts” seem to be that it is R. Eliezer who is correct, since God himself endorses his position; nevertheless, the majority has voted otherwise, and therefore prevails, even though they are not correct. Krochmal seems to have considered the rabbis more proficient logicians and analysts than they considered themselves (or than the author of the story considered them, at least).
 61. This dating is in accord with the previously cited baraita.
 62. BT Temurah 16a.
 63. That the term *halakhah* is of Aramaic origin was first suggested, to

- the best of my knowledge, by Binyamin Musafia in his addenda to the *Arukh*. He cites the Targum of Onkelos, which translates the Hebrew term *mishpat* as "hilkhat," as does Krochmal. As far as I am aware, Krochmal arrived at his historical conclusions—that the Aramaic origin of the term *halakhab* means that halakhot emerged after Aramaic took root in the country—independently. For a recent discussion of the origins of the term *halakhab*, and its possible Aramaic provenance, see Saul Lieberman's *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), p. 83, n. 3.
64. This can be seen, inter alia, from the treatment of such halakhot by Maimonides in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Kafih ed., vol. 1, pp. 9ff.
 65. *Guide*, p. 213 emphasis added. Krochmal's position here is not totally unprecedented. A number of traditional commentators have explained the use of the phrase *halakhab l'Moshe mi-sinai* in mishnah Yadaim 4:3, as meaning "like a halakhah l'Moshe mi-sinai." See, ad loc., the comments of Samson of Sens, Asher b. Yehiel, Ovadiah of Bertinoro. For Maimonides' differing view on this subject, see *Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 9ff.
 66. It is interesting to note that these remarks, as far as I know, stirred no controversy whatsoever. Zechariah Fränkel's publication of similar views eight years later created quite a stir. Perhaps the fact that Fränkel was very much alive and thus a living influence on the Jews of his day accounts for some of the difference in reaction. Further, Fränkel's religious allegiances were suspect in the traditional world, whereas there was no doubt about Krochmal's punctilious observance. I should add that Krochmal's "historical" reconstruction of how these laws emerged is totally unsubstantiated; as a functional definition of the *halakhab l'Moshe mi-sinai* in rabbinic literature it has much to recommend it.
 67. Another category of early halakhot which Krochmal must explain is that of the *tikkunim* or ordinances, which Krochmal distinguishes from the etymologically related category of *takkanot*. The latter category is designed to remedy a problem induced by the halakhah. The former refer to ordinances that are enacted because of their inherent benefit. It is, claims Krochmal, the *tikkunim* which are often attributed to figures from antiquity. These attributions are not to be dismissed as mere rabbinic fancy, but rather the rabbis, for heuristic

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purposes, deliberately retrojected them to the time at which they could first have been applicable. Thus, for example, the rabbis attributed to Moses the establishment of the first blessing of the grace after meals, because Scripture requires a blessing after eating, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that a blessing was established in the time of Moses. To be sure, the blessing as we now have it could not possibly have derived from the time of Moses, as there are a number of "late Hebrew" words in it (*Guide*, p. 214).

68. *Ibid.*, p. 215. Krochmal, apparently quoting from memory, uses the word "innovate" (*l'badesh*), although the text reads "teach" or "instruct," and I have translated accordingly. Apparently, Krochmal conflated this text from PT with one from BT (Megillah 19b) in which it is claimed that God showed Moses, inter alia, "the future innovations of the Soferim."
69. It is with this theory of the immanence of Torah that, I believe, Krochmal implies a reconciliation of the conflicting positions of Maimonides and Nachmanides. It will be recalled that this conflict was cited as one of the problems with the traditional understanding of rabbinic history, but Krochmal, having stated that he can reconcile these positions, never explicitly returns to the issue. Yet, it seems, based on what we have just seen, that for Krochmal the difference between the two is one of perspective and not substance. Maimonides emphasizes the historical aspect of the actualization of that which is incorporated within the Torah. Thus, since the innovation was made by a given student, albeit using one of the hermeneutic principles and thus in accord with reason, it must, in most circumstances, be considered historically indistinguishable from what we call rabbinic. Nahmanides emphasizes the qualitative aspect of the derivation, and from this perspective it must be considered Torahitic, in that the Torah encompasses the derived law. While the question of how to count the 613 commandments remains intact, since clearly only a portion of all the laws can be included, the more important theoretical question is dissolved. For there remains no qualitative difference between laws that are classified as Torahitic and those that are derived from the hermeneutical principles, however they are to be classified. As far as the legal distinctions go, Krochmal seems to have agreed with Nachmanides that the legal status of the derivations is Torahitic, while agreeing with Maimonides that one cannot consider them as

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actually being from Sinai, except in the specific philosophical sense, outlined in the quotation above. In this instance his agreement with Nachmanides is to be expected, for if there were legal distinctions between the derivations and those laws explicitly stated in Scripture, Krochmal's construct would be strongly challenged, for it would suggest that there is a qualitative distinction to be drawn after all. As it is, for Krochmal there are no legal or qualitative distinctions between these two types of laws, only historical ones, which must be acknowledged, but are irrelevant to the system.

70. At this point Krochmal's general discussion of the oral tradition is almost concluded. For the sake of completeness, I should add that before moving on to the examination of how the Mishnah came into being, he distinguishes two other categories of laws included within the oral tradition. In addition to the major categories of derivations on the basis of the accepted hermeneutical principles and the laws of Moses from Sinai, Krochmal mentions the "established laws," which are enacted rationally and with equitable concerns, are in total accord with the laws of the Torah, and are occasionally supported by verses from the Torah. The second category consists of the laws imposed on the Jews by the various empires that had authority over them during the period of "learning halakhot" and which were retained by them. These are never against the laws of the Torah, although they are rabbinic laws and Roman ones is historically meaningful but irrelevant to an understanding of the essence of the rabbinic tradition. These laws originate in historical circumstances beyond the control of the Jews, but they are integrated within the system in accord with its basic values. Furthermore, the existence of such laws does not affect the dating of the rabbinic legal system, since they represent mere appendages tacked on at a later date. For a critique, see Samuel Bialoblocki, in *K'nesset l'Zekher Bialik* (1941), pp. 361-63.
71. So the second mishnah in Avot. Krochmal identifies him as Simon ben Honi the second. See *Guide*, pp. 65ff.
72. We can see here an application of Krochmal's position that every rabbinic claim or saying has some significance; they are never to be totally dismissed, even if their literal meaning cannot be maintained.
73. For Krochmal, anonymity is generally considered a sign of antiquity, for reasons that are clear given his approach. For him, laws taught prior to Hillel were "recorded" anonymously; it is only after Hillel,

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and the development of different, and competing schools, that halakhot were repeated with the names of the scholar who formulated them, or in whose school they were preserved, and, perhaps, added to. See Krochmal's discussion of the age of Tamid, *Guide*, p. 224.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 221. BT Yoma 16a. Krochmal discusses and defends this claim in light of apparently conflicting evidence.
75. *Guide*, p. 227. The first great "forgetting" in this period occurred sometime between Pompey and Herod. It is not of concern to us here.
76. This claim is in accord with the position that an anonymous mishnah follows the view of R. Meir. See BT Sanhedrin 86a.
77. Rawidowicz, in his introduction (pp. 141-42), quotes the first half of this passage, and comments that it indicates the extent to which Krochmal was prepared to criticize Rabbi for being "enslaved to the material that was before him." He claims that Krochmal chastises Rabbi for not being creative in the construction of the Mishnah. I think that the passage as a whole indicates that the thrust of Krochmal's thinking is precisely in the other direction. This is a good example of Rawidowicz's tendency to see Krochmal as far less traditional than he was.

CHAPTER 6

THE PERPLEXITIES OF
THE AGGADAH

“If you wish to recognize Him who spoke and the world came to be—study aggadah; thus will you come to recognize Him and cleave to His ways.”

“Said R. Yehoshua ben Levi: This aggadah—one who writes it has no share [in the world to come], one who expounds it is obliterated, one who listens to it receives no reward. All my days I have not looked at aggadah . . .”¹

KROCHMAL’S CHAPTER on aggadah opens with the juxtaposition of these conflicting rabbinic pronouncements. He cites them to illustrate the deep ambivalence of Jewish culture toward this genre of rabbinic discourse. On the one hand, in the aggadah one finds much rabbinic reflection on the nature of God and providence; it is, thus, an indispens-

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able, if problematic, resource for the construction of rabbinic theology. On the other hand, the aggadah is replete with scientific and historical errors; angels, demons and evil spirits; and stories about the rabbinic sages that cast them in a bad light and seem to promote questionable ethical practices. Further, both "good" and "bad" aggadot are embedded in a form that on the surface suggests the rabbis were incapable of systematic—that is, good, Western—thought, even allowing for the different modes of expression appropriate to religious rather than philosophical speculation. They abound with anthropomorphic, hyperbolic and mythological formulations. Thus, both types of aggadic material were problematic from a modern perspective, for, as a recent work on medieval aggadic interpretation opens "on the face of it, nothing could be more alien to the nature of systematic religious philosophy than the aggadah of the classical rabbinic literature."²

Of course, Nachman Krochmal was scarcely the first to try to dissolve the ambivalence created by this unusual literature. Jewish culture is replete with attempts to explain (away?) the presence of some of the more troubling elements in the aggadah. The standard approach of the rationalists, with Maimonides in the vanguard, was to reinterpret the offensive anthropomorphic and mythological passages to bring them into accord with reason; they even imputed great profundity to them.³ Within limits, Krochmal is quite sympathetic to this approach. Others, led by Nahmanides in his record of his disputation with Pablo Christiani in Barcelona in 1263, simply deny that the aggadah has any authority. Jews are free to accept or reject the import of aggadic statements as they see fit. To this position as well, Krochmal is somewhat sympa-

thetic.⁴ As far as the historical and scientific errors in the aggadah are concerned, the issue had been dealt with by Azariah de Rossi (c. 1511–c. 1578), who argued that the authority of the rabbis is limited to “those things dependent on prophecy,” but in matters of science and history their opinions are “entirely human”; that is, there is no qualitative difference between the opinions of the rabbis, and those of later scholars. In fact, the later scholars have the advantage of a greater pool of knowledge from which to draw.⁵ Lengthier analysis of Azariah’s position is not necessary, for, here as well, Krochmal, within limits, accepts the validity of this approach (*Guide*, p. 246).⁶

That this problem is dealt with continually throughout Jewish history is itself eloquent testimony to the fact that none of the “solutions” was fully satisfactory. From Krochmal’s perspective it is clear that none of the approaches mentioned effectively dealt with all the problems presented by the aggadah. For even after we have dismissed all the historically and scientifically incorrect claims of the rabbis; even after we have been shown the profound esoteric content of the anthropomorphic and mythological stories; even after we acknowledge that the aggadah is not authoritative in the sense that it would be incumbent on Jews to accept all aggadot as unquestionably true, there remain many aggadot that still reveal superstitious and offensive modes of thought. That is, there remain aggadot that cannot be allegorically dissolved; there remain aggadot that cannot be dismissed as merely representative of the level of scientific knowledge of the day. Further, none of these approaches deals sufficiently with the historical questions regarding the aggadot they explain away. Where

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did they come from? What purpose did they serve? Among the tasks Krochmal sets for himself is to explain how, and by whom, such aggadot were created, and how they found their way into rabbinic literature, in particular the Babylonian Talmud.

The Problem of Aggadah in the Modern Period

If the problem had not yet been resolved, a new guide was necessary. But, of course, this new guide would have to take into account a set of facts with which Krochmal's predecessors had already dealt, but which had become more acute in the modern period. As Krochmal was fully aware, it was not only Jews who were familiar with—and had profound difficulties with—the aggadah. In the modern period, the aggadah had become a general source of scorn directed against the rabbis (*Guide*, p. 248); it became the occasion for “simpletons”—gentiles as well as Jews—to depict the rabbis as fools (*Guide*, p. 245). Try as Westernized Jews might to distance themselves and their religious heritage from this literature, others, Jews and gentiles alike, refused to let them. Try as the former might to rely on Maimonides and others, the latter would pull out the support from under them. Try as they might to drive a wedge between aggadah and halakhah, asserting that only the latter represents rabbinic thinking, their opponents would ignore or deny the distinction. Thus did the aggadah become a weak link in the Jewish quest for religious respectability in the modern world.⁷

The establishment of the confused and chaotic world of the

aggadah as the yardstick by which to measure the rabbinic intellect was already a commonplace of Enlightenment thinkers, as Arnold Ages has shown.⁸ For example, Denis Diderot, in his article "Juifs" in his famous *Encyclopédie*, noted the high level of rabbinic superstition, concentrating his critique on rabbinic angelology and demonology, precisely the focus of Krochmal's apologia.⁹ This tendency was to receive further impetus in the abbé Luigi Chiarini's *Théorie du judaïsme*, the work of a figure otherwise quite distant from the world of the Enlightenment.¹⁰ Chiarini (1789–1832), a professor of Oriental languages at the University of Warsaw, published his *Théorie* as a prolegomenon to a French translation of the Talmud; the translation, in turn, was designed to open this arcane document to modern Jews, thereby demonstrating to them the silliness of continued adherence to a Judaism founded on it. While Chiarini did not live long enough to redeem his pledge of a French translation of the Talmud, his *Théorie* did create quite a commotion for a short time, and seems to have contributed to the outbreak of anti-Semitism in France at the end of the century.¹¹

Chiarini's work made no lasting original contribution; as Zunz and Jost have shown, he was actually remarkably unoriginal, borrowing heavily from Eisenmenger, Buxtorf and Raymond Martini.¹² It is, however, precisely this fact that makes his work noteworthy; in it one will find centuries of Christian reflection on rabbinic thinking and values. In addition, one will find there Chiarini's one significant original contribution, namely, an attempted refutation of various Jewish apologists of the Berlin Haskalah, Aaron Wolfssohn in particular, who strove to distance themselves and their religious heritage from

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the more offensive aspects of rabbinic aggadah. Finally, Chiarini is of interest here because the structure of his critique of rabbinic Judaism, particularly of rabbinic aggadah, corresponds closely to the concerns expressed by Krochmal in his chapter. If, then, Krochmal was not responding to Chiarini per se, he was responding to the claims that find expression in his work.¹³

Chiarini challenged the notion that the aggadah in its original context should be seen as deliberately cast in images and parables so as to not lead the masses astray, a claim that was central to much Jewish apologetic. He claims that Maimonides, for example, in advancing his position forgot that the original locus of this material was the Talmud itself, by which he apparently means the academic setting from which the Talmud emerged.¹⁴ It was thus never directed at the masses and never intended for them. One cannot therefore say that the rabbis formulated their thinking in a fabulous manner to conceal esoteric doctrine from the masses; put bluntly, given the locus from which the material emerges, the only justifiable conclusion one can reach is that they really believed that nonsense, or simply enjoyed wasting their time with it.

Another standard of Jewish apologetic is that the aggadah must be sharply distinguished from the halakhah, not only in terms of methodology, but in terms of authority. There is no obligation to believe anything that violates one's sense of order and propriety—so it has been claimed throughout the ages. Chiarini challenges this claim as well, arguing that the aggadah emerges from the same people and institutions as does the halakhah. Further, the aggadah is used to support the same

goals as is the legal material, and, in fact, is sometimes used as the basis of, or support for, a legal ruling.¹⁵

Thus, the aggadah, having the same goal and objective as the halakhah, for it demands and prohibits the same things, must be as obligatory as the latter; for the one and the other turn on the same commanded and prohibited things, not to annul each other but to mutually guide the hand. In this sense, there is not, nor could there be, any divergence of opinion relative to the authority of the aggadah; in attacking the latter, one equally undermines the authority of the halakhah.¹⁶

Thus, the attempts by Jewish apologists from Maimonides through Aaron Wolfssohn to deny the authority of the aggadah are undermined by reconstructing the alleged perspective of the talmudic rabbis themselves.

Chiarini was well aware that there are those committed to the talmudic tradition who deny the literal authority of the aggadic materials. This matters little for, he claims, following Maimonides, the number of such Jews is very small, and, in any event, their views do not correspond to those of the ancient rabbis. Thus, Chiarini claims that the first of the three different attitudes to aggadah discerned by Maimonides—namely, to believe them literally, and to deny any esoteric interpretation at all—predominates in Jewish culture. The result is that

there is this striking difference between the Jews and other peoples: even the Israelite scholars have never been much different than the vulgar and coarse of their nation. That is why, except for two or three talmudists who may be cited as opposed to the authority of the aggadah, all the others have recognized and do recognize that

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authority as prevalent, and belong, consequently, in this first class [of believers in the simple, literal meaning of aggadot]. (Ibid., p. 48)

As for the third class of Maimonides, those who acknowledge an esoteric content within the fabulous aggadic shell, Chiarini claims the number is remarkably small (as Maimonides himself acknowledges). Further, Maimonides "found almost all his contemporaries ready to arm themselves against him, and to declare him heretical. It is at least incontestable that his authority and that of the small number of other Israelites who, by conviction, think as he does regarding the nature of the aggadah exercise no influence on the mass of Jews, particularly the Jews of Poland. While that mass is today more advanced than it was in the time of Maimonides, and while it is finally persuaded that man has his eyes in the front and not in the back, it keeps them ever closed to the truth so as not to see it" (ibid., p. 51). Thus, he claims, the fact that a few Jewish scholars interpreted the aggadah figuratively throughout the centuries had little impact on Jewish culture. Most Jews continued to believe the stories literally. On this point it seems that Krochmal agreed with Chiarini; many Jews did interpret the aggadot literally. For the former, however, such people are not representative of Judaism per se, but rather represent the distortion of Judaism from within. They are part of the self-proclaimed pietists, the anti-intellectual Jews who are the cause of the rejection of religion by its cultured despisers.¹⁷

In any event, for Chiarini, the fact that there were those who understood the aggadot allegorically could not be cultur-

ally influential, for these allegorists offer interpretations that seem arbitrary, each commentator interpreting in his own way, without ever discerning the actual meaning of the passage in question. Given the history of aggadic allegorization, no authoritative nonliteral interpretation could emerge to compete with the literal meaning of the aggadot (ibid., vol. 1, p. 71). Thus, a theory of Judaism is perfectly justified in treating the aggadah as an authoritative body of literature, whose creators believed it literally, and which most later Jews felt obligated to believe and interpret literally; it may accordingly judge the rabbis as superstitious and foolish men who had little understanding of natural processes, who firmly believed in magic and demons. While today few would doubt that the rabbis believed in magical incantations and demons, a century and a half ago, such a position would instantly discredit, not only in rationalist circles, but even among romantics who ostensibly had a greater appreciation for the mythological and irrational.¹⁸ It is to be noted, in anticipation of what is to come, that Chiarini's position can only be maintained if he is right about the original locus from which this material was generated—namely, the rabbinic academy—and if all the aggadot actually emerged from within the rabbinic estate.

Krochmal's Response

Krochmal's self-appointed task was to present an understanding of the aggadah that would dissolve the challenges outlined above, and thus affirm the credibility of his portrait of rabbinic Judaism as a profound and theologically advanced tradi-

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tion. The first step in executing this task is to define aggadah, as opposed to halakhah, by noting the methodological distinctions between them.¹⁹ The cornerstone of both is scriptural exegesis, or midrash; however, the type and extent of midrash differs greatly. For the aggadist it is perfectly proper to distance a verse from its simple meaning far more radically than could the halakhist. For the latter, the process of midrash is a far more intellectual one; the consequences are of great importance, and consistency, achieved by the proper exercise of reason, is essential. From the disciplined halakhic midrash one can see that aggadic midrash is not representative of what the rabbis think a scriptural verse actually means. For the aggadist, by contrast, freer use of imagination is permissible, since there are no practical consequences. Thus, the aggadists sometimes take a metaphorically intended verse literally, and vice versa. They feel free to ignore tense and person whenever it suits them. To them, all biblical verses are equal; one could readily compare a verse from the Prophets to one from the Pentateuch—unthinkable for the halakhist. Finally, the aggadist addresses some immediate problem, and is not necessarily concerned with the establishment of something lasting, while the halakhist is concerned with determining everlasting norms.²⁰ These distinctions illustrate that, while both halakhah and aggadah are based on midrash, they are essentially two separate disciplines, and one cannot judge the one on the basis of the other. Thus does Krochmal attempt to restore the distinction between halakhah and aggadah challenged by Chiarini. Krochmal had no illusions of innovation here; the need for his restatement is overtly polemical. As he put it, the distinction between halakhah and aggadah is obvious, and

has been said many times; it needs, however, to be said many more times, given the emergence of those in modern times who yet refuse to acknowledge it, motivated either by simplistic and misplaced piety, or by the desire to cast scorn on the rabbis and thereby discredit them. These two perspectives correspond to the two distorting religious tendencies discussed in chapter 1 of the present book (*Guide*, p. 240).

Given that the aggadah had no practical authority, what purpose did it serve? For Krochmal the answer is quite obvious. The aggadah was directed by the rabbinic leaders to the masses, to instill reverence and morality—among other things—in them; in achieving this goal the rabbis were largely successful. It is this audience and this goal that are responsible for the form of many of these aggadot. For in addressing the masses, the profound content of the message must be masked. Without allegorical, esoteric/exoteric devices, the aggadist cannot attain his goal. Not only are such devices necessary, they are in fact quite common; they are known to both ancient and modern authorities. Indeed, “it is practically impossible to be without them for one who wishes to teach theological matters” (*Guide*, p. 242). Thus, aggadic thinking, if not its specific forms, is not some rabbinic aberration, but rather, is universal, and necessary for one who wishes to impart a theological truth without undermining the faith of the theologically uninitiated.²¹

Here again, Krochmal echoes Maimonides; he will proceed, however, with a different emphasis, choosing to more forcefully address the original locus of this material, and thereby render Chiarini’s objection incorrect. That is, according to Krochmal, the majority of aggadot did not originate in the

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rabbinic academies, but rather in the synagogue. They are records of sermons, sometimes delivered by preachers of the first rank, sometimes by lesser figures. They were intended for the “ignorant, their wives and sometimes their children [who] came from their homes in the hamlets and villages to the nearest town” to hear preaching. The preacher, who often came from the academy, would prepare a clever opening, a rhetorically embellished request for permission to preach, and an appropriate sermon (*Guide*, p. 249, note).²²

These sermons were not preserved in any fixed form. They were repeated by members of the audience in various ways, but were not “published” in an official version as were the halakhot; they were thus subject to much corruption. Only late in the amoraic period did there appear “organizers of aggadot,” who attempted to provide some fixed form to the sermonic materials in circulation. Yet even here, “since [such collections of material] were not [preserved] in the general academy as was the *gemara*, they did not achieve a fixed order until the time of the composition of the [known] midrashic collections, which was very late” (*Guide*, p. 249). This absence of fixed form or academic locus accounts for the numerous repetitions of material, in different versions, that occur throughout the existing rabbinic corpus. Thus, this type of aggadah was neither fixed nor studied in the academy. Its journey from oral presentation to published form—comparable to the children’s game of “telephone”—may account for some of the more idiosyncratic elements in this literature.

Of course, not all aggadot are designed to instill theological or moral matters; some are created to instruct in more mundane areas. In pursuing the matter in greater detail, Krochmal

discerns four different types of aggadot, only the most important of which are intended to instruct in theology, morality and physics (natural philosophy). The first type of aggadah is the fable, comparable in form and intent to Aesop's fables. The second type is the parable, in the literal sense of the term. That is, the parable type seeks to instruct through comparison, explaining a given situation by invoking a more familiar analogue; these were so common among the Pharisees, that Jesus, seeking to emulate them, often used them in addressing the masses.²³

The third type is a fabricated story designed to instill admiration for great historical figures or events, and the desire to emulate them. Such stories are not to be taken literally, nor does the teller intend that one depend on them for historical explanation. It is in keeping with Krochmal's approach that he feels compelled to add that they should not be seen as self-aggrandizing lies; they are intended for a useful purpose—respect and admiration for the legislative authorities—and are presented in a manner suited to the audience.

The fourth type is the allegory, created in order to impart theological and scientific knowledge. The allegory is always dressed in the garb of a strange story, in accordance with the level of the intended audience. In this type of aggadah the creator will often take natural events that conform to natural laws and provide other explanations for them. (Lest his reader miss the point, Krochmal adds that this is not to be taken as a seriously believed explanation of the phenomenon.) Other times the teller will rely on enormous exaggeration to make his point. The specific device used will depend on the audience and the time.

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Krochmal has presented and defended all these types, and described their original locus and publication history. Yet, there still remains the fact that the rabbis seem to have actually held certain views that are demonstrably false; even these can be explained, although Krochmal remains somewhat embarrassed by them.²⁴ Beyond this, and despite the long apologetic tradition, which Krochmal reviews, still troublesome are the aggadot that include childish superstitions, stories regarding the efficacy of magic, incantations and demons, as well as those that appear blasphemous, and those that denigrate the prophets and sages. (*Guide*, p. 246). The majority of such aggadot are to be found in the Babylonian Talmud. Here the recourse to sermonic allegory is of no avail, for no amount of creativity can interpret these stories as conveying an appropriate moral or theological lesson. In fact, Krochmal claims, these superstitious and blasphemous aggadot cannot be defended; they must be rejected as totally unrepresentative of rabbinic thinking and culture.²⁵

The issue before Krochmal is to explain how these aggadot came to be included in the various collections in which they are to be found, primarily the Babylonian Talmud. For if it can be shown that these aggadot are not authentically rabbinic, and found their way into rabbinic collections in a manner different from, and inconsistent with, the way in which the other aggadot came to be included, they will no longer pose a threat to the authentic aggadot, to the genre as a whole, nor, most importantly, to the reputation of the rabbis.

Characteristically, Krochmal feels compelled to explain why it is that the previous sages who deny the authority of the

aggadah saw fit to conceal the manner in which these aggadot found their way into the collections, while he sees fit to divulge this information. As is to be expected, Krochmal appeals to the great differences that exist between the medieval and modern periods. With the advent of printing, knowledge that previously was reserved for the scholar is now available and known to all; in the modern period even the uneducated and unsophisticated know much more about the physical sciences and ancient history. In addition, in the modern period the needs of

the community are so much different, for the desire to learn from the Torah has been limited, and there has been an increase in the number of arrogant who boast of being able to attain truth, without having pursued it at all. And if already in the days of the earlier sages, in which books were not available to the worthy and unworthy alike, *and the gentiles were not at all learned in the books of the Jews*, there were those, most of them sincere, who pressed and compelled them to say what they did . . . what can intelligent people, observers of the Torah, do when they are forced onto such a narrow path, on which there is not room to stray to the right or the left? On the one side are the petty obscurantists who have increased among the insignificant learners of Torah, who take the midrashic explanation [i.e., aggadic] for the meaning of the text, and the poetic garb, designed to explain or instill something in the hearts of the masses, for the essence of the matter . . . and the private opinions that pertain to a specific time for eternal verities. And even with the [indefensible] aggadot they say that they are among God's secrets for his reverers, and they offer explanations that are close to the worst idolatry. . . . They call this Jewish faith, and anyone who denies it a heretic. For the sake of peace I will not delve further and show by example the great, terrible damage to the purified faith

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that sprouts from such people. On the other side there are those scholars in various fields from among us who are not yet sufficiently initiated in matters of faith . . . and many others among the general readers in the European nation in which we live, all of whom laugh at and mock the strange aggadot, and go on to mock the entire Gemara, and ultimately come to denigrate the sages, and despise those who revere and respect them. (*Guide*, pp. 247-48; emphasis added)

Thus, in a refrain that should be quite familiar by now, Krochmal insists that given the realities of the nineteenth century, what was once meant to be kept away from the public must now be offered to them, for the very respectability of Judaism was at stake. The edifice cannot be allowed to fall because of some strange aggadot. It is, therefore, imperative for Krochmal that the literary presentation of the aggadah be examined critically, so that we can understand how it came to exist, and how it came to be included in the various collections.

Krochmal presents his views in six numbered paragraphs, which, taken together, explain the origins and nature of the aggadic texts. Given the author's emphasis on the book's structure, which we have seen, it seems advisable that we follow the method of presentation found in the *Guide*, with interpretive remarks included along the way.

1. The beginnings of the aggadah are to be found in the scriptural exegesis that was designed to foster morality and proper belief among the masses. The teachings were publicly delivered in sermonic form on the Sabbaths and holidays. Sometimes these sermons were designed to teach halakhah through the aggadah, and many such sermons are preserved

in the collections known as Numbers Rabbah and Deuteronomy Rabbah. As we saw above, Krochmal believed these sermons were not transmitted in a fixed form, or order, until well into the eighth century, when “redactors of aggadot” began to create collections. Already here we find a characteristic of aggadah that indicates its inferiority in the rabbinic hierarchy of values; the halakhot were transmitted in fixed form because they had practical authority, but also because they represented the legitimate tradition, and preservation in fixed form preserved the integrity of that tradition. The aggadot, on the other hand, were not endowed with authority, and were not considered part of the authentic tradition. If they were, they would have been preserved more exactly and with greater care. This characterization of the aggadot, however, does not apply to those found in the tractate Avot, or Avot d’Rabbi Natan. While these also attempt to instruct in morals and faith, they have much greater authority; their form was fixed, and transmitted orally throughout the centuries. They are to be considered as equivalent to other tannaitic sources, and are called “aggadah” only because of an imprecise extension of the word. Thus, the tannaitic attempts to instruct in morals and faith found in these tractates are not to be considered part of the aggadah, and are therefore untouched by Krochmal’s analysis.

2. Also considered aggadah only in the most imprecise sense are the esoteric doctrines of the rabbis—namely, the account of creation, the account of the chariot, and the secret reasons for the commandments. This exclusion is to be expected, given Krochmal’s approach to rabbinic esoterica that we have seen previously. The entire legitimacy of Krochmal’s project is based on the claim that the rabbis engaged in the

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study of physics and metaphysics, albeit in a nonphilosophical form. It is therefore impossible for Krochmal to consider such esoteric studies part of the aggadah, which derives from public sermons, whose form was not preserved, and whose authority was limited. Rather, these materials must be seen as part of the precisely formulated and preserved elements of rabbinic study, comparable to halakhic statements, in both their literary history and their authority.

3. In terms of the sources of aggadah, there are four levels to be distinguished. The first level contains the Mishnah, Tosefta and the Midreshei Halakhah. The aggadot contained therein are all of high quality, and most of them derive from public sermons delivered in the tannaitic period. The second level contains the aggadot found in the Palestinian Talmud and all the other Palestinian aggadot. Strange aggadot are very rare in these collections; in general, most of them are "pleasant and good," and contain many useful historical details. The third level contains the "late midrashim" which include the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana, and Tanhuma, Tanna d'Be Eliahu and others. Krochmal makes no comment regarding any of these collections, as to their meriting a third rank. It is apparent that to him they contain many more strange aggadot than the Palestinian Talmud, and fewer than the fourth-level Babylonian Talmud, which, despite containing many precious aggadot, includes most of the strange and damaging ones, as well.

4. Krochmal claims that it is clear that the aggadot were written down long before the halakhot, albeit in a haphazard and unfixed manner, and he provides a number of proofs from the Talmuds to show that there existed, already at the time of R. Yohanan (third century), books of aggadot.²⁶ The reason

that the aggadot could be written at a time when the halakhot could not is probably due to the fact that the aggadot had no legal authority, as they were stated to suit the hour, to arouse the audience to a specific need. In addition, there were "experts" in aggadah who were inferior to the halakhists, and they were lenient with themselves. Krochmal's claim that the aggadot were written down does not necessarily contradict his previous claim that the aggadot were not transmitted in fixed forms. For, while it is true that once committed to writing there is a fixed wording, it does not follow that this wording is identical to the original wording, nor that an aggadah was written down only once, in one collection. Specific aggadot may have been included in more than one collection, and in each in a different form.

However we evaluate the above claim regarding the writing of the aggadot, it is clear that Krochmal regards this claim as yet further evidence of the inferiority of the aggadah vis-à-vis the halakhah. For it is the halakhah that was oral Torah, and could not be committed to writing, while the aggadah was not to be included in this category, and thus could be written.

5. From the fact that many of the peculiar aggadot—those that deal with demons, incantations and other absurdities—are not formulated in the language of the Mishnah or the Gemara, but rather in some Aramaic/Persian combination, which was the language of the masses, it follows that there were aggadic collections created by the uneducated and slightly educated rabble, as well as by rabbis addressing the masses. It is, Krochmal claims, only within the collections of the rabble that one finds these strange aggadot, not within the collec-

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tions of the scholars. Krochmal "proves" this by a citation of a talmudic passage which seems to indicate that there were books, prevalent among the masses, that deal with the interpretation of dreams.²⁷ Thus, the strange aggadot are in no way to be seen as representative of rabbinic Judaism. The direction of Krochmal's thought here is clear, and requires no comment.

6. Not only were there collectors of stories among the rabble, but there were also some imbeciles, from which no people or generation is free, among the writers of aggadot, who were scornful of the scholars. Indeed, the Talmud itself reports that even in the courts of the exilarchs, and among their entourages, there were those who despised the sages. It is they who are responsible for the existence of aggadic collections that denigrate the sages, and depict them as engaged in unethical practices. Such stories therefore are not to be seen as an example of intra-rabbinic bickering or jealousy; such aggadot are not authentic products of rabbinic Judaism, and in no way should be considered illustrative of rabbinic values.²⁸

Having established that some types of aggadot are not authentically rabbinic, the question naturally arises, how did they come to be included in the Babylonian Talmud, one of the most sacred texts of the Jews? In answer to this question Krochmal briefly relates the history of the talmudic text. In its particulars Krochmal's history follows closely that of R. Sherira Gaon, and therefore need not detain us here. What is of importance is that, according to Krochmal, the Talmud was essentially complete at the time of the death of Rav Ashi (427), and in the ensuing seventy-three years (or until the death of Ravina II) some additions were made, and perhaps

some small changes in order. Thus, with the exception of a few additions of later scholars, called Saboraim, the Talmud was closed in the year 500: its closure was due to the persecution of Jews in Persian lands. All Talmudic material was transmitted orally during this time; the writing of this material began at the earliest in the year 589, when yeshivot were reestablished, and probably not until the Islamic era. On the other hand, the aggadot existed in written form as early as the third century, as we have seen. When the Talmud was finally set to writing, the scribes, unable to discern the wheat from the chaff, included the various aggadic collections in their transcriptions of the Talmudic material. Thus, the inclusion of the strange aggadot in the Babylonian Talmud does not represent a conscious choice on the part of the rabbinic leaders of the Jewish community, but rather the ignorance or malevolence of the scribal class. Again, authentic rabbinic Judaism is absolved of all responsibility for the creation and "canonization" of superstitious and derogatory aggadot.

The final step in Krochmal's defense of rabbinic Judaism in the face of the intolerable aggadot is to explain why they were retained in the Talmud even though their original inclusion was not sanctioned. To this Krochmal responds that their deletion was made unnecessary by the development, and widespread use, of halakhic compendia, such as the *Halakhot* of Alfasi, which themselves deleted all aggadic material.²⁹ Since the aggadot were rarely studied, there was no compelling reason to delete them from the texts despite their spurious nature.³⁰

Krochmal's attempts to disinherit the unacceptable aggadot are completely without foundation, and represent nothing less

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than a *deus ex machina*. In general, his theories regarding the aggadah did little to advance the discussion in a serious way, despite the fact that his work is still cited. Most of what Krochmal claimed that can stand the test of time was already to be found in Zunz's study of Jewish sermons. Nevertheless, Krochmal's chapter on aggadah remains important for three reasons. The first is that it exercised a not inconsiderable influence on nineteenth-century thinking on aggadah, particularly among Eastern European scholars. Echoes of Krochmal's view may be found in Rapoport's *Erech Millin* in a more tentative and toned-down manner, in Isaac Baer Levinson's *Zerubbabel*,³¹ as well as in Isaac Hirsh Weiss's *Dor Dor v'Dorshav*.

A second and more important reason why Krochmal's chapter on aggadah is more than a passing curiosity is the light it sheds on the process of modernization as it confronted "enlightened" Jews who wished to remain loyal to their religious tradition. For Krochmal's disowning of a part of the aggadic corpus represents an act of remarkable desperation. It is explicable only in terms of a man who sees his religious culture under attack at its weakest point, and who can find no other refuge from the attack but to partially concede the point in order that the other, more important elements may continue to flourish. Other literature from the period, although choosing less radical responses, also provides evidence of the extent to which aggadah became an enormous intellectual challenge, indeed, a source of embarrassment. In Isaac Baer Levinson's *Beit Yehudah*, written at approximately the same time as Krochmal's chapter, the works of many non-Jews, including Voltaire, are cited as examples of those who denigrate Judaism on account of its aggadic teachings. Levinson juxtaposes them

to other non-Jewish works that are more sympathetic to the aggadah and to the Talmud more generally.³²

This approach, while fascinating, and itself shedding much light on the nature of intellectual modernization, was not acceptable to Krochmal, as, in the end, it failed to address the fact that, however one lines up previous Jewish and gentile scholars, the reality is that the critics of aggadah were right, *within carefully defined limits*. That is, while one could cite a pro-aggadah Jew to respond to an anti-aggadah Jew, and a pro-aggadah gentile to respond to an anti-aggadah gentile, none of this addressed the substance of the matter. For Krochmal, one fact was inescapable. A very small percentage of aggadot were simply offensive to the modern consciousness; worse yet, such aggadot were taken as demonstrative of the capabilities of the "rabbinic mind." The only appropriate solution was to disinherit them. If the primary source of scorn against rabbinism was shown to be a foreign growth within the corpus of rabbinic literature, surgery to remove it would lead to rabbinism's healthy rehabilitation. The path to modernity of the traditional Jew could not traverse the entire expanse of aggadic literature, even as it could not bypass it totally either. Rather, portions of this literature had to be acknowledged as an expression of sublime philosophical concepts, while other portions had to be recognized as the rantings of foolish people, and excised from the Jewish cultural patrimony. Only thus, claims Krochmal, could a Jew successfully negotiate the difficult path that circumstances and intellectual curiosity had opened before him.

The final reason that Krochmal's discussion remains interesting is that it illuminates the limits of the ostensible roman-

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tic attachment to the irrational, as perceived by one of the age's more perspicacious students.³³ That is, it is remarkable that even in the age in which many had come to appreciate the irrational elements of culture, Krochmal felt he had no choice but to excise the most irrational aspects of rabbinic culture in order for the remainder to thrive. This cannot be attributed to a facile rationalism on the part of Krochmal, as he, perhaps more than any other Wissenschaft scholar, had a deep appreciation for the irrational forms of religious expression. On the other hand, this appreciation had its limits, nowhere better illustrated than here in the discussion of aggadah.³⁴

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are often pictured as an age in which the simplistic rationalism of the Enlightenment gave way to a far greater appreciation of other cultural manifestations. Both the epistemological investigations of Kant and the Idealists, and the historical thinking of Herder, C. G. Heyne³⁵ and others opened up another side of culture in which ideas, such as the incarnation of God in a human, became explicable and defensible expressions of human need.³⁶ The concept of myth, and its application to the world of biblical study and well as to the understanding of the Greco-Roman world, allowed a new, sympathetic, understanding of the ancient world to emerge. No longer were ideas cast in irrational form to be rejected on those grounds. All of this, however, had its limits—limits that often go unnoted, but that Krochmal's discomfort forces us to confront.

The irrational was esteemed to the extent that its irrationality could be dissolved—that is, to the extent that herme-

neutics emerged that allowed for myths to be deciphered in ways that impressed the modern soul. Numerous examples of this may be drawn from one of the true classics of the age, Herder's *Vom Geist der hebräischen Poesie*. In this work, a brilliant, insightful and sympathetic hand illuminates the way in which the so-called "oriental mind" perceived the world and expressed this perception in tropes of various kinds. Yet Herder's apologetic motive, and his theological boundaries, are apparent throughout. Most relevant in light of the problems Krochmal experienced with aggadah is Herder's treatment of the biblical Satan, as he appears in the book of Job.

He is simply one of the angels, i.e., one among the attendant train of the Supreme Sovereign. In this character he is sent as a messenger to search through the world and bring information. He merely acts in accordance with the duty of his office. . . . God maintains the right, though for a long time, indeed, he permits Job to be severely tried; and at the end of the book Satan is no longer heard of. This conception of him, as an angel or messenger of God, is so widely different from the later Chaldee conception. . . . The Chaldee Satan is the opposer of Ormuzd, and the primitive cause of all evil. The agent represented in Job cannot even be compared with the Typhon of the Egyptians, or what the ancients called a man's evil genius. He is nothing but the attendant angel of the tribunal, a messenger sent out to make enquiry, to chastise and to punish. I have already remarked, how much the reference of every thing to a court of justice prevails throughout the book.³⁷

Thus, not all poetic, irrational expressions are created equal. Some continue to speak to us in ways that impress, while others bespeak an understanding of the world that is primitive and theologically offensive. In such an environment, herme-

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neutics that dissolve the irrational character of demons and supernatural evildoers remain elusive.³⁸

The limits of Krochmal's appreciation of the irrational elements in rabbinic aggadah are quite close to those of Herder. Like Herder, and unlike Heinrich Heine,³⁹ for example, the poetic, allegorical nature of the genre is highly esteemed. However, the nature of the genre does not mean that any and all ideas expressed within it are necessarily of value. Foolish ideas do not become less foolish because they are enigmatically expressed. Placed in the hands of foolish people—for Herder, the Chaldees and others, for Krochmal, the semi-educated rabble—the genre quickly disintegrates into offensive nonsense, to be disinherited by people of culture. Further, like Herder, Krochmal wished to demonstrate the extent to which the ancient world still has much to say to us and teach us, despite the fact that the ancients did not speak the way we speak, and did not always think the way we think. Accomplishing this goal required a certain selectivity with regard to what the ancients had bequeathed.

In his discussion of aggadah we see Krochmal at his most bold and desperate; it is this boldness and desperation that make the chapter interesting. Nevertheless, the nature of his presentation remains within the contours of the portrait of Nachman Krochmal that emerges from an analysis of his work and place in nineteenth-century Jewish culture: a strong advocate for the continued viability of traditional Jewish life, a passionate believer in the religious genius of the rabbinic tradition.

NOTES

1. The first passage is from Sifre Deuteronomy, an early rabbinic commentary on Deut., par. 49. The second passage is from the Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), Shabbat 16:1.
2. Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 1. Saperstein's entire first chapter is a good treatment of the problem of the aggadah for medieval thinkers. These problems were compounded by the more recent ones.
3. See Maimonides, *Moreh*, pp. 8–10 (introduction); also, Saperstein, throughout. For the use of the aggadah by Maimonides, see, W. Bacher, "Die Agada in Maimunis Werken," in Bacher vol. 2, pp. 131–97. Also David Hartman, *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1976), pp. 28–101. In his work Maimonides divides the students of aggadah into classes, differentiating those who believe it literally from those who recognize the esoteric content of this material. To say that this differentiation is often quoted would be an understatement. Virtually all subsequent students who deal with the issue of the aggadah, from Azariah de Rossi to the Maharal of Prague, from Rapoport to Luigi Chiarini (on all of whom, see the text below) quote this differentiation.
4. There have been those who question the sincerity of this statement of Nahmanides; for a review of the issue, and a forceful, and, in my view, correct, defense of Nahmanides' sincerity, see Marvin Fox, "Nahmanides on the Status of Aggadat: Perspectives on the Disputation at Barcelona, 1263," in *JJS*, vol. 40 (1989), pp. 95–109. Fox does not note that most nineteenth-century scholars assumed Nahmanides' sincerity as a matter of course, although probably more for apologetic than scholarly reasons.
5. Azariah de Rossi, *Me'or Einaim*, David Cassell, ed., 3 vols., repr. (Jerusalem: Makor, 1970/71), vol. 1, pp. 196–97. See in general chapters 14–28, pp. 196–278. Azariah's position regarding scientific claims is in fact much older; already R. Sherira Gaon had denied that the rabbinic statements deserved greater credibility than expert medical opinion. (For the source of Sherira's responsum, and a review of the literature on this issue, see the comments of Reuben Margoliot in

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note 18 to his edition of Abraham Maimonides' "Ma'amar al Odot D'rashot Chazal", appended to his edition of the latter's *Milhamot ha-Shem* [Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, n.d.], p. 84.) This position was also echoed by Maimonides, and by his son Abraham. Cf. *Be'er ha-Golah* of Judah Loew b. Bezalel (the Maharal of Prague), who responded to de Rossi in the sharpest terms at the end of "*be'er shishi*." He writes:

But one who says that the aggadot are not words of Torah just like the rest of the Torah that was spoken at Sinai has no portion in the world to come. It may be proven from the very material he has cited as support that the aggadot may be recognized as words of divine wisdom by one who understands them, although not by one who has no wisdom or knowledge at all, who can only grasp the physical things that are in front of him, for the words of the sages are a very, very profound science. (*Be'er ha-Golah*, in *Sifre Maharal* [Jerusalem: 5732], p. 135)

The Maharal closes his polemic with the prayer that "He, may He be blessed, save the seed of the remnant of Israel, that there be not found among us another breach that gives honor and glory to foreigners. Amen Selah." It is to be noted that the Maharal, too, for all the respect he gives to the aggadah as Torah, engages, perhaps more than anyone else, in extensive allegorization of the aggadot, thus betraying the same ambivalence as others.

6. For further discussion of other approaches to the problem of the aggadah, see de Rossi, chapter 14; Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport, *Erech Millin*, s.v. "aggadah"; Moshe Aharon Shatzkes, *Sefer ha-Mafteach* (New York: Pardes, 1929; first edition, 1866), pp. 1-12; Isaac Baer Levinson, *Beit Yehudah* (1838), throughout and, idem, *Zerubbabel*, pt. 1, pp. 56-59; Isaac Samuel Reggio's introduction to his Torah commentary, *Sefer Torat ha-Elohim*, (1840), vol. 1, pp. 7b-11a.
7. Many before Krochmal recognized the fact that aggadah was a source of scorn among gentiles. As Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson relates, Hayyim b. Bezalel, the brother of the Maharal, saw the aggadah as the primary barrier keeping Christians from respecting the Talmud and Judaism. See his *Hagut ve-Hanhagah*, (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1959), pp. 38-39. Similarly, R. Yitzhak Wetzlar, in the middle of the eighteenth century, noted that Jews and Judaism are routinely mocked by the upper classes of gentile society. He recommends that teachers not teach the *Ein Ya'aqob*, the most important collection of

- aggadot, to the youth for they interpret the aggadot literally, and treat them as representative of Jewish thought. See Azriel Shochet, *Im Hilufeï Tequfot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1960), p. 202.
8. Arnold Ages, *French Enlightenment and Rabbinic Tradition* (Frankfurt am Main; Analecta Romanica, Heft 26, 1970), throughout, esp. pp. 29-47.
 9. See Denis Diderot "Juifs (Philosophie des)," in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Assezat, 1876), pp. 386-97. A recent compendium of rabbinic angels and demons is Reuven Margoliot's *Mal'akhe Elyon* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 5748, 3rd edition. Part one provides a list of references to the good angels, while the second part collects data pertaining to the evil spirits found within rabbinic and kabbalistic literature.
 10. On Chiarini, see Arnold Ages, "Luigi Chiarini: A Case Study in Intellectual Anti-Semitism," in *Judaica*, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 1981), pp. 76-89.
 11. See *ibid.*, pp. 81-82, 87. Regarding the translation, two volumes appeared in 1831; Chiarini's death the following year brought an end to the project. See *ibid.*, pp. 77-78, for a discussion of the translation project. Ages does not mention that, according to Zunz, anyway, the whole project was commissioned by the Russian government for the sum of twelve thousand thalers. See Zunz's "Beleuchtung der *Théorie du Judaïsme* des Abbe Chiarini" in his, *Gerammelte Schriften* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), 3 vols. in 1. vol. 1, p. 273.
 12. See Zunz, *Schriften*, pp. 290-94; Jost, *Was hat Herr Chiarini in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Juden geleistet? Eine freimüthige und unpartheische Beleuchtung des Werkes: Theorie du Judaïsme* (Berlin: 1830), pp. 24-35.
 13. It should be noted that Chiarini's work was written for the purpose of reforming Polish Jewry, and was apparently commissioned by the Russian government (see above, note 11). Levinson testified that by the fifties Chiarini's work was virtually unknown, having been thoroughly discredited by Zunz and Jost. See his *Zerubbabel*, pt. 1, p. 13.
 14. Luigi Chiarini, *Theorie du judaïsme*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1830), vol. 2, pp. 54-56. He writes:

Enfin, il faut ranger dans la troisieme et derniere categorie les *Agadas* qui doivent leur origine à l'extrême secheresse qui accompagne partout la *Halacha* dans la Thalmud, et qui a paru insupportable aux Rabbins eux-memes, quoiqu'ils en soient les auteurs. . . . Cette troisieme espece d'*Agadas* reparait

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à chaque instant dans la Thalmud, et même les deux premières dont nous venons de parler, et qui, dans l'origine, étaient peut-être telles que nous les avons définies, y rentrent souvent dans cette dernière catégorie, c'est-à-dire y sont citées sans égard pour le sens caché qu'elles renferment, mais seulement pour laisser reposer le lecteur et le délasser de la fatigue que la *Halacha* lui a fait éprouver. *En effet, le Thalmud a été écrit pour les savans et non pour le commun des hommes; et sous ce rapport, ses allégories ne peuvent, en aucune manière, être assimilées aux Mythes du vieux Testament et aux paraboles du nouveau.* (Emphasis added)

- The last clause is not unexpected from the Catholic priest; the attempt to differentiate rabbinic writings and the Gospels of the New Testament is not uncommon in nineteenth-century Christian writings on rabbinics. This need to differentiate may help to explain the vigor of Chiarini's denunciation of aggadah and rabbinic writings generally.
15. He cites the example of R. Gamliel and his sons found in the very first mishnah (M. Berakhot 1:1). Krochmal, *Guide*, p. 248, denies that aggadot ever served as the *source* of a law, although they do at times justify observance of a law; he cites the position of Rashi at Shabbat 30b, s.v., *mutav she-t'khabeh nero*. This position is, of course, ad locum, but Krochmal treats it as a general proposition.
 16. Chiarini, vol. 1, p. 46.
 17. See above, chapter 1, pp. 16–18.
 18. This will be discussed further in the text below.
 19. Defining aggadah has never been all that simple. In some way or another it is almost always defined, fully or, as here, partially, in terms of halakhah. Saperstein, e.g., claims that it is "best defined negatively as the nonlegal component of rabbinic discourse" (p. 213). While this is probably true, for Krochmal it is not enough; his understanding of the problem required that the methodological distinctions be clear, so that the claim that they try to do the same things would lose credibility.
 20. This echoes Zunz; see his *Vorträge*, p. 61.
 21. We see once again the way in which religious representations are seen as enveloping speculative truth. As we shall see, though, the concept of religious representations will go only so far in Krochmal's reconstruction of rabbinic aggadah.
 22. There are in fact many classical sources that support the position that the aggadot were originally preached to the *ame ha'aretz* (the common folk). These are reviewed by Levinson in *Zerubbabel*, pt. 1, p. 50.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 243. It is not insignificant that Krochmal presents the Pharisees as Jesus' model, imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. Chiarini's claim that the rabbinic parables are not comparable to those of the New Testament is not only contested thereby; it is turned upside down: Jesus is not a superior creator of parables, but rather an unoriginal imitator. This is one of many attempts by Jewish scholars in the nineteenth century to depict Jesus as an unoriginal and inferior product of his Jewish environment. Abraham Geiger's approach to the question has now been exhaustively studied by Susannah Heschel in her "Abraham Geiger on the Origins of Christianity" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1989). There were many other Jews who pursued similar lines of argument, even as there were many Christians who, like Chiarini, sought to distance Jesus from the world of Palestinian Judaism, dismissing apparent parallels between Jesus' activity and that of the rabbis as merely superficial. A comprehensive study of this would be welcome.
24. *Guide*, p. 245. He quotes a passage from Maimonides, also referred to by Azariah, to the effect that rabbinic scientific opinions cannot be seen as inspired or holy, but rather as indicative of the state of scientific knowledge at the time. See Maimonides, *Moreh* p. 459 (3:14). See above, note 5.
25. It is interesting to compare Krochmal's position here with that of the otherwise far less traditional Peter Beer, who in the face of undecipherable stories remarks:

Es ist hier kein anderes Mittel, als entweder diese Männer für wahnsinning zu erklären, oder einen verborgenen Sinn, wenn nicht darin zu suchen, (denn wer würde sich jetzt die Mühe dazu nehmen) aber doch zu muthmassen. Das erste gehet schon darum nicht an, weil viele Sentenzen dieser Männer in andern Stellen, der Vernunft in vollem Masse zu sagen. Es muss also hier der zweite Fall eintreten, und—so verhält es sich auch. (Peter Beer, *Geschichte Lebrer und Meinungen aller bestanden und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden und der Geheimlehre oder Cabbalah* [1822], vol. 1, p. 295)

Beer goes on to explain that the path from oral to written form rendered the hidden meaning and lessons forever lost. He would never dream of actually removing these passages from the authentic rabbinic corpus. This is one example in which more conservative scholars adopt more radical scholarly positions in the hope of preserving the modern relevance of the tradition.

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26. This too follows Zunz *Vorträge*, p. 182. Krochmal's claim, as Zunz's, is based primarily on BT Gittin 60a, where it is reported that R. Yohanan and R. Simon b. Laqish (third-century rabbinic sages) used to read from a book of aggadah on the Sabbath. They lived long before the Talmud itself was completed or committed to writing.
27. *Guide*, 251. He cites a passage from BT Berakhot 55b–56a.
28. Again here, Chiarini, echoing Eisenmenger, made much of the ethically negative portraits of sages that appear in the Talmud. These portraits suggested to him that Jews, subject to the corruption of the rabbinic mind, were incapable of decency and civility, thus necessitating a wholesale reform of their religious lives. See Ages, "Chiarini," pp. 81–82.
29. For a critique of Krochmal's views on the aggadah and its origins, see the review of the *Guide* by "SHALOSH" (Hirsh Mendel Pineles, abbreviated "shalosh" after the last letter in each of his names) in *He-Haluz*, vol. 1 (1852), (photographic reprint, Jerusalem: Makor, 1972), pp. 127–33. There Pineles disputes the claim that the strange aggadot were unknown to the Amoraim, and did not derive from them. In his support he quotes numerous Talmudic passages in which amoraim are seen discussing these aggadot. While sympathetic with Krochmal's attempt to defend the honor of the rabbis, Pineles nonetheless is unable to refrain from showing the former's errors, although he certainly does not wish to in any way damage the reputation of the rabbis, and does not feel that he has. Krochmal undoubtedly was aware of the Talmudic discussions that Pineles cites; we must conclude, assuming (as I do) he was intellectually honest, that he considered the discussions as pseudepigraphic, this being an occasion in which the claim of pseudepigraphy would relieve rather than exacerbate the perplexities of the time.
30. Characteristically, Krochmal tries to show that he is not totally innovative here, discerning allusions in the works of Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi that suggest, to him, anyway, that they, too, suspected that some aggadot did not originate in rabbinic circles. See *Guide*, p. 256.
31. See Levinson, *Zerubbabel*, pt. 1, p. 56.
32. See Levinson, *Beit Yehudah*, chapter 112 (=pt. 2, pp. 77–86). Similarly, earlier in the century, Peter Beer lamented, "Aber empörend scheint es uns dennoch, wenn Menschen aus Gehässigkeit und Parteisucht, sämtliche Talmudisten für den Abschaum der Menschheit

- erklären, und ihnen alle Vernunft und allen Sinn für Moralität absprechen." He responds to the charge, "Man findet wahrlich in dieser Sammlung, neben manchem für uns unverständlich Gesagten und Gedachten, sehr vieles, das gut gesagt und trefflich gedacht ist. Auch sogar vieles, welches der reinste Moralist unserer Zeit nicht besser sagen könnte" (Beer, p. 297).
33. Jan de Vries's characterization of the age is typical. He writes, "Jetzt wird der Irrationalismus gepredigt; die Seelenkräfte, die eben ausserhalb des Intellectes tätig sind, brechen mit eruptiver Gewalt hervor; das Gemütsleben mit seinen Leidenschaften und die Phantasie, das sind jetzt die grossen Triebfedern der neuen Kunst" (*Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie* [Munich: Karl Alber Freiburg, 1961], p. 121).
 34. See also above, chapter 2, note 44.
 35. On Heyne, see de Vries, pp. 143-49; John Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), pp. 3-10.
 36. Both Kant and Hegel contributed to this, each in his own, apologetic, way. For Kant as a moralistic *darshan*, see *Religion*, throughout, esp. pp. 54-72. For Hegel as a *darshan*, see *LPR*, vol. 3, throughout, esp. pp. 301-4, 311-12, 322-47. Each of them was quite willing to view the Scriptures as examples of nonrational expressions of rational doctrine. Thus, unlike, say, Voltaire, they were each prepared to defend the continued importance of this nonrational ancient literature.
 37. Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, James Marsh, trans., (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1971; original English edition, 1833), vol. 1, pp. 111-12. The apologetic and triumphalist elements in this approach are readily apparent.
 38. Peter Beer cites Herder's theories of poetry and allegory at some length in his attempt to explain aggadah relatively favorably. See Beer, pp. 285-87. (His citation is drawn from Herder's *Briefe über das Studium der Theologie*.) Chiarini cited the same passage, no doubt drawing it from Beer, whom he quotes copiously, but dismissed it as a defense of aggadah, for the number of aggadot to which Herder's position is relevant "est aussi limité dans le Thalmud que celui des bonnes traditions qui tombent dans la première époque de la Halaca" (Chiarini, vol. 2, p. 53). Krochmal understood the contours of the discussion better than Beer in recognizing the limited relevance of

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- Herder's work to resolving the problem, and in recognizing the limited contribution his work made to exacerbating the problem.
39. For Heine, the very nature of allegory and what he calls romantic poetry, given that it seeks to grasp the infinite that is beyond humanity's ken, leads to a high level of mystification that ultimately, inevitably, produces the negative effects Krochmal discerned in aggadah. (See his "Romantic School" in idem, *The Romantic School and Other Essays* [New York: Continuum, 1985], p. 9.) For Krochmal, given his traditional leanings, such a position is untenable. The infinite can be grasped in thought, and can be expressed rationally. Communication with the uninitiated led to the allegoristic form, but this did not lead to "abortions of imagination"—as Heine put it—at all. Indeed, in the hands of the sages, aggadah, allegory, is an indispensable and deftly exercised tool in educating the masses and in communicating publicly with each other; only in the hands of fools does it become an embarrassing abortion of the imagination.

CHAPTER 7

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KROCHMAL'S WORK remains of interest for at least three reasons. It represents an important Jewish reaction, both critical and sympathetic, to the intellectual modernization that shook the foundations of traditional society; it provides a different model of coping with the modern age from those that came to prevail in Germany and have dominated the discussion of Jewish modernization; its philosophical sections, including its phenomenology of rabbinic learning, remain an untapped resource in the continuing efforts to achieve a successful Jewish reorientation in the modern age. In addition, it is clear that Krochmal exercised an important influence on conservative Jewish historiography in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Understanding him and the issues he confronted will aid in our understanding of the general conservative attempt to deal with historical criticism.

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Krochmal and the Modern Intellect

Throughout this book, I have shown that Krochmal's work must be seen as a reaction to particular philosophical and historiographical approaches that seek to deny legitimacy to rabbinic Judaism. In essence, he countered the triumphalism of the modern, largely Protestant, self-judgment, which saw itself at the pinnacle of human achievement, and, perhaps, even the culmination of world history, with an equally triumphalist Jewish self-evaluation that sought to shatter this self-serving construct. In this respect, Krochmal should be seen as part of the general conservative reaction of the early part of the nineteenth century.

What distinguishes him from much of this reaction is that despite his attraction to certain romantic notions, particularly pertaining to the *Volk* and its *Geist*, Krochmal rebelled against recourse to highly romantic, antirational or fideistic postures. Instead, for the most part, he combated modern triumphalism by trying to turn the tables on it—by using the very criteria that ostensibly undergirded it to undermine it. This is most evident in his metaphysics and understanding of Jewish history, in each of which he adopts the criteria of his various disputants to show that their evaluation of Judaism and its place in the history of culture is simply incorrect. In this respect, we should see him as one of the pioneers of a conservative, but essentially modern reorientation to the transitions accompanying the modernization process.

Grappling with Krochmal's polemic may help humanists bring into focus yet once more the extent of the cultural imperialism of modern philosophical and historical thinking.

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For the underlying polemic of Krochmal's *Guide* indicates the way in which a Jewish scholar understood the encounter between philosophical and historical scholarship and Judaism, while the "guide" itself attempts to counter the disdainful one-sidedness of this encounter.

The two giants of modern philosophy prior to Krochmal's death were, of course, Kant and Hegel. Many have written of their attitudes toward Judaism, and I have added my own observations as they became relevant throughout this book. Of importance here is the fact that these negative views of Judaism (and virtually all non-Protestant religions) are embedded in works that pretend to be philosophical studies of religion in general. Yet Kant, in attempting to identify religion within the limits of reason alone, has no reservations about writing a book that is essentially an ethical reduction of Christianity, whose method is to "midrashically" reinterpret the relevant passages of the New Testament in light of his own moral theory. Kant provides no evidence of having studied other religions and their scriptures seriously, other than the Old Testament, of course.¹ He nevertheless feels perfectly justified in locating rational religion within the doctrines of Christianity, as best he can identify them. Similarly, Hegel's philosophy of religion, while far more sophisticated and learned than Kant's, is also constructed as a philosophical defense of Protestant Christianity, which it labels the absolute religion.²

Now, of course, Kant and Hegel are free to develop their understanding of Protestantism as they see fit. Certainly one could not, on the basis of Krochmal's defensive reaction, criticize their theological stance. What Krochmal's work does bring into sharp focus is the enormous self-confidence that

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allows them to embed these views within an ostensibly impartial consideration of the universal phenomenon labeled religion, whether understood historically or "within the limits of reason alone." Krochmal's work shows how one can adopt their theological and/or ethical criteria and, on the basis of a different set of data and existential needs, arrive at an opposing point of view.

The methods employed in the understanding of human history share similar biases. In the third chapter of this work, I have discussed this in detail. Here I wish to add the following observations. The philosophers of history seek to explain the historical development that led to contemporary Western European culture. The arguments are deductive, and are based on the judgment that theirs is the highest culture humanity has ever known. What is striking here is that such thought is facilely understood as a philosophy of the history of *human-kind*. Entire civilizations are reduced to their putative contribution to Western culture. It has been claimed that such forays into universal history are not Eurocentric, since the understanding of the emergence of Europe is truly universal in scope, encompassing as it does the vast "oriental" world, and not just the Roman-Germanic civilization.³ But this simply indicates that men such as Herder and Hegel were not racist, xenophobic maniacs as were some of their contemporaries. They were, however, people quite certain of the superiority of their world to any that history had yet witnessed.

The more liberal scholarly work of the period, then, seems to have been dominated, no less than the conservative, by the mentality that produced Schiller's famous remark, "die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht." I do not understand the

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adaptation of this remark by Hegel as merely a theodicy, but also as reflecting a position that world history is like a judicial proceeding in which there are winners and losers, innocent and guilty.⁴ The criteria on which such judgments are based are tailor-made to suit the judge's biases, just as the criteria for evaluating the various religious traditions were fashioned. In this world court, Protestant scholarship was judge and jury, Protestant/German culture the victorious claimant.⁵

Viewed against this backdrop, Krochmal's work can be seen as a resoundingly defiant response to the scholarly work that preceded him. It represents a clarion call to the Jew to reject the judgment that would doom his culture to oblivion. It was a demand for broader and deeper Judaic knowledge, so that modern Jews would rebel against those who would deny them continued legitimacy. Somewhat paradoxically, the intellectually honest way to coherently achieve this rejection is through a strong commitment to philosophical and historical research. Thus, one is led to acknowledge that, for all its flaws of execution, modern scholarship must change the way Jews see themselves and their tradition. For, stripped of its biases, modern scholarship opened up new avenues to human understanding that could not be ignored. If philological analysis could establish that the book of Qohelet could not be a tenth-century product, it would be sheer obstinacy to claim otherwise—particularly so given that a more recent date served to depict Jewish vitality as that much greater. If Hegel had unlocked the clue to human history and the mystery of human spirit, as Krochmal apparently believed he had, let his work be stripped of its Lutheran apologetic and used to illuminate the sources of Judaism. Thus does Krochmal call on his reader

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to adapt modern scholarship to interpreting Judaism's essential message, confident that such an adaptation will vindicate the Jewish tradition in the world court.

Krochmal and Modern Judaism

Todd Endelman has complained of the Germanocentric bias of recent histories of modern Judaism, and has tried to redress the balance with his own study of Anglo-Jewry. For all of the merits of his study, by virtue of its focus on a Western Jewry, it, too, deals with issues such as acculturation, religious accommodation and emancipation. Thus, while the story is quite different the themes overlap significantly. In Krochmal's work we find a response to modernity in which none of these issues is truly relevant; it, in turn, sheds important light on the reality of "modernization" in Galicia, and the limits of the *haskalah* movement there.

While Krochmal was probably the most "acculturated" of his colleagues in the sense that he was fully at home in the world of German culture, the fact is that he did not live within this cultural sphere. He lived in a society in which the surrounding culture was Polish, and there is no evidence of familiarity with it. The cultural world he knew did not overlap with his immediate social environment at all. The same may be said for all of his most important colleagues and students, even if they were far less at home in the world of German learning.

The aspirations of Western Jews to achieve a modern religious orientation was inextricably linked to hopes of acculturation and emancipation. The hopelessness of such aspirations

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in Galicia meant that the desire for religious accommodation would scarcely resemble Western attempts. Krochmal's work betrays no program for religious accommodation in the sphere of Jewish praxis. All agree—enemies and friends alike—that he was punctilious in his own observance. Further, he defends the importance of halakhah on both national and philosophical-theological grounds. What he and his kindred spirits hoped to accomplish was the intellectual transformation of contemporary Jewry, rabbinate and laity alike. They hoped to stamp out the alleged superstitions of Hasidism, the close-minded dogmatism of the rabbinate, and the philosophical and historical ignorance of the Jewish masses. None of this was to lead to an abandonment of traditional practice, but to a renewed intellectual—indeed, modern—commitment to it.

As far as emancipation goes, I have already indicated that this was scarcely a realistic prospect for Galicia's Jews. The promise of the Josephine reforms of the 1780s was quickly and cruelly squelched in the subsequent decades. Thus, while some maskilim hoped for government help in eradicating Hasidism and in modernizing their educational system, hopes for full-scale emancipation were rarely articulated in the decades of Krochmal's productive life. Jewish modernization in Galicia was not shaped by the quest for emancipation as it was elsewhere.

A study of Krochmal's work cannot neglect his immediate, Jewish social environment. Yet his *Guide* is unique in providing a picture of the intellectual challenges of modernity and a Jewish response to them that is cut off from identifiable social and political concerns. It is a scholarly response to a scholarly set of challenges. In this respect, it provides us with an

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important picture of the intellectual disorientation wrought by modernity.

If we bring together all of Krochmal's historical studies, it is clear that his response is of two kinds. The first directly challenges certain historical constructs that conflict with traditional self-understanding. The second and more interesting response challenges the philosophical implications of historical thought. Krochmal taxes his ingenuity to neutralize the disorienting effects of historicism without denying the validity of historical research. He acknowledges that the Jewish tradition has unfolded over the course of time, and that it has been affected by the same immanent causality as all other human achievements. Yet he denies that this truly affects the essence of that tradition. The essence of Torah, the essence of Jewish theology exists beyond history; they are absolute. At the same time they must be expressed and experienced through human institutions. Thus, there is no suggestion here that Jews exist beyond history; they live in history, and it is only through a study of history that one can fully appreciate the essence of Judaism (*Guide*, p. 209). However, that essence, while discernible in history, exists beyond it. It is absolute and thus secures for the Jews as eternal existence.

It is in the context of his battle against relativism that we can best understand the interplay between philosophy and history throughout the work. Historians, qua historians, do not recognize absolutes. They deal with facts (alleged or real), possibilities, assumptions, could-haves, might-haves—that is, contingencies. Philosophers in Krochmal's day, on the other hand, saw it as their business to comprehend the infinite, the absolute, and to understand its relation to the finite

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—a task that must take account of history to be complete. Making sense of all this is more readily accomplished by someone operating with biases inherited from a Protestant *Weltanschauung*, or for anyone who can live with an allegedly sublated past. For them, the absolute can be conceived as engaged in a lengthy process of self-realization that is played out over the millennia of human history.

For Krochmal, impressed as he was by the grandeur of this metaphysical vision but devoted nevertheless to Jewish tradition, the business of making sense of all this was trickier. On the metaphysical level, the self-realization drama of the absolute is played out through creation, revelation and the consequent recognition of God as absolute being on the part of Israel. Subsequent history then becomes the stage on which this completed drama's effects may be witnessed; the action, however, has already reached its denouement. On the other hand, on the historical level, now stripped of ultimate importance, events may be reconstructed using the tools of critical research. It is imperative that we know when and how texts and ideas emerged; otherwise our understanding of Judaism would be incomplete. Such reconstructions cannot, however, diminish the absolute nature of the culture whose external manifestations they describe. Thus, history may replace memory, but Judaism remains intact, indeed, enhanced, as a better historical picture serves to more fully illustrate its absolute nature.

Throughout this book, specific examples of this point abound. Here it will be sufficient to rehearse but two of them, for they are central to Krochmal's attempt to historicize without relativizing. In response to the claims of Spinoza—that otherwise

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most unhistorical of thinkers—that the Bible must be read literally and historically, that is, as the product of a time and place, and thus not metaphorically, Krochmal claims that symbolic language is universal and therefore the Bible (and rabbinic documents) must be read as symbolic statements. Furthermore, the nature of symbols and metaphors is itself universal so that the Bible is as accessible today as it was when it was first composed. Indeed, as our base of knowledge grows, the Bible becomes more accessible. Krochmal will historicize the text, acknowledging that it has an original historical locus. More than that, on the basis of historical considerations he will argue for untraditional dates for much of it, albeit not the Pentateuch. He nevertheless refuses to historicize basic human mental structures, for to do so would be to abandon the plausibility of sacred history, and would make the primary texts of Judaism distant and inaccessible.

In his discussion of the history of rabbinic texts, Krochmal describes the historical process that led to their emergence, but denies that the essential contents of these texts were subject to such a process. (This, of course, excludes, specific ordinances designed to deal with a specific set of circumstances; it refers to the interpretations of the Mishnah and the Scriptures that define and determine their practical contours.) To claim otherwise would be to acknowledge that these documents are the result of specific, variegated historical circumstance, making their interpretations and legal prescriptions contingent rather than absolute. As Krochmal saw clearly from contemporary scholarship, such an acknowledgment is tantamount to saying that rabbinic Judaism represented an important cultural achievement in its day, but its day has

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passed, and its laws and values may be rejected. Combating this position is a central goal of the *Guide*. Thus, history was not the enemy, relativism was. Krochmal's approach was to argue that we can have the former without the latter.

More than any other issue touched on in the *Guide*, the disorientation brought on by relativist historicism remains a crucial difficulty for Jews in the modern world. Jewish thinkers in this century, from Franz Rosenzweig to Emil Fackenheim, have continued the struggle to develop a vision of Judaism that is intellectually honest yet insulated from the destructive effects of historicism. I will leave it to others to judge whether their visions are more compelling than Krochmal's.

The problem is not confined to Jewish "thinkers." The various modern movements that characterize Judaism in the modern age have also struggled with the issue. It seems to me that were Krochmal alive today he would be tragically disappointed with what has been accomplished. Many, although certainly not all, of the modern Orthodox have taken refuge from the problem in their denial of history as a category relevant to their self-understanding. Already Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), one of the most significant figures in the emergence of this Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century, insisted that Orthodox tradition admits of no history at all. The entire tradition originated at Sinai.⁶ There may be a history of the Jews but not a significant history of Judaism. This position has been carried forward into the twentieth century by many of Hirsch's followers, as well as by Joseph D. Soloveitchik and many of his disciples.⁷ Krochmal, of course, would be greatly distressed by this unwillingness to

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confront historical consciousness and to adapt Jewish self-understanding to it.

He would, I think, be yet more distressed by the direction of liberal versions of Judaism, which concede too much to history. A Reform Judaism for which every aspect of Jewish culture, save for the monotheistic idea itself, is seen as historically conditioned allows for no absolute and binding demands. In the name of historicism the very connection to history has been severed, and the absolute nature of Jewish spirituality stands unperceived. He would not, I think, judge modern conservatism any less harshly, although he would appear to have the most in common with it. For modern conservatism, too, has failed to develop a response to the challenge of relativism, to compellingly articulate the manner in which Judaism transcends history. Thus, for Krochmal, it too concedes far too much to modernity and modern values, cutting itself off from the absolute nature of traditional Jewish awareness. Maybe Krochmal's distress should not concern modern Jews; maybe, as Mordecai Kaplan has often insisted, it is a sign of Jewish maturity that Judaism no longer insists on its grasp of absolute truth, such a claim being necessarily a vain delusion. Yet I cannot help but feel that modern Judaism will continue to drift aimlessly or take refuge in fideism if it cannot resolve—for itself—the problem of historical relativism, and self-confidently affirm a transcendent and binding set of principles. This is the challenge Krochmal's work forces modern Jews to face; whether his solution is compelling is for the reader to judge.

Turning once again to Krochmal's debt to modern philosophy, we can see that in addition to providing a compelling

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metaphysical vision, modern philosophy provided Krochmal with a new branch of hermeneutics with which to unlock the treasures of Judaism. It provided him with the means to read texts, such as Ibn Ezra's Bible commentary, in a novel way. Using this approach, he could construct a response to modernity that was both daring and yet conservative. Thus, in Krochmal's vision of Judaism, the fundamental elements of traditional Jewish thought remain: God as an instructor in faith through revelation; the authenticity and antiquity of the oral law; the inspired leadership of the Great Assembly, Pharisees and rabbis; the qualitative distinction between Judaism and all other religions, despite acknowledgment of some common elements; Israel as the light unto the nations; the eternity of Israel. Yet all of these elements are provided with historical and/or philosophical foundations that are quite different from earlier justifications of these essential principles. For Krochmal knew perfectly well that times had changed and the needs of his audience were different. A new philosophically sophisticated justification was needed.

Krochmal's response to modernity then is quite distinct from that of all others. It is the response of an intellectual looking to ease the path of lesser intellectuals as they confront new ways of viewing the world. It embraces modernity cautiously, but only after it has redirected the course of its most significant intellectual trends, adapting them to a modern reconstruction of Jewish principles. It implicitly recognizes the intellectual foundations of modernity, as they were articulated by the giants of Western, primarily German, thought, as inimical to Jewish survival, and seeks to turn them upside down. He articulates the foundations of modern thought

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drawing from Jewish sources, thereby ensuring Jewish survival.

The Question of Influence

Somewhere toward the end of the nineteenth century, Solomon Schechter wrote, "I may assert with the utmost confidence that there is scarcely a single page in Krochmal's book that did not afterwards give birth to some essay or monograph or even elaborate treatise, though their authors were not always careful about mentioning the source of their inspiration." Yet, in 1945 Gershom Scholem bemoaned the fact that Krochmal's work exercised virtually no influence on other Wissenschaft scholars. How are we to make sense of these two completely opposing positions?

A full response to this question would require treatment of almost all subsequent Jewish scholarship in areas touched by Krochmal's *Guide*. This, of course, cannot be done here. I can, however, provide some general reflections on the direction of jüdische Wissenschaft after 1851, and thereby explain the conflicting evaluations of Krochmal's place in modern Jewish history.

Much of the distinction between Schechter and Scholem is tied to the different interests of the two scholars. Schechter's concerns are far broader than Scholem's, and take into account, inter alia, the direction of rabbinic scholarship in the nineteenth century. Scholem's concerns are characteristically narrow, and are directed to Krochmal's positive evaluation of Jewish mysticism, a position not shared by most of his colleagues.

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Adopting Schechter's broader perspective, we must still allow for considerable hyperbole on his part; nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Krochmal's was among the most influential of voices regarding the history of the rabbinic tradition. His work suited the conservative scholarly temperament, eschewing the hypercritical skepticism of someone like Jost, while at the same time recognizing that traditional claims could not stand as stated before historical scrutiny. He thus developed a historical form of hermeneutics in which traditional claims are always taken seriously, but not literally. In this way he relieved the ancients of the charge that they were speaking self-serving nonsense. More than that, he helped his modern reader bridge the alleged gap between himself and his ancestors—the cause of much of the perplexity of the time—by showing that the ancients were no less capable of serious and systematic theological and legal thinking.

This approach suited conservatives quite well. While Heinrich Graetz's fourth volume of his *Geschichte der Juden*, which treated the rabbinic period, came out too soon after Krochmal's *Guide* to have been influenced by it, we can see a certain similarity of purpose. Each understood the political needs of the time; each saw the need to treat the rabbis sympathetically, to explain their achievement in terms that made sense in the nineteenth century, and that could serve to justify continued adherence to rabbinic practices. While their specific reconstructions differed, their basic approach overlapped considerably.

The influence of Krochmal's specific reading of the rabbinic past begins to emerge in Zechariah Fränkel's *Darkhe ha-Mishnah*, in which the former's vision of the Soferim and his

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understanding of the *halakhab l'Moshe mi-sinai* are rehearsed and developed. Similarly, Krochmal's influence on Isaac Hirsh Weiss (1815–1905), Hanokh Albeck and Chaim Tchernowitz are palpable, despite explicit disagreements on particulars. Even David Zvi Hoffmann's work betrays grappling with, and partial acceptance of, Krochmal's conception. The list of lesser scholars similarly impressed could go on at some length. Today, to be sure, time has passed his vision by. But seen in the context of the political, scholarly battles of the nineteenth century; seen as the pioneering effort it was; seen in the context of conservative scholarship in general in the nineteenth century, and conservative Rechtswissenschaft in particular, Krochmal's efforts in constructing a coherent picture of rabbinism are quite impressive.

As Isaac Hirsh Weiss pointed out long ago, Krochmal's efforts in the philosophical area were to bear less fruit.⁸ It seems that Krochmal's Eastern European students were far less impressed with Idealist metaphysics than was the master. Certainly, his appreciation of Jewish, Neoplatonic mystical sources, central to his metaphysics, was shared by few, and led Scholem to his view that Krochmal had little influence. His reading of Ibn Ezra, while not wholly devoid of effect, was either too difficult, too fragmentary or too tendentious to have exercised broad influence.⁹ In general, then, Krochmal's efforts as philosopher and as historian of Jewish thought were attended to by few. This strikes me as unfortunate, for Krochmal's reconstruction of the metaphysics he finds implicit in Jewish sources seems to me to be a potential resource in the effort to articulate a compelling Jewish metaphysics, something severely lacking in modern Jewish thought.

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As a biblical scholar, Krochmal's work was simultaneously too timid for modern critics and too radical for traditional scholars to have found broad acceptance. Still, his work gave voice to an approach that had appeal to a segment of conservative scholars from Rapoport, whose early work on Isaiah bears Krochmal's stamp, to Graetz, whose treatment of Psalms and Qohelet represent applications of Krochmal's approach, to Isaac Hirsh Weiss. These scholars all embraced Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and understood the religious stakes in compromising on this point. At the same time, they treated other parts of the Bible in a critical manner, albeit using the tools of modern scholarship in a partisan way.¹⁰

The question of Krochmal's influence must go beyond the literary record. Certainly no one doubts the enormous effect Moses Mendelssohn had on modern Judaism. One would be hard pressed, however, to find significant attachment to his conception of Judaism as articulated in *Jerusalem*. Even the great *Biur* was to exercise far greater influence on Jews in the East than in Germany. Mendelssohn's importance derives in large measure from the very fact of his existence—the worlds he tied together, the example he set, the attitudes he transmitted. So it is with Nachman Krochmal.

The list of figures who were inspired by him is long. It includes someone like Yehoshua Heshel Schorr, a radical otherwise contemptuous of conservative scholars who, allegedly, compromised on their scholarly claims because of religious attachments. His admiration for Krochmal, however, was undiminished. This may be due to a meeting between the two, which took place early in Schorr's life, that clearly left an impression on the younger man. Whatever the cause of

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Schorr's uncharacteristic admiration for Krochmal, it is clear that the former saw the latter as a source of inspiration.

Similarly, Micha Yosef Berdichevski (1865–1921), in both his pre-Nietzschean and Nietzschean stages, referred to Krochmal as the source of wisdom from which Jewish scholars in the East must draw. He finds in Krochmal an authentic and original Jewish voice. Even when criticizing, Berdichevski is always reserved and respectful—qualities not generally associated with him.¹¹

The most significant testimony to Krochmal's greatness and importance comes from his contemporaries—the people who knew him and whose lives were changed by this acquaintance. Virtually all who have written on Krochmal's life, from Rapoport to Bloch, Letteris to Weiss, and Rawidowicz most of all, have commented on the effect that Krochmal exercised on those who knew him. He seems to have had the unique quality of being able to discern the talents that people had and to push them to develop them to the fullest. His role as the "Socrates of Galicia" had an enormous impact on the direction of Jewish scholarship in the East, including the research of Rapoport and Zvi Hirsh Chajes.

In bringing together encyclopedic interests with towering learning and scrupulous religious commitment, Krochmal served as an example of a religious figure who could confront the disorienting perplexities of the modern age and emerge with his religious commitment and scholarly integrity intact. His self-imposed, truly Herculean task, was to build anew the historical and philosophical structure of Judaism so as to redirect the course of Jewish modernity. No longer were Jews to be perplexed by modernity because of their ignorance of

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Judaism. The creative power of their minds was to reinterpret Judaism and its history in modern terms, and thereby transform the modern world, forcing it to grapple with the reality of Judaism rather than complacently disregarding it or considering it sublated. That few chose to walk on Krochmal's particular path cannot diminish the power that his example exercised on the scholarly Jews of Eastern Europe. For ultimately, Krochmal's work—his teaching as well as his written legacy—was dedicated to the proposition that Jewish tradition contained within itself the means to combat the dogmatism and materialism that were destroying Jewish life. The religionational pride in this stance was to become a hallmark of much Eastern European culture.

NOTES

1. The ignorance manifest in Kant's claim that reconstructing the grammar of the Hebrew language may not be possible because there is only one book in this language is astonishing. (See *Religion*, p. 155.) It is quite clear that he, in contrast to Hegel, felt no obligation to educate himself in matters Jewish (a point made by Emil Fackenheim in his *Encounters between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* [New York: Basic Books, 1973], p. 52 and chapter 3, passim).
2. See part 3 of Hegel's *LPR*, passim. This tendency is also characteristic of Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1958), which also pretends to be an analysis of religious life in general. See speech 5, passim, esp. pp. 241–53; see also Martin Redeker *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 50. The essentially Lutheran nature of German Idealism was fully recognized by Jürgen Habermas, who writes, "It remains astonishing how productively central motifs of the philosophy of German Idealism shaped so essentially by Protestantism can be developed in terms of the experience of the Jewish tradition."

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Further on he writes, "The Kantian rationalism of the Marburg School stripped away the specific pathos it owed to its Lutheran lineage." See Jürgen Habermas, "The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers," in idem, *Philosophical-Political Profiles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 21–44 (quotations from pp. 21 and 28, respectively).

3. See, e.g., Manfred Riedel's introduction to his edition of Eduard Gans's *Naturrecht und Universalgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), p. 14.
4. Cf. Walter Kaufmann's *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), p. 261. Hegel's use of the phrase in his *Philosophy of Right*, par. 341, supports my understanding. I should point out that for Hegel, the winners are not judged on the basis of "mere might" but rather in terms of "the actualization of the universal mind" (par. 342).
5. Much of this is in accord with the presentation of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978). A more comprehensive and less politically motivated study of Orientalism would include a treatment of the Jews and Judaism in Western scholarship.
6. See "Questions Left Unanswered" in Gunther Plaut's *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), p. 45, and more generally Hirsch's polemic against Fränkel and Graetz contained in the fifth volume of his *Collected Writings*, passim.
7. The absence of any serious consideration of history in Soloveitchik's main works is palpable. See also the work of Yeshayahu Leibowitz, in which, yet again, the relevance of history is denied.
8. See his memoirs, *Zikhronotai* (Warsaw: 5655), p. 117.
9. That it was too difficult seems to have been the judgment of Weiss (ibid.). David Herzog, the editor of the *Zofnat Paneach*, probably the most important commentary on Ibn Ezra's commentary, remarked that Krochmal's work was too fragmentary to be of value in understanding Ibn Ezra's philosophy. See his review of Y. L. Krinsky's *Mehokkeke Yehudah* in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 64 (1910), p. 219, n. 4. That it was tendentious, and represented more of Krochmal's views than Ibn Ezra's, is the position of most twentieth-century scholars who have addressed the question. See above, chapter 2, note 28. Rawidowicz insisted that it was more

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influential than generally acknowledged. See his "Rabi Avraham Ibn Ezra b'Ha'arato shel Rabi Nachman Krochmal," in *Rabi Avraham ben Ezra: Kovets Ma'amarim al Toldotav vi-Zirato* (Tel Aviv: Zion, 5730), p. 185. Krinsky in the "Karne Or" section of his commentary *Mehokeke Yehudah*, quotes from Krochmal's work quite extensively, particularly on Genesis 1:1 and Exodus 3:15, presumably with approbation. Through this work, Krochmal's reading of Ibn Ezra was brought to the attention of a much larger audience than he would otherwise have had. Whether his views were accepted by Krinsky's readers I cannot say.

10. For an interesting reflection on this aspect of Jewish scholarship, see Solomon Schechter's introduction to his *Studies in Judaism* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 10-17.
11. See *Kitve Micha Yosef ben-Gurion (Berdichevski)* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), pp. 33, 100. See also his response to Shai Ish Horowitz's *Ziyyun l'Nefesh Ranak*, in *Ozar ha-Sifrut* (1888). On Horowitz and Krochmal, see Stanley Nash's *In Search of Hebraism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), pp. 72-87.

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