

Plato and Aristotle in Hebrew Garb: Review of Dov Schwartz. *Jewish Thought in Byzantium in the Late Middle Ages* [חקק וקרוב: הגות יהודית]. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2017. 540 pages, USD 43, ISBN 978-965-493-898-3

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Schwartz provides us in this lengthy tome with a philosophical survey of the major Byzantine Jewish rationalists from the 14th and 15th centuries. This volume is both an important contribution to medieval Jewish thought and a valuable introduction to the Romaniote savants whose works, many still in manuscript, have survived the vicissitudes of succeeding centuries.

Over two millennia ago there were literally millions of Greek-speaking Jews, many literate and prolific in translating their cultural and literary heritage for the benefit of non-Hebrew literate audiences. That massive heritage was preserved by the emerging Jewish messianic and gentile Christian populations who survived the three major destructions of Mediterranean Jewry by the Romans: Jerusalem in 70 (Masada in 73 or 74), Alexandria (116–117), and the Roman defeat of Bar-Kokhba in the scorched earth conquest of 135. Prominent among these Greek treasures were the Septuagint scriptures, the philosophical oeuvre of Philo, the histories of Flavius Josephus, and a plethora of apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Much of this corpus was lost to Jews during the succeeding millennium, at least in terms of Jewish manuscript survival.

In the tenth century, the Hebrew renaissance in Byzantine Southern Italy began the recovery of the Second Temple Judeo-Greek heritage, albeit in Latin translation. And since these Jews were still citizens of the Roman Empire (since 212) centered in Constantinople [Kushta, to be more correctly read as its Greek sobriquet Kosta!], they presumably identified themselves as Rhomaioi (Romans), as did the other subjects of the emperors. Modern historians since the sixteenth century, however, called that continuator of the Roman Empire 'Byzantine' (from the ancient Greek colony on the site). This Greek-speaking chapter of Roman history was generally disparaged, especially since the Renaissance which tended to exalt Classical Rome. Byzantine Studies are generally respected today, however.

The tenth-century Hebrew recovery, beginning perhaps in the eighth century, was centered in Byzantine Southern Italy, primarily Apulia. There a Hebrew renaissance developed that has left a treasure trove of piyyutim developed from Palestinian creative traditions, Midrashic commentaries that continued the classical rabbinic productions of the Talmudic period in Eretz Israel, and the new mysticism arriving from Baghdad in the

ninth century and hinted at in *Megillat Ahima'az* composed in Capua in the mid eleventh century. More important for subsequent Jewish national identity was the recovery of Second Temple history through the appearance of *Sepher Yosippon*, a magnificent history adapted from Latin sources which the anonymous author rendered into a vibrant Hebrew text that influenced countless Jews and others for the next millennium. A century or so later Yerahme'el ben Shlomo assembled a corpus of midrashim (preserved in a fourteenth-century unicum) which continues to be exploited to today, although its "Byzantine" origin has been obfuscated by Ashkenazi heirs (just as were *Sepher Yosippon* and the piyyut corpus, as well as the mystical secrets of the Torah). Other Greek texts were appearing in Hebrew translation primarily in southern Italy (e.g., I Maccabees, several Byzantine Chronicles, and the Life of Alexander).

This Hebrew recovery of ancient Greek and Latin Judaica, preserved as apocrypha and pseudepigrapha by the churches, was further developed in wide-ranging intellectual developments among Romaniote Jews, e.g., the polymath Shabbatai Donnolo. Much is preserved in the surviving manuscripts recently exploited by scholars of various disciplines, most recently by Gershon Brin in his study of tenth century Romaniote biblical commentaries gleaned from Genizah fragments originally published by Nicholas De Lange¹: רעואל וחבריו – פרשנים יהודיים מביזנטיון מסביבות המאה העשירית לספירה [Reuel and his Friends – Jewish Byzantine Exegetes from Around the Tenth Century CE] (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University Press, 2012).

The past century and a half's scholarship on the middle Byzantine period is now amplified by the important book of Dov Schwartz on the wide-ranging interpretations of Maimonides and Ibn Ezra by the Romaniote philosophers and kabbalists of the Palaiologan period. Hopefully, Schwartz's book, when translated, will encourage scholars in Islamic and Catholic fields of Jewish intellectual life to broaden their perspectives and add the Romaniote contribution to the medieval heritage of Byzantine Jews. It is needless to emphasize the important contribution that this book adds to the study of Byzantine philosophical studies in general.² Its translation therefore should be a desideratum to complement the recent monograph of Philippe Gardette, *Les juifs byzantins aux racines de l'histoire juive ottomane* (Istanbul: Isis, 2013) that covers much the same ground but is unmentioned by the author.

Schwartz divides this intellectual heritage between philosophy and kabbalah. Lacking in this comprehensive survey is a fuller discussion of the fruitful interchange between Greek and Latin sources with the Hebrew scholarship traversing the Mediterranean between Sepharad and Byzantium.

Many of Schwartz's authors expressed themselves in piyyut (from the Greek *poiesis*), which was a major Romaniote contribution to medieval and modern Jewish culture for the past 1500 years, from its origins in Eretz Yisrael, e.g., Kalir, to the poets of Ioannina murdered in the Shoah who had sung in Hebrew and Greek. Poetry is as

¹ *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Tübingen, 1996.

² See Katerina Ierodiakonou *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. by Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford, 2002).

important for Greek Jews as was the poetry of the Arabs for their Jews. The piyyut of the Romaniotes deeply influenced the piyyut of Italy and Spain, and especially the Rhineland Ashkenazim who bequeathed it to Eastern Europe where it flourished partly anonymously in the East European synagogues and their ubiquitous siddurim.

One example of the double helix of Romanote Hebrew and Byzantine Greek poetry is the Greek adoption of the biblical play of embedding stock verses in new contexts [שיבוץ], already evident in the Psalms. The Byzantine intellectuals who knew their Septuagint as well as their Homer adopted this interplay. The author of *Sepher Yosippon* in turn, influenced his future readers by his mastery of biblical poetics and his contemporaries. He penned an early version of perhaps the most influential slogan in Modern Hebrew literature and history: 'We shall not die as sheep led to slaughter' (chap. 16: ולא (נמות כצאון לטבח יובל). As adapted by Abba Kovner, the call for self-defense 'We shall not go like sheep led to slaughter' became an influential trope during and after World War II.³

Leon Weinberger published five volumes of the extent piyyut oeuvre of Romanote Rabbanite and Karaite Jewry of the Balkans that is only critically outlined in his English summary opus [*Jewish Hymnography* (London, 1997)], cited by Dov Schwartz. Modern Greek Jewish poets include Joseph Elijah of Ioannina, published in English with translation by Rachel Dalvin, and Asher Moisis who translated the Psalms into Greek *deka-exi* meter, as well as the Haggadah for Pesach and the synagogue liturgy into Modern Greek.

In the realm of philosophy, the influence of Plato was preeminent and, though periodically displaced by his student Aristotle until the emergence of the 11th-century savant Michael Psellus, nonetheless their classic creative oeuvre greatly influenced the Romanotes. Already in *Sepher Yosippon* the middle Platonic speeches that Josephus composed for his Zealots and others were expanded and updated to Neoplatonic rhetorical speeches by Pseudo Hegesippus, the anonymous author of the fourth century anti-Jewish theological diatribe that he adapted from Josephus. The author of *Sepher Yosippon* translated these Latin speeches into a vibrant Hebrew and thus introduced a rich Neoplatonic corpus that was read and studied by many Jewish intellectuals in subsequent centuries. Plato's introduction of the soul into philosophical and later theological discourse along with his dualism inherited from the Zoroastrians permanently influenced Jewish and western thought, while the translation of these themes into Hebrew effectively Judaized them.

Plato's brilliant student Aristotle was the great teacher of science and politics who was translated into Arabic by Syriac scholars. His corpus came to dominate post crusader thought among Mediterranean intellectuals through its Arabic translations, soon Hebraized and ultimately translated for Latin scholars. Some Muslim scholars used

³ See Yael Feldman and Steven Bowman, 'Let Us Not Die as Sheep Led to the Slaughter', <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4063523>; for the extensive 19th-century antecedents see Feldman, "'Not as Sheep Led to Slaughter?': On Trauma, Selective Memory, and the Making of Historical Consciousness", *Jewish Social Studies* 19 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.19.3.139>.

Aristotle's logic and reasoning to challenge Koranic faith until the *Moreh Nevukhim* of the polymath Moses Maimonides (Rambam) set the course for Jewish thought for the next millennium. Rambam argued reason was a tool whose proper use enhanced the truths of sacred texts. A recent study by Alfred Ivry has convincingly argued that Rambam was at base a Neoplatonist; Ivry's book *Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed": A Philosophical Guide* (2016) opens a new chapter in the pursuit of Jewish philosophy. Rambam hitherto had been treated mainly as an Aristotelian, but in Byzantium most of the Jewish philosophers analyzed by Schwartz were Neoplatonists who commented on Rambam's *Moreh* and his *Milot Hahegayon*.

Kabbalah, too, is a late offspring of Plato (especially his *Timaeus*) whose insights were built upon to explain the manifold mysteries of the Tanakh. Indeed, the greatest mystery of the Tanakh that certainly fascinated and perplexed theologians is the divine creator who chose Israel for his message. God is the ultimate Unity אלהים אחד בורא שמיים וארץ (One God creator of heaven and earth). God is also the ultimate mystery (μυστήριον, cf. מוסתר פנים: is the transliteration coincidental?) which is hidden but is perceptible to religious and philosophical intellectuals. The *sephiroth*, Plato's emanations, were Hebraized by Jewish mystics using King David's vocabulary from his prayers to God [1Chron 29.11]. These *sephiroth* may be traceable to Plato's myth of creation where his demiurge made (ἐποίησεν, i.e., lit. 'made' but possibly or polemically read in the Septuagint as 'poeticized') creation through a series of emanations whose hyper dimensional cosmology permeates the later stages of Zoharic kabbalah, especially in the later Italian contributions of Mosheh Hayyim Luzzatto *et al.*

Moshe Idel's perceptive unravelling of Abraham Abulafia's thirteenth-century teachings and his personalized mystical odyssey has further clarified Gershom Scholem's description of Abulafia's reliance on Rambam's *Moreh* as the first stage of his messianic venture and his guide to later mystics such as Joseph Karo. Schwartz's study shows that Scholem's and Idel's chapters on Abulafia should now include Romaniote kabbalists as well. Abulafia's creative reading of the mystic philosophy of Rambam is another facet of the influence of Plato and Aristotle on Romaniote scholars – although as Idel shows Abulafia taught but a handful of students in Greece, along with their Sephardi colleagues as well as other Jewish intellectuals from Ashkenaz to Yemen and Sepharad to Iran.

Over a generation ago Mosheh Idel confirmed for me the importance of the kabbalistic traditions among Romaniote Jewry. Their corpus of extant kabbalistic manuscripts, for example, outnumbers the combined total of Sephardi and Ashkenazi kabbalistic manuscripts! Additionally, the important texts of ספר הפליאה and ספר הקנה are now shown to be of early fifteenth-century Byzantine origin even if their anonymous author was likely a Sephardi scribe who copied his sources in the Balkans.⁴

One nominal caveat before we sit at this Romaniote symposium. It was customary for Romaniote Jews to have dual names – one for the public sphere in Greek and one for the synagogue in Hebrew. A prime example is the polymath erroneously known as "Judah Moskoni" who never existed as such outside of 19th (and 20th) scholarship.

⁴ See Bowman, "Who wrote *sefer hakaneh* and *sefer hapliah*?" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 54 (Summer 1985): 150–152.

This scholar of philosophy and history signed his name as *Yehudah hamekhuneh Leon ben Mosheh hamekhuneh Moskoni*, namely, his first name is rendered into an equivalent Greek as is his father's name! He was known as Yehudah ibn Moskoni. He was not from Italy as suggested, but rather from Ohrida in Macedonia. Another mistaken identity is the famous polymath Mordecai Komtino whose name reflects the Greek Khomatianos. Of more interest is the bilingual parallel between the Hebrew name Shlomo Sharvit Hazahav and his Greek doppelganger, the polymath George Chrysokokkos, whose scientific publications somehow parallel those of the Hebrew *payyitan* [!]. Indeed, the relationship between these two Greek and Hebrew scholars has yet to be determined... And there are more such errors and anomalies for scholars to explore, including the Ashkenazisation of Byzantine Kosta as Kushta.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Sephardi scholars and merchants who travelled to Byzantium engaged local Romanioties to translate Greek philosophical and scientific texts into Hebrew for their own use and also perhaps for commercial purposes. Shemarya Halkriti (late thirteenth-fourteenth centuries), perhaps the dean of Romanioite polymaths, had a successful career as a translator of Greek texts for Roger II of Sicily. He was a competent Talmudist and as a philosopher castigated the (ancient and contemporary) Greek philosophers for their lack of comprehension of the complexities of the process of Creation in Genesis since they relied on two Byzantine "seminal" texts such as Aristotle and the Septuagint. Incidentally, the Greeks did not understand the double polemic in the Septuagint Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, which cleverly rejects both Aristotle's emphasis on the eternity of the kosmos and the mythology of the Greek poets and philosophers on creation: 'Εν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. Namely, the Greek gods Ouranos and Gaia are demythologized here just like the Canaanite gods in the Hebrew original. [Cf. below Shemarya Halkriti for discussion of eternity.]

These preliminary remarks are an historian's humble contribution to the symposium of philosophers seated at the *shulhan arukh* hosted by Dov Schwartz. The hors d'oeuvres presented at this feast are offered by Schwarz from the unexplored manuscript of Michael Balbo of 15th-century Crete containing *inter alia* his philosophic and kabbalistic commentary on Psalm 29. Schwartz's book treats several major Romanioite intellectuals and the question of radical "rationalism" [so Schwartz describes his theme] in Byzantium during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For background, he too briefly introduces the Byzantine polymath Platonist Michael Psellos (eleventh century) who taught and commented creatively on Aristotle's logic [his *de interpretatione* in Ierodiakonou mentioned above] and his discussion of universals. Schwartz then continues with the contribution of Maximus Planoudes's translation of Latin texts of science and philosophy, and the anti-Aristotelianism of Theodore Metochites.

It is in the latter part of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, that new trends enter the Byzantine polemics which are explored more extensively. Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism cross from Italy in response to the monk Gregory Palamas and his revolutionary [albeit its sources were in early Byzantium] Orthodox mysticism commonly called Hesychasm [שתיקה—silence] that came to dominate the Orthodox Church [compare its contemporaries Kabbalah and Sufi mysticism]. Palamas was opposed by

the rationalist churchman Barlaam of Calabria (ca 1290–1348). Palamas was primarily concerned to approach the primal light of creation attainable through mystical exercise that involved the negation of outside influences [e.g., by reciting a mantra of biblical verses while meditating on the omphalos (navel)], in particular those of Aristotelian philosophy which Barlaam introduced into Palamas' argument that he ridiculed, calling the hesychast monks "naval gazers". The importance of this Orthodox controversy is its influence on Elnatan ben Mosheh Kilkis קלקיש in his lengthy (over 300 pages) treatise *Eben Saphir* אבן ספיר, perhaps the largest manuscript to survive from this period. The second part of אבן ספיר is primarily philosophical and kabbalistic. He argued that God is above Being and Nothingness. [By the way as Akiva Jaap Vroman argued:⁵ if God created *every thing*, God has to be No Thing.] Kilkis also discusses logic, grammar, Hebrew language, astrology, medicine, psychology, and rationalism. He follows Barlaam's negation of divine attributes and the abstract presentation of God. Nehemiah Kalomiti argued in turn that the 'light' is the secret divine reality and this idea continued throughout the fourteenth century. Finally, Shemarya Halkriti castigated the Greek philosophers for not understanding בראשית, namely, the Creation! That the divine may be interpreted as light is clearly indicated in the biblical texts, and Christianity developed this insight further based on the Greek philosophical sources. This idea was prominent in late Byzantine theology and dominated until Spinoza's identification of God with nature [*deus sive natura*] or in a later popular Hassidic gematria, אלהים הוא הטבע. Following mediaeval meteorology, fire and air defined reality and thus described 'divine light' which was reflected in the soul. Bottom line: Kalomiti identified God with light and this was the basis of his polemic against Hesychasm in his treatise ספר מלחמות [Book of the Wars of Truth]. Kilkis, however, argued differently: God effected revelation through light which bypassed the potential reification of God. Kilkis defined the perception of light by the prophets in two different ways: through the rational (לעיני הראש) and through the emotional (לעיני הלב)—all of this wrapped in his kabbalistic and mystical metaphors. This idea is clearer in his explanation of the idiom אור בהיר [Job 37, 21] and *Sepher Habahir* which he learned from Abraham ibn Ezra's translation of ספר ערוגת הבושם (*Sepher Arugat Habosem*). He parsed this idiom by the traditional metaphor אש שחורה על גבי אש לבנה 'black fire atop white fire'. Schwartz suggests the reading that the ones who cleave to the light succeed in bringing it 'from above to below', that is, incorporate it into themselves, which suggests that Kilkis was familiar with Palamas' metaphor of *manna* as 'bread that came from on high'. Kilkis' idea is that the phrase 'angels of light' derives from Rambam (ultimately from the 11th-century Neoplatonic *Hovoth halevavoth*). The phrase was more fully developed later in *Sepher Hapeliah* (composed in Byzantium in the early fifteenth century). Kilkis also uses the older midrash about the אור ראשון [Primordial Light] which preceded creation and was hidden for the Tsaddikim; he argues it was the same as the divine light that the Tsaddikim saw, i.e., that this light was continuous (Job 37.21) but was hidden from the wicked; it was the spiritual אור חיים, 'light of life' that enlightened, and therefore explained the verse יהי

⁵ *On God, Space & Time* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

אור 'Let there be light' (Gen 1, 3). Kilkis develops this idea to argue that prophesy was superior to philosophy which fueled his polemic against Hesychasm: while they clove to access the 'light', they actually negated the possibility of experiencing prophesy.

The light of the sun becomes a kabbalistic metaphor for the later Romaniote kabbalists such as Hizkia ben Avraham and Moshe of Kiev (fourteenth century). The discussion of divine light is further developed in the course of the Hesychast polemic that includes Kilkis, Moshe of Kiev, and *Sepher Hapeliyah*. Shemarya HaIkriti, the central rationalist of the fourteenth century, developed new approaches that differed from those of Spain, Provence, and Italy in his philosophical treatises. [An interesting individual on the fringe of the main circles was David ibn Biliah of Portugal who polemicized against the identification of God with nature.] Shemarya HaIkriti also polemicized against the dualism of Hesychasm. Shemarya HaIkriti in particular, according to Schwartz, engaged the dualism of the Gnostic Cathars when he was in Italy. The influence of the Cathars on Moshe HaDarshan and Abraham Abulafia and through them on subsequent kabbalists is an important insight, which Schwartz adopts. This insight helps to clarify the general influence of Christianity in its various forms on mediaeval Jewish thought, in addition to the general impact of Christian culture on the minority of Jews in the West. This Judaized dualism appears in Shemarya's idea of 'greater and lesser gods' and also in *Sepher HaKane* in which 'Our God has 96 *Partzufim*'. Similarly, the idea of Written Torah and Oral Torah were already partially anticipated in Byzantine thought in the mid twelfth century in the relationship between the father and son, further developed by Gregory Palamas. This idea later appears in the fifteenth century in Adrianople in the Jewish scholar Elisha the Greek, the teacher of George Gemistos Plethon who later brought his Byzantine Neoplatonism to the Council of Florence in 1438–1439.

Finally, Schwartz explains Shemarya's polemic against Hesychasm over the opposition between Emanation and Dualism. The first concerns the spiritual, while for Hesychasts it is physical. Regarding the second, Palamas taught a distinction between the divine light, an energy, and the power of the divinity, namely the relationship between the Father (the great god, *el gadol*) and the Son (the lesser god, *el katan*) in this world. Shemarya's argument has no parallel in the West, neither among the Cathars nor the kabbalists. In any event, Hesychasm continued to challenge the Orthodox world, especially in Palamas' Hesychasm, called השתיקה in Jewish sermons, and well into the fifteenth century was echoed among the Romaniotes, e.g., Michael ben Shabbetai Balbo. Schwartz summarizes the polemic by six major Romaniotes over how the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's approaches to creation affected both the Orthodox via Palamas and the reaction of Byzantine intellectuals, rationalists, and mystics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Palamas influence continued primarily among Kabbalists in the fifteenth century until the Sabbatian movement of the seventeenth while the majority of Jewish intellectuals remained under the influence of Rambam and his Sephardi interpreters. In other words, the Palamas-Barlaam controversy continued to influence Romaniote intellectuals long after the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans and the arrival of the Sephardi refugee scholars.

Fourteenth century Romaniotes such as the rationalist Yehudah ibn Moskoni and payyetaniam like Leon ben Moses Haparnas and Avishai wrote on the concept כול (*kol*) in Ibn Ezra.⁶ In the fifteenth century this interest in *kol* continued with an analysis by Mordecai Khomatiano (usually known as Komtino). The treatises of these two are representative of the leading themes in Byzantium which only allude to the lively trends in Sepharad. Yehudah ibn Moskoni on Ibn Ezra and Khomatiano on Rambam, like other Romaniotes in the later Middle Ages, were mostly concerned with perceiving the divine light: ראיית האור האלוהי ודואליזם.

Schwartz's third chapter explores Rambam and Ibn Ezra on Bereshit and the Romaniote response against the background of the Italos Affair (פרשת יוחנן איטלוס). John Italos of Calabria was a Neoplatonist, the student of Michael Keroullarios and skilled in Aristotle which he taught in Constantinople in the eleventh century well before Barlaam's arrival. Italos was a bit of a curmudgeon and his views later brought him to trial by the church which relegated him to a monastery. The central theme of Creation engaged many in their commentary and polemic against Aristotle, including the Jews, particularly the *Eben Saphir* of Elnatan Kilkis who argued that the emanation deserves to be hidden and obscured from the masses: האצלה ראויה להצנעה ולהסתרה מעיני הציבור. הרחב. Kilkis relied on a long-standing tradition in Romaniote philosophy and critiqued Aristotle from his Neoplatonic perspective, relying on the rabbinic classic *Pirke d'Eliezer* as discussed by Rambam. Kilkis considerably influenced R. Avraham, Menahem Tamar and other darshaniam such as the payyetaniam Nehemiah Kalomiti and Shmuel in the Corfu prayer book.

Romaniote scholars followed the dominant Neoplatonic commentaries of the Orthodox philosophers and also relied on the Arabic commentaries of Aristotle's *de anima* by Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes and of course Ibn Ezra. Kilkis was aware of the 11th century Sephardim Shlomo ibn Gabirol and Abraham ibn Ezra who also appear in the *Keter Shem Tov* of Avraham of Kalonia. Schwartz, continuing his analysis of *Eben Saphir* and Mosheh Kamino, also cites the piyyut of Nehemiah Kalomiti in his *Sepher Milhamoth emet* which begins with 'what is the soul? It is pure intellect (היא השכל) (הזך). Next, Schwartz analyzes Ephraim ben Gershon's Neoplatonic psychological and rational approach and of course Yehudah ibn Moskoni, and additionally, he identifies anew Hizkiah ben Avraham as a Byzantine. Also, he finds Ibn Rushd's *torat hasekhel* [on intellect] quite influential among Byzantine philosophers and kabbalists.

The relationship of prophecy to wisdom engendered virulent disputes over the meaning of *Moses' Prophecy* (משה נבואת). Moses' prophecy was intensively explored by the Neoplatonists for centuries after Rambam, but Rambam was (deliberately) unclear in his extensive discussion of Moses as a unique prophet. Though Kilkis attacks Aristotle and the rationalists, he occasionally cites them. The rationalist Yehudah ibn Moskoni argued that wisdom - *hokhmah* - was the foundation for prophecy - *nevuah* - but the

⁶ See Eliot Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word KOL in Abraham ibn Ezra," *REJ* 149 (1990), 77-111 and H. Kreisel, "On the Term KOL in Abraham ibn Ezra: A Reappraisal," *REJ* 153 (1994), 29-66.

prophet was superior to the sage. The prophet spoke in riddles and parables to the public while the philosopher spoke in the language of science and theory. We recall that Abulafia called for knowledge of Rambam's *Moreh* before his students could learn his steps toward attaining *nevuah*. Schwartz does not connect Abulafia with Yehudah ibn Moskoni but rather with Kilkis. In any case, Yehudah ibn Moskoni was a student of the rationalist Shemarya HaIkriti and was aware of the ecstatic traditions of Spanish rationalism. Shemarya emphasized reality over vision in his texts, while later Khomatiano argued against the extreme rationalists who claimed that *hokhmah* was superior to *nevuah*. The polemics ranged throughout the Romaniote world from Constantinople to Crete. Schwartz devotes considerable space to the dispute between Michael Balbo and Yedidiah Rach who was a cold rationalist. The argument centered on Exodus 33. Yedidiah tried to exclude *Mesharet Mosheh* (perhaps a thirteenth century anonymous treatise) from the argument which focused on *Nevuat Mosheh* and argued directly against Rambam's position. The argument boiled down to a radical vs. a conservative position on the difference between *nevuah* and *hokhmah*, between theology and philosophy. Many Byzantine scholars, for their part, considered the prophets to be philosophers.

Schwartz's chapter 6 touches briefly on the Karaites in Byzantium, in terms of their relations with Rabbanites and their intellectual contributions in commentary, *parshanut* and philosophy. The arrival of Karaites in Byzantium, dated to the 970s by Zvi Ankori, issued new challenges to the Romaniote Rabbanites that lasted from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. Similar challenges occurred in Spain, e.g., Judah Halevi's *Sepher ha-Kuzari*. In the same century we learn from Abraham ibn Daud's *Sepher Hakabbalah* that there was likely a deadly hunt against Karaites in Spain, while open violence in Kosta is reported by Benjamin of Tudela. But no openly literary strife seems to have survived among Byzantine Jews according to Schwartz, which is a bit of an understatement: איננו מוצאים התפתחות של סוגה אנטי קראית מובהקת. On the contrary, among the few sources from the tenth and eleventh centuries we find in Tuvia ben Eliezer's *Leqah Tov* a strong argument against Karaites, but little else before the thirteenth century [see Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* for Byzantine Karaite anti- Rabbanite writings.] Subsequently Karaite authors cited rabbinic authors and even Hazal as Ankori shows. It went from hostility to tolerance from Tuvia ben Eliezer's polemic in his *Lekah Tov* to considerable intellectual intercourse between the two branches of Byzantine Judaism and Mordecai Khomatiano's acceptance of Karaites as students. This position was approved by Eliezer Mizrahi, the *rav roshi* of Constantinople in the sixteenth century, when both groups were identified as *sürgün* (i.e., forcibly relocated to Constantinople by Mehmet II). Still there were negative attitudes such as Moses Kaputzato and Shlomo ben Eliah Sharvit Hazahav, *Sepher Hapliah*, and Moshe of Kiev. Yehudah ibn Moskoni continually referred to Karaites as Tsedokim for their mistaken interpretation of the Bible and for their calendar differences. The question was over the Karaite approach to rationalism which changed over the centuries until Karaites became, according to Schwartz's major referent Daniel Lasker, proponents for rationalism in the tradition of Rambam. Lasker also argues that what is exceptional is that Karaite philosophical and theological treatises of the fourteenth century, which became canonical for the East European Karaites, outnumbered the

Rabbanite writings of that period. Lasker explains that this was partly due to the lack of migration of Rabbanite and Karaite texts to Spain. He further argues that the major polemicist was Moshe of Kiev, and his suggested explanation to this conundrum was that the Karaite expansion was north into the Slavic lands of Eastern Europe along the trade routes from Kiev. Yet, we note, Karaite savants migrated in the fifteenth century from the Crimea to Constantinople as represented by Kaleb Afendopoulo. Unfortunately, the history of Karaites in Eastern Europe has received too little attention. In the fourteenth century Karaites were not only rejecters of the Oral Law; as Ankori shows, they absorbed it in various ways in order to adjust to Byzantine diaspora life and conditions – but they were also radical rationalists according to Schwartz, and so the rationalist Rabbanites argued against them as if they were radical rationalists even after the Karaites distanced themselves from radical rationalism. Early Karaites attacked rationalism but in the later Middle Ages they adopted the Rambam model. So, according to Lasker, Aaron ben Elijah (fourteenth century) opened his *Gan Eden* with Greek philosophers, and it is a question whether he influenced the Rabbanites or they him! As for biblical commentary *parshanut hamikra*, Karaites differed with the Rabbanites for many years but eventually the Rabbanites accepted Karaite *parshanut* since it recognized Ibn Ezra who indeed had relied on Karaite *parshanut*. Shemarya Halkriti included their *parshanut hamikra* as part of his effort to unify the disputing Jewish factions of his times.⁷ On the other hand, Avishai in his biblical commentary *Yoreh Deah* divides his predecessors into biblical grammarians and radical philosophers. Yehudah ibn Moskoni, too, describes Avishai's work as 'biblical grammar' in his letter about contemporary libraries he visited.⁸ Schwartz suggests Avishai was alluding negatively to Karaites in his comments on biblical grammar.

Neither Shemarya nor Avishai discussed Karaites directly in their biblical commentaries. Rather Kilkis argued directly and harshly against them and against radical rationalists. Yehudah ibn Moskoni critiqued especially their reliance on lunar sighting for Shabbat and holidays, an issue about which Rabbanites and Karaites fought physically and polemically in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as Benjamin of Tudela attests. Yehudah ibn Moskoni identified Yehudah haParsi as a Karaite and disputed his scholarship as an astronomer. Indirectly he critiqued the Karaites in general on the calendar during his commentary on Ibn Ezra, upon whom the Karaites also relied. Schwartz also discusses other Byzantine commentators on Ibn Ezra and their attitude towards Karaites, such as Elazar ben Mattiah (late thirteenth century Romaniote? Karaite?), Meyuhas ben Eliahu (fourteenth century) who, not directly a polemicist, castigates the Karaites as מבזי דבר ה' 'scorners of the word of God', 'scorners of the oral Torah, such as Tsedokim, Karaites, and Samaritans, and despisers of the sages Hazal' (הבוזה תורה שבעל פה כגון צדוקים) (וקראים וכותים והמבזה תלמידי חכמים). He also castigates Avraham Krimi or Kirimi (in his commentary *Sephatom Emet* requested by his Karaite student, על

⁷ See his "Letter to the Jews of Rome" in *Otzar Nehmad* II (Venice, 1857), pp 90–94 and translation in Bowman's *The Jews of Byzantium 1204–1453* (University of Alabama Press, 1985), pp 255–262.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 282–285.

י (פי בקשת תלמידו הקראי) who served as his source for philosophical and halakhic commentary. While Kilkis was overtly polemical against Karaite theologians he nonetheless challenged the historical perspective of Hazal and tried to distinguish between the Tse-dokim and the Karaites, the latter to their detriment (לגנאי); he criticized the Karaite Shabbat practice of no candles, e.g., that the darkness represented their theological errors and lies while the Rabbanites pursued the two Torahs. Apparently, Schwartz suggests, behind Kilkis's method was recourse to implement Rav Hai Gaon's (eleventh century) hope that שמא יחזרו למוטב (=perhaps they would return to the fold), that is, return to an acknowledgment of Hazal and authority of the Oral Law. Kilkis, in any case, differed from the anti-Karaite positions of Shemarya, Avishai, and Yehudah ibn Moskoni.

In a chapter 7 on sermons, דרשות ודרשנים על, we read of the importance of sermons and rhetoric in Byzantium as paralleled among Romaniote Jews. Spanish sermons increased dramatically after the Exile (*gerush Sepharad*) in the welcoming hospitality of the Ottomans, especially due in part to the early development of printing in Salonika. Before that, sermons were less available and generally followed the Romaniote style of the fourteenth century – dramatic and overly playful with many citations and biblical commentaries. The chapter describes their characteristics such as structure, use of silence (השתיקה), hagiography, ideas, in particular the sermons of Michael ben Shabbetai Balbo (fifteenth-century Candia) whose extensive manuscript contains a plethora of such sources, and ideas in Mordecai Khomatiano, the latter two extensively excerpted by Schwartz.

The following chapter, הגות וחברה, discusses the role of theological controversies in the archive of letters that developed into full blown treatises on ethical, philosophical, and theological responsa, שו"ת, replete with flowery phrases and poetry, מליצה ושירה. Michael Balbo's oeuvre is full of 'leadership' and 'rationalism' and includes a collection of personal recommendations that he was happy to write. A popular motif of his was microcosm. Earlier Shemarya was very interested in time and its connection to Creation as we shall soon see, perhaps derived from Neoplatonic sources originating in Italy.

Schwartz devotes an important chapter [9] to Shemarya Halkriti, the most innovative and wide-ranging Romaniote scholar of the fourteenth century. His oeuvre consists of letters and short philosophical monographs as well as two important commentaries on *Shir Hashirim*. His larger studies have not been preserved including the precis of the Talmud he prepared for his son. This chapter is Schwartz's energetic attempt to introduce him into the canon of mediaeval Jewish philosophers.

Avraham Kirimi, perhaps Shemarya's student, preserves sections of Shemarya's commentaries in his own biblical commentary שפת אמת (*Sephat Emet*). Central concerns of Shemarya were speculative and theological but Kirimi's citations emphasized the importance of Shemarya's *pshat* which was somewhat different from the *pshat* of Rambam. For example, Rambam explained הייתם כאלהים (Gen 3, 5) as שרים ומנהיגים (ministers and leaders) but Shemarya explained *Elohim* according to its meaning, Kirimi writes. And further, Kirimi cites Shemarya about the sleep (*tardemah*) that God caused to fall on Adam as a narcotic anesthesia (as the Greek doctors administered before an operation) lest he feel any pain. He also sought deeper layers to the text like an archaeologist even

though he acknowledged that the whole Torah was from Moses. As for Adam, he was the intercessor between the Creator and the world, and it was for this role that he was created. Shemarya saved his more radical and innovative ideas for his commentary on *Shir Hashirim*, a text that remains the most fertile for Jewish and Christian savants and readers since R. Akiva's sanctioning of this poetic text. His radical claim was expressed in allegories, like all philosophical commentaries, suggesting that the material intellect wanted to achieve eternity by fusing with the active intellect, but alas, none of those treatises he possessed read the text in such vein. King Solomon, its biblical author, was typically read as the wisest and the most intellectual but he was not a prophet according to Kilkis. Shemarya considered Solomon a prophet above all the later prophets in both his commentaries on *Shir Hashirim*. Solomon's great sin in the biblical text was that his wives led him after other gods; however, Shemarya reasoned that his Active Intellect used this tactic to overcome his material intellect and thus attain his status as a complete sage higher than the prophet: חכם שלם למעלה מהנביא. Shemarya's discussion of 'cleaving' (דביקות) is Neoplatonic, as one expects, and is explained in his commentary as a hint to מיתת נשיקה (as a death kiss, perhaps like the מיתת מרים in Scripture). In any case, Shemarya differs from his Romaniote contemporaries like Kilkis the kabbalist who thought that only through kabbalah rather than through philosophy could the human soul attain דביקות to the active intellect (השכל הפועל). In Shemarya's metaphor the soul was immortal after it separated from the body (in death). All the sacred writings which he possessed and about which he wrote ('gave birth!') were his כי שכל i.e., ... שכל נפשי (my opinions and my commentary will survive forever) which leads to his continuing polemic against the denying philosophers (e.g., Aristotle) who say that the primordial world preceded God and Creation. Finally, Shemarya argues that God is happy that he (Shemarya) is interpreting *bereshit* correctly (הנפש לאחר המוות נגזרת משמחת הקב"ה ביצירת ההוגים אשר שמחת). Shemarya also influenced Nehemiah Kalomiti in his book ואין מזכיר אמת: (no one will remember my name save for the book I shall write, so I said to myself, 'after my demise, my book will be my monument for generations.') Shemarya taught that (his) creativity is eternal and it constitutes worship in the highest. [No wonder some contemporaries (e.g., Maestro Moses de Roquemaure Tolintol (?)) thought he had messianic aspirations.]

Shemarya's attitude toward time, according to Schwartz, was also unique and his approach was non-Aristotelian, contrary to most philosophers and pre-twentieth-century physicists. Augustine answered the question why the world was not created before a specific time by writing that there was no time before creation. Irenaeus was more circumspect: we do not have enough knowledge to grasp an answer this question. The scholastics like the thirteenth-century Duns Scotus introduced the idea of "potential time" (which was developed among Jews such as RaLBaG).

Shemarya reasoned from *creatio ex nihilo* יש מאין בריאה that is, from divine will out of complete freedom as an answer to the question: why was the world not created before now? God is alive and time is timeless, and God works whenever he wills, he argued. God after all is אין לו ראשית ולא אחרית, 'neither a beginning nor an ending', therefore

there was no time before time was created along with the world.⁹ 'One could say that God does not exist **לא נמצא**.' God in effect created all existence.¹⁰

Rambam argued that God created the world at the beginning of time since there could be no time without a movement of creating (cf. Aristotle's *arithmos kineseos*). But Shemarya argued that time is not dependent on movement since time is autonomous and therefore eternal which leads to a paradox: The world could not have been created in time since any point in time is preceded by another point in time and since God has no beginning God could not have created the world in the eternal time. So, he would answer the question why was the world not created before? Thus, he strengthened Rambam by not distinguishing between the larger eternity (neither logical nor final point) and the paradoxical smaller eternity which has an initiating point but not a final point. Contrary then to Aristotle's argument that time was not eternal, Shemarya postulated two times: a) the eternity of time both past and future; b) eternal time does not change (so Aristotle) and three characteristics of the continuity of time: a) before creation eternity is continuous; b) from creation to the present time is particle units (יחידות מתפרטות של זמן); c) from present to future eternity continues without changes; and d) God is beyond time since he exists in all times.

Shemarya's position differed from Rambam's (who cites Aristotle in Part II of his *Moreh*) and Aristotle's paradox (which he may have known in the original): **שאם אינו ראוי לברוא העולם אלא בזמן שאין זמן אחר קודם לו, שאי אפשר לו לברוא כלל**. "If improper to create the world at a time that has no other time preceding it, it would be impossible for Him to create it at all." He solves this paradox by postulating different times after creation, which introduces three different times. The first of these, before creation, cannot be counted. Shemarya used the method of Saadia Gaon who knew Greek ideas about time (Philoponos, sixth-century Christian) and the Greek philosophers and used them to counter Saadia, Aristotle, and other Greek sources. He also differs considerably from his contemporary Kilkis. Shemarya also revised Saadia's duality of time to argue that eternity was time bound for past and future and that only the time from creation to the present was final (compare the Greek concept of $\tau\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ as a perpetual present). Thus, he argued two types of time: homogenic eternal time (pre-creation and the future) and partial time (from creation to the present).¹¹ In his summary he identifies his own time of writing as 5106 = 1346 CE: **כי עד היום אינו רק חמשת אלפים ומאה ושש שנים וקודם לכן אלפים**. **שנים לאין מספר לא היה שום דבר רק האלהים לבדו**. Because up to this day it has been only 5106 years and before this for uncountable thousands of years there was nothing but God alone.

Shemarya's best known student is Yehudah ibn Moskoni to whom a chapter [10] is dedicated along with his fifteenth-century critic Menahem Tamar. Ibn Ezra was

⁹ One could then translate Gen 1,1 as "At first God created time and space."

¹⁰ One could also argue, as already noted, that as God created all things, therefore God is "No Thing." Akiva Vroman, *On God, Space & Time* (Transaction Publishers, 1999).

¹¹ Interesting to note his estimate of the precreation time at myriads times myriads would equal many more billions than modern physicists' estimation of the Big Bang at about 13.7/8 billion years ago or a mere 1300 myriads.

the main intellectual influence alongside Rambam in later Byzantium for Rabbanites and Karaites through his biblical commentaries. Both Mordecai Komtino and Shlomo Sharvit Hazahav (Chrysokokkos) wrote monographs while Ibn Moskoni and Menahem Tamar wrote super commentaries. Ibn Moskoni's is called *Eben Haezer* which he wrote in Majorca following his studies with Shemarya in Negroponte (Chalkis in Euboea). Thus, he combined Romaniote and Sephardi traditions. Menahem Tamar for his part was a student of Shabbetai ben Malkiel Hacohen who taught him logic which he applied to his commentary on Ibn Ezra dated 1514. Tamar also cited eight different tracts of Aristotle—*ספר אותות עליונות*, *ספר אותות עליונות*, *החוש והמוחש*, *המדות*, *פיזיקה*, *השמע*, *בעלי חיים*, *השמים והעולם*, *בלי חיים*, *השמים והעולם*, *בלי חיים*, *השמים והעולם*—and thus strongly challenged Ibn Moskoni's commentary from a different perspective, namely the Romaniote romanticism, in particular Ibn Moskoni's prolixity (*אריכות*) which he attacked, comparing it to the rationalism of the newly arrived Sephardi refugees to the Balkans. Schwartz claims that Ibn Moskoni's *Eben Haezer* was his one simple comprehensive treatise. He neglects to mention in his discussion the role of Ibn Moskoni in the rediscovery and editing of the longer version of *Sepher Yosippon* which remained a staple of numerous Jewries for the next seven centuries.

Menahem Tamar's commentary was based on grammar, language and pshat; his style avoided flowery phrase (*מליצה*) and centered on specific topics (rather than a continuous commentary), e.g., Aristotle, Ibn Ezra's treatises, Rambam's treatises, Ramban's commentary on the Torah, RaLBaG, *Sepher Olam*, *Milhamoth Hashem*, Shmuel ibn Tibbon, al Ghazali, a rumor of Plato's astrology, and especially his teacher Shabbetai ben Malkiel Hacohen. Menahem Tamar ridiculed Ibn Moskoni's inanities: *האריך בזה בשטויות כמנהג* ("he went on and on with inanities as customary"). Since Ibn Moskoni represented the zenith of Romaniote scholarship in his *Eben Haezer*, Tamar critiqued him from the perspective of the more sophisticated Sephardi scholarship. Indeed, he looked down on the Romaniote intellectual traditions of the fourteenth century. Ibn Moskoni for his part was obsessed with the esoteric elements in Ibn Ezra and produced extensive excursuses on Ibn Ezra's hints, riddles, and secrets. His prolixity was mainly used to enlighten his contemporaries with the wisdom of Ibn Ezra, which only he understood (*pace Schwarz*), to uncover the allegorical commentary of the writings and aggadot of Hazal, and also the political and religious facets of the esoteric style. In this approach, according to Schwartz, Ibn Moskoni adopted the Platonic model according to which the king was the wise man who acquired philosophical knowledge as well as the Jewish tradition in which Jewish kings habitually made a copy of the Torah.

In contrast, Menahem Tamar acknowledged that he was not able to disclose Ibn Ezra's many secrets and was unwilling to explain them by philosophy and allegory. He quotes RaLBaG but not Ibn Moskoni, who, for example, explains the ark's accessories through astral magic and thus revealed much that Aaron, Moses' brother, did not know. Ibn Moskoni also relied on the commentary to *Shi'ur Koma* by Moses Narboni and its scientific, mathematical, and astrological insights, but he did not hesitate to analyze them critically and harshly, i.e.: 'he erred much, he didn't know much, and he was superficial'. Ibn Moskoni differed stylistically and in depth from Sephardi and Provençal scholars in his critique of their explanations and reliance on previous scholarship.

The difference between Yehudah ibn Moskoni and Menahem Tamar is that ibn Moskoni represents the culmination of Romaniote commentary even if he was prolix. Menahem Tamar was less prolix in his style and drew deeply from Sephardi influence that flourished in the Balkans after the expulsion from Spain and superseded the local Romaniote tradition.

A final chapter [II] in this lengthy compendium is dedicated to Mordecai Komtino whose Greek name Khomatiano(s) identifies him as the last great Romaniote intellectual. Best known for his commentaries on the Torah (completed in 1460), Ibn Ezra, and Rambam, this chapter is primarily concerned with the Torah and Rambam, especially his rationalist and scientific commentary of the commandments. He also critiqued Moses Kaputzato for the lack of accuracy in Kaputzato's pshat reading that in turn relied on Hazal's speculation that Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar was a 'cohen'.¹² Komtino stressed that Hazal's comments needed interpretation that allowed him to develop his rationalist commentary which focused on whether she could be burnt for her incest before there was a biblical law to that effect. He also engaged in polemic with Shabbatai ben Malkiel Hacoheh.

Nor did Komtino avoid ranging widely in his commentary on the commandments following that of Rambam but there were more reasons than the obvious, and his pursuit of that direction was a good pedagogical tool to accelerate rational and intellectual development, hence his prolixity. So, for example, he wrote that the Ten Commandments presented values based on Neoplatonism and Aristotelian foundations, i.e., they led one to embrace rationalism. So, the First commandment was the foundation for all the rest which depended upon it, as he explained in his engineering metaphor. He negated the influence of astral magic compared to science, although he occasionally resorted to their use when they applied. Like Ibn Moskoni, Komtino presented them as *sod*, since they both saw theological links in the esoteric, astronomic, and astrologic traditions, especially where they fit the laws of nature. But he totally negated astral magical commentary. His commentary also tends toward asceticism reflecting his vegetarian avoidance of meat.

Komtino, in the spirit of his Romaniote and Orthodox Byzantine environment (in particular the contemporary polemics of the Platonic-Aristotelian controversies), engaged in polemic and controversy, especially regarding commentary and theology and the influence of the ancients over the moderns. He wrote in a clear manner but occasionally abstruse in his commentary on Rambam's *Milot Hahegayon* and Ibn Ezra's *Yesod More*. He critiqued his contemporaries for their intellectual weakness. Komtino stressed his rationality and control of disciplines and sciences, but his approach to the Guide was allegorical. He stressed physics and mathematics and emphasized that the intellectuals' worship of God (עבודת אלהים של המשכילים) led them to intellectual cleaving

¹² Page 472: "Hazal said she was a *bat cohen* and therefore liable to burning [Albeck, *breshit rabbah* 1044]. Moses the Greek said, 'If only she was a *bat Yisrael*, but I see her as a Canaanite'. This sage thought they wanted her to be a *bat Aharon hacoheh*, and did not know that the *mitzvat kehunah* was not yet in effect, so they wanted a priest like Malki Zedek or like him...the talmud mentions that she was the daughter of Shem ben Noah [*ibid*, see *Targum Yonatan* 38,6 and *Tosephta Sukkah* 24b]."

after death (דביקות שכלית שלאחר המוות) (p.482) and this characterized his approach to and commentary on the Guide. He relied heavily on Moses Narboni's commentary on the Guide and other Provençal and Spanish commentaries. Komtino in fact saw himself as a super-commentator on Narboni's commentary which he amplified with his own opinions and critiques, but he defended Rambam throughout his pshat commentary: לעולם דברי אלהים חיים הם ודברי הרב ע"ה כמעט אינו טועה. "There are hardly any errors in Rambam's words; they are forever words of the Living God." In Part II, he cites heavily Aristotle's Physics via Ibn Rushd.

Schwartz's philosophical odyssey through the major figures of Romaniote intellectual life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brings together from the scattered few remaining manuscripts of their prodigious oeuvre: the pursuit of rationalism, primarily Neoplatonic, by radical rationalists, moderate rationalists and kabbalists such as Elnatan Kilkis, Shemarya HaIkriti, Yehudah ibn Moskoni, Menahem Tamar, Michael ben Shabbetai Balbo, Mordecai Khomatiano (Komtino), and other lesser-known scholars. These Romaniotes continued the long career of biblical commentary of Romaniote Jews in the Byzantine world who drew from and challenged pagan and Orthodox scholarship on biblical, philosophical, and theological topics. They and their Karaite co-religionists drew from the well of Ibn Ezra and Rambam and composed their own rich collection of kabbalistic tracts, which in turn fed western scholars through the intercourse that stimulated late mediaeval scholarship throughout the Mediterranean. Additionally, they stimulated development of the piyyut and produced the major midrashim of post Antiquity, viz. *Sepher Yosippon* and Yerahme'el's *Sepher zikhronoth vedivre hayamim* of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Dov Schwartz has supplied a new chapter in the study of mediaeval Jewish philosophy with his comprehensive summary, including a sumptuous selection of quotes from their writings, some still in manuscript, and review of contemporary scholarship on the subject themes of the period.

We began with millions of Romaniote Jews (citizens of the empire since 212 at the latest) who continued to sing in the languages of Hellas and Israel the sweet voices of Greek philosophers. The Christian revolution absorbed countless myriads of converts while the Muslim conquests Arabized whole sections of their population, leading to a decline during a millennium to less than eighty thousand and further to maybe half that number by the fourteenth century, with a further sharp decrease from the Black Plague to the Ottoman conquest. The decline continued through the massacres attending the Greek revolution in the 1820s until their nadir on the eve of the Nazi conquest and deportation to the frozen camps of Moloch. Today, mainly in Greece and Israel and the few Romaniotes in the United States we can count perhaps hundreds of families who still chant the piyyutim of their ancestors but apparently no longer philosophize in their pursuit of science and scholarship.