

## **Jewish Theological Systematization in the Context of Islamic Culture**

**Ali Shahbazi,<sup>1</sup> Hamideh Amiryazdani<sup>2</sup>**

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Among the most important Jewish encounters with other cultures and civilizations, the encounter with Islamic culture was, in our view, the most important. This encounter was in some aspects like their encounter with the ancient civilization, but the impacts were more valuable and constructive. Under Islamic rule, the Jews not only had a sense of security but also enjoyed a relatively satisfactory freedom of thought and religion. Their encounter with Islamic theology was more through their acquaintance with Mu'tazilite theology, which emerged at the beginning of the eighth century, and it was this encounter that resulted in theological and philosophical systematization in Jewish thought.

The impacts of Mu'tazilite theology on Jewish theological thought can be found in three areas: (1) content-oriented impacts, (2) methodological impacts, and (3) systematization of theology and philosophy.

**Keywords:** Jewish theology, Mu'tazilite, Kalām, Maimonides, al-Farabi.

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### **Introduction**

Among the most important Jewish encounters with other cultures and civilizations, three historical encounters can be highlighted, each of which were highly influential on Jewish culture and thought: (1) the encounter with Iranian culture, (2) the encounter with Greek culture, and (3) the encounter with Islamic culture.

The Jewish encounter with Iranians took place in the 6th century BC, following the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great, the founder of Achaemenid Empire. The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great was a starting point in the Jewish-Persian relations, well remembered

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1. Lecturer, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran (ashahbazi2@gmail.com), corresponding author.
  2. PhD Candidate in Comparative Study of Religion, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran (sareh\_amiryazdani@yahoo.com).

by Jewish and even non-Jewish historians. Iranian sovereignty brought social and political freedom and security for Jews (Sabourifar 1385 Sh, 45). Therefore, the Jewish people always commemorate their Iranian rulers, and names of many of these rulers have been mentioned in the Old Testament. In the Bible, Cyrus, King of Persia, is remembered as “God’s Christ,” whom the Lord appointed for conquering other nations and triumph over other lands (Gimann 1375 Sh, 42) and accompanied in all his conquests and victories (Isaiah 45:1-4). God considers Cyrus as His shepherd, one who fulfilled all that He pleased, and who re-built Jerusalem and renovated the Temple (Isaiah 44:28). Obviously, the great admiration of the Jews for Iranians made them welcome the impact of Persian religion even more. Many historians and researchers have demonstrated that Jews, in the Persian period, adopted important Iranian beliefs and rituals (Armstrong 1385 Sh, 49). Such beliefs include the existence of an evil force which is in constant conflict with good and is not under subjugation of God, finite and goal-oriented aspect of the universe, promise of a cosmic savior at the dawn of the end of the world providing the context for its end, the existence of heaven and hell and judgment of the dead, the end of the world with resurrection of the dead and final judgment and destruction of evil, establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth and righteous entry into this kingdom and eternal life with God (Boyce and Grenet 1385 Sh, 1:3; Rezaee n.d., 1:462; Hekmat 1388 Sh, 200-1).

Additionally, regarding the Jewish encounter with Greek culture, the Jewish community, especially in Alexandria, was highly exposed to identity-based and cultural threats. In other words, the Jews, in the Hellenistic period, were exposed to a significant transformation and to a serious cultural and religious threat. Therefore, they were concerned about their cultural survival as “Jews,” as they were in the struggle against praising Canaanites’ idols during the period of the Judges. In this struggle, the Jews were challenged both in terms of their social life and religious beliefs, and also in theological and intellectual terms. Many Jews were highly attracted to Greek culture, lifestyle, and systematized philosophical thought. Accordingly, the Jews, for the first time, encountered with such philosophical systems and systematic cosmologies as Plato’s, Aristotle’s, the Stoics’, and so on. Although such an encounter led to division within the Jewish community (one side of the struggle were Hellenists and the other side were Hasidim, the opponents of Greek culture), and although some like Philo tried to

develop a religious philosophy harmonizing Greek philosophy with the teachings of the Bible, those struggles neither created a new trend in Jewish culture nor led to the establishment of a Jewish theological or philosophical system. In fact, Philo's philosophical and theological heritage was handed to Muslims and Christians and not to the Jews.

Nevertheless, it took almost seven hundred years from Philo and his attempt to start a movement in Jewish theological systematization until the start of a systematic philosophical and theological practice in the Jewish communities in the Middle Ages and the emergence of the next philosophers under the territory of Islamic culture (Wolfson 1982; Winston 1997, 49). Since Philo until the era of Saadia Gaon, when we can see the start of theological reflections in the Jewish communities, Jewish thought was primarily focused on reflection on the scriptures (i.e. written and oral law) and proposing different interpretations for them, the bastion against the surrounding environment, especially the Greek intellectual environment considered as a threat. Over this period, we cannot see an independent work in the Jewish literature on theology or philosophy. It was only in the Middle Ages and in the context of Islamic culture that the Jews started their theological and philosophical works.

The Jews' encounter with Islamic culture was in some aspects like their encounter with the ancient civilization. However, the consequences were more valuable and constructive. In the light of Islamic rule, the Jews had not only a sense of security but also enjoyed a relatively satisfactory freedom of thought and religion. Islamic and Jewish social environments were so close that Arabic became the literary language of the Jews. However, Islamic culture was not a coherent and integrated package; it was facing, from the very beginning, the formation of intellectual and cultural currents, especially in the field of theology and philosophy.

The Jews' encounter with Islamic theology was more through their acquaintance with Mu'tazilite theology, which emerged at the beginning of the eighth century. Therefore, the Jewish theology during this period was more influenced by this theological current. Maimonides, who was a preeminent scholar of Jewish law in the Middle Ages, states that the Jewish theological doctrines (rabbinic and Karaite Judaism) are all derived from Mu'tazilite theology; Ash'arite theology, which later emerged in Islamic history and introduced new viewpoints,

did not influence Jewish theologians. This choice did not result from a comparison and evaluation of Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite ideas and teachings; rather, since Jewish theologians first got to know the Mu'tazilites, they adopted their ideas and thoughts.

From the very beginning, as we know, Islamic culture, with respect to its religious teachings and foundations, has been witness to the formation of numerous intellectual currents, especially in the realms of theology and philosophy. Mu'tazilite theological current was the earliest school of Islamic theology and had its beginnings in the 8th century. Moreover, Mu'tazilite theology is said to have emerged as a response to and in dealing with Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Christianity. Since monotheism (*tawhid*) and Justice ('*adl*) are two central Mu'tazilite doctrines, they call themselves “the People of Monotheism and Justice.” Based on the divine Justice, righteous people are rewarded for their good deeds, while sinners are punished for their misdeeds. Clearly, such a belief would entail that we consider human beings as free-willed beings responsible for their deeds, and that God's promises and threats are meaningful. Additionally, Mu'tazilites, due to their belief in divine Justice, held a belief in the essential good and evil. Good and evil, in their view, are intrinsic in objects and actions; moreover, we are able to distinguish between good and evil by our own reason independently of revelation. Therefore, Mu'tazilites are said to have believed in rational and intrinsic good and evil. *Tawhid* (monotheism) is tantamount to the denial of any other god(s), on the one hand, and the belief in the absolute divine simplicity and denial of any composition in the divine nature, on the other. Clearly, the tenet just mentioned is also related to the issue of divine attributes. Mu'tazilites denied the reality of divine attributes and believed in the identity between divine essence and attributes; otherwise, they believed, the attributes would be pre-eternal beings beside God—an idea that entails *shirk* (polytheism). They also reject the belief in the creation of the Qur'an by the same argument.

### **Theological Impacts of Mu'tazilites on Jewish Theological Knowledge**

Theological impacts of Mu'tazilites on Jewish theology can be found in three areas. First, the theological issues raised among the Jewish theologians were to a large extent an imitation of Mu'tazilite theological issues. For instance, David Al-Mukammas, in his book '*Ishrun makalat (Twenty Chapters)*', highlights such issues as the unity of God, the

divine attributes, and justice; issues which were also highlighted in Mu'tazilite theology. Saadia Gaon, in his book *al-Amanat wa l-i'tikadat* (*The Book of Doctrines and Opinions*) has displayed this influence to a large extent. Titles of the articles in the book and their order depict the influence of thought and ideas of the Muslim theologians of the time.<sup>1</sup>

Second, Mu'tazilites concentrated on intellect and a rational way of thinking. They believed in rational goodness and evil due to their emphasis on God's justice and also human free will. This highlighted the position of reason in their theology, which greatly influenced Jewish theologians (Rabbanites and Karaites) (Maimonides n.d., 2:180). This can clearly be observed in the works of such philosophers as David Al-Mukammas and Saadia (c.f. Wolfson 1979; Gaon 1976, xxv). These two theologians benefited from rational arguments to demonstrate their religious viewpoints in their books. Jacob Kirkisani, a Karaite, gave more priority to reason and rational thinking than revelation, since, as he believed, the Bible contained the notion of false prophets with their false claims of revelation (Sirat 1990, 40).

The third impact has to do with the systematization of theology. The contents and structure of Saadia's *The Book of Doctrines and Opinions* and Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed* clearly depict the influence of the common ways of theological and philosophical debates among Muslims. The impact of the systematization of Jewish theology was obtaining a systematized construct of beliefs and also clear principles for theological discussions (c.f. Maimonides n.d., 180; Ben-Shammai 1997, 130).

The direct influence of philosophical and theological thoughts of Islamic thinkers on Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages cannot be ignored. According to Ibn Tibbon (the famous translator of philosophical and mystical works from Arabic to Hebrew in the Middle Ages), the richness and diversity of writings in the Jewish community under Muslim rule was surprising. These works included both commentaries on the Bible and Talmud and also independent works in

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1. The titles are as follows: (1) on creation of the universe, (2) on the unity of God and other divine attributes, (3) on the divine commands, (4) on obedience and disobedience, predestination and divine justice, (5) on merits and demerits, (6) on the human soul and its eternity, (7) on the resurrection of the dead, (8) on the redemption (the age of Messiah and liberation of Israel), (9) On the heavenly reward and punishment, and (10) on human obligations in this world (Gaon 1976) .

various sciences, as well as apologetics, mainly in Arabic. This was a common procedure for those Jewish communities under the Islamic rule, though not for the Jews in Christian territories. Since their only concern was the Bible or because they did not have access to books related to other sciences, Jewish scholars did not highly value those sciences. In this regard, Ibn Tibbon emphasizes the importance of linguistic context for dissemination of science and philosophy among Jews in Muslim lands. Both language and suitable living environments gave rise to the formation of a kind of Arabic-Jewish culture in Islamic lands (Stroumsa 2009, 4). This influence was so effective that such thinkers as Saadia Gaon, Yahuda Ha-Levi, Maimonides, and Gersonides were not just seeking to adopt some important ideas here and there; rather, they studied and worked on Islamic philosophy profoundly, and then, of course, employed it for their own Jewish philosophical purposes. Possibly, one reason that Jewish philosophy is too dependent on Islamic philosophy is the closeness of Islam to Judaism. Their shared views on monotheism, for instance, can be cited as an example in this regard.

In terms of Islamic culture in the 9th century (2nd century AH), in addition to such theological currents as Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites, and the Imamiyya, some other major philosophical schools emerged following the translation movement. As a matter of fact, the boundaries between philosophy and theology cannot be determined in medieval Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions. For this reason, we have used the concepts of philosophy and theology interchangeably throughout the paper. Although for Philo of Alexandria, as a founder of religious philosophy (if we agree with Wolfson in this regard), philosophy was the servant of the Bible—a belief that became prevalent in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—philosophy either became theological in the intellectual realm of these three religions or became theology itself in some cases. Therefore, it can be said that religion and religious beliefs were the stimuli to the intellectual activity of thinkers. More precisely, although influenced by Greek philosophical thought, the thinkers in this era adhered to their respective religion and faith. They were believers who wrote for their religious communities, trying to provide their readers with a reasoned defense of religious beliefs. Therefore, when it comes to classifying the Jewish intellectual groups in the medieval era, there is no clear-cut distinction between philosophers and theologians. On the other hand, in this era, we witness an integration of ideas and

views, especially among Muslim thinkers. Avicenna, for example, is found to be more neo-Platonic than Aristotelian. In other words, in Avicenna we have a platonized or neo-platonized Aristotle. However, one cannot ignore that some figures in the Middle Ages had philosophical thought, whereas theology was only at the margin of their philosophical thinking; such Jewish neo-Platonists as Isaac Israeli and Ibn Gabirol can be considered as examples in this regard (Rudavsky 1997, 154).

### **Kalam, Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian Movements**

To classify Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages, we should focus on the contexts and foundations, rather than on the specific philosophical or theological schools to which they belonged. Accordingly, given the philosophical schools and views that lasted in the Islamic era (i.e., Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neo-Platonic schools) and also based on the philosophical integrations previously mentioned, the Jewish thinkers fall into different groups, including theological, neo-platonic, Aristotelian, and anti-Aristotelian currents. In this case, the Jewish philosophical and theological thinking is mainly based upon Islamic philosophy and theology. Therefore, we will study David al-Mukammas, Saadia Gaon, Jacob Qirqisani, and Yusuf al-Basir with an Islamic theological perspective, Isaac Israeli and Ibn Gabirol with a neo-platonic perspective, and Ibn Dawood and Maimonides with an Aristotelian philosophy perspective. We thus deal with four currents in the Jewish medieval thought: (1) theological (Karaitic and Rabbinic), (2) Neo-Platonic, (3) Aristotelian, and (4) anti-Aristotelian currents.

It should be noted that the Jewish thinkers of the Islamic era can be classified into two geographical groups: (1) those in the Islamic territories including the eastern Islamic world (Egypt and Mesopotamia) and the western Islamic world, and (2) those in the Western Christian lands (including northern Spain, the Provence, and Italy). The condition of Judaism in northern Europe did not offer a good opportunity for the Jews to participate in intellectual interactions with their Christian neighbors; therefore, the Jewish scholars in this region, such as Rashi, were focused mainly on hermeneutic activities. In southern Europe, possibly except for the south of Italy, the relation between Jews and Christians was not comparable with the conditions of the Jews on the east. However, in Islamic countries, the Jewish communities were increasingly growing in the middle of the 9th to 13th

centuries. Moreover, the Islamic and Jewish social environments were so close that Arabic language and literature became the scientific and literary language of the Jewish scholars; whereas, the Jews in Christian lands spoke their own native language, and Hebrew was their scientific and written language.

To cite some instances relating to direct impact of Islamic thinkers on the Jews, we can refer to such Jewish theologians as David al-Mukammas and Saadia Gaon, as well as Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides. Accordingly, al-Mukammas in his most important philosophical work titled *Ishrun maqala (Twenty Chapters)*, written in Arabic, was highly influenced by Mu'tazilites in terms of the methods and contents of his discussions. As mentioned earlier, al-Mukammas, influenced by Mu'tazilite doctrines, focused mainly on the issues of God's unity and consequently divine attributes. He first addressed different meanings of unity, clarifying that when one says that God is the "One," he should consider this oneness as both external (i.e., rejection of other gods), and internal (i.e., belief in God's essential simplicity and rejection of any multiplicity in His nature). Clearly, al-Mukammas targeted both Christian beliefs and the beliefs of the attributists, who believe in the reality of divine attributes. Therefore, he refers to God's attributes as not being superadded to His essence, but identical with His essence. Thus, when ascribing the attribute of life to God, al-Mukammas would say, "God is living not in virtue of life, but His life is Himself," and "God is living not in virtue of life, but in virtue of Himself." He took the latter preposition from Abu l-Hudhayl and the former from al-Nazzam.

Saadia Gaon wrote his important work *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* in Arabic, which was the first systematic and philosophical presentation of Jewish doctrines, using Islamic philosophical and theological concepts. In the scheme of his work, Saadia closely followed the Mu'tazilites. As was previously mentioned, the topics of the ten articles of his book and their order clearly reveals the influence of theological discussions prevalent among Muslims and also the imprint of their structure on Saadia. In addition, they represent his serious commitment to the systematization of Jewish. Prior to discussing any of these topic, Saadia explains his main pre-supposition, which is the compatibility of reason and revelation. Thus, influenced by Muslim theologians, Saadia distinguishes between rational knowledge or laws ('*aqliyyāt, sharā'i*' '*aqliyya*) and revealed



knowledge or laws (*sharā'i' sam'iyya, sam'iyyāt*). Therefore, he considers rational reflection and speculation as compatible with religious teachings.

After stating this primary standpoint, he clarifies the sources of knowledge in order to take a firmer step in illustrating his own theological system. However, as we saw earlier, the first topic discussed in his book is the createdness of the world and the unity of God, the Creator. For Saadia, as a theologian, it is important to first prove the createdness of the world so as to prove the existence of God and His oneness and the issues associated with it. Under the topic of God's unity, Saadia is most emphatic in rejecting the corporeality of God, thereby highlighting His immateriality and transcendence. In his view, God, unlike other beings and things, cannot be defined by any of the Aristotelian categories, and He transcends all of them. As with al-Muqammis and Muslim theologians, Saadia believes that God's essence is identical with His attributes; therefore, he highlights God's absolute simplicity as against Christians and Muslim attributists and also rejects any idea of plurality and combination in God. Saadia emphasizes on the negative meaning of divine attributes, arguing that when, for example, we say that God is All-knowing, we mean that, first, His knowledge is not comparable with the human way of acquiring knowledge, and, second, His being All-knowing means that He is not ignorant. Furthermore, Saadia believes that those attributes ascribed to God in the Bible with an apparently metaphorical or personified meaning incompatible to God should be interpreted in metaphorical and allegorical terms. Thus, in Saadia's view, God is one, both in terms of external and numerical unity and in terms of internal unity and simplicity. Influenced by Mu'tazilites, he also discusses the issue of the createdness of God's word and, following Abu l-Hudhayl, argues for its creation in time. In addition, he distinguishes between the *communicative* word of God and His *creative* word. Saadia argues that when used to show God's communication with a prophet, the word refers to a real being, which God creates in the air at the time of the communication; however, when used for the creative act of God, it refers only to the will and wisdom of God in His creative actions. Thus, it is obvious that Saadia believes in the createdness of the Torah just as Mu'tazilites believed in the creation of the Qur'an.

Other Jewish theologians, such as Qirqisani and Yusuf al-Basir, did not differ much from Saadia in terms of their approaches and systems of thought and the influence of Muslim thinkers on them.

### **Maimonides and Islamic Philosophy**

Maimonides (1135-1204) was the most important and preeminent medieval Jewish philosopher in Spain. Besides the prophets of Israel, he regarded Aristotle as the highest representative of human rational faculty, calling him “the chief of the philosophers” (Maimonides n.d., 1:30). In a letter to Ibn Tibbon, the Hebrew translator of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, he states, “Aristotle's works are the roots and foundations of all works on the sciences, but they cannot be understood except with the help of commentaries, those of Alexander of Aphrodisias, those of Themistius, and those of Averroes” (Leaman 2013, 8). The great deal of compliments he gives to al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Averroes (as the great interpreter of Aristotle), as well as to Avicenna (though to a lesser extent) suggest his inclination towards Aristotelian philosophy and disinclination towards neo-platonic philosophy or neo-platonic interpretations of Aristotle. He praises al-Farabi so much, considering him a great sage and philosopher whose works, especially his *Metaphysics*, sources of wisdom and truth.

Maimonides lived in an Islamic environment. He was familiar with both theological and philosophical currents in the Muslim community of the time and with Jewish intellectual figures and the works they had produced under the influence of Muslim theologians. The intellectual paradigms dominant in the Islamic community of the time gave a specific worldview and intellectual framework to Maimonides, a fact that is especially reflected in his *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Issues addressed in this book—such as knowledge of God, compatibility of reason and revelation, proving the existence of God, God's unity and His attributes, divine providence, the creation of the world, prophecy, religious dogmas, and so forth—were long discussed by Muslim theologians.

### **Maimonides and al-Farabi: Imagination Faculty and Prophecy**

As previously mentioned, Maimonides held al-Farabi in the highest esteem, considering his ideas in metaphysics as guides to truth. As we know, al-Farabi is a philosopher concerned with both systematization and harmonization; accordingly, he emphasized that philosophy is one unit, since its only aim is the pursuit of truth. Therefore, al-Farabi

attempts to show that despite the apparent difference between them, Aristotle and Plato are in fact in agreement. Based on his theocentric perspective, al-Farabi strove to reconcile religion and philosophy, contributing much to the philosophical foundation of later philosophy. His doctrine of reconciliation was based on two main points: first, revising the Peripatetic philosophy and dressing it with a Platonic form; and, second, providing a rational interpretation of religious truth. His cosmological and psychological theories, which shaped his theory of prophecy, played a key role in this regard (Madkour 1362 Sh, 1:657). According to al-Farabi, prophecy is the result of an interaction between the intellect and the mimetic capacities of the imaginative faculty. What makes prophetic knowledge unique is not its intellectual content *per se*—that is found in philosophy as well. True prophecy is in reality the symbolization and imitation of the selfsame truths known demonstratively and intellectually in philosophy. All prophets possess, in addition to their intellectual capacities, the gift of an especially keen imaginative faculty. This gift allows their imagination to receive an influx or emanation of intelligibilities from the Active Intellect. In this way, what is normally available only to a select few who can reach the level of the acquired intellect, can be communicated by the prophet in the form of sensory images to a much wider, non-philosophical public (Black 1996, 187). According to al-Farabi, prophetic inspiration or revelation is caused by imagination, which can create mental images, as in dreams and visions, and also ascend to higher worlds to receive, in its communion with the Active Intellect, heavenly rulings related to particular cases (Madkour 1362 Sh, 1:658). Thus, prophecy can be explained through this communion of imagination with the Active Intellect, and the chief characteristic of a prophet is to have a vivid imagination to work in conjunction with the Active Intellect.

Therefore, according to al-Farabi, both prophets and philosophers receive their knowledge from the same source, which is the Active Intellect; the former through imagination, and the latter by way of speculation and contemplation. In fact, religious truths and philosophical truths are both the radiation of the divine illumination through imagination or contemplation. However, we must not suppose that al-Farabi bases prophecy solely on human imagination; rather, according to his theory of intellect, which considers a hierarchy for human intellect (potential intellect, actual intellect, and acquired

intellect), human beings may reach a stage where the actual intellect becomes the acquired intellect, and, in this case, the perfect sage or the prophet (or the imam) emerges, who can receive revelation from God through the Active Intellect. Therefore, whatever is emanated from God to the Active Intellect emanates from the Active Intellect through the acquired faculty to the passive intellect, and then from it to the imaginative faculty. So, the person becomes a wise and perfect intellectual because of what his passive intellect receives from the Active Intellect, and he is a prophet and a warner because of what his imaginative faculty receives from the Active Intellect (Farabi 1361 Sh, 269).

It should be mentioned that al-Farabi uses imaginative faculty to explain only parts of the prophet's perceptions (i.e., the images), but he talks about the necessity of the communion of the prophet's intellect with the Active Intellect to explain other perceptions of the prophet (that is, the intelligible forms). In fact, al-Farabi is trying to explain three types of perceptions in the prophet: perception of intelligibilities, perception of imaginative and tangible forms (such as seeing the angel of revelation), and perception of specific incidents in the past, present, or future. In al-Farabi's view, revelation in the second or third type entails the communion of the prophet's imagination with the Active Intellect, but in the first type requires the conjunction of his rational faculty with the Active Intellect. Thus, he clearly asserts that in the prophet, the Active Intellect is present in both components of his rational soul, which are theoretical and practical intellects, and then in his imaginative faculty (cf. Kriesel 2001, 246-47). Therefore, it is clear that the exclusive characteristic of a prophet is the perfection of his imaginative faculty. A prophet differs from a philosopher in terms of the perfection of the imaginative faculty, but both are similar in terms of the perfection of the theoretical faculty. Thus, every prophet is a philosopher, but not every philosopher is a prophet.

### **Maimonides and Prophecy**

Like al-Farabi, Maimonides is an eclectic thinker, who attempts to integrate two contrary views. Before explaining the integrative view of Maimonides, we should first clarify the place of the imaginative faculty for him. In his view, the imaginative faculty has two functions: preserving images and recombining them. The material and data that it uses is the product of the five senses. Sometimes, as when we sleep, the

senses cease to function and the imaginative faculty, freed from the continuous distractions of the senses, can do its own proper activities and reveal its true capabilities. In this state, it turns towards itself and retrieves the images that it has stored while we were awake. This signifies that the imaginative faculty could achieve a level of perfection in which it sees things as if they were in the outside world (Maimonides n.d., 2:402). Thus, the concept of imagination becomes quite an important concept in Maimonides' theory of prophecy. It is usually said that Maimonides, where the question of a corresponding external reality does not arise, considers prophecy merely an internal psychological process, something similar to a dream. He indeed claims that the difference between dreams and prophecy is only a matter of degree (Leaman 2013, 39). He even says that whenever one finds in the Scriptures the presence of angels in the process of prophecy, it is just a description of a psychological experience caused by the imaginative faculty (Leaman 2013, 39).

Maimonides adopts a conception of imagination which implicitly encompasses a wide range of internal senses, but its main function is to combine and analyze concepts and images. Through our five senses, we receive sensory data and we re-organize them in different ways; for example, we relate our current hunger to not having had breakfast in the morning. Imagination is also related to what will happen in the future, such that if the faculty of imagination is so powerful and perfected in a person, he may receive the premonition of the future events. He who has a powerful imagination possesses both a powerful rational faculty and also appropriate moral and physical characteristics. Such a person is in fact a prophet, who knows not only what will happen in the future but also the reasons and means of what is to happen. This awareness is due to a deeper understanding of divine and logical origins of those events. Such a person possesses the skills required for transferring his information to others— a practical and visual capacity, which itself requires the ability to employ the faculty of imagination. The imaginative faculty is fully engaged with human senses, and the peak of its function is when the senses are free and resting. In the view of Maimonides, exactly at this state, an emanation from God is received by this faculty in accordance with its talent and readiness. The explanation of how this emanation is transferred from God through the separate intellects to the human imaginative faculty is based on

Maimonides' hierarchical cosmology that he has borrowed from Muslim philosophers.

As already mentioned, to be a prophet, it is necessary for both the rational faculty and the imaginative faculty to attain that emanation from the Active Intellect. If the emanation is received only by a person's rational faculty, and not by his imaginative faculty, he becomes a philosopher; if it is received by both his rational and imaginative faculties, he becomes a prophet; and if it is received only by his imaginative faculty, he becomes a statesman, lawgiver, diviner, charmer, and so on.

### **Conclusion**

In this article, we focused on the Jewish encounter with Muslims, which resulted in the formation of the theological and philosophical systems in the Jewish tradition. We showed this important influence in the works of such great Jewish theologians and philosophers as al-Mukammas in his *Ishrun makalat*, Saadia Gaon in his *al-Amanat wa l-i'tikadat*, and Maimonides in his *The Guide for the Perplexed*. The imprint of Islamic theology is clearly reflected in the issues discussed by these Jewish thinkers, in the positions they have taken, and in the structure and system they have chosen to present their ideas.

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