does not cause the divine omniscience to undergo any limitation; unless, misled by common usage, one should designate as "possible" those things whose undetermined state results not from their own essence, but only from our deficient knowledge of the essence. But this kind of possibility, which, indeed, is no possibility at all, must be eliminated from God as quite irreconcilable with His omniscience. In its strict and precise form, the notion of possibility is not at all antagonistic to the omniscience of God; for it is easily conceivable that God from the beginning regulated creation, so that for certain cases both alternatives should be "possible" events; that the Creator, in order to grant to human liberty the opportunity to display its own energy, left the final issue of certain actions undecided even for His own knowledge (*ib.* p. 96; German trans., p. 123).

Human free-will, it is true, suffers a certain limitation through the variety of moral dispositions, partly due to natural causes, to be found in single individuals, as also in entire nations. But man is able to overcome his natural disposition and appetites, and to lift himself to a higher plane of morality, by purifying and ennobling himself (*ib.* p. 97; German trans., p. 124). The Torah, and the study of ethics which forms a part of practical philosophy and is designated, by an expression borrowed from Plato ("Gorgias," 464), as the "doctrine of the healing of souls," are the guiding stars to this exalted plane; but no scientific presentation of practical philosophy approaches in this regard the lofty heights of the Scriptures, wherein are clearly expressed the most sublime moral principles known to philosophers (*ib.* pp. 98, 101; German trans., pp. 126, 130).

The ceremonial laws also serve the purpose of moral education, and are, therefore, in view of their ethical tendency, to be numbered among the moral laws; although when compared with the doctrines of faith and the ethical laws proper, they have only a subordinate importance, as the Holy Scriptures also attribute to the sacrifices a relatively minor importance in comparison with the moral laws (*ib.* p. 102; German trans., p. 131).

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J. G.

ABRAHAM BEN DAVID. See YIẒḤAḲI, ABRAHAM.

ABRAHAM BEN DAVID OF OSTROG (Volhynia): Commentator; flourished about 1500. He wrote כור לזהב ("Furnace for Gold"), a commentary on the Targumim to the Pentateuch. Some also attribute to him a treatise on the thirteen hermeneutical rules of Rabbi Ishmael, published at Canterbury in 1597, by the converted Jew Philip Ferdinand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.* Nos. 4215, 4216, 5053.

M. L. M.

ABRAHAM BEN DAVID OF POSQUIÈRES (RABaD III. ראב"ד): French Talmudic commentator; born in Provence, France, about 1125; died at Posquières, Nov. 27, 1198. Son-in-law of Abraham ben Isaac Ab-Bet-Din (RABaD II). The teachers under whose guidance he acquired most of his Talmudic learning were Moses ben Joseph (according to Michael, "Or ha-Ḥayyim," p. 24, the latter was the chief teacher of RABaD, but the manuscript note to which Michael refers reads quite differently in Buber's introduction to "Shibbale ha-Leḳeṭ") and Meshullam ben Jacob of Lunel. RABaD (abbreviation for Rabbi Abraham ben David) remained in Lunel after completing his studies, and subsequently became one of the rabbinical authorities of that city. He went to Montpellier, where he remained but a short time, and then removed to Nîmes, where he lived for a considerable period. Moses ben Judah ("Temim De'im," p. 66) refers to the rabbinical school of Nîmes, then under Abraham's direction, as the chief seat of Talmudic learning in Provence.

Persecution.

But the real center of RABaD's activity was Posquières, after which place he is often called. It is difficult to determine when he removed to Posquières; but about 1165 Benjamin of Tudela, at the outset of his travels, called upon him there. This traveler speaks of RABaD's wealth and benevolence. Not only did he erect and keep in repair a large school-building, but he cared for the material welfare of the poor students as well. It was his great wealth which brought him into peril of his life; for, in order to obtain some of it, Elzéar, the lord of Posquières, had him cast into prison, where, like Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, he might have perished, had not Count Roger II. of Carcassonne, who was friendly to the Jews, intervened, and by virtue of his sovereignty banished the lord of Posquières to Carcassonne. Thereupon Abraham ben David returned to Posquières, where he remained until his death. Among the many learned Talmudists who were his disciples in Posquières were Isaac ha-Kohen of Narbonne, the first commentator upon the Talmud Yerushalmi; Abraham ben Nathan of Lunel, author of "Ha-Manhig"; Meir ben Isaac of Carcassonne, author of the "Sefer ha-'Ezer"; and Asher ben Meshullam of Lunel, author of several rabbinical works. RABaD's influence on Jonathan of Lunel also is evident, though the latter did not attend his lectures.

Literary Works.

Besides being an active teacher, Abraham was a prolific author; for he not only wrote answers to hundreds of learned questions—which responsa are still partially preserved in the collections "Temim De'im," "Oraḥot Ḥayyim," and "Shibbale ha-Leḳeṭ"—but he also wrote a commentary on the whole Talmud and compiled several compendiums of rabbinical law. Most of his works are lost; but those which have been preserved, such as the "Sefer Ba'ale ha-Nefesh" (The Book of the Conscientious), a treatise on the laws relating to women, published in 1602, and his commentary on Torat Kohanim, published in 1862 at Vienna, are sufficient evidence of his untiring industry and remarkable intellect. Neither his codifications of law nor his commentaries are true examples of his strength. The title of "Baal Hasagot" (Critic), given him frequently by the rabbis, shows that they realized the direction in which his ability lay. Indeed, critical annotations display his powers at their best, and justify his being ranked with Alfasi, Rashi, and Maimonides.

It may, in addition, be safely asserted that Abraham ben David did even more for the study of the Talmud (which for so many centuries was for the Jews their only intellectual sphere) than the celebrated Spanish scholars. Without accusing Maimonides of intending to supplant the study of the Talmud itself by means of his compendium, the "Yad ha-Ḥazaḳah," it is nevertheless a fact that if Alfasi and Maimonides had not encountered such keen opposition, rabbinical Judaism would have degenerated into an exclusive study of the legal code, which would have been fatal to any original intel-

lectual development in a considerable portion of the Jewish people. This danger was not so imminent for those Jews who lived in lands where Arabian culture ruled; for there the study of the Hebrew language and poetry, and especially of the sciences and philosophy, would always have afforded a wide field for intellectual development. It was, therefore, sufficient that the leading Jewish rabbis domiciled in Moorish countries should devote much attention to furnishing a clew to the labyrinth of the Talmud, intricate and perplexing as the latter had become by the addition of the copious post-Talmudic literature of law and custom. Some sort of guide had become imperatively necessary for the practical application of this voluminous and intricate material. But in Christian countries like France and Germany, where the largest communities of Jews existed, throughout the Middle Ages there was no such outlet for Jewish intellectuality as the culture of literature or of the sciences which existed in Moorish Spain. Their own religious law was the only field open to the intellects of the Jews of Germany and northern France.

That the Jewish mind remained fresh and productive, in spite of the restrictions that hampered the people during the Middle Ages, is due mainly to the efforts of such men as Rashi and Abraham ben David, who utilized the Talmud as an arena in which they could exercise their intellect. In his commentary, Rashi furnished a smooth and well-paved road to the Talmud; while RABaD, by his acute criticism, pointed out the way intelligently and with discrimination. This critical tendency is characteristic of all the writings of RABaD. Thus, in his commentary upon Torat Kohanim (pp. 41*a*, 71*b*; compare also Harkavy's "Responsen der Geonim" in "Studien und Mittheilungen," iv. 164), we find the caustic observation that many obscure passages in rabbinical literature owe their obscurity to the fact that occasional explanatory or marginal notes not tending to elucidate the text have been incorporated. The real strength of RABaD is shown by his criticisms of the works of various authors. The tone which he employs is also characteristic of his attitude toward the persons under criticism. He treats Alfasi with the utmost respect, almost with humility, and refers to him as "the sun by whose brilliant rays our eyes are dazzled" ("Temim De'im," p. 22*a*). His language toward Zerahiah ha-Levi is harsh, almost hostile. Though only eighteen years old, this scholar possessed the courage and the ability to write a sharp criticism upon Alfasi, and RABaD refers to him as an immature youth who has the audacity to criticize his teacher. However, in fairness it must be stated that Zerahiah had himself provoked this treatment by sharply criticizing RABaD, and by incorporating into his own work some of RABaD's interpretations without acknowledgment to the author (compare Gross, *l.c.*, 545, and Reifmann, "Toledot," p 54).

Rashi and RABaD.

Attitude as a Critic.

Abraham's criticism of the "Yad ha-Ḥazakah" of Maimonides is also very harsh This, however, was not due to personal feeling, but to radical differences of view in matters of faith between the two greatest Talmudists of the twelfth century. Maimonides' aim was to bring order into the vast labyrinth of the Halakah by presenting final results in a definite, systematic, and methodical manner But in the opinion of RABaD this very aim was the principal defect of the work. A legal code which did not state the sources and authorities from which its decisions were derived, and offered no proofs of the correctness of its statements, was, in the opinion of Abraham ben David, entirely unreliable, even in the practical religious life, for which purpose Maimonides designed it. Such a code, he considered, could be justified only if written by a man claiming infallibility—by one who could demand that his assertions be accepted without question. If it had been the intention of Maimonides to stem the further development of the study of the Talmud by reducing it to the form of a code, RABaD felt it his duty to oppose such an attempt, as contrary to the free spirit of rabbinical Judaism, which refuses to surrender blindly to authority.

Maimonides and RABaD.

RABaD was thus an opponent to the codification of the Halakah; but he was even more strongly opposed to the construction of a system of dogmas in Judaism, particularly according to the method followed by Maimonides, who often set up the concepts of the Aristotelian philosophy as Jewish theology. Maimonides, for instance, in accordance with his philosophical conviction and in the true spirit of Judaism, declares the incorporeality of God to be a dogma of Judaism, or, as he formulates it, "whosoever conceives God to be a corporeal being is an apostate" ("Yad ha-Ḥazakah, Teshubah," iii. 7). In the circles with which RABaD was connected, a certain mystical anthropomorphistic conception of the Deity was usual; and therefore it was but natural that a statement which practically declared his best friends apostates should arouse his resentment. He, therefore, appended to Maimonides' formula this brief but emphatic criticism: "Why does he call such persons apostates? Men better and worthier than he have held this view, for which they believe they have found authority in the Scriptures and in a confusing view of the Haggadah." The phrase concerning the Haggadah shows that RABaD is himself far from advocating the anthropomorphistic view. His opposition to Maimonides' statement of the doctrine of the incorporeality of God is only directed against its being raised into a dogma Judaism is to Abraham ben David a religion of deed, and not one of dogmas. His attitude toward the teachings of Maimonides in regard to the future life and the eternity of the world is in harmony with this point of view. According to him the opinion of Maimonides on this question was as distinctly heretical as the corporeality of God from the standpoint of Maimonides; yet he has no word of vituperation for its author, but merely contents himself with recording his difference of opinion (*l.c.* viii. 2, 8). Thus, the ultra-conservative Talmudist was broader-minded and more tolerant than the greatest of the medieval Jewish philosophers (compare Smolensky, "'Am 'Olam," chap. 13).

Judaism a Religion of Deed, not of Dogma.

Abraham ben David is particularly severe on the attempts of Maimonides to smuggle in his philosophic views under cover of Talmudic passages. To cite one example· Sorcery, according to both Biblical and rabbinical law, is, under certain conditions, an offense punishable with death. The opinions in the Talmud on the various acts coming under the category of sorcery differ widely, owing, no doubt, to the fact that it was not practicable to look upon every superstitious practise, from which Talmudic Judaism itself was not entirely free, as a heinous offense Maimonides, who, from the point of view of his philosophy, looks upon sorcery, astrology, augury, and the like as pure absurdities, decides that even the innocent actions which Scripture narrates of Eliezer (Gen. xxiv 14), and of

Jonathan (I Sam. xiv. 8–10) are to be considered as falling under the ban. Here RABaD is not content with merely correcting the statement of Maimonides, but he declares that, in his opinion, Maimonides deserves the ban for the calumnious views he expresses concerning these Biblical personages (Yad. 'Akum, xi. 4). This suffices to explain the principle that actuated Abraham ben David in his intense opposition to Maimonides, and particularly to his "Yad ha-Ḥazaḳah," which David himself designates as a great achievement (Kilayim, vi. 2). However, his criticisms are not merely bitter, but wonderfully skilful. They are seldom more than a few lines long; yet the defenders of Maimonides have written without success page after page of laborious reasoning in support of their master. Abraham's remarkable command of the entire Talmudic literature, his extraordinary acuteness of intellect, and his phenomenal critical powers are shown at their best in this criticism of "Yad ha-Ḥazaḳah"; and, as he wrote it only a few years before his death, and at an advanced age, it is all the more noteworthy.

The cabalists look upon Abraham ben David as one of the fathers of their system, and this is true to the extent that he was inclined to mysticism, which led him to follow an ascetic mode of life and gained for him the title of "the pious." He frequently spoke of "the holy spirit (or Elijah) disclosing to him God's secrets in his studies" (see his note to "Yad ha-Ḥazaḳah," Lulab, viii. 5; Bet ha-Beḥirah, vi. 11), great mysteries known only to the initated ("Yesode ha-Torah," i. 10). It may be asserted with confidence that RABaD was not an enemy to secular science, as many deem him. His works prove that he was a close student of Hebrew philology; and the fact that he encouraged the translation of Baḥya's "Ḥobot ha-Lebabot" (compare Gross, *l.c.* 1874, p. 165) proves that he was not hostile to philosophy. This philosophic work argues strongly against the anthropomorphistic conception of the Deity; and the favor with which Abraham ben David looked upon it is sufficient ground on which to acquit him of the charge of having held anthropomorphistic views. Moreover, his works show acquaintance with philosophy; for instance, his remark on "Hilkot Teshubah," v., end, is a literal quotation from Honein b. Isaac's "Musre ha-Philosophim," pp. 11, 12—or Loewenthal, p. 39, below—which is extant only in Alḥarizi's translation.

Bibliography: Gross, in *Monatsschrift*, 1873-74; Renan, *Les Rabbins Français* (*Histoire Littéraire de la France*, vol. xxvii.); Michael, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, No. 79; The Catalogues of Steinschneider and Neubauer of the Munich and Oxford libraries, under *Abraham ben David.*

L. G.

ABRAHAM BEN DAVID PROVENÇAL: Italian Talmudist of the sixteenth century. He was a member of an illustrious family of Italian rabbis who came originally from Provence in the south of France. Abraham officiated as rabbi in Casale-Monferrato and in Mantua, Italy. Besides being a learned Talmudist, he possessed a thorough knowledge of Latin and philosophy. He taught Abraham Portaleone, and was a friend of Azariah dei Rossi, who refers to him as a storehouse of science. According to Michael ("Or ha-Ḥayyim," p. 31) he was still living in 1608. He wrote a preface to Elijah di Vidas' cabalistic work, "Reshit Ḥokmah," Venice, 1593.

Bibliography: Zunz, *Biography of Azariah dei Rossi* in מצרף לכסף ed. Wilna, 1865, p. 21; Michael, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, No. 82.

D.

ABRAHAM DOB BAER BEN DAVID OF OVRUCH: Rabbi of Jitomir, Russia, about 1840. His Talmudic studies were pursued under Mordecai, rabbi of Chernobyl and a disciple of Israel Ba'al Shem (Besht). He wrote homilies upon the Pentateuch, called "Bet Ḥayyim" (House of Life) which treat the Scripture text according to the fourfold method of interpretation known as פרד"ס, that is, *perush* ("literal explanation"), *remez* ("allegorical"), *derush* ("homiletical"), *sod* ("mystical"). The work also contains inquiries concerning points of rabbinical law and responsa. The closing years of his life were passed at Safed, Palestine.

Bibliography: Zedner, *Cat. Hebr. Books Brit. Mus.* p. 31.

S.

ABRAHAM DOB BAER BEN SOLOMON: Rabbi in Orsha in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He wrote באר אברהם ("Abraham's Well"), containing Glosses on the First Part of the Code Shulḥan 'Aruk, Yoreh De'ah, Shklov, 1783.

D.

ABRAHAM BEN ELIEZER: Commentator (probably a contemporary of Elijah Mizraḥi); lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, probably at Constantinople. He wrote a supercommentary on Rashi's Bible Commentary. Only a small fragment of it, covering the weekly portion "Mas'ey," has been published in Jacob Canizal's collectanea, a very rare collection of supercommentaries on Rashi (Steinschneider, "Cat. Bodl." No. 5515). Abraham died in 1525, at a very old age.

Bibliography: Michael, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, Nos. 47, 281.

L. G.

ABRAHAM BEN ELIEZER HA-KOHEN: Polish *darshan*, or preacher; flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was the great-grandson of Issachar Baer, surnamed Baerman Ashkenazi, the commentator of the Rabbot. At Amsterdam, in 1673, he edited his grandfather's work, "Mareh Kohen," to which he added an introduction. Subsequently he was stricken with blindness. Forty years later, being then well advanced in years, he published his own work, "Ori we-Yish'i" (Berlin, 1714), containing a selection of his sermons, treating of repentance, prayer, and charity. The title of his work, "My Light and My Salvation," was suggested by the facts that he had regained his sight, and that he had had a fortunate escape from a dangerous fire.

Bibliography: Michael, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, No. 50.

L. G.

ABRAHAM BEN ELIEZER HA-LEVI: German Talmudist; flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century. Probably he was a pupil of R. Meir of Rothenburg (died 1293), to whom he applied for decisions in difficult ritualistic cases. He also maintained a learned correspondence with his relative, Asher ben Jehiel (born 1250; died 1327), also a pupil of R. Meir, and did not interrupt it even when Asher emigrated to Spain in 1302.

Bibliography: Michael, *Or ha-Ḥayyim*, No. 49.

L. G.

ABRAHAM BEN ELIEZER HA-LEVI BERUKIM: A cabalistic writer; born before 1540; lived for a long time in Jerusalem, and died at an advanced age in 1600. A pupil of Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria (died 1572), and a man of great piety and sincerity, Abraham, by his earnestness, won many people to a scrupulously religious life. His chief aim was to see the Sabbath observed as strictly as possible and to warn Israelites against its desecration. To this end he urged them to begin its celebration before sunset, and therefrom derived his title "Berukim" (The Sayer of Benedictions). His chief work is "Tiḳḳune Shabbat" (Ordinances of the Sabbath),