

Abstract

Ahavah ba-Ta'anugim (Love in Delights), is an important Jewish and scientific encyclopedia from the fourteenth century. It was written by Rabbi Moses ben Judah. In this work the author reveals his originality in scientific and theological questions as well as in Bible exegesis relating both to the rabbis and to philosophy. It incorporates within it all the current states of mind, Averroes, Maimonides, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, and the kabbalah, and creates a new approach that unifies all the opposites into a complete and fascinating composition. This book has unfortunately never been published and has hitherto not merited the notice it is worthy of nor has it been previously researched in depth.

The Author, the Date of the Work and its Objectives

The work was written during the years 1353-1356. The author is not known from any other composition or context. Indeed, there is no mention of events nor places in the work, itself, that might afford biographical details about him. However, in one place the author mentions Nahmanides, calling him by the honorific *Marana ve-Rabbana* ("our master and teacher"). This indicates that he was a disciple of one of Nahmanides' students. In the same place the author also mentions Nahmanides' critique on Maimonides, as if he was referring to an individual composition and not merely to Nahmanides' commentary on the Torah. This terminology alludes to the *Sefer ha-Zikkaron* by Rabbi Yom Tov ben Abraham Ishbili (the *Ritba*) (1250 approx. to 1330), and one may assume from this that Moses was a student of one of the Ritba's students.

Four manuscripts of the work have survived. The latest is from about two hundred years after its composition. This indicates that it was in demand. At the same time, as far as is known, the work was not mentioned in contemporary and later works.

The title of the work, *Ahavah Ba-Ta'anugim*, is taken from the biblical Song of Songs 7:7: "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love in delights!" Yet, the "love" is directed towards the philosophical pursuits. The object of the book is to defend philosophy and to demonstrate

that Torah and philosophy are not in contradiction but rather supplement one another. Nevertheless, the author does not make the bold assertion, at least not expressly, that Torah and philosophy are identical. Following Maimonides he claims that the Torah is made up of two components, one theoretical, and the other practical. The theoretical is the more important component not to be found in other religions. This theoretical component in turn comprises two parts. The first includes knowledge concerning which philosophers and prophets are in agreement, and which they acquire in the same manner. The second part contains knowledge that can never be attained by the philosopher, such as the creation of the world, providence, and miracles. Thus, although prophecy possesses additional knowledge to that acquired through philosophy, the prophet must first study philosophy before he can reach the level of prophecy, and the precondition for perfection in the realm of Torah is the study of philosophy.

When commencing the study of philosophy one must start with logic. One then moves on to the natural sciences, and only at the end to metaphysics. Moses' book focuses on the two latter stages, and is a comprehensive summary of physics, which is identified with the Act of Creation (*ma'aseh bereshit*), and with metaphysics, that is identified with the Act of the Chariot of Ezekiel (*ma'aseh merkavah*). In this context *Ahavah Ba-Ta'anugim* is considered to be an encyclopedic work, being a summary of the branches the learning in these two fields.

Each section of the work is subdivided into treatises. The first section, dealing with physics (natural science), has eight treatises. Starting with matter and ending with man, it discusses the following subjects:

- (1) On Prime Matter.
- (2) On the Substance.
- (3) On the Elements.
- (4) On Motion, the Existence of the Mover, and especially the Prime Mover; On Time, Infinity and the Finite.
- (5) On Space and Vacuum.
- (6) On Human Nature.

(7) On Astronomical signs.

(8) On the Soul, the Human Soul; On Sleep and Waking; and On Dreams.

The second section discusses metaphysics (the divine wisdom) and also comprises eight treatises. It begins with definitions, then deals with the heavenly bodies, and concludes with separate intellects and with God. The following are the subjects:

(1) On Substance and Accident, Chance and Necessity; On the Categories.

(2) On Existence.

(3) On the Whole, Parts, and the One.

(4) On the Substance of the Sphere in the Parts of the Heavens, according to their Number and Soul.

(5) On the Separate Movers and their Number.

(6) On the Necessary Existent, and on negative Names.

(7) On Knowledge.

(8) On the Way the World is Related to God, Seeing as the World as a Whole is One and is bound from one end to the other with the bond of existence and the bond of knowledge, and the entirety is bound to God, may He be blessed, with these two bonds.

The third theological section contains four treatises, and is arranged in an order that recalls Maimonides' Principles of Faith from the sixth onwards: prophecy and the prophecy of Moses; the law of reward and punishment; and the messianic era. The order of its subjects is as follows:

(1) On Magic

(2) On Prophecy and its Names, and the Prophet's Acts.

(3) On the Creation of the World; On Providence, Reward and corporeal Punishment, as Mentioned in the Pentateuch; and On the Reasons for the Commandments.

(4) On the Immortality of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Dead

From this viewpoint the book greatly contributes to the study of the history of philosophy, presenting clearly and in a well-structured examination the central questions of each topic and the principle issues of contention. In addition, since the author has a definite opinion regarding these points of dispute between the philosophers he resolves them by undermining the fundamental arguments that lay behind the views he wishes to refute.

Moses almost always adopts Averroes' view, whom he judges as second to Aristotle. On the other hand he sees Avicenna and Al-Ghazali as thinkers of a lower standard. He sees them as sages who attempted to create a compound between religion and philosophy. This is invalid since when one is engaged in philosophy he must accept upon himself all the assumptions relating to philosophy, whilst when one discusses religious matters, he must likewise accept the principles of religion.

Moses also offers his own original solutions to scientific questions. His originality is not in the negation of Aristotelian philosophy but in the development and expansion of the philosophical subjects in uncommon directions. This approach should probably be viewed as a link in the transition from the situation where Aristotelian philosophy dominated to the tendency to criticise it. This latter tendency gained momentum in the course of the fourteenth century.

Another aim of the composition is to harmonise the secrets in Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Torah, together with those in the Guide to the Perplexed, with the author's own philosophical theories. Moses sees the two as identical despite the fact that Ibn Ezra's philosophy has an abundance of astrological notions, and against this, Maimonides absolutely rejects such notions. Astrology is not a dominant component in Moses' thought, yet wherever it appears, Maimonides is presented as if he concurs.

Furthermore, the author's unadulterated admiration for Maimonides alongside his acceptance of Averroes' philosophical views has created a unique interpretive feat on the work by Maimonides, who himself was inclined to follow Avicenna. Moses defends Maimonides wherever he advances a philosophical approach contradicting his own philosophical conclusions. Associated with the school of thought of the Ritba, he reveals

interest in kabbalah, and draws upon various subjects from it. In such instances he interprets extreme kabbalistic mythical notions in a distinctly philosophical fashion. He relates to kabbalah as he relates to *Midrash*, and interprets it according to the notions of the kabbalah, and thereby uproots the mythical and anti-philosophical side from it.

Metaphysics

In the metaphysical topics Moses accepts Averroes' understanding whereby God is a form encompassing all the forms of the world. This God is the prime mover of the sphere. Similar to Averroes, Moses rejects Avicenna's view identifying God with the necessary existent that is not the mover of the sphere. His originality here lies in bringing these views into unequivocal agreement with those of Maimonides in his Guide. He asserts that although Maimonides was aware of the problem resulting from the identification of God with the mover of the 'Aravot sphere, implying similitude of God, he attributed it to Aristotle's system, whilst he himself did not accept it, and did not use the solution offered by Avicenna and Al-Ghazali, but, like Averroes, held that God moves the 'Aravot sphere. This view is expressed in the Guide, (I, 70) where he explains that the noun רכב in the biblical verse רוכב ערבות (Psalms 68; 5) "that rideth upon the *Aravot*" is said about God, for he is the ruler over the sphere that encompasses all, which is the 'Aravot sphere.

The identification of God with the prime mover also negates the perception of God as the necessary existent. According to Moses this view derives from the distinction made by Avicenna between being and existence - a distinction which is itself erroneous. Here, too, as in the discussion about God as the prime mover of the earth, Moses believes that Maimonides was not in error as was Avicenna and Al-Ghazali, but that his distinction between being and existence is only his exoteric view, adopted for polemical purposes against the Kalam, in order to remove from God any positive attribute.

Despite denying the definition of God as necessary existent, Moses uses it in a new sense. He claims that whilst Avicenna thought that necessary existent is one for whom there is no reason for its existence, Aristotle defined the necessary and essential as something that must

continue perpetually in the same condition. This Aristotelian term for the necessary comes in opposition to the concept of the possible, which is the potential to change, and even the actual possibility for loss. This definition for the necessary draws the conclusion that everything that is perpetual in its existence is necessary. Hence, one may deduce that it is not only God who is a necessary existent but also the celestial spheres, and the entire existence is also necessary of existence.

At the same time Moses claims that the only similarity between the two is in the common term, necessary existent, used for both God and the world. However there is a difference between them. This notion is connected to the definition of God as the form of the world. The difference between necessary existent for God and for the world stems from the fact that God is the form that includes the world and not the reverse.

The Doctrine of Creation

The definition of God as the sublime form, although borrowed from the vocabulary of Averroes, is extremely distant from his original definition. Whilst, according to Averroes, God is indeed the sublime form, yet matter has its own separate existence, according to Moses the entire world derives from God. Moses accepts Avicenna's doctrine of emanation notwithstanding his acceptance of Averroes' view in all cases, and according to him creation *ex nihilo* means the emanation of matter from the principle of the beginning, which is God.

God, being the one intellects the forms, contains the three parts of existence, which are the sublunar world, the world of the stars and spheres, and the world of the separate intellects. By God intellecting Himself, existence derives from Him, and He continues to constantly influence it, therefore He is in it and immanent in it. There is multiplicity in the world because there is potential, however with God the world is contained in his thought, thus it is not multiplicity but rather oneness. God's immanence is so radical that it means that "there is nothing at all extraneous to Him". We perceive here a point of view approaching pantheism.

Moses stresses that God's immanence in the world is by no means corporeal. and despite the fact that He influences it through the 'Aravot sphere, He is Himself separate from the

world. On the one hand God's immanence is similar to the workings of the heart which is inside the body and at its centre, yet on the other hand it is similar to the workings of the acquired intellect which is an action that is connected to the body but devoid of corporeality.

Moses then, with his doctrine of emanation, presents the classical theory of the gradual emanation of the separate intellects from God, yet adapts it to Averroes' philosophical concepts. According to Avicenna's classical theory, the first separated intellect, intellecting God and itself is already multiple, and emanates the sphere and its soul. The second separated intellect intellects the first separated intellect and itself, and emanates the sphere and its soul, and so on until the Active Intellect. However, according to Moses, God intellects the entire world, and even the separate intellects intellect all that is beneath them. This intellection emanates the soul of the sphere and the sphere. Since Moses rejects Avicenna's view that the spheres possess a soul, preferring Averroes' view denying these souls, his intention is that this intellection emanates the separate intellects, that move the spheres, and function like the soul of the sphere.

Moses interprets the kabbalistic theory of the *sefirot* according to this doctrine of metaphysics and creation. The separate intellects are a part of God, Himself, being part of the world's intellectual and formative system. He identifies the divine *Kavod* with the separate intellects. On this subject he raises the issue of whether one needs to pray to it or not. In order to describe the unity between God and the separate intellects, he often employs the image of two points joined by a line having seven parts. This line presumably alludes to the influx that passes from intellect to intellect. Moses holds that this line is also expressed in the Hebrew letter, *vav*, in the tetragrammaton. One may therefore conclude that Moses finds the separate intellects identical to the *sefirot*, yet in so doing gives the *sefirot* an anti-mythological philosophical interpretation.

According to Moses, the separate intellects continue to emanate the world of the spheres in descending sequence, and matter is but a stage in this emanation meaning a reduction in the astral powers. The creation of matter is not unmediated creation, *ex nihilo*, but is a natural process of development and emanation from the upper spiritual world to the sublunary world.

The first matter emanates from the Active Intellect, and the Active Intellect is also the source of the first matter and the cause for its combination with form. According to Moses, everything whose existence is dependent upon another is termed 'created'. Since the existence of the first matter is dependent upon God, the world is termed 'created'. He asserts that this is also Maimonides' esoteric view on the subject.

From the creation of the first matter, which is the platform for sublunary world's matter, the sublunary world evolves to its various forms. The spheres move the elements and prepare them to receive the natural forms through the creation of the material form, and this motion and preparation is termed emanation. The natural forms, themselves, derive from, and emanate from the Active Intellect, and according to Moses, even the movement of the spheres and the physical substratum is considered emanation, and the heavens are termed the world's spring.

The Doctrine of the Soul

The dominant concept of emanation in Moses' philosophy, that sees diminution in each stage in existence, ascribes a central place to man, being the elevated being in a sublunary world. Since every separate intellect is less than its predecessor as it includes all that which is beneath it, thus man contains in him the entire sublunary world. In addition, man has a divine part which he calls "a spiritual branch", which is the הנפש הדברית.

In a discussion on the nature of the נפש הדברית, Moses accepts Averroes' view. The hylic intellect consists of two parts: the first is the physical substratum upon which the material intellect rests, which is in the faculty of imagination; the second is the Active Intellect, itself, that rests upon the physical substratum. Therefore the individual's intellect is none other than one of the aspects of the Active Intellect and it has no separate and independent existence.

Moses emphasizes that the nature of the Active Intellect that enters the human soul does not change of its own accord but on account of it entering the body. He compares it to an onyx stone that falls into sand. Just as the onyx stone does not lose its essential nature through

being mixed with sand, yet, it does not shine, as is its nature, because of the sand, so, too, the Active Intellect does not lose its own nature, yet the matter makes the intellect become, so to speak, lacking in the intellectual forms and to become a hylic intellect. However once the onyx stone is separated from the sand it becomes purified and returns to illuminate as its former nature.

Therefore, Moses distinguishes between three conditions: the hylic intellect, the intellect in acquisition (השכל בקניין) and the acquired intellect (השכל הנקנה). The hylic intellect is, as noted, the Active Intellect that rests on the physical substratum. The intellect in acquisition is the stage where the intelligibles are gradually acquired. Against it the acquired intellect is the knowledge of all the intelligibles at once, achieved through knowledge of the essence of the Active Intellect and conjunction with it. In the state of the acquired intellect, the nature of the Active Intellect reverts back to its original essence. This occurs during prophecy, and even enables immortality of the soul, since this intellectual knowledge is identical to the Active Intellect that is, itself, eternal.

Moses describes the third stage of the conjunction by the phrase “the intellect that is acquired and emanated”. This choice of terminology is in deference to Maimonides and not according to Averroes. According to Moses’ exposition the acquired intellect that Maimonides refers to is not an entity that is actualised from its potential state through the influx that descends from the Active Intellect, but is the very Active Intellect itself. This interpretation by Maimonides reveals the influence of Averroes, and in fact, Moses is here reading Maimonides through the glasses of Averroes.

An additional innovation of Moses is in his exposition of the kabbalistic notion of the transmigration of the soul in philosophical terms. The Active Intellect, which is all-encompassing and one, enters the bodily substrata of various people, changes through chance, and afterwards returns to its source and is united a second time with the Active Intellect. This is the transmigration of souls!

The Doctrine of Prophecy

As noted, Moses associates prophecy with conjunction with the Active Intellect. After the prophet is engaged in the normal process of intellection, and acquires intelligibles from the Active Intellect, at a certain level the influx that descends from the Active Intellect is so great that the prophet is conjoined to it and receives prophecy. The Active Intellect, the direct cause for the occurrence of the prophecy, is identified by Moses with God's *Kavod*. At this juncture Moses mentions the fact that Nahmanides attacked Maimonides for attributing to Onkelos the view that the *Kavod* was created and is not a part of the essence of God, and if we bless him as 'Blessed be the Name of the honour (*Kavod*) of his Kingdom" we are behaving like idol worshipers. Moses views the Active Intellect, or the *Kavod*, as identical to the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence), similar to Nahmanides, and alleges that Maimonides also thought so.

As a result of the influx from the Active Intellect, the *Kavod*, intellectual thoughts are born to the prophet, which are more complete than those acquired in the normal process of intellection. The meaning of this concept is that whilst the sage learns from cause about the effect, or, in other words, from below to above, the prophet learns from the effect about the cause, or, from above to below.

This influx also descends, of course, upon the faculty of imagination. As a result of this the prophet has the ability on the one hand to foretell the future, and thereby to enhance the bodily affairs of the nation, as the leaders of the states, and on the other, to imitate the intellectual truth in a manner that will be comprehended by his audience, and thereby to enhance the soul of the nation.

Moses does not suffice himself with this psychological doctrine of prophecy but integrates it with an ontological doctrine of prophecy. He asserts that in the prophetic vision the prophets, whilst at slumber, see the created light. This light exists both in the soul of the prophet and beyond it. This created light is a separate creation which is renewed when necessary from within the created *Kavod*, that is, the Active Intellect.

This created light has three objectives. The first is to explain to the prophet the matter he has prophesied about in a better way. Since people generally comprehend things better when presented to them through the abstraction of tangibles, the knowledge of something that is at

first abstract is difficult. For this, the created light makes abstract matters perceptible. The second objective of the created light is to instruct the people. If the prophet learns better when the knowledge is tangible, how much more so is the people in need of a palpable image in order to understand theoretical matters. The third function of the created light is to increase the prophet's dignity. For example, the pillar of darkness and the pillar of fire that accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness were due to the merit of Moses, and therefore the people appreciated his greatness.

Since the created light also exists within the soul of the prophet at the moment of conjunction, and also outside his soul, Moses holds that every prophecy should be seen as both an allegory and also an event outside the soul. Thus, whilst the revelation of Sinai was an historical event bringing together natural and supernatural elements, it is also an allegory for the ability and limitations of human perception.

Regarding miracles, Moses asserts that when the prophet conjoins with the Active intellect he also conjoins with all the separate intellects through it. This conjunction bestows upon him the ability to perform miracles because it adds to him knowledge on the way the material world functions. In his view miracles are described as the acceleration of natural events.

The Doctrine of Providence

On the question of providence, Moses combines the Maimonidean view that is inclined to explain providence in a naturalistic way, with astral elements, which are also naturalistic, appearing in Ibn Ezra's thesis of providence. All events in this world are influenced and established through the disposition of the stars, however, there are two ways whereby one may avert the evil that has been decreed for him. The first is to know how to foretell the future. The second is the ability of the prophet to conjoin himself with God and carry out miracles. By the prophet's conjunction with the higher world above the planetary system, he can wreak havoc on the planetary system and change the decrees.

Moses therefore explains Maimonides' view, whereby the level of providence matches the level of knowledge, by the fact that the prophet, as far as his knowledge is concerned, knows all the reasons for the good and evil decrees, and can conjoin with the Active Intellect and with its help act in the sublunary world. When the prophet's soul does not conjoin with the Active Intellect he is affected by chance since he is subject to the disposition of the stars and constellations.

Therefore, although all is preordained, and God, who is the ultimate cause, knows all of man's deeds in advance, this does not imply that man has no free choice. If there was no choice there would be no point at all for the Torah, nor for reward and punishment. Moses asserts that so long as all the reasons for the occurrence of an event have not been fulfilled, the event is not necessary. That is to say, although all is decreed in advance, choice is possible to avoid evil through astrological prediction, or through conjunction with God and affecting the disposition of the stars.

The Reasons for the Commandments

Regarding the reasons for the divine commandments Moses integrates the Maimonidean doctrines, the astrological notions of Ibn Ezra, and the symbolic kabbalistic ideas. He divides the commandments into two. The first are those commandments that wisdom necessitates. Moses apparently has in mind the commandments relating to belief. He includes in this category such commandments as the belief in the existence of God and His unity, His non-corporeality, His providence over individual human beings, and prophecy. Parallel to these are the transgressions of denial of these beliefs and even denying the creation of the world. He does not consider these as real commandments but rather as facets of the Torah.

The second part of the commandments is composed of the practical commandments. He subdivides the practical commandments and transgressions into five categories. The first group includes those precepts that contain an allusion to a true knowledge. Thus, for instance, the observation of the Sabbath alludes to the physical truth whereby the celestial spheres are made from pure matter and they live and attain. In the prohibition from labour man reduces

his corporeality and is likened to the matter of the celestial spheres. The New Year, and the Day of Atonement are supposed to symbolise man's conjunction with the Active Intellect: the blowing of the ram's horn on the New Year symbolises the external restraints of man from attaining to conjunction, for example, an inclination towards vice, or a difficulty to study, just as at the revelation at Mount Sinai the blast of the ram's horn symbolised these restraints. The Day of Atonement symbolises the conjunction. For example, on the Day of Atonement the Jews liken themselves to the angels, that is, to the incorporeal intellects. In this way they symbolise the conjunction that is achieved by one who despises corporeality, as Moses at Mount Sinai attained conjunction with the Active Intellect without eating or drinking for forty days. Other precepts are explained similarly, such as dwelling in a tabernacle, the shaking of the palm-branch, and the holy sanctuary and its vessels, and so forth. Man mimics the symbolic scientific truths through his actions thereby constructing a parallel system to the world, such as the "earthly Temple" that mirrors the heavenly one. This system draws forces from the higher world, and Moses does not mean the astral influx but rather the influx from the Active Intellect, indicating the influence of kabbalah on his theory.

The second group includes the precepts for the perfection of human nature. There are two sides to this human nature. The first is to create a man with a moderate human nature whose forces of the soul are strong and not wasted on internal struggles, and his soul is free to pursue intellection. The second is the astrological side. Since man's physical constitution (תולדות) and human nature are among the causes of the influx of the stars to influence man for good or evil, the precepts are intended to perfect the human nature and to intervene with this influence for better or for worse. Examples of such precepts are circumcision, forbidden foods, and so on.

The first group has precepts related to enhancing the governance of the city. Moses does not bring many examples, and it might be that this category is sufficiently evident for him to see no need to demonstrate it.

The fourth group consists of commandments whose aim is to uproot corrupt opinions. They include the obligation to put a sorcerer and soothsayer to death, to shatter the alters of

idolaters to pieces, and prohibition from making an incision (to mourn for the dead) and so on. The difference between this category and the first category is that whilst the first has precepts alluding to positive beliefs, the fourth group has those precepts whose purpose is to uproot the contrary beliefs.

The fifth and last group contains precepts that are royal decrees, meaning that we do not entirely understand their intention and how they work, such as the drenching of an adulteress.

Summary

Ahavah Ba-Ta'anugim is a most important philosophical work that amalgamates trends and characteristics from Averroes, Maimonides, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, and the kabbalah, bringing them to one whole.

In his metaphysics Moses adopts Averroes' definition whereby God is a sublime form encompassing all the forms.

In his doctrine concerning the creation, Moses surprisingly adheres to the doctrine of emanation in accordance with Avicenna's version, whilst interpreting Averroes in a way that opposes the doctrine of emanation.

In his doctrine of the soul, too, Moses adopts Averroes' definition of the soul according to which the soul is the essence of the Active Intellect emanating from it and resting on the physical substratum of man. Therefore, the eternal part of man is the Active Intellect that acquired the intelligibles.

In his doctrine of prophecy Moses adopts Averroes' theory on the conjunction with the Active Intellect, according to which man's intellect unites with the Active Intellect, and therefore acquires knowledge of the world from above to below. This is opposed to philosophical knowledge that is acquired from below to above, that is, from the individuals to the forms.

In his doctrine of divine providence Moses harmonises Maimonides' theory of intellectual providence with Ibn Ezra's thesis of astrological providence.

Moses sees in the commandments principally the implantation of correct beliefs through the imitation of actions that allude to the world's structure, together with precepts intended to prevent man from entering into harm, whether deriving from improper governance of the city or from the disposition of the stars.

Moses is a faithful disciple of Averroes and considers him as the most important philosopher after Aristotle. He is consistent in his rejection of the views of Avicenna and Al-Ghazali, and accuses them of a low level of thought that is not motivated by philosophical but rather by religious considerations.

He is an admirer of Maimonides. He sees him as the master of all prophets, like his biblical namesake. Thus, although Maimonides' approach is influenced by Avicenna, Moses re-interprets it in light of Averroes.

The second most important thinker in *Ahava Ba-Ta'anugim* is Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra. He devotes a great deal of space to the exposition of his secrets in his commentary to the Pentateuch. His attempt to blend Maimonides and Ibn Ezra result, first and foremost an interpretation of Maimonides in the light of Ibn Ezra, and not the reverse.

The aspect of Ibn Ezra's thought that is emphasized is emanation and the creation of the base world, man's conjunction with God - due to his soul that is in the upper world, and the divine attributions.

Moses is a philosopher who mixes kabbalistic motifs into his philosophical thought. This is achieved mainly through the philosophical interpretation of kabbalistic terms, lacking the mythological side to the kabbalah. *Ahava Ba-Tan'anugim* is an important and comprehensive encyclopedia, that contains a detailed summary of all the physical and metaphysical subjects in the science of the 13th and 14th centuries. For this reason, the work constitutes a major contribution to the study of the history of philosophy, since it lucidly presents in a well-structured fashion the central subjects of each topic and the principle points of contention.

Furthermore, since the author has a clear opinion on the disputes between the philosophers, he resolves them through undermining the arguments supporting the views he has rejected.

Here, too, the contribution of the work is not to be doubted, for it is systematically constructed so as to explain the logic behind each conviction, and in addition, advances its own original solutions.

Moses is an indubitable philosopher, faithful to the trends of the fourteenth century. His uniqueness lies in his efforts to combine different opinions even when they contradict these trends.

Despite the uniqueness of the work the extent of its popularity and diffusion is not certain, and notwithstanding the fact that it was still copied two hundred years after its composition, we can not be sure as to its concrete influence on the history of philosophy. It is written in an esoteric style that makes its comprehension somewhat challenging. This might account for the fact that we do not find extensive use of the book despite its originality and importance. This does not lessen its value nor its indispensability, that provides testimony for the love of study and the joy of intellectuality among the Jewish philosophers of the fourteenth century.

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