

# Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments IX

Introduction 1

## PART 1

### *The Thirteenth Century*

- 1 **Philosophy in Ashkenaz: The Problem** 9
  - 1 Why No Philosophy in Ashkenaz? 10
  - 2 Why Philosophy in Late Medieval Prague? 26
  - 3 Rationalization, *Entzauberung*, and Medieval Jewish Philosophy: Methodological Considerations 37
  
- 2 **Jewish Intellectual Life in Thirteenth-Century Bohemia** 54
  - 1 Ashkenaz versus Kenaan: Some Remarks on the General Context of Jewish Intellectual Life in the Czech Lands 54
  - 2 The Beginnings of Jewish Intellectual Life in the Czech Lands 64
  - 3 Prayers, Midrash, and Theology: Abraham ben Azriel's *Arugat Ha-Bosem* 69
  - 4 The Incorporeality of God 73
  - 5 Individualism, Rationalization, and the Concept of the Soul 79
  
- 3 **The Reception of Maimonidean Philosophy in Thirteenth-Century Bohemia: Moses Taku and David the Greek** 97
  - 1 The Controversy Concerning Resurrection in the 1200s 97
  - 2 Moses Taku's Assault on Philosophy 103
  - 3 Hanbalism in Ashkenaz? 117
  - 4 Taku in the Ashkenazi Context 124
  - 5 David the Greek 126
  - 6 Hebrew Grammar and Maimonidean Philosophy: The *Quntres Diqduq Sefat Ever* 129
  - 7 A Controversy Avoided 135

## PART 2

*The Prague Circle*

- 4 **Pestilence and Philosophy in Late Medieval Ashkenaz** 143
- 1 The Origin and Demise of the Prague Circle 143
- 2 New Intellectual Directions: Avigdor Kara on a Persecution in 1352 154
- 3 A Plague Tract in Hebrew Composed in Prague 165
- 4 Ashkenazi Physicians in the Late Middle Ages 179
- 5 Conclusion: The Black Death as a Game Changer 198
- 5 **The First Philosophical School in Ashkenaz** 199
- 1 The Rabbis and the Astronomical Clock 200
- 2 Philosophy and Sciences outside the Universities 205
- 3 The Milieu of Philosophy in Ashkenaz 208
- 4 The Impact of the University and Hussite Propaganda 214
- 5 Philosophy and Competence in Polemics 217
- 6 **Philosophy as a Literary System in Fifteenth-Century Ashkenaz** 221
- 1 The Prestige of Philosophy 221
- 2 Accommodating Philosophy to Ashkenaz: The Secret of the White Tallit 223
- 3 Menahem Shalem: A Possible Source of Bruna 228
- 4 Continuity and Break 232
- 7 **Philosophy on Trial: Controversial Themes in the Thought of the Prague Circle** 233
- 1 Opinions, Discourses, and Debates 233
- 2 An Anonymous Critique of Philosophy: Substantial versus Contractual Truths 235
- 3 Jewish Identity versus Cosmopolitan Civilization, or Why Not to Include *Guide of the Perplexed* in the Canon of Rabbinic Literature 244
- 4 Prophetic versus Scientific Truth: A Debate about the Music of the Celestial Spheres 248
- 5 Jewish Identity *versus* Scientific Knowledge: Narboni's Paradigm and Its Rejection by the Anonymous Letter against Philosophy 252
- 6 Warding off Modernity: Mühlhausen and Shalem on the Sounds of the Celestial Spheres and on Prophecy 254

## PART 3

*Menahem Shalem and the Hussite Revolution*

- 8 **An Excursus: Marc Richir's Theory of Symbolic Institution and the Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy** 269
- 1 Symbolic Institution 271
  - 2 *L'instituant symbolique* 277
  - 3 On the Sublime: *Rencontre* and *Malencontre* 281
  - 4 The Sublime in Exegesis 286
  - 5 Dephasing of the Present and Reconquering Time 290
  - 6 A New Symbolic Institution: The Names of God in Medieval Jewish Philosophy 296
  - 7 Jewish Philosophy as a Symbolic and Historic Institution 299
- 9 **Revolution and Symbolic Institution** 306
- 1 Apocalyptic Thought versus Philosophy: Shalem's Commentary on an Eschatological *Barayta* 308
  - 2 Shalem's Theory of Symbolic Institution I: Hypnosis and Symbolic Institution 313
  - 3 Shalem's Theory of Symbolic Institutions II: Rituals as Symbolic Systems 329
  - 4 Bestiality and the Hussite Revolution 336
  - 5 From *Malencontre* to *Rencontre*: The True Worship of God 345
  - 6 "True Belief" in Maimonides, Shalem, and Hus 350
- 10 **Philosophy as a Project of Rationalization in Fifteenth-Century Prague** 358
- 1 Social Facts 358
  - 2 Maimonidean Philosophy as a Program of Rationalization 362
  - 3 Was the Program Realized? 369
  - 4 The Rationality of Rationalization 372
- Conclusion: The Reception of Medieval Jewish Philosophy in the Czech Lands** 389
- Bibliography** 395
- Index of Persons** 432
- Index of Subjects** 434