Maimonides and Prophecy, R. Pinhas Lintop, R. José Faur, and More Examples of Censorship

by Marc B. Shapiro

1. In my last post here I discussed whether Maimonides believed that the entire people of Israel experienced prophecy at Mt. Sinai. I neglected to refer to Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah 8:3, which states:

This is one of those passages that presents problems for the interpreter, since what Maimonides says in the Mishneh Torah, that all Israel experienced prophecy as Moses did, is contradicted by what he says in the Guide. As is to be expected, R. Kafih takes note of this problem in his commentary to Yesodei ha-Torah 8:3 (p. 165 n. 13), and what he says is fascinating. Commenting on the passage I quoted above, R. Kafih writes:

What R. Kafih is saying is that Maimonides’ words in the Mishneh Torah, that all Israel “saw and heard[1] with [its] own eyes and ears as he did,” should be understood as rhetoric, designed to have an effect on the reader, but they do not reflect Maimonides’ actual view which is that all of Israel did not see and hear as Moses did.

Regarding this issue, see also R. Kafih’s commentary to Guide 2:33, n. 5, where he writes:
Further discussion of this matter, where R. Kafih elaborates on what he only hinted at elsewhere, can be found in his *She’elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rivad* (Jerusalem, 2009), nos. 24-26, where he explains to R. Mazuz what Maimonides had in mind.

In previous writings (books, articles, and posts), I have called attention to many examples where Maimonides writes things that he does not actually believe, so what we have just seen is nothing new. The significance of the example I have mentioned is that R. Kafih accepts this approach as a valid method of explaining a formulation of Maimonides in the *Mishneh Torah*. For another example from R. Kafih, see his note to *Guide* 2:45 (p. 268), where he writes:

In *Ketavim*, vol. 2, p. 619, R. Kafih writes:

When people ask me what to read to get a sense of R. Kook’s thought and the conflicts it created, one of the things I always recommend is Naor’s introduction to *Orot*. On the subject of Naor, I would like to call attention to another work of his which did not get the exposure it deserves. In 2013 he published *Kana’uteh de-Pinhas*, which focuses on the interesting figure R. Pinhas Lintop, rav of the hasidic (Habad) community of Birzh, Lithuania. R. Lintop was unusual among Lithuanian rabbis in that he intensively studied Kabbalah. He was also a supporter of the Mizrachi movement.[2] Here is his picture.
Those who want to see a picture of his recently discovered tombstone can go here.
Anyone interested in Lithuanian rabbinic thought should examine *Kana’uteh de-Pinhas*. Among other things, it includes previously unknown letters from R. Lintop to the Chafetz Chaim and R. Kook. It also includes chapters by Naor on aspects of the philosophy of Habad, R. Tzadok, and R. Solomon Elyashiv.
Naor calls attention to R. Lintop’s view of Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles. Unfortunately, I did not know of this
when I wrote my book on the subject. R. Lintop is no fan of Maimonides’ concept of dogma or of Maimonides’ intellectualism in general. He rejects the notion that otherwise pious Jews can be condemned as heretics merely because they don’t accept Maimonides’ principles. He even makes the incredible statement that of the great rabbis, virtually all of them have, at the very least, been in doubt about one fundamental principle.

Are we to regard them all as heretics? Obviously not, which in R. Lintop’s mind shows the futility of Maimonides’ theological exercise, which not only turned Judaism into a religion of catechism, but also indoctrinated people to believe that one who does not affirm certain dogmas is to be persecuted. According to R. Lintop, this is a complete divergence from the talmudic perspective.[3]

R. Lintop further states that there is no point in dealing with supposed principles of faith that are not explicit in the Talmud.[4]

As for Maimonides’ view that one who is mistaken when it comes to principles of faith is worse than one who actually commits even the worst sins, R. Lintop declares that “this view is very foreign to the spirit of the sages of the Talmud, who did not know philosophy.” As is to be expected, he also cites Rabad’s comment that people greater than Maimonides were mistaken when it came to the matter of God’s incorporeality.[5]

As part of his criticism of Maimonides and the Jewish philosophers in general, R. Lintop writes, in words similar to those earlier used by Samuel David Luzzatto:[6]

In his Pithei Shearim[7] R. Lintop criticizes Maimonides’ view, Hilkhot Melakhim 8:10, that given the power Jews must force non-Jews to adopt the Noahide laws. According to R. Lintop, this command only applied to the seven nations that inhabited ancient Canaan, but does not apply to any other non-Jew, even those living in the Land of Israel. Throughout his
discussion, R. Lintop shows a strong moral sense and it is this which leads him to disagree with Maimonides. As he states:

אין הקב' מקפח שכר כל בריה

As for those non-Jews who don’t observe the Noahide laws (referring in particular to the commandment against *avodah zarah*), R. Lintop sees them as blameless as they don’t know any better, having been born into their cultures.[8]

Among other things, I was surprised to see R. Lintop write:[9]

He assumes that *Besamim Rosh* preserves authentic medieval responsa and yet he also recognizes that the publisher Saul Berlin was a maskil. This is significant since as far as I know, everyone else who believes *Besamim Rosh* to be authentic has no idea who Saul Berlin was.

Many who have heard of R. Lintop know of his correspondence with R. Kook and assume that they shared the same outlook. This is actually not the case, and in a letter to R. Yaakov Moshe Harlap R. Lintop said as much himself.[10]

In 2013 the fourth volume of Reuven Dessler’s *Shenot Dor va-Dor* appeared. This volume contains two lengthy letters from R. Lintop to R. Kook (pp. 414-437). R. Lintop does not hesitate to criticize R. Kook’s understanding of hasidut. One of his criticisms is particularly noteworthy (pp. 435-436). R. Kook had written about how Hasidism is based on the idea of *ahavat Yisrael* for both the collective and the individual. R. Lintop replies that this is incorrect, as hasidut is not based on *ahavat Yisrael* but on *ahavat avodat Yisrael* and *ahavat avodat ha-hasidut*.

Then comes the following incredible passage, incredible since R. Lintop was at the time serving as rav of a Habad community and was generally quite connected to Habad philosophy, although he himself was not a Habad hasid. Some readers might see this as a purely academic type of statement, but anyone who knows the thought of R. Lintop will realize that this is,
if not actually criticism, certainly disappointment with some of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady's statements.

There are many Habad adherents who read this blog and maybe some of them will want to weigh in on this.

Since, in the passage just quoted, R. Lintop cites the Tanya, let me share something interesting that appears in R. Mazuz's recently published Asaf ha-Mazkir, p. 558. He mentions having heard that mitnagdim made fun of the Tanya since it begins as follows:

This comes from Niddah 30b and is stated by R. Simlai. The reason for the mitnagdim's mocking is that R. Simlai was an amora so therefore the term תניא, which begins R. Shneur Zalman's work, is inappropriate, as this term is used to introduce a baraita. (R. Mazuz argues that contrary to popular belief R. Simlai was a tanna, yet this is impossible.)

Finally, R. Isaac Nissenbaum tells us that R. Lintop was not a fan of R. Samson Raphael Hirsch.[11] (I wish I knew of this source earlier so I could have included it in my forthcoming article – already with the publisher – on Orthodox responses to Hirsch):

-,הניא אותי מלה��ך אחרי "החורב" של רבי שמשון רפאל הירש [הוא]

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Just as I was finishing this post, a new book by Naor appeared entitled *Mahol la-Tzaddikim*. It focuses on the controversy between R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto and R. Eizik of Homel regarding the purpose of creation.

3. In my new book I give examples of passages that were not translated properly, or not translated at all. After reading the book, Joel Wolowelsky sent me an edition of *Birkat ha-Mazon*, first published in 1946 (i.e., right after the Holocaust). The translation is by Rabbi Chaim Brecher, who is mentioned in my book in another context. Brecher’s edition of *Birkat ha-Mazon* actually became quite popular and was reprinted many times. In fact, the bentchers handed out at my own bar mitzvah were reprints of this edition.

At the beginning of *Birkat ha-Mazon* for weekdays, Psalm 137 (*Al Naharot Bavel*) appears (although almost no one says this). The final verse of this psalm reads:

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אשרי שיאחז ונפץ את עלליך אל הסלע
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A proper translation of this verse is: “Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy [the Babylonians’] little ones against the rocks.”

I think it is fair to say that in modern times most people would be uncomfortable with the feeling expressed here. That explains the false translation of the verse provided by Brecher: “He will be as joyous as were you when you dashed our little ones against the stones.”
Was it a general humanistic feeling that impelled this false translation or was it the impact of the Holocaust that was responsible? In other words, with the then recent murder of so many Jewish children, perhaps it was not thought proper to give publicity to a verse that spoke of killing children of another people. Whatever the reason, it is obvious that this
is an intentionally false rendering of the verse.

Regarding my book, let me also note the following:

Pp. 38-39. I wrote that there are no Ashkenazic siddurim, even those published in the State of Israel, that have an uncensored version of Birkat ha-Minim in the Amidah. As people know, I was working on this book for many years, and when I originally wrote this sentence it was correct (or so I believe). However, by the time the book appeared it was no longer correct. Rabbi Barry Gelman called my attention to the fact that in 2012 a nusach Ashkenaz siddur appeared without the censored text. Here it is.
וַהֲלֹחְם אֲוֹרִים אֵל הָעָרֶה, קָחְוּ.
וַקְרָא אֵלֵּךְ יְאמֹר, אֶל הַמִּשְׁמָרָה
יְהֹוָה, וַקְרָא אֵלֵּךְ מִשְׁמַר הָרָע
יְהֹוָה, וַקְרָא אֵלֵּךְ מִשְׁמַר הָרָע
יְהֹוָה, וַקְרָא אֵלֵּךְ מִשְׁמַר הָרָע
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וַיְזַהְרֶה בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם, שָׁמרוּ בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם.
וַיְזַהְרֶה בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם, שָׁמרוּ בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם.
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וַיְזַהְרֶה בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם, שָׁמרוּ בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם.
וַיְזַהְרֶה בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם, שָׁמרוּ בָּאֵל הָאָרֶם.
Over the summer I was in Vienna and learnt that a couple of years ago Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister, one of the community rabbis of Vienna, published Siddur Tefilat Yeshurun, and this siddur also includes an uncensored text of Birkat ha-Minim. I had never before seen this siddur, and what led me look at its version of Birkat ha-Minim were the following words that
appear on the title page:

מנהג בני אשכנז ללא שיבושי הצנזורה ושינויי המשכילים והמדקדקים

P. 55 n. 34: I somehow missed the fact that Esther Farbstein, *Be-Seter Ra’am*, pp. 614-616 n. 92, indeed discusses the story of the 93 Bais Yaakov girls committing suicide in Cracow. She also shows the fictional character of the story. (Thanks to R. Yaakov Taubes for calling this to my attention.)

P. 83: I refer to a responsum by R. Samuel Aboab who states that the words *minhag shel shetut* regarding kapparot were added by the printer. My language was not precise as this comment is not found in a responsum of Aboab but is quoted in Aboab’s name in a responsum of his student, R. Samson Morpurgo, referred to on p. 83 n. 11.

p. 131 n. 45: I report Derek Taylor’s claim that Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz once attended a non-Jewish event without a head covering. I also note that Taylor does not provide documentation of this claim. Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Elton, who has recently been appointed rabbi of the prestigious Great Synagogue of Sydney, called my attention to this photograph in which Hertz is not wearing a kippah (source).
This was not even a non-Jewish event, but a lunch sponsored by the Polish-Jewish Refugee Fund. Hertz is also wearing a clerical collar.

Here is another picture of Hertz without a kippah (source).

Here he is wearing a kippah (source).

The men sitting behind him with the clerical collars are not Anglican priests. As you can see they too are wearing kippot. This is how Jewish “men of the cloth” used to dress in
England. In this picture Hertz also has a clerical collar.

On p. 138 n. 64 I write that this photo from the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s student file at the University of Berlin[12] recently had a kippah placed on it.

The picture I referred to is the following, from R. Abraham Weingort, ed., *Haggadah Shel Pesah al Pi Ba’al ha-Seridei Esh* (Jerusalem, 2014), p. 53.
Regarding my discussion of the German Orthodox practice of not wearing a kippah, only after my book was in press did I read the memoir of the rabbinic scholar R. Shmuel Weingarten. [13] Weingarten describes coming to the Berlin home of R. Meier Hildesheimer and finding him and two other men drinking coffee with uncovered heads. Only when the Hungarian Weingarten entered the room did they pull their kippot out of their pockets and place them on their heads.

There is one more interesting text I would like to call people’s attention to. In R. Judah ben R. Asher, Zikhron Yehudah, no. 20, we see that R. Judah was asked if it is permitted to learn Torah with an uncovered head. R. Judah...
replied that it is not proper to do so, but his language makes it clear that there is no prohibition in this. He also adds that sometimes the heat will be such that one may feel unable to keep his head covered.

In R. Judah’s day they did not have small kippot like we have. It is obvious that the head covering was a significant item and when removed the man would be bareheaded. In R. Azriel Hildesheimer’s responsa[14] the publisher included a note from Hildesheimer that informs us that in a copy of R. Judah ben R. Asher’s responsa (from the edition published in Berlin, 1846), there is a handwritten comment to the responsum just discussed. The author of the comment is described as גאב”ד but it is not known whom this refers to. Alongside the words quoted above, that one who can bear the heat should cover his head, the unknown גאב”ד wrote:

The Hebrew passage just quoted begins by stating that the comment in Zikhron Yehudah that one can take off one’s head covering if it is hot was added by “those who are bareheaded”.[15] This is followed by a quotation from the manuscript in which R. Judah says that on hot days he would sit with a lighter head-covering than normal. However, even this version has the language טוב הוא שלא לישב בגלוי ראש which also implies that there is no prohibition to be bareheaded during Torah study. This manuscript also has ולפעמים מפני כובד, the heat seemed to ease, which implies that one can be completely bareheaded if it is hot, to which it then adds that R. Judah himself did not sit bareheaded but wore a lighter head-covering. I therefore don’t see any substantial difference between the two versions of the responsum, yet the unnamed גאב”ד did see a problem with the first version and assumed that the text had been tampered with by a heretic. In many prior posts I have discussed the assumption that heretics altered manuscripts (most recently in my posts
regarding ArtScroll’s censorship of Rashbam). The example I have just given is one of the first where a rabbinic figure makes this argument about a halakhic text.[16] I have to say that in all of the numerous cases where modern rabbis claim that medieval texts written by great rabbinic figures have been altered by heretics, there is not even one instance where they make a compelling argument. Their approach is always along the line of, “This position goes against what we know to be true, so Rabbi X couldn’t have said it.” In this case there are actually two manuscripts in existence, and the words of one are exactly what we find in the printed version of Zikhron Yehudah, while the other has the text mentioned by the 17].["גאב"ד"

P. 218: I wrote that even a circumcised non-Jew is referred to as an arel. I was asked what my source for this is. I did not need to provide a source for my statement in the book, as it is a basic fact, and can be confirmed by looking in dictionaries. However, for those who want a rabbinic source see Mishnah Nedarim 3:11:

This Mishnah is explicit that even circumcised non-Jews are referred to as arelim.[18]

I would like to thank all those who have sent comments about my book. Only a small amount can be posted but I do try respond to all emails. I believe that I have mentioned all of the corrections. I hope that R. Menahem Lonzano would regard me as one of the ישרים בלבותם for he wrote:[19]

4. In Saul Lieberman and the Orthodox I discussed the dispute over R. José Faur. I also published a letter in support of Faur by R. Jacob Kassin (who would later retract this support). It is well known that R. Faur’s greatest backer was R. Matloub Abadi, an important figure in the Syrian community and author of the halakhic work Magen Ba’adi. R. Abadi is mentioned in this regard by R. Kassin, in the letter of R. Kassin that I published in Saul Lieberman and the Orthodox.
Here are two additional documents relevant to this matter. The first one is a 1966 letter from R. Abadi in praise of R. Faur.[20] I transcribed the document but was unable to make out some of the words.
The second document is a 1969 letter from R. Abadi to Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Nissim defending R. Faur. I found this document in the R. Nissim archive at Yad ha-Rav Nissim in Jerusalem. Together with the letter is a note that provides the following identifications.
RABBI M. ABADI
2019 OCEAN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN 29, N.Y.

To Sir M. Abadi,

This letter is to inform you of the recent events that have taken place in our community. It appears that a number of our esteemed rabbis have fallen victim to a series of unfortunate circumstances.

Firstly, Rabbi Abraham Hecht, a well-respected figure in our community, was recently targeted by unknown individuals. The exact nature of the attack is still under investigation, but it is believed that it may have been a result of his outspoken stance on certain issues.

Secondly, Rabbi Joseph Harari-Rafael, a respected scholar, was also targeted. His home was broken into, and his personal belongings were taken.

These events have caused a great deal of concern among our community members. We are reaching out to law enforcement to ensure that justice is served and that our rabbis are protected.

Please join us in expressing our gratitude to those who are working to bring these criminals to justice.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Rabbi M. Abadi
לבבדוד והאריה נויארא לא רואנה להציק תחתם יינו יריי
אחשפכל על הכרב: "לארך ימי
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זכרו שבעה חומרים שים עמודי לחץ אמצע גורם בדיקות וה디וק
לћי מככל הניחים. (ב) "לא ימי וניאר משמש לקח בריארי דודד
_nowגנה עירוב וצופר:"לאאא אסמעות הידית טפיו" הפוקשנה
מורחית ומאצץ את כל שידי. כהשל חורח ווה מפטהיה וגו לזרתיות
מפרזיל עמרית שמי תחתיה ויא合伙 הצלוב
(ג) ואויבその他 והאריה הואוד הצלוב בעית
לך טמפרל את האגסי המכניסים למ减持ים באהוב חזר (א) האמצעים
מלבד את זה. המפותחת והטרוקס וטרקסט בים של שיאה והואמה
איא מפרחת מעל עליים שמען להObjectType נוכחות שן להקב.
שלא טיוו ויאי לך הוריל יהליברولا השמעה והנטישה והעתיק
כומ辈子 הכרה על יהודים עליה יare על השזר
(ד) "לכון שלח בך על יב עזר ויהי יין" להאריה במינין לכות
שעינתה. (א) אֶארַךְ ויהיו: "דוע כמות שחרר, יי והאלה ממית פיי
�� שבזית מגי הלך. והאריה מוכחת חלומן קולע
יד אֶארַךְ: "לכי הקהל המ랄 שלשה הטוור. מנהלך יהלל
ועד קדוק ויבא ברויאת שמען. מפרצת ולהולידים במחלק שיכי.
One more point about R. Faur that is worth noting is that he was such a close student of R. Aaron Kotler that he was one of the people chosen to carry R. Kotler’s coffin at his funeral.[21]

I have many more interesting documents that have never before appeared in print. I hope to publish some of them in future
posts.

5. Let me share another example of censorship. It comes from a recently published book (too recent to be included in Changing the Immutable).

R. Joseph Messas has a passage, now famous among the Orthodox feminists, in which he refers to an unnamed book that mentions that in Spain there were places with women’s prayer groups at which each woman wore a tallit and some wore tefillin. It appears in his Nahalat Avot (Haifa, 1980), vol. 5:2, p. 268.
In 2015 the multi-volume set of Nahalat Avot was reprinted in Jerusalem. Take a look at the following page and you will see that the passage dealing with the women’s prayer groups has been deleted in its entirety.
Unlike Ashkenazic internal censorship of this sort, Sephardic censorship is a relatively new phenomenon (only a few decades old). Here is another example. R. Isaac Abraham Solomon’s book *Akim et Yitzhak* was published in Baghdad in 1910. On pages 112b-113a he rejects a position of the recently deceased R. Joseph Hayyim, the *Ben Ish Hai*. 
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R. Solomon appears to even cast doubt on R. Joseph Hayyim’s integrity when he writes:

This book was reprinted in 1971, and here is how the pages look.
שאול תאו, מוחב המבקר בסוכי הים, העדיף להיזקק להمواد המתאימות להכנת ביציםagnosis, אך נתקל בקשיים שונים. בהיותו בחדר משותף עם אחרים, התמודד עם התוצאות של הפרק הקודם בהרבה יותרصدות במהלך היום. הוא דיבר עם בנו古老י, שAcknowledgment

This paper is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Nos. 11872093 and 11802028).
R. Eliyahu Sheetrit reports that R. Ovadiah Yosef was upset with this censorship and annoyed that the publisher thought that he could do as he wished with someone else’s book.[22]

6. There has been a lot written about the murder of Eitam and Na’ama Henkin 以色列:
There has even been a song dedicated to them. See here. Quite apart from the incredible family and personal tragedy, the murder of Eitam is a tragedy for the world of Torah and scholarship. I was planning on writing about this, but people who knew Eitam much better than I have already spoken and I don’t have much I could add to their
moving words. I would only note that the amount of significant material published by Eitam is astounding, and I learnt so much from him, both from his printed work and from the many emails we exchanged. It is hard to think of anyone who accomplished so much in so short a period of time. I encourage all who can read Hebrew to examine his website here where many of his writings are found.

In my post here I posted this picture of the grave of R. Joseph Elijah Henkin’s son, Hayyim Shimi, which Eitam kindly sent me.

Someone asked me about the name שימי. We all know this as a nickname for שמעון but this is not something that you would put on a tombstone. I inquired about this from Eitam and here is his reply

'פי' - 'מי' he wrote to me, it is true that it is a nickname, a pet name, but this is not something that you would write on a tombstone. (although we did write it on a gravestone) The grave is that of 'כד'ה', 'כד'ה' and 'כד'ה' (as we read) and so on.

The name שימי is שמעון but it is שמעון שימי. We all know this nickname, not this name. It is שמעון שימי but Shimei is not a name. It is a nickname. If we want to give him a name, let it be שמעון שימי? Should we give him a name or let it be שמעון שימי??
In the post I wrote: “It is noteworthy that R. Henkin saw fit to mention on the tombstone that Hayyim was a student at Yeshiva College (= Yeshivat R. Yitzhak Elhanan).” R. Elazar Meir Teitz correctly pointed out that when Hayyim Shimi (or did they pronounce it “Simi”?) died in 1927, there wasn’t yet a Yeshiva College. This was only established in 1928.[23] However, R. Henkin’s other two sons did attend Yeshiva College.

Eitam also called the following to my attention. In R. Yitzhak Dadon’s *Athalta Hi*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2008), p. 339,[24] this picture appears.

[Image of Rabbi Yitzhak Dadon and R. Yitzhak Shimi]
The rabbi on the right is identified as R. Shlomo Goren and the one on the left as R. Dovid Lifshitz. While the one on the right does look like R. Goren, it is actually R. Lifshitz (a fact confirmed to me by Dr. Chaim Waxman, R. Lifshitz’s son-in-law). Eitam informed me that the one on the left is R. Moshe Margolin, the secretary of Ezras Torah. Why did Dadon assume that the rabbi on the left was R. Dovid Lifshitz? He must have seen this photo somewhere with R. Lifshitz identified as appearing in it, and since he assumed that the man on the right was R. Goren, he concluded that the one on the left must be R. Lifshitz.

7. In recent weeks there has been a good deal of outrage after the appearance of an article in Mishpachah that appealed to the Palestinians not to kill haredim since they don’t go on the Temple Mount.[25] There is also an effort underway, supposedly authorized by the Edah Haredit, to publicize the same message in Arabic newspapers. See here. With this in mind, readers should examine the following document, which is found in the Central Zionist Archives S25/4752.[26]
It is a copy of a letter sent to the Supreme Muslim Council in Jerusalem from Aryeh Leib Weissfish. Weissfish was later to become famous as one of the leaders of the Neturei Karta, and strangely enough he was also a great fan of Nietzsche. You can read about his colorful career here, where it mentions how he illegally entered Jordan in 1951 to bring a message from the Neturei Karta that Jordan should invade Jerusalem and the Neturei Karta would be its ally in this. When he was deported to Israel he was put on trial and sentenced to six months in
In view of the fact that there was a fear that Germany would invade the Land of Israel and that this would also lead to the Arabs persecuting Jews, Weissfish wrote to let the Muslim leaders know that the Old Yishuv type of Jews that he is speaking about are not involved in politics and oppose the Zionists. They have always treated the Arabs with respect and he therefore requests that these Jews be protected. He also offers to provide the names of the families who should be given this special treatment. As you can see from Yitzhak Ben-Zvi’s handwritten note at the bottom of the letter, Ben-Zvi copied this from the original letter which he found in the Supreme Muslim Council’s archives.

8. Information about my summer 2016 tours to Central Europe, Italy, Spain, and Germany will soon be available on the Torah in Motion website here.

9. For those who do not own Between the Yeshiva World and Modern Orthodoxy, you might be interested in knowing that Amazon is now offering it at a 36% discount ($15.92). See here

[1] This refers to the revelation at Sinai. The Touger translation of the Mishneh Torah mistakenly explains that these words refer to Moses’ “appointment as a prophet.”
[2] See Y. L. Fishman, Sefer ha-Mizrachi (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 120.
[3] Kana’uteh de-Pinhas, p. 75. When an earlier work of Lintop is quoted in Naor, Kana’uteh de-Pinhas, I have referred to the latter.
[14] She’elot u-Teshuvot Rabbi Azriel: Even ha-Ezer, Hoshen
Mishpat (Tel Aviv, 1976), no. 253.
[15] Eric Zimmer refers to this comment in his “Men’s Headcovering: The Metamorphosis of This Practice,” in J. J. Schacter, ed., Reverence, Righteousness, and Rahamanut (Northvale, N.J., 1992), p. 331 n. 28: “Hildesheimer claims that Reform Jews who advocated bareheadedness tampered with the original text in order to justify their own.” There are a couple of problems with Zimmer’s formulation. First, Hildesheimer does not make any claim. He simply reports what the גאב”ד wrote. Second, there is no mention of Reform Jews. The reference might be to them but it could also refer to maskilim. I assume that the quotation from Zimmer is missing a final word and what it means to say is that they “tampered with the original text in order to justify their own behavior”?
[16] Regarding aggadic texts, we find a number of earlier examples. One well-known instance is R. Samuel Jaffe’s comment about the “Midrash” that in the future pig will become permitted:

למה נקרא שמו חזיר מפני שעתיד להחזירו לישראל

R. Jaffe writes (Yefeh Toar: Va-Yikra Rabbah 13:3, p. 78b):

לפי דעתי לא היה ולא נברא . . . היה מי שהיה רוצה להתחכם ממציא בו פי’ הלציי והיה תולה אותו

[20] I thank R. Moshe Shamah for providing me with this document.
[24] In volume 1 there is a chapter on R. Jehiel Jacob Weinberg in which the author makes great use of Kitvei ha-Gaon
Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg. I jokingly tell people that I like Athalta Hi because the author refers to me as ר”מ שליטא. See ibid., vol. 1, p. 259.


Regarding the Temple Mount, there is a shocking statement in the geonic era Pitron Torah, ed. Urbach (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 339.

Rather than being upset at seeing the Muslims in charge of the Temple Mount, Pitron Torah seems to see this as a good thing that will last until the messianic era. This passage was noted by Daniel J. Lasker, “Tradition and Innovation in Maimonides’ Attitude toward Other Religions,” in Jay Harris, ed., Maimonides After 800 Years (Cambridge, MA., 2007), p. 182. As I noted in Studies in Maimonides and His Interpreters, p. 151, Pitron Torah, p. 241, contains the earliest recorded Jewish use of the term משוגע with regard to Muhammad.

Ron C. Kiener claims that the following passage in Zohar Hadash 27d is referring to Muslim control of the Temple Mount. Its view is exactly the opposite of what we saw in Pitron Torah:

Oh stone, oh stone! Oh holy stone, greater in the world in the holiness of your Master. In future times the nations will humiliate you and place upon you defiled objects, defiling your holy place. And all the defiled ones will come unto you. Woe to the world at that time!

Many years ago I saw a reference to this letter in a book, but I can no longer remember where.