Chapter Eight
Solomon, *Aristoteles Judaicus*, and the Invention of a Pseudo-Solomonic Library[894]

As the thirteenth century saw the rise of Aristotle as a new contender for the role of "the wisest, most learned man of all times, the very personification of all knowledge", Jewish scholars were faced with a new challenge: how to grapple with Aristotelian rationalist philosophy. One option was to declare it irrelevant, and present Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy as diametrically opposed; another option was to co-opt Aristotelian philosophy by depicting Aristotle as Solomon's pupil. The result of this latter approach was the emergence of a legendary tradition whose purpose was to legitimize Jews' study of philosophy, in general, and the influence of Aristotle, in particular.

What developed was in many ways a continuation of traditions dating from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. But Jewish-Hellenistic writers,[895] and later the Church Fathers, were concerned with the influence of the Jewish patriarchs, Moses, and the biblical prophets on the development of Egyptian and Greek wisdom—particularly that of Plato and Pythagoras. The new legendary tradition that emerged in medieval Jewish apologetics, on the margins of existing polemics between "Aristotelians" and "anti-Aristotelians", claimed in contrast that Jewish "wisdom", or Jewish "philosophy", had been appropriated specifically by Aristotle. Not only was Solomon, then, the wisest of all ancients, a teacher to kings who arrived from all four corners of the earth to hear him; he was also a teacher to that "greatest of all philosophers," Aristotle, whose teachings, in turn, informed the Christian scholastics.[896] Seen through this lens, Aristotelian philosophy was no "Greek wisdom" extrinsic to Judaism, but rather a continuation of Jewish wisdom whose original form had been lost in the throes of history, only to be preserved in Greek garb. Its renewed reception into the bosom of Jewish culture was thus the restoration of what was lost to its former glory and rightful owner. Solomon was chosen for the role of Aristotle's teacher since no ancient figure in Jewish history more famous than he could better represent lost wisdom. And since Aristotle dealt not only in philosophy but in all spheres of

894 See Shavit (2006); Melamed (2010). Melamed's work is an extremely comprehensive study on the subject, and I have learned a great deal from it.

895 Only Aristobulus (second century B.C.E.) was familiar with Aristotle (perhaps his *On Philosophy*). See A. Yarbro Collins (1985, p. 837).

896 Roth (1978).

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knowledge, Solomon was the sole biblical figure whose intellectual scope could be considered comparable. This legendary tradition was born of necessity; it would not have emerged or appeared in so many texts had their authors not felt the need to legitimize their own engagement in theology, philosophy, and science, and to legitimize Aristotle.

This was a strategy of legitimizing cultural borrowing, in which an ancient figure of authority is invoked to make permissible the intercultural influence so widespread in the cultures of the ancient East as well as in Christianity and Islam. It sought to reframe such borrowing by claiming that Jewish culture was not only the source of all wisdom but also encompassed the whole of it, and hence no source was truly external. In the context of Solomon, according to this legendary tradition, not only was Aristotle Solomon's pupil, but it was Solomon's wisdom that led to Jesus' salvation.

This claim to universal scope is expressed in Judah Halevi's (1075 – 1141) book *The Kuzari* (*Kitāb al-Khazarī*):

> "And what is the opinion of Solomon's accomplishments? Did he not, with the assistance of divine intellectual and natural power, converse on all sciences? The inhabitants of all the earth travelled to him, in order to carry forth his learning, even as far as India. Now the roots and principles of all sciences were handed down from us first to the Chaldeans then to the Persians and Medians, then to Greece, and finally to the Romans. On the account of the length of this period and the many disturbing circumstances, it was forgotten that they had originated with the Hebrews, and so they were ascribed to the Greeks and Romans. To the Hebrews, however, belongs the first place as regards the nature and the languages and as to the fullness of meaning".[897]

The idea that Solomon's wisdom was the source—direct or indirect—of some part of Greek wisdom appears even earlier in an introduction by the tenth-century Karaite scholar Yacob Qirqisani to the Book of Genesis. Therein he claimed that Solomon, the wisest of all, possessed what was known as "natural knowledge", which the Greek philosophers acquired from him (the Jewish sages too, he maintained, employed rationalist philosophical methods).[898]

The Arab tradition faced the same need for legendary legitimization when it came to translating Aristotle's writings into Arabic. *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (The Catalog)

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897 II, 66. Trans. from the Arabic by Hartwig Hirschfeld, (Halevi 1905, p. 124). Elijah Hayyim ben Benjamin of Genazzano, a physician, theologian, and Kabbalist of the first half of the sixteenth century, suggested a different chain of transmission. There, the source for the idea of reincarnation was Abraham; the Chaldeans received it from him, and from them it passed to the Egyptians, the Persians, and the Indians. See Ogren (2009).

898 Hirschfeld (1918, pp. 39 – 47). I am grateful to Prof. Yoram Erder for bringing this work to my attention.

by Ibn al-Nadīm relates the tale of a dream dreamt by the Caliph al-Maʾmūn[899]; according to the story, Aristotle appeared in the dream and answered all the caliph's questions to his satisfaction. This granted him the approval for that interaction, al-Maʾmūn sent a delegation to Constantinople which returned to Baghdad with a convoy of camels laden with books.[900] This was a legendary tale that emerged against the background of a project of translation from Greek (as well as Persian and Indian) literature into Arabic, which began in the ninth and tenth centuries. It was, thus, a legendary appendage to the reality of the transmission of Greek philosophical literature from Alexandria to Baghdad. This transmission was at first mediated by the translation efforts of Syriac-speaking Nestorian and Monophysite Christians in Aleppo and Edessa; after the Orthodox bishop put an end to this work in 489, the translation efforts moved to Nisibis in south-east Anatolia and Jundishapur in north-west Persia,[901] mediated by the translations and exegetic work of the Sabians in Haran (today in southern Turkey). This translational activity was organized by the Abbasid caliphs themselves, who aspired to make Baghdad a cultural center that would inherit and build upon the legacy of Hellenistic Alexandria. For this purpose, the caliphs established a library and academy (*Bayt al-Ḥikma*) in their new capital and encouraged the project of translation into Arabic; such translations became widely available for sale in

899 The *Fihrist* was compiled in 987; Caliph al-Maʾmūn reigned from 813 – 833.

900 Ibn Abī Yaʿqūb al-Nadīm (1970, Vol. 1, pp. 483 – 484); F. Rosenthal (1994, pp. 48 – 49). The Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr (755 – 759) asked the Emperor of Byzantium to send him books of mathematics; he was sent Euclid and several works on physics. His heir, al-Maʾmūn, would later bring translators to Byzantium to translate scientific literature into Arabic. According to another source, the Byzantine emperor opposed giving manuscripts to the Caliphate; only when al-Maʾmūn threatened to limit the religious freedom of the Christians under his rule was he forced to agree. Ibn Khaldūn wrote that al-Maʾmūn had a strong interest in science, and the collection he sent to Baghdad and its translation enabled Muslim scholars to devote themselves to the sciences and to excel therein. While they "might have been opposed to many of the views of the first and foremost teacher [*al-muʿallim al-awwal*] Aristotle," they regarded him as "the supreme authority insofar as the acceptance or rejection of a view was concerned, due to his great fame." In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldūn (1958) writes: "The sciences of only one nation, the Greek, have come down to us, because they were translated through al-Maʾmūn's efforts", (*The Muqaddimah*, vii:18; Vol. 3, pp. 115 – 116, 328 – 330). According to al-Maqrīzī's *The Topography of Cairo* (*Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-Iʿtibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, 254), in 1070 al-Muntaẓir sold thousands of books from the Fatimid library in Cairo in order to pay the wages of his soldiers, and the books were borne to their destination on twenty-five camels. See el-Abbadi (1993, pp. 172 – 178); Abbou-Hershkovitz (2006). The prolific translator Ibn al-Baṭrīq wrote of having visited, as part of his search for materials, all the temples in which the philosophers placed had their books.

901 Qadir (1991, pp. 31 – 34); Macy (1989).

Baghdad.[902] Constantinople was not the sole source of the Greek-Hellenistic literature brought to Baghdad; it also arrived from Damascus, Alexandria, and other cities. Works by Aristotle were paramount in this translation project, and a large part of the Aristotelian corpus was translated as well as Aristotle's biographies (several works by Plato were also translated).[903] Nonetheless, the mythical tradition created to justify such borrowing was relatively marginal, since the Muslim culture of the time did not object in principle to the reception of "alien wisdom" in the way that Jewish culture did.

Jewish depictions linked Aristotle and Solomon (as well as "Solomon's library") because Aristotle represented the alien "Greek wisdom," and the legendary tradition, as we have seen, emerged as internal apologetics, namely, as an argument against the anti-Aristotelians, who described Aristotle as "the worst of the apostates, may his name be blotted out",[904] "an unbridled misguided philosopher" who disseminated "deviant theories", and similar derogatory expressions. This Jewish tradition regarding Aristotle, which developed gradually and in with a great deal of variety, is evident in many texts; below are few examples.[905]

R. Abraham bar Ḥiyya wrote in the twelfth century that "all the scholars of the gentiles who are well-versed in the sciences learned that wisdom from our sages",[906] and Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) wrote that Hebrew science predated Greek science and had been pillaged by the Greeks[907]; neither, however, as-

902 On Muslim translational activity, the center in Baghdad, the libraries there, and the scope of the Aristotelian corpus in Arabic, see Lameer (1991); Daiber (1997, pp. 29–43); van Koningsveld (1998); Pinto (1929); Kraemer (1992); Mackensen (1932); Montgomery (2000, pp. 65–88); Moller (2019, pp. 59–98).

On the Harran Sabians and their translation activity, see Erder (1981, pp. 54–68); Stroumsa (1999). According to a Sabian tradition, their prophets were Pythagoras and Solon. Sabian literature was itself influenced mainly by neo-Platonic literature.

903 Peters (1968a, 1968b); Mavroudi (2015). See Chapter Seven.

904 Nachmanides (1962, p. 172).

905 For detailed, albeit incomplete, surveys, see Santer (1901); Zinberg (1960, pp. 394–398); Halevi Madlinger (1893, pp. 71–76); Eisenstein (1903, pp. 206–216); Rappel (1990, pp. 46–66); Fuss (1994). Micha Yosef Berdichevsky combined the contents of *Shevilei emunah*, *Shalshelet hakabalah*, and *Sefer hadorot* into one story; see Bin-Gorion (1952, pp. 162–163). The full description of the legendary tradition appears in Melamed (2010).

906 R. Abraham bar Hiyya, *Sefer ha'ibur* (Book of Intercalation), ed. Zvi Philipovski, London, 1851 (the first version of the book was printed in Verona in 1146), p. 73. On the identification of King Ptolemy Philadelphus with Claudius Ptolemy, see Sela (2003, p. 48).

907 See Sela (2003, pp. 304–313). Ibn Ezra adds an imaginary biographical story, which also appears in another version in the writings of the chronicler al-Bīrūnī, who assigned a Jewish sage the position of translator from Hindi to Arabic. The Caliph chose a Jew for this purpose

sociated the transfer of knowledge with Aristotle. On the other hand R. Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Falaquera (1225?-1290?) linked a second-century astronomer and mathematician, Claudius Ptolemy, to Solomon, and wrote in *Sefer haMa'alot* (The Book of Degrees) that "it is a well-known fact that in the days of Solomon people came from all four corners of the globe to hear his wisdom, as is written (1 Kings 10:24) and the whole land sought after Solomon and each who heard his speech or his name would write it in his own language as every nation copies that which it finds from the wisdoms of others, just as the Greeks copied all the books of the wisdoms into their language. And Claudius Ptolemy recalled that he sent to the priests in Jerusalem who would copy for him in his own language the books of wisdom that there were. And it is impossible that Solomon, may he rest in peace, did not write books of natural science and of divinity, but those books were lost in the Exile".[908]

In *Shevilei Emunah* (Paths of Faith), printed in Trento in 1518 (and published in several editions), R. Meir ben Isaac Aldabi (c.1310 – 1360) was probably the first to connect Solomon and Solomon's library to Aristotle: "And I found it written that Aristotle the Greek, who is followed by all the men of science, who draw upon his books, and who was the teacher of Alexander the Great who shook the whole world [...] when Alexander conquered Jerusalem, he took the treasure of Solomon for his teacher Aristotle; then Aristotle studied and interpreted all the books of Solomon and copied them in his own name and added to them his own errors, upon which he hid the books of Solomon[909] to cause the world to believe that Aristotle himself wrote them of his own judgment".[910]

Aldabi, who relied on a source he left unnamed, composed his book in Jerusalem, where he died; perhaps it was for this reason that he felt the need to write of a library in Jerusalem, the seat of kings and home to a great Temple.

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not only because he knew both languages, but also because he was perceived as a "neutral" mediator who could serve as a kind of "inspector" and would also discern whether knowledge acquired from an Indian book might lead to heresy.

908 Falaquera (1894, p. 12). And see Malter (1910).

909 The source may be the *Book of Maccabees* 2 (2: 13 – 15): "The same things also were reported in the writings and commentaries of Nehemiah; and how he found a library that gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts." Judah did the same, and "gathered together all those things that were lost by reason of the war we had" (the reference here is probably to several of the books of the Bible). On the question of whether there existed a library in the Second Temple, or whether a collection of books was preserved there and, if so, what it contained, see Haran (1994); Klijn (1977).

910 Ibn Aldaby (1988, p. 352). The book was written in 1440 and printed in Constantinople in 1552.

The book devotes no consideration to the question of how Solomon's books (beyond those the Bible attributed to him) might have survived, or how Solomon's library (or the library of the First Temple) might have withstood the latter's destruction and the exile to Babylonia, and come to be found by Alexander in Jerusalem. In describing how "Aristotle studied and interpreted all the books of Solomon and copied them in his own name", Aldabi described the transfer, or translation, of a corpus of books representing the entirety of Jewish wisdom, from which Greek scholars would study: "these are the real words dispersed throughout the books of the foremost scholars". Aldabi also wrote that the Greeks added "many things from their lies that contradict the words of our sages, may their memories be blessed, since in what they did not learn from them they could not themselves arrive at the truth." What was true in Greek philosophy was what was borrowed from the wisdom of the Jewish people, all collected in Solomon's library. In Aldabi's worldview, it did not suffice to describe the "wisdom of Solomon" in general terms; rather, there was a need for a physical library to exist containing all the books written by Solomon—a complete corpus dealing with philosophy, metaphysics, and every natural science.

The Jewish legendary tradition about Aristotle and Solomon's library flourished in Spain, Provence, and Italy, and would reappear in quite a few works, some of them anonymous. Several claim that Aristotle received Solomon's wisdom by oral transmission, but, in the majority, he is described as having acquired it from Solomon's library.

Abraham ben Shem Tov Bibago, who lived in Spain in the fifteenth century and composed commentaries on Aristotle (including an exegesis on the *Posterior Analytics*, 1446), wrote in the third section of his book *Derekh ha'Emunah*[911] that the fame of Solomon's wisdom was widespread, his lost books having traveled broadly over time and been translated into the languages of other nations. Thus, he reasoned, "these are human, not Greek, wisdoms"—a useful distinction for a Jewish scholar who adhered to distinctly Aristotelian views. Like his predecessors, Bibago explained that all of these numerous wisdoms "which belong in our nation" had been lost in the darkness of exile. Bibago purported to quote Eusebius (whose work was translated into Latin in the fifteenth century, and who himself quotes Clearchus of Soli): "Most philosophy came to us [the Greeks] from the wise Aristotle, and if you wish I can tell you how it came to us and how we heard it from his lips". In this telling Aristotle was "a Jewish man from the seed of Israel, a Jerusalemite from the sons of Koliah, the tribe of Benjamin. He came to us from the distant islands in Asia and descended from the mountains and sat

911 *Derekh ha'Emunah* (The Way of Faith), Bibago (1987, p. 56).

with us for many days. He studied our philosophy, and brought to us a greater philosophy of his own which we studied from him".[912]

The physician and philosopher Gedaliah Ibn Yaḥya ben Joseph (c. 1515–1587) added in his book *Sefer Shalshelet ha-Kabalah* (The Chain of Tradition), a Kabbalistic work, that not only Aristotle but many other scholars of Athens studied under Jewish sages in Jerusalem and elsewhere; Plato, for example, was Jeremiah's student. From the introduction to Bibago's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, Ibn Yahia learned that Aristotle had recanted his view of a pre-existing world and become a "convert." This new understanding, Aristotle wrote to Alexander, was courtesy of one of the wise Jews (Simeon the Just), who proved to him the futility of his philosophical concept of an "ancient, pre-existing world". Enlightened, Aristotle burned all his books, "since those who adhere to the Torah will walk through life by its light, while the adherents of philosophy will fall into the abyss of hell".[913] In other words, Ibn Yahya believed that truth was achieved not through rational inquiry, but only through divine revelation. He claimed to have learned of Aristotle's late conversion from an "old book" according to which the learned Don Abraham Ibn Zarzar had heard the story in Lisbon from an "Ishmaelite [Arab] sage", who in turn had seen a work in Cairo by Aristotle in which the latter retracted all his pronouncements regarding providence and the immortality of the soul. The source of this story was probably a book by the Muslim scholar Ibn Rushd (Averroes), *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut, 1180), itself a response to Ibn al-Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Tahāfut al-Falāsifa).[914]

This story recurs in different versions and texts, including *Sefer haMusar* (The Book of Moral Instruction) by the biblical exegete, philosopher, and grammarian Joseph ibn Kaspi (1280–1345); *Magen Avot* (Shield of the Faith) by the physician and scholar R. Simeon ben Ẓemaḥ Duran (1361–1444); Judah Abrabanel's (c.1465-c.1523) *Dialogi d'Amore* (Vikuah al Ahavah, Dialogues on Love); *Minhat Kana'ut* (Offering of Jealousy) by Yeḥiel of Pisa (1507–1574)[915]; *Nefutzot Yehudah* (The Dispersed of Judah) by Judah Moscato (c. 1530–1589); *Kissot le-*

912 Bibago (1987, pp. 195–198). See Wirszubski (1963, Appendix VI, pp. 72–75).

913 Ibn Yahya (1957, pp. 83–84). Over a period of two hundred years the book was printed four times, and a further dozen in the nineteenth century.

914 See Qadir (1991, pp. 31–69). The first part of al-Ghazālī's book, which was translated into Hebrew in the fourteenth century by Moshe Narboni, was also translated into Russian; one translation states that Aristotle learned from Zerubbabel, and from the prophets Ezra and Malachi.

915 Yeḥiel of Pisa was a banker and scholar who copied Ibn Rushd's translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

Beit David (Chairs for the House of David) by R. Judah Asahel ben Eliezer Del Bene (1615–1678); and others.[916] Some of these stories are the source for Isaac Cardoso's (1603\4–1683) *Las excelencias de los hebreos* (Excellences of the Hebrews, Amsterdam 1679), in which Pythagoras, Plato, and other Athenian philosophers visit Egypt, Phoenicia, and Babylonia, learning on their journey of the wisdom of the Jews. (The book also relates that Aristotle arrived at the true understanding of things following a conversation with a "Jewish sage.") As a source for the story that Aristotle converted to Judaism late in life, Cardoso cites a work by the French Orientalist Jacques Gaffarel (1601–1681) and by the Italian philosopher Fortunio Liceti (1577–1657), *De Pietate Aristotelis erga Deum et homines*.[917] Both, in turn, acquired the story from a Jewish source, according to which Aristotle read the Jewish holy scriptures and was deeply influenced by them.[918]

There were scholars, however, who dismissed these traditions. Modena, for example, called them foolish; Azariah dei Rossi (1513–1578), in his *Sefer me'Or Einayim* (The Light of the Eyes), was similarly scornful. But this did not prevent their continued use in the coming generations. Among those who repeated the stories were R. Moses Isserles (referred to as Rema, 1520–1572), an eminent rabbi, *posek* (halakhic authority), and scholar in Poland, who wrote on the subject in his book *Torat ha'Olah* (On the Burnt Offerings, Prague, 1550)[919].

R. Jehiel Heilprin (1660–1745) repeats in his book *Seder haDorot* (The Book of Generations) the claims of Judah Halevi and added to them R. Meir Aldabi's account in *Shevilei Emunah* and Bibago's in *Derekh ha'Emunah*; Meier Eliezer Rapaport-Hartstein, in the introduction to his book *Sefer Chakhmei Yavan o Divrei Chakhamim* (The Book of Greek Wisdom or the Words of Wise Men, Munkacs,

916 Three versions appear under the entry for Aristotle in *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica* by Giulio Bartolocci (1613–1687), who worked in the Vatican library.

917 Cardoso (1971, p. 36). See there, notes by the editor, 30, 31. See more on the claims of a Jewish source for Greek philosophy in Bonfil (1994, pp. 128–135).

918 See Del Soldato (2017).

919 Chapter 11 in Isserles (1854, pp. 39–50). R. Isserles, who studied philosophy and science, relied on *Sefer Ehad Yashan* and *Shevilei Emunah*, writing that Socrates had learned wisdom from Assaf and Ahitophel, while Aristotle derived his teachings from Solomon but added to Solomon's wisdom several "bad ideas" in order to conceal his theft: "the fundamental ideas of Aristotle were stolen from the wisdom of Solomon, of blessed memory. When Alexander of Macedonia conquered Jerusalem, he put Aristotle, his teacher, in charge of Solomon's library, and the latter put his name on all the good things he found there, and he added some bad ideas such as the eternity of the world" (trans. Fuss 1994, p. 109).

1905)[920]; Isaac Baer Levinsohn[921] (1788–1860); and others.[922] He writes that it is written in *Shevilei Emunah*: when Alexander conquered Jerusalem, he took over the books of Solomon for his teacher Aristotle, and Aristotle copied philosophy from them and gave them his own name, and he was tongue-tied".[923] He quotes Yehudah Halevi as well as the story of Aristotle's conversion and the claim that in the latter's final book, *Metaphysics*,[924] he disavowed all his previous conclusions, writing late in life that if he could, he would have burned all the copies

920 He also adds that "there are some among the first who wanted to find in Galen's book R. Gamliel's book of medicine", but also that many of the sages "abused and cursed Aristotle".

921 In Chapter 27 of his book *Teudah be'Yisrael* (1828 [1977 ed.]), Levinsohn repeats this tradition and adds earlier legendary traditions about Socrates who learned about the Creator of the world from Ahitophel and Assaf; about Plato who learned from the prophet Jeremiah; and about Aristotle who learned from Simeon the Just (1828, pp. 25–27).

922 The *maskil* Judah Leib ben Ze'ev (1784–1811) included in his popular reader *Beit haSefer*, Vol. II: *Mesilat halimud* (Vienna, 1820, 6th printing) sayings by Aristotle and episodes from his life and did not forget to mention the philosopher's "debt" to the Jews. "It was said of him that he spent many days in the company of a great sage, one of the wise men of the Jews, who taught him the wisdom of Egypt (the Kabbala) and their religion (and Jewish writers throughout the generations have told us that the name of the wise man is Simeon the Just, a great priest at the start of the construction of the Second Temple). Know now that two of the greatest wise men in the sciences, the most luminous among the sages of Greece, Plato and Aristotle, praised by the nations, learned their wisdom from the sages of Israel... and now this great, illustrious nation, where, where are they?" Of Aristotle's influence he writes that "Aristotle's fame spread throughout the land and his memory passed down through the generations, and his glory was known also in far-off isles, which possessed no books other than the books of their religion, and the ancient Ishmaelites [Muslims] studied his books that were in Hebrew, and the Persians in their language with Arabic commentaries, and to this very day his books are circulated and known to all. People followed him blindly, attentive to his every word, and Maimonides admired him greatly, and Moses Mendelsohn as well, so much so that they adhered to all of his teaching as if the Almighty had not given them eyes to see other than Aristotle, and no heart to know anything other than the son of Nicomachus". Ludwig Philippson (1875–1876) wrote a series of articles entitled "Moses und Aristoteles" in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, in which he compared Aristotle's political philosophy with Moses' Torah. While expressing his esteem for Aristotle, Philippson wrote that his philosophy was suitable for its time but that the Torah of Moses was universal, human, and atemporal. Considering the many testimonies about the way Aristotelianism penetrated the Jewish intellectual world, and the "rationalist" legitimization it received from the legendary tales, it is hard to accept Halbertal's view that the gate to Aristotelianism was esoterism. Halbertal (2007).

923 Heilprin (1769, pp. 135–137). The book was printed a second time in Lwow in 1858 and a third time in Warsaw in 1878.

924 The book was translated into Hebrew for the first time in 1485 from a mediating translation in Latin. On translations of Aristotle in the Middle Ages, see Wolf (1715–1733, pp. 217–223); Steinschneider (1893).

of the books he had written, though they be as numerous as the sand on the beaches: "And I would [rather] choose the strangulation of my soul than for my books to be widely distributed. For those that cling to the Torah go to light with the light of life. And those that cling to philosophy go to the pit of destruction [i.e., the grave] ... And even I am prepared to be punished". Aristotle, Heilprin claimed, wrote to Alexander the Great that God had opened his eyes: "He drew me out of this foolishness in which I was immersed all the days of my life in dealing with the teachings of philosophy... And therefore, my dear student—Alexander, my great king—do not put forward my works [for others to study]—neither you nor my fellow philosophers."[925]

This legendary tradition depicted Aristotle, rather than Plato, as the Greek philosopher who drew his doctrine from Jewish wellsprings. It was woven from five sources conjoined, in the context of Jewish intellectual history during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, into a new tradition. These sources were:

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925 A similar legend was told about Maimonides, namely that at the end of his life he cast aside Aristotelianism and turned to the Kabbala. See Scholem (1935). A tale about Aristotle and his student in medicine, Maimonides, had a long life. It relates that Aristotle told Maimonides that he could create a man who would live forever. They cast lots, and it was Maimonides' fate to be torn to bits, his limbs cut up and placed into a glass container. But Maimonides did not fulfill his part of the agreement; he did not allow Aristotle to be resurrected for fear that people would be misled by him and think him a god. The *maskil* Abraham Baer Gottlober (1810–1889) wrote that he heard the tale, like many others, from teachers, and regarded that as proof that they were filling their students' minds with "endless fantasies and nonsense" (A. B. Gottlober 1976).On the various sources and versions of the story, which apparently originated in the Middle Ages under the influence of legends about the Roman poet Virgil the Sorcerer, in popular and Yiddish pamphlets, see Yeshayahu Berger, "Maimonides in Folk Legends" *Masad—Maasef leDivrei Sifrut*, Tel Aviv, 1936. According to Berger's version, Maimonides' pupils suggested that he place a rooster in his home and tease it. He did as they suggested, and the rooster broke the glass case that held Aristotle's body parts. On Virgil's legends, see Comparetti (1895, pp. 326–327). In *maskilic* literature, Aristotle's name symbolizes a worldview opposed to Judaism. In *Divrei Shalom ve'Emet* (Berlin 1782–85, Vienna, 1826), Naphtali Herz Wessely wrote that Aristotle's metaphysics was based on "spiderwebs" and "emptiness", but that the fact that here and there "Aristotelian views" found their way into books on nature, and led to heresy, was not a reason to reject the views that originated in Jerusalem; these were universal views and no nation in the world existed in which these wisdoms were not employed (pg. 22–26). There was thus no all-encompassing prohibition against the study of the theory of nature or philosophy. In the nineteenth century, Mendele Mocher Seforim also wrote about Aristotle as a source of authority in his novel "*Bayamim hahem*" (In Those Days). In the contest between the two autodidacts of the town, Lisaac and Isaac, the former cites Aristotle as an authority: "This is what Aristotle says, do you hear me, gentlemen, this is what Aristotle says!" The latter replies: "You frighten me! So what if Aristotle says? Is he a rabbi or a teacher in Israel?" Mendele, *Kol Kitvei Mendele Mocher Seforim*, (1963, p. 262).

(1) the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his meeting with the High Priest there[926]; (2) Clearchus of Soli's account in his lost book, *On Sleep*, of Aristotle's meeting with a "philosopher" from Judea (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, I.22, 177–182; Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica*; and Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* V, 66, 4–5).[927] This story was probably born against the background of Aristotle's stay in Assos in northwestern Asia Minor from 345–347 B.C.E., a period during which he discarded the views of his teacher Plato in regard to theological issues. An error in printing Eusebius' translation into Latin in 1470 engendered the story that Aristotle converted to Judaism[928]; (3) The numerous legendary accounts of the life of Aristotle (*Vitae Aristotelis)* and anecdotes from his life in Hellenistic, Syrian, and Arabic literature,[929] which included pseudo-epigraphical books of Aristotle's letters to Alexander the Great on political and other subjects, as well as Aristotle's "last will and testament". Muslim literature on this subject included details about Aristotle's life that did not appear in the Hellenistic literature; (4) The role played by Jews and Christians in disseminating stories about Aristotle, particularly by the Nestorian translator Ḥunain Ibn Isḥak (c.808–873) who wrote, among books, *Kitāb Nawādir al-Falāsifa* (Maxims of the Philosophers),[930] and by his son, Ashak, and their role in disseminating his teachings

926 Kasher (1993); Arnaldo Momigliano (1979). The legend about the encounter between the high priest Simeon the Just, the last member of the Great Assembly, "who was an extremely wise man in all the wisdoms and the sciences" (*Yoma* 69a), and Alexander the Great gave rise to the story that Simeon was the one who influenced Aristotle (who did not even accompany Alexander on his visit to Palestine). On this story in comparison with the version in Josephus, see Tropper (2013, pp. 113–156); Ben Shazar (2017).

927 Lewy (1938); B. Bar-Kochva (2010a).

928 The source for the re-emergence of this story about Aristotle's Jewish origins is a printing error in a 1448 Latin translation by a humanist from Crete, George of Trebizond, which was carried out for Pope Nicholas V (Eusebius *Preparatio Evengelica* 9, 5–6) This was a translation of Clearchus of Soli's story about the "meeting" between Aristotle and a Jewish sage. He translated the sentence "*Ille igitur unxit Aristoteles, Judeeus erat, et igitur*" and added "*e igitur subiunxit Aristoteles, Judaeus erat*".

929 See Aristotle (1957, pp. 258–265); Gunderson (1980); F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (1994, pp. 116–118). Artmon collected and edited Aristotle's letters that were in Scepsis, including forged letters. See During (1957); and Gutas' criticism of During: Gutas (1986, pp. 15–36).

930 See A. Loewenthal (1896). Ḥunain Ibn Isḥak also quoted the words of the prayer that "Aristotle recited every morning": "Mighty, mighty, and ancient that departeth not / and emanates from all, save me from your great fire" (second section, Chapter 4, 27). In the polemic between Isserles and the Maharshal (R. Shlomo Yehiel Luria 1510–1574), the former was accused of having supported the words of Aristotle on a certain matter in his book *Torat ha'Olah.* In the polemic, the Maharshal's fear was that many students were abandoning the Torah and turning to Aristotle, whose words were the "wine of crocodiles". Isserles responded with the claim that "the

by translating the Aristotelian corpus into Arabic and thence into Latin, thereby reviving it in western culture[931]; (5) Aristotle's description in *Peri philosophies* of the "East" as a source of *Sophia* more ancient than that of Egypt, and therefore the birthplace of various inventions.[932]

Another source, which may have played a background role, was the legends regarding lost books of wisdom from antiquity (for example, the books of Enoch, to whom ancient traditions attributed 356 books), and legends of books hidden away in various locations. Such legends appear in a later form in the introduction by Yehia Altatrik, the "copying Ishmaelite", to the pseudo-Aristotalian book *Secret of Secrets:* "I did not leave any of the halls in which the philosophers placed their secrets. I entered them all and did not desist from any of the great monks there who professed to know them, until I came to a hall of the sun worshipper built by the great Hermes himself. There I found a monk of great wisdom. I outsmarted him and grew near to him and used artifice until he gave me permission to peruse the books of the hall which had been placed there".[933]

Isaac Baer Levinsohn summed up what was known about the Jewish contribution to the dissemination of Greek philosophy in the world of Islam and Christianity in his book *Te'udah beYisrael* (1828). He wrote: "Know, learned reader! That the wisdom of Greek philosophers that is renowned today throughout all the nations of Europe, in the language of their countries, came to them from

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wisdom of the scholars and the philosophers came to them from Israel and all of their wisdom is contained in the Torah... and it is written in *Shevilei Emunah* that most of the Aristotelian wisdom was stolen from the wisdom of Solomon, for when Alexander the Great conquered Jerusalem he took over the treasure of Solomon for his teacher Aristotle" (Isserles [1854]: *Torat ha'Olah* 1, 11, p. 39). One of Luria's accusations was that Isserles's students copied Aristotle's prayer into their own prayer books. See Ziv (1972); Elbaum (1990, pp. 156–165); Ben-Sasson (1984). According to Ben-Sasson, Aristotelianism arrived in Poland and, specifically, in Isserles' home Krakow, via Italy (mainly Padua), where the status of Ibn Rushd was preserved. The result was that Aristotelianism flourished in Krakow during the first decades of the fifteenth century, and perhaps for several generations thereafter. According to Jan Długosz (1415–1480), a Polish historian and cleric who would become the archbishop of Lwow, apocryphal stories about Aristotle were widespread in Poland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There are three Hebrew manuscripts of the pseudo-Aristotelian work *Problemata Physica*, translated by Ben Yitzhak, including one translated by Moshe Ibn Tibbon which quotes, *inter alia*, from the *Translation of Hunain Ibn Ishak* of Aristotle's book on "natural questions". See Filius (1999, LX-LXIV); Assaf (2001).

931 *Anecdotes of the Philosophers* (in German, *Sinnsprache der Philosophen*). Not only was Ḥunain a prolific translator—he translated 116 books from Greek, including those by Aristotle, Plato, and Galen—but he also authored thirty-six books in various areas of medicine.

932 On the fragments of the dialogue, see Ross (1955, pp. 73–96); Bywater (1877).

933 Gaster (1925–1928, London, pp. 2–3). On the St. Petersburg manuscript, see Hanah Yonah Gorland, "Yalkutei Katzir", in *HaShahar*, 3, 8, March 1872, pp. 451–456.

the Jews, who were the reason this wisdom spread and became known to their scholars, as well as the wisdom of later sages from among the Arabs and the Jews".[934]

In this apologetic literature, then, Solomon was not only Aristotle's teacher but also his counterpart; like him, he plumbed the depth and breadth of his wisdom in his many books.

The historical context in which this apologetic tale came into Jewish literature is the thirteenth century, a time when Christian theology in the West became re-acquainted with Aristotelian philosophy and Aristotelian science as a result of texts in these fields being translated into Latin via their translations into Arabic; these works soon assumed an incontrovertible authority. One may, of course, question whether the writers mentioned in this chapter or any others actually believed in this imaginary story and truly required it in order to legitimize Aristotle's reception into Jewish philosophy. It is entirely possible that the story simply drifted from text to text. However, the very fact that it did so and that its vitality was preserved beyond the era of Jewish intellectual syncretism demonstrates its power. On the other hand, medieval Christian literature, which until the eleventh century was familiar with some of Aristotle's writings through the translations of Porphyrios, Boethius, and Gaius Marius Victorianus, and later via translations

934 Levinsohn (1977, pp. 111–112). In this context, Levinsohn makes special mention of Aristotle ("the foremost philosopher") and of Clearchus's claim (which he attributed to Josephus) that Aristotle studied with a Jew, noting that "as a result many erred in this matter and thought that Aristotle was a Jew". (Levinsohn 1977, p. 114). He also writes that Greek scholars had learned the science of astronomy from Jewish sages, whose knowledge was lost during the time of the exile: "And the sages studied this science well and thoroughly, and perhaps they had access to our books from the Second Temple when they surpassed us" (Levinsohn 1977, p. 88). Levinsohn also repeats the tradition that Plato was a student of the prophet Jeremiah (p. 113). A contemporary use of this story is evident in an article by R. David Kleiner, "The Powerhouse of the Universe," published in the periodical *Et lahshov*, a Hebrew-language journal on Jewish thought (July 2002, pp. 36–39). The author repeats several of the claims noted above and quotes Isserles in *Torat ha'Olah* about the meeting between Jeremiah and Plato, during which Jeremiah answered Plato's questions about philosophy; he also cites Tommaso Campanella's claim that Pythagoras was a Jew and "a Hebrew." According to Campanella, Aristotle's teachings contradicted the holy scriptures (and reliance upon him furthermore impaired the "Italian" nature of the heliocentric doctrine); hence the Christians who relied on Aristotle were themselves denying the Holy Scriptures. The background to this is the tradition that the intellectual circle originally founded by Pythagoras in Calabria (where Campanella was born) acquired his heliocentric concept from a Jewish source; as a result, there was a continuity between heliocentrism (and Galileo's theory) and the Holy Scriptures. Campanella (1622 [1994], pp. 1–34, 119–121). The tradition according to which Pythagoras learned from the Jews (and from Solomon) also appears in Arabic literature.

created in Sicily in the twelfth century, required no such apologetics to legitimize his work. Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and their students, for instance, needed no extrinsic justification in order to bring the "pagan" Aristotle into the tent of Christianity. Only when Aristotle's prestige declined in the mid-seventeenth century did a group of scholars come to his defense by using the Jewish legendary tradition to "baptize" Aristotle and describe him as owing his redemption to Solomon's wisdom.[935] On the other hand, Jewish culture did require a legendary tradition in order to overcome its objection to Aristotelian philosophy, and the continued vitality of the tradition reveals the value and status of philosophy and the sciences in Jewish culture. Nor is the tradition devoid of historical truth, if we interpret "Solomon" as a personification of the contribution of Jewish translators in transferring the Aristotelian corpus first from Greek to Arabic, and then into Latin, and thence to the emergence of scholasticism and Thomism.

In any event, what we have is a dual-edged sword: a legendary tradition that not only posited Aristotle as Solomon's pupil but shaped Solomon's image in the model of Aristotle, as a magus and an author of many books.

The Invention of a Pseudo-Solomonic Library

> "*Auctoritatem litteris praestat antiquitas summa*"
> Tertullianus, *Apologeticum*, XIX[936]

In what manner was the wisdom of Solomon preserved, and where could it be found, apart from the three books attributed to him that were included in the Jewish and Christian bibles, and apart from the mentions made thereof in the Talmudic literature? Unlike Jesus, Solomon was no preacher, his teachings transformed into oral tradition. If indeed knowledge-seekers traveled the earth to hear him, where are the accounts they must surely have recorded upon return to their lands? That Solomon's fabled wisdom seemed to have left few marks was a gap the legendary tradition was called upon to fill, particularly as the middle ages saw parts of the Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian corpus adopted into Western culture.

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935 This was an attempt, Del Soldato writes, to describe "the human, intellectual, and theological perfection of Aristotle, which could be saved by rejecting any dissonant voices, even those that were part of the same school and tradition". Del Soldato (2007, p. 546). And see Melamed (2010, p. 193), which relies on Chroust (1945).

936 "Extreme antiquity gives books authority", trans. Terrot Reaveley Glover, Tertullius (1984, pp. 92–93).

Solomon's afterlife began in the Hellenistic period, as various literary genres emerged. Libraries, both public and private, were established beyond the walls of temples and royal palaces[937]; and books became a sought-after, popular "commodity" via copiers and booksellers, to the extent that their very popularity became a subject of satire. Seneca (4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.), for example, wrote of the plethora of books suddenly in existence and of those who purchased them not in order to read but to impress others and decorate their homes.[938] Authors composed books on diverse subjects; according to Diogenes Laërtius, the Aristotelian corpus alone numbered 400 works. Nothing of this sort existed in the Jewish culture of the Hellenic and Roman periods, although books were accorded significant status in "sectarian" Jewish culture (the mythological Enoch, as we have seen, was said to have written 356 books under the guidance of the angel Uriel[939]—but this was strictly a legendary, or mythological, library). Jewish sources from these periods mention only a few prolific authors, and certainly none who wrote in a broad range of intellectual or literary spheres; nor have we evidence of the existence of Jewish libraries parallel to those established by the Romans, Greeks, and Christians, such as the library established by Pamphilus (d. 309) in Caesarea, which would later became the property of Eusebius.[940] Only in the Middle Ages do we find Jews who own large private libraries. A story in the sixteenth-century *Sefer haYashar* reflects the value ascribed to a collection of books as a reserve (and representation) of wisdom. The story relates that when Roman soldiers looted Jerusalem after its destruction by Titus, a general named Cidrus discovered a barrel full of books about religion, history and the like. He included these in his spoils, brought them to Seville, and from there several books found their way to Naples, where *Sefer haYashar* was written.[941] Such instances notwithstanding, the corpus of medieval Jewish manuscripts is meager compared to the great number of books and libraries in the Western culture of the period, or to the extensive project of manuscript reproduction the latter supported.

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937 For example, it was said of Marcus Mettius Epaphroditus, a freed slave who wrote commentaries on Homer, that he owned 30,000 books (scrolls).

938 *De tranquillitate*, 9. In his satire, *Adversus indoctum et libros multos ementem* (The Ignorant Book-Collector), the second-century Lucian mocks a wealthy man who accumulates books but is incapable of reading them. Lucian of Samosata (1969, pp. 175–212).

939 1 Enoch 2:10–11. These books were passed down from generation to generation; thus, for example, Enoch gives them to his son Methuselah (1 Enoch 1:1–2, 68).

940 See Grafton and Williams (2006).

941 *Sefer HaYashar*, Dan (1986, pp. 37–38). Not to be confused with a popular thirteenth-century book of *musar* by this name, whose author is unknown, and which employs Aristotelian concepts. See also Bar-Levav (2006, 2011).

The relative lack of Jewish libraries does not signify an absence of literary activity: the Hellenic and Roman periods saw the development of Jewish apocryphal literature and Jewish Hellenistic literature, including the books of Josephus, Philo, and others whose work has not survived. During this lengthy period *The Wisdom of Solomon*, *Psalms of Solomon*, and *The Testament of Solomon* were added to Solomon's supposed oeuvre, as were books of magic such as the eleventh-century *Salomonis libri de gemmis et daemonibus* by the Byzantine historian Niketas (c.1155–1217), who enumerated other magical books by Solomon.[942]

The Middle Ages saw a growing perception within the Jewish cultures of Spain, Provence, Italy, and Ashkenaz of books, and collections of books, as an asset of great value.[943] The existing corpus of Hebrew-language books being small, a legendary tradition developed of ascribing to Solomon (who cautioned that "of making many books there is no end"[944]) the authorship of a nonexistent pseudo-Solomonic corpus relating to philosophy and science. Solomon, as we have seen in previous chapters, was a natural choice to be credited with (invented) work in those fields; still, such works were far outnumbered by the number of similarly invented books on matters arcane and magical that were attributed to him, and needless to say the total number of books ascribed to him is minuscule compared to those supposedly written by Aristotle, or various other Hellenist and Roman writers.

It would be an exaggeration—perhaps even an invention—to claim that the trend of attributing the authorship of invented works to Solomon emerged consciously from the desire to create a comprehensive "ancient" Jewish library that could equal the Aristotelian corpus. It does seem, however, that the invention of the pseudo-Solomonic corpus resulted from the fact that, without the background of a "written cannon", both the tradition relating to Solomon's wisdom and the legend that he was Aristotle's teacher lacked a vital element. Thus, the "books of Solomon" functioned as a substitute of sorts for the absent literature of the Second Temple period, which either never existed or had been lost and forgotten.

The Sages themselves attributed no books to Solomon other than the three mentioned in the Bible. They were unfazed by the absence of a Jewish "library" and felt no compulsion to credit books to Solomon other than those three. The

942 I have already mentioned (Chapter Seven) the *Ars Notoria*. For a list of magical manuscripts attributed to Solomon see Butler (1998, pp. 47–48).

943 This awareness was expressed in the interest taken in the process of creating a book, the ways of preserving it, the rules governing its lending and borrowing, etc. See in Vol. II, Book VI, pp. 421–433 of Dinur (1972).

944 Ecclesiastes 12:12.

sages of medieval times, however, were considerably more occupied with the question of his literary output. Judah Halevi explained the relative dearth of Jewish books written by Solomon by arguing that the king had indeed recorded all his wisdom, but that the books were translated into the language of the Chaldeans and the source was lost.[945] R. Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides, 1288–1344), the prolific Provençal scholar and rigid opponent of Aristotelian philosophy,[946] had a different explanation. According to him, Solomon had written only those books that were inspired by the divine spirit. Maimonides cited only *The Wisdom of Solomon*; R. Judah he-Ḥasid, the major figure in the Ashkenazi Chasidic movement, asserted in *Sefer Hasidim* that Solomon refrained from composing books for fear that those reading them would be distracted from their study of the Torah or—worse yet—come to rely on the sciences and abandon the Torah and its commandments. Yosef Taitazak, among those exiled from Spain, described ten books attributed to Solomon that had been hidden in earlier times for fear that non-Jewish scholars would claim them as their own; these books, he predicted, would reemerge with the coming of the Messiah.[947]

In contrast to this apologetic strategy, there developed a separate trend of attributing to Solomon the authorship of any number of books—a diverse pseudo-Solomonic corpus. Thus, R. Shem Tov Joseph Falaquera wrote in *Sefer ha-Ma'alot* that Solomon had written sixty-five books, whose names he did not provide. One writer who claimed to know the identities of several of these was the Muslim writer Abū Aflaḥ of Syracuse, of whom little is otherwise known. In the enigmatic *Sefer haTamar* (Book of the Palem Tree), which was translated from Arabic into Hebrew, probably in Provence in the fifteenth century, Abū Aflaḥ wrote: "These are the articles called the articles of Saliman al-Yahud, one of the ancient kings: the *Book of Experiments*, *Book of Old Age*, *Book of Proverbs*, *Book of Perfection*, *Book of Exploits*, *Book of Uniqueness*, *Book of the Sermon*, *Book of Calling for Security*, *Book of Desire*, *Book of the Upright*, *Book of Medications*, *Book of Choices*, *Book of Maintaining Agility*, *Book of Sects of Scholars*, *Book of Purposes*"[948]; he proceeded to cite excerpts from these books.

In his introduction to Abū Aflaḥ's work, Gershom Scholem wrote that the author objected to and even derided hermeneutics, contrasting that science with Solomon's wisdom, from which he cited twenty enigmatic maxims. Regarding Solomon, Abū Aflaḥ wrote that the former had delved into the wisdom of reli-

945 *Kuzari* 1:63, 2:66.
946 Among his writings is *Milhamot Ha-Shem* (The Wars of the Lord, 1325).
947 Scholem (1971–1978).
948 Scholem (1926, p. 26).

gion from his boyhood and "wrote renowned books about it", some of which were translated into Arabic, others of which appeared anonymously.

Part of another book by Abū Aflaḥ—*Mother of the King*—was included in a book by Gershon ben Solomon of Arles, Provence, entitled *Sha'arei Shamayim* (Gates of Heaven, printed in Venice in 1547). The latter book relates that the Queen of Sheba brought King Solomon a precious miraculous stone, which Solomon would later discuss in a book he composed titled *Sefer haMatzpen* (The Compass). In *Solomon's Desire,* a commentary on the Song of Songs, Johanan Alemanno provided a similar description of Solomon's books: "those that came out in our language [Hebrew] and those that did not. And those that did are not attributed to him, but he was the original author undoubtedly". He further mentioned 23 books about which he had allegedly learned from Apollonius of Tyana. Jacob ben David Provençal claimed that the Christians had stolen Solomon's great *Book of the Mystery of Nature*; while *Sefer haMeshiv* (Book of the Respondent), a Kabbalistic-mystic work demonizing philosophy that was written in Spain before the expulsion,[949] lists the names of ten secret books by Solomon, including *The Book of Correcting Traits*, *The Book of the Garden of Eden*, *The Secret of Hell*, and *The Wisdom of the Heavens in the Secret Knowledge of the Stars and Zodiac*.

This Jewish legendary tradition would eventually make its way into Western culture. Roger Bacon addressed it in his *Opus*, though he distorts Josephus' words when he writes that Solomon authored 4,005 books. Bacon's utopian novel *New Atlantis* (1627) describes an academy for scientific research named the "House of Solomon, wherein may be found "a few parts" of Solomon's books; these included a *Book of the History of Science*, which dealt with the subject of natural philosophy.

All the writers noted above supplied the names of books putatively written by Solomon in order to reinforce their various worldviews. The Jewish Italian philosopher and Kabbalist Abraham Jagel (1552–1623) solved the puzzle of how Solomon's many books made their way to other nations by claiming in his own *Bet Ya'ar haLevanon* that Solomon gifted books to those kings who came from far-off lands to hear his wisdom, and that "to this very day" some of these books exist in Armenia and the kingdom of Sheba. (The only book Yagel alludes to by name is the *Book of Medications*.) Yet the weakness of this legendary tradition lay in the fact that the most it could do was list the names of Solomon's lost books; little information could be supplied regarding their supposed content. Nor did it employ the tactic of fabrication, namely of presenting an existing text as a

949 Idel (1983c).

lost manuscript of Solomon's, miraculously discovered.[950] At any event, the tradition has not persisted into modern times; in this era no lost book in any sphere of science has been attributed to Solomon, although a claim has been made that since in his three books Solomon was writing for a broad contemporary public, he chose parables that would be comprehensible to that public and "concealed" his vast scientific knowledge. In the story "Solomon's Wisdom Excelled", which repeats these pretexts, S. Y. Agnon offers his own explanation. Solomon was apprehensive of commentators who stripped from texts their sacred meaning and cloaked them in fallacious interpretations. It was these ignorant, vulgar, and envious men who were to blame for the fact that we do not, today, possess Solomon's books; commentators of that ilk exist to this very day.[951]

950 Speyer (1970).

951 Agnon (1963). *Kol kitvei sipurav shel Shmuel Yosef Agnon*, v. 7: "*Ad Hena*" (To This Day), Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, pp. 299 – 304.