

DURAN, PROFIAT (c.1345–1414), also known as Efod (Hebrew acronym of “I, Profiat Duran”); Spanish grammarian, philosopher, and apologist. Duran was born in Perpignan but later lived in Catalonia. After the persecutions of 1391, he seems to have been forcibly converted to Christianity and for a number of years, under the name of Honoratus de Bonafide, served as astrologer to King Juan I of Aragon. He is chiefly remembered for his two polemical works against Christianity. In his *Iggeret al Tehi ka-Avotekha* (“Don’t Be Like Your Fathers”; Constantinople, 1570) he showed in a witty style the inconsistencies between Christian doctrines and the findings of Aristotelian philosophy. The work takes the form of a letter to David Bont Bonjorn, who was a convinced Jewish convert to Christianity. Initially, it was misunderstood by its Christian readers, who called it *Alteca Boteca* (a jumbled pronunciation of the Hebrew title) and thought the title was meant literally, not ironically. Subsequently, when they grasped its real import, they publicly condemned and burned it. Later, Yosef ibn Shem Tov wrote a commentary on it. Duran’s other polemical work, composed with the encouragement of Hasda’i ben Avraham *Crescas, was *Sefer Kelimat ha-Goyyim*. In this he analyzed such Christian doctrines as the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, and original sin, with the object of showing how they were incompatible with the teachings of the New Testament. He also pointed out errors in the Vulgate and argued that they were the result of St. Jerome having been helped by a less than knowledgeable Jew, resulting in misquotation of the Hebrew Bible by Jerome and other church fathers. Duran also wrote a commentary on Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed*, notes on Averroës’s commentary on the *Almagest*, a commentary on parts of Avraham *ibn Ezra’s commentary on the Torah, various astronomical treatises, a criticism of Yosef ibn Nahamias’s *Or ‘Olam*, a letter of condolence to R. Avraham ben Yitshaq ha-Levi that contains many of his philosophical ideas, and a history of the persecution of the Jews from the time of the Second Temple, which is now lost. In addition, he produced a grammatical work, the *Ma’aseh Efod*, which describes how Hebrew was pronounced by the Spanish community in the fourteenth century. In the introduction, he affirmed his belief in the perfection of the Torah and argued that the preservation of Torah was the reason for Jewish existence. At the same time he maintained that neither philosophical nor kabbalistic speculation were incompatible with the study of Torah. Duran’s works were used by later Jewish apologists such as Yosef ibn Shem Tov and Shem Tov ibn Shaprut. *Iggeret al Tehi ka-Avotekha* and *Sefer Kelimat ha-Goyyim* were published by J. D. Eisenstein in his *Otsar Vikkuhim* (1928).

• Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1961–1966). Maud Natasha Kozodoy, “A Study of the Life and Works of Profiat Duran,” Ph.D. dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary, 2006.

DURAN FAMILY, a family of rabbis and scholars.

Shim'on ben Tsemah Duran (1361–1444), rabbinic authority and religious philosopher known by the acronym **Rashbats**. He studied in his native Majorca and in Aragon. In addition to his religious education, he studied medicine and practiced in Majorca. After losing all of his belongings in the 1391 anti-Jewish outbreak, he moved to Algiers, where he served as a member of the *beit din* of *Yitshaq ben Sheshet Perfet (whom he succeeded as chief rabbi of Algiers in 1408). Because this was a full-time occupation, he had to break precedent and accept a salary, and he wrote *responsa* permitting sages to receive payment from community funds. His ordinances (*taqqanot*) on matrimonial matters retained their validity among North African Jewry for centuries. As a halakhist, he opposed stringency that had no Talmudic backing and stressed the use of logic in reaching legal decisions.

He was strongly influenced by Maimonides but did not accept certain of his philosophical views. He rejected Maimonides’ opinion that the divine attributes were all negative and asserted that they were positive and identical with the essence of God. He held that humans receive a special soul from God (*neshamah*), which is responsible for their rationality, and this soul has the potentiality of immortality, depending upon the bearer’s righteousness. He followed Maimonides’ theory of prophecy but laid greater stress on the component of God’s grace. He reduced the number of fundamental principles to three: the existence of God, the divine origin of the Torah through revelation, and the doctrine of reward and punishment (a formulation adopted by Yosef *Albo).

Duran was an enthusiastic follower of the Kabbalah, which he often quoted in his writings. He was also an outstanding polemicist. In his writings against the *Karaites, he stressed the oral law as the key to understanding the written law. He was familiar with Christian writings, holding that they had to be studied in order to be refuted. In his anti-Christian polemics, he argued that Jesus and his disciples observed the commandments and that his crucifixion was not the result of neglect of the Torah but because of messianic claims. In disputes with Muslims, he sought to prove the human origin of the Qur’an.

Duran’s major work, *Magen Avot* (Leghorn, 1785; Vienna, 1864), covers subjects other than philosophy and relates to many areas of science. His writings include over nine hundred collected *responsa* (*Teshuvot Shim'on ben Tsemah*, usually known by the acronym *Tashbetz* [Amsterdam, 1738–1741; Lwów, 1891]) and branch out beyond legal matters to such fields as mathematics, astronomy, and Hebrew grammar. Duran also wrote *piyyutim*, in addition to commentaries on earlier poems.

Shelomo ben Shim'on Duran (c. 1400–1467), known by the acronym **Rashbash**; rabbi in Algiers

and son of Shim'on ben Tsemaḥ Duran. He studied with his father; his education extended beyond Jewish subjects to medicine, the natural sciences, and philosophy. A member of his father's *beit din*, he succeeded him after his death as rabbi of Algiers. Like his father, he was for many generations regarded as an outstanding authority by the Jews of North Africa. His main works are his *responsa*, published in *Teshuvot ha-Rashbash* (Leghorn, 1742), which deal not only with halakhic issues but also with matters of faith and philosophy, and *Tiqqun Soferim* (Leghorn, 1744) on contract law. Duran also wrote the polemical *Milhemet Mitsvah* (in J. D. Eisenstein, *Otsar Vikkukhim* [1928], pp. 134ff.) to refute the attacks of the apostate Yehoshu'a Lorki on the Talmud.

Tsemaḥ ben Shelomo Duran (15th cent.), rabbinical scholar in Algiers; second son of Shelomo ben Shim'on Duran. He was *dayyan* in Algiers, together with his two brothers Aharon and Shim'on, and was well-versed in medicine, philosophy, and Kabbalah, toward which his attitude was positive. He laid down important rulings concerning Marranos, whom he regarded as halakhically Jewish. Some of his *responsa* are quoted by Yosef Karo, while one hundred fifty of his *responsa* were printed together with those of his brother Shim'on in *Yakhin u-Vo'az* (Leghorn, 1782).

• **Shim'on ben Tsemaḥ Duran:** "The Principles of Judaism according to Rabbi Simon ben Zemah Duran," Ph.D. dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1970. Isidore Epstein, *Studies in the Communal Life of the Jews of Spain as Reflected in the Responsa of Rabbi Solomon ben Adreth and Rabbi Simon ben Zemah Duran* (New York, 1968). **Shelomo ben Shim'on Duran:** Shalom Bar-Asher, "Basic Trends in the History of the Jews of the Maghreb and the Rise of the Center in Algiers, 1391-1492," *Pe'amim* 31 (1987): 22-39, in Hebrew. Abraham M. Hershman, *Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Peret and His Times* (New York, 1973). Abraham Shusterman, "A Study in Fifteenth-Century Spanish-Jewish Polemics: As Reflected in the Writings of the Duran Family," rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1930.

—SHALOM BAR-ASHER

DURESS (Heb. *ones*), forcing a person to speak or perform an act, or to abstain from acting or speaking, against the person's will. According to the Talmud, individuals are responsible for their actions only if they are initiated and performed of their own free will (*B. Q.* 28b). This principle is derived from *Deuteronomy* 22.25-28, according to which a betrothed virgin who has been raped is freed from all penalty, since she acted under compulsion (*Ned.* 27a). While various types of duress are recognized by *halakhah*, compulsion as grounds for extenuating circumstances refers only to physical violence or a threat to the life of the person concerned (following the phrase in *Lv.* 18.5, "he shall live by them [the commandments]," that is, not die by them [*Ket.* 33b]). Compulsion to commit one of the three cardinal sins—idolatry, murder, or an adulterous or incestuous act (*San.* 74a)—is to be resisted even at the cost of one's life. However, a person who violates one of these three precepts under duress remains unpunished by human courts (Yitshaq ben Sheshet Peret, *Resp.* 4, 11, 387). A divorce granted under duress is invalid, and a woman who is forced to agree to wedlock is considered unmarried by law. Oaths or vows

taken under duress are also invalid and carry neither obligation nor penalty. Similarly, a gift bestowed under duress may be rescinded (Shemu'el ben Me'ir on *B.B.* 47b), but a sale or purchase concluded under similar circumstances remains valid (*Shulhan 'Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat* 205.1). Saving one's life by means of another's property is permitted, but compensation must be made to the owner of the property; likewise, an injury caused under duress to one's fellow must still be compensated (*B. Q.* 27a).

• Elisha C. Benzmira, "Necessity and Duress in Jewish Criminal Law: A Monograph on the Law of *Ones*," Dr. of Law thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1979. Arnold N. Enker, *Duress and Necessity in the Criminal Law* (Ramat Gan, 1977), in Hebrew and English.

DUSTAN (Dositheans), *Samaritan sect. Details are obscure; however, there are accounts of such a sect from the fourth century BCE and from the fourth century CE. The sect is mentioned in Samaritan sources, as well as by the church fathers and Muslim writers. Descriptions of the earlier sect mention various ways in which it diverged from the main Samaritan group, including differences in calendar, liturgy, and ritual law. The later Dustan sect had variations in the biblical text and in the calendar, and they observed all festivals on Sabbaths. The original sect may have continued to exist for a considerable time, and further sects may have derived from it.

• Stanley J. Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 17 (Leiden, 1976).

DUTY (Heb. *hovah*), an obligation or due, payable to God or to another person. The rabbinic idiom for fulfilling one's duty, "*yots ei yedei hovato*," literally means emerging from the hold of one's obligation. *Hovah* is distinct from **mitsvah*, which can also signify a commendable, but not necessarily obligatory, action (*reshut*); for example, each of the three daily prayer services is a *mitsvah*, but whereas the morning and afternoon services are obligatory, the evening service is *reshut*. The rabbis insist that the commandments are to be observed as a duty and not in order to be rewarded (*Avot* 1.3). The *Hovot ha-Levavot* by *Bahya ben Yosef ibn Paquda' distinguishes between the duties of the spiritual life and the ceremonial and practical obligations, the "duties of the limbs." The rabbis considered the performance of positively commanded actions, which expressed the desire to obey God's will, morally superior to voluntary good deeds.

Medieval philosophers maintained that duties of a moral nature, as distinct from ritual commandments, were independent of divine revelation since human reason and conscience would have formulated them. The philosopher Immanuel Kant asserted that true ethics must be "autonomous." A system of duties imposed by an "outside," that is heteronomous, source (e.g., God as in the case of Judaism) was of necessity inferior. This issue played an important role in the