

Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah (Harvard Judaic Monographs)

Bernard Septimus



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This study of the sometimes stormy career of a brilliant and colorful talmudist offers a broad picture of medieval Hispano-Jewish culture.

Meir Abulafia (ca. 1165-1244), commonly called Ramah, was born into the old Jewish aristocracy of Muslim Spain and educated in the best Judeo-Arabic tradition, but lived his whole life under the new political and cultural realities of Christian Spain. Mr. Septimus portrays Ramah's career as a lawyer, exegete, poet, and theologian in an age of rapid cultural change. His book describes the intellectual cross-fertilization and conflict that resulted from new connections with European Jewish communities to the north. It focuses, in particular, on the great controversy over the philosophical rationalism of Maimonides, which Ramah initiated and in which he played a major role. This clash dominated Jewish intellectual history for three centuries and parallels important developments in Latin Christendom.

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