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Philosophy and Science in Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Bible

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During the Middle Ages – the age of commentary par excellence – four distinct methods of Jewish biblical exegesis developed. These methods, formalized in the thirteenth century, were designated by the acronym PaRDeS. The four methods were *peshat*, the literal/grammatical/historical/contextual method of interpretation; *remez*, the philosophical/allegorical approach; *derash*, the method of rabbinic midrash; and *sod*, the esoteric method of the kabbalists, who read the Bible through the ten *sefirot*, the names of God, and letter permutations.[1]

This chapter introduces the second of these four canonical methods of interpretation. It surveys the main philosopher-exegetes and schools of thought during the Middle Ages by their period and geographical location. These include the rise of philosophical-theological exegesis in the Islamic East; the exegetical traditions of the Islamic West, especially in al-Andalus; the Maimonidean traditions in Provence, Italy, and to a lesser extent Christian Spain; and the post-Maimonidean developments in Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen. The final section focuses on anti-philosophical and anti-Maimonidean traditions of exegesis. These traditions developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, often as a direct response to the spread of Maimonideanism, and continued into the fifteenth century, when Jews were influenced by contemporary trends of anti-Aristotelianism.

One preliminary note about terminology: The survey focuses on philosophical exegesis in general, but attempts to single out examples that relate to subjects of scientific interest in a more narrow sense. In the Middle Ages, philosophy included what we call today "science," that is, discussions based on or related to empirically observed phenomena. In addition, it should be noted that a complete survey of the history of philosophy and exegesis would need to consider a wide variety of sources, including philosophical and theological summas, polemical tracts, controversial letters, popular literature, philosophical sermons, and proper commentaries on the Bible. In this chapter I focus primarily on biblical commentaries, with only occasional reference to the cognate literature. A complete study of all the relevant literature would require a much larger investigation.

[1] I would like to thank Gad Freudenthal, Angela Jaffray, and Tzvi Langermann for many helpful comments and suggestions. For the history of PaRDeS, see especially E. Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in A. Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible to the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 313–55; and most recently M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 429–37.

THE ISLAMIC EAST

The history of medieval Jewish philosophy, science, and exegesis begins in the Islamic East. Under the influence of Christian and Islamic traditions and in response to the spread of philosophy, a distinct Jewish commentary tradition developed.

What was the character of early Islam, and how did it contribute to a Jewish exegetical tradition? During the first three centuries of Islam, a remarkably open intellectual environment developed. The conquest of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt brought the ancient centers of learning under the rule of Islam. Arabic became the common language, but separate religious groups continued to thrive. In particular, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians were protected and were allowed to continue their traditions. Although Greek paganism was not tolerated, the classical texts were translated into Arabic and stimulated the development of an Arabic philosophical and scientific tradition.[2]

This open cultural and intellectual environment produced some interesting results. Freethinkers such as al-Rāzī, among the Muslims, and Ḥiwi al-Balkhi, among the Jews, wrote critiques of traditional religion and Scripture.[3] Philosophical and theological sessions took place in the mosques and included members from all the different traditions: The only requirement for participation was that one check religious dogma at the door.[4] In response, there developed Islamic theological and exegetical traditions interested in using philosophy to explain Scripture, or to defend Scripture against philosophy. Most famous is the Mu'tazilite school of Kalām, which aimed to show that Scripture is not inconsistent in any way with the findings of reason.

This fluid and open cultural setting is exemplified in the life and work of the first known Jewish verse-by-verse commentator on the Bible. Dāwūd al-Muqammiṣ (ninth century) converted to Christianity and studied in the Christian schools before returning to the religion of his fathers.[5] In addition to his theological summa, entitled *Twenty Chapters*, he also produced Judeo-Arabic commentaries on Genesis and Ecclesiastes. Only one fragment of the Genesis commentary survives, but as a later report testifies, al-Muqammiṣ drew extensively from the Syriac tradition.[6] Thus this early Judeo-Arabic commentary on the Bible grew out of a direct encounter with Eastern Christianity.[7]

[2] For background on all these developments, see J. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); idem, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and His Circle* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[3] For al-Rāzī and other "heretics" in Islam, see S. Stroumsa, *Freethinkers in Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). For Ḥiwi, see I. Davidson, *Saadia's Polemic against Hiwi al-Balkhi* (New York, 1915); J. Rosenthal, "Ḥiwi al-Balkhi – A Comparative Study," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 38 (1947/8): 317–42, 419–30; 39 (1948/9): 79–94.

[4] For reports about the *majālis*, see, e.g., Kraemer, *Humanism*, p. 59; Y. T. Langermann, "Saadya and the Sciences," in idem, *The Jews and the Sciences in the Middle Ages* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1999), p. 13 n. 37.

[5] See S. Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's Twenty Chapters* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[6] See the report by al-Qirqisānī, trans. L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 54: "Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Raqqī, known as al-Muqammis, has written a fine book containing a commentary on Genesis, which he translated from the commentaries of the Syrians." See also the discussion by S. Stroumsa, "What is Man: Psalm 8:4–5 in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Exegesis in Arabic," *Henoch* 14 (1992): 283–91.

[7] In light of this, it is worth suggesting the possibility that Philo of Alexandria, the great Jewish Hellenistic philosophical exegete of Late Antiquity, might have influenced medieval Jewish exegetes indirectly through Syriac Christianity. For some investigation in this direction, see D. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 16; B. Chiesa, "Dawud al-Muqammis e la sua opera," *Henoch* 18 (1996): 131–7.

In the 100 years after Dāwūd, two related, but hostile and adversarial, traditions emerged. The Karaites, a Jewish sect that rejected the rabbinic tradition, developed a strongly grammatical approach to Scripture. Although some of the Karaite exegetes were opposed to philosophy, others embraced it and cultivated a rationalistic hermeneutic.[8] For example, Jacob al-Qirqisānī (tenth century) defended the use of reason in the introduction to his commentary on Genesis and made use of scientific and philosophical ideas in his explication of individual verses.[9] His defense of reason in the preface to the Genesis commentary reads as follows:

> Before beginning this we must prove the validity of rational speculation and philosophical postulates from Scripture by mentioning some passages in it which point and lead to them. We shall do this because some of our scholars, upon hearing an interpretation interspersed with matters pertaining to philosophical speculation, are frightened away from it, regarding it as superfluous and unnecessary; indeed, some of them consider it improper and even forbidden. But this is only because of their ignorance and the poverty of their knowledge. Were the eyes of their mind open, they would have learned that these things are tools for the understanding of Scripture and ladders and bridges toward the perception of revealed truth, inasmuch as the truth of Scripture and religion can be comprehended only by reason. Since the philosophical postulates, too, are built upon rational deductions based in their turn upon the knowledge of things perceived by the human senses and logical axioms, he who rejects rational and philosophical opinions thereby denies all data posited by cogitation or sense perception.[10]

The Rabbanites, the heirs of the rabbinic tradition and defenders of midrash, also embraced the new traditions and methods,[11] mainly due to the efforts of Saadia Gaon (882–942). Saadia hailed from Egypt, but moved to Iraq where he ascended to the position of Gaon in the ancient rabbinic academy of Sura.[12] Writing in Arabic rather than Aramaic or Hebrew, and borrowing and adapting the philosophical and literary trends of his time, he managed to completely transform the literary character of Rabbinic Judaism.[13]

[8] For Karaite exegesis, both grammatical and philosophical/theological, see especially D. Frank, *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); and see, in general, *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. M. Polliack (Leiden: Brill, 2003), especially the chapters by H. Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," pp. 339–62, and M. Polliack, "Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," pp. 363–413. Note that with the opening of the Firkovich collections in St. Petersburg, a team of scholars has been organized, primarily in Israel, to edit and translate Karaite commentaries and theological works. The first fruits are two manuscript catalogues: *Judaeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovich Collections: The Works of Yusuf al-Basir – A Sample Catalogue, Texts and Studies*, ed. D. Sklare, with H. Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1997) (Heb.); *Judaeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovich Collections: Yefet ben ʿEli al-Basri, Commentary on Genesis – A Sample Catalogue, Texts and Studies*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, S. Butbul, S. Stroumsa, and D. Sklare (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2000) (Heb.).

[9] For examples, see Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 53–68; H. Ben-Shammai, "The Doctrines of Religious Thought of Abū Yūsuf Yaʿaqūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet b. ʿEli," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977 (Heb.); idem, "Studies in Karaite Atomism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985): 243–98.

[10] Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 54–5.

[11] For background on the Rabbanites, see in general R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); idem, "The Geonim of Babylonia as Biblical Exegetes," in M. Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Vol. 1, Part 2, *The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), pp. 74–88.

[12] There is a considerable literature on Saadia. The foundational biography by H. Malter, *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1921), remains extremely useful. See also, in addition to the recent studies by Brody cited in the previous note, his *Rav Seʿadyah Gaʾon* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2006) (Heb.).

[13] For the literary developments, see especially R. Drory, *The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic Literary Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1988) (Heb.); idem, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Saadia was a zealous defender of Judaism and the rabbinic tradition. Much of his tumultuous career was devoted to polemics. He wrote controversial treatises against freethinking critics of the Bible and against the Karaites and included attacks on Christianity in his philosophical work and commentaries on the Bible. Yet his defense of tradition is far from traditional; on the contrary, his work is very innovative. He borrowed the methods of his rivals in order to develop a defensible rabbinic tradition.

Saadia's commentaries are long and digressive.[14] They include systematic introductions, Arabic translation of each verse, and extensive commentary. In his interpretations of verses and stories Saadia touches on subjects in every area of learning, from the philological and poetic, to the legal and polemical, to the philosophical, theological, and scientific.[15] He justifies the use of reason with his famous exegetical rule: If a verse contradicts reason, sense experience, another verse, or tradition, then it needs to be interpreted nonliterally. The first part of this rule, as it appears in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, reads as follows:

> And so I declare, first of all, that it is a well-known fact that every statement found in the Bible is to be understood in its literal sense, except for those that cannot be so construed for one of the following four reasons: It may, for example, either be rejected by the observation of the senses, such as the statement: "And the man called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" [Gen 3:20], whereas we see that the ox and the lion are not the offspring of womankind. Hence we must conclude that the implication of the statement embraces human descendants only. Or else the literal sense may be negated by reason, such as that of the statement: "For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" [Deut 4:24]. Now fire is something created and defective, for it is subject to extinction. Hence it is logically inadmissible that God resemble it. We must, therefore, impute to this statement the meaning that God's punishment is like a consuming fire, in accordance with the remark made elsewhere in Scripture: "For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy" [Zeph 3:8].[16]

Like the Mu'tazilites, Saadia was concerned primarily with biblical anthropomorphisms. Yet the implication for philosophy and science in general is far-reaching, for sense experience and reason are made the final arbiters of scriptural meaning.

Saadia had extraordinary influence on the later rabbinic exegetical tradition. In the Islamic East, his imprint is found in the work of Samuel ben Hofni and others.[17] His writings

[14] All his extant commentaries have been edited and translated into Hebrew. See *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, ed. and trans. M. Zucker (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1984); *Saadia's Commentary on Psalms*, ed. and trans. Y. Qafih (Jerusalem: Qeren ha-Rav Yehudah Leyb ye-ishto Menuḥah Hanah Epshṭain she-'al yad ha-Aqademyah ha-Amerikanit le-mada'e ha-Yahadut, 1966); *Saadia's Commentary on Job*, ed. and trans. Y. Qafih (Jerusalem: Ha-Va'ad le-Hotsa'at Sifre Rasag, 1973); *Saadia's Commentary on Proverbs*, ed. and trans. Y. Qafih (Jerusalem: Ha-Va'ad le-Hotsa'at Sifre Rasag, 1975); *Saadia's Commentary on Daniel*, ed. and trans. Y. Qafih (Jerusalem: Ha-Va'ad le-Hotsa'at Sifre Rasag, 1981); *Rav Saadya's Commentary on Exodus*, collected, ed. and trans. Y. Ratzaby (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1998); *Rav Saadya's Commentary on Isaiah*, collected, ed. and trans. Y. Ratzaby (Qiryat Ono: Mekhon Mishnat ha-Rambam, 1994); Y. Ratzaby, "Excerpts from Rav Saadya's *Commentary on Lamentations*," *Bar-Ilan Annual* 20–1 (1983): 349–81 (Heb.). See also the English translations by M. Sokolow, "Sa'adya Gaon's Prologomenon to Psalms," *PAAJR* 51 (1984): 131–74; L. E. Goodman, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah Ben Joseph al-Fayyumi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); H. Ben-Shammai, "Saadia's Introduction to Daniel: Prophetic Calculation of the End of Days vs. Astrological and Magical Speculation," *Aleph* 4 (2004): 11–87.

[15] For examples, see G. Freudenthal, "Stoic Physics in the Writings of Rabbi Sa'adia Ga'on al-Fayyūmī and Its Aftermath in Medieval Jewish Mysticism," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 6 (1996): 113–36; Langermann, "Saadya and the Sciences"; idem, "A Citation from Saadia's Long Commentary to Genesis, in Hebrew Translation," *Aleph* 4 (2004): 293–7.

[16] Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 265–6.

[17] See A. Greenbaum, *The Biblical Commentary of Rav Samuel b. Hofni Gaon* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1978); D. Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

spread west as well, to North Africa and Islamic Spain, where they were read, used, and surpassed by a new generation of philosophers, exegetes, and philosopher-exegetes.

ISLAMIC SPAIN

The second major development in the history of medieval Jewish philosophical exegesis took place in Islamic Spain. There, during the tenth and especially eleventh and twelfth centuries, a very diverse Judeo-Arabic culture emerged. It included original contributions in legal scholarship, grammar, poetry, philosophy, theology, and biblical commentary.

The Spanish school of biblical exegesis was primarily concerned with grammar, rhetoric, and history; its members developed what is now called the Spanish school of *peshat*.[18] Yet they were interested in philosophy and philosophical exegesis as well. Thus Solomon Ibn Gabirol wrote Neoplatonic explications of the Garden of Eden and of Jacob's ladder; Moses Ibn Ezra devoted part of his *Maqālat al-Ḥadīqa fi ma'nā al-majāz wa-'l-ḥaqīqa* (Treatise of the Garden on Figurative and Literal Language) to the philosophical discussion of biblical words and stories, and exegesis is found throughout the philosophical-theological writings of figures such as Bahya Ibn Paqudah and Judah Halevi.[19] Even the grammarians and grammarian-exegetes per se, such as Judah Ibn Bal'am and Moses Ibn Giqatilla, were not averse to introducing philosophical or scientific ideas into their biblical commentaries.[20] Yet there were two exegetes in particular – Isaac Ibn Ghiyath (1038–89) and Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) – who embraced both *peshat* and philosophy. These two figures are the focus here.

Isaac Ibn Ghiyath was a scholar of varied talents; indeed, he is a perfect example of the diverse Jewish culture of Islamic Spain. Legal authority, poet, and biblical exegete, he introduced scientific and philosophical themes, mainly of a Neoplatonic orientation, into his poetry and exegesis. His only commentary is a long Judeo-Arabic explication of Ecclesiastes, which (like Saadia's commentaries) includes a systematic preface, an Arabic translation of each verse, and a verse-by-verse interpretation of the text.[21] The commentary includes detailed grammatical and rhetorical explications, as well as philosophical interpretations and digressions. According to Ibn Ghiyath, the use of philosophy is necessary because Solomon himself was a master of all the sciences and subtly alluded to every discipline in his work. As enumerated in Ibn Ghiyath's preface, the expertise shown by Solomon in Ecclesiastes

[18] For the development of Spanish *peshat*, see especially the work of Uriel Simon, of which a bibliography is available in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis* 5 (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000), pp. 21–9 (Heb.).

[19] For a survey of these developments, see S. Klein-Braslavy, "The Philosophical Exegesis," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 302–20; M. Cohen, "The Aesthetic Exegesis of Moses Ibn Ezra," ibid., pp. 282–301; and P. Fenton, *Philosophie et exégèse dans le jardin de la métaphore de Moïse Ibn Ezra, philosophe et poète andalou du XII^e siècle* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[20] See, e.g., the editions and Hebrew translations by M. Perez: *Rabbi Judah Ibn Bal'am's Commentary on Isaiah* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1992); *Rabbi Judah Ibn Bal'am's Commentary on Ezekiel* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000); *Rabbi Judah Ibn Bal'am's Commentary on Jeremiah* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002).

[21] The commentary was edited and translated by Y. Qafih, in *Hameš megillot* (Jerusalem: ha-Agudah le-hatsalat ginze Teman, 1962), pp. 157–296. For proof of Ibn Ghiyath's authorship, see S. Poznanski, "Aus Abu-l-Barakat Hibat-Allahs arabischen Kommentar zu Kohelet," *Zeitschrift für Hebraeische Bibliographie* 16 (1913): 32–6; S. Pines, "Toward the Study of Abû al-Barakât al-Baghdâdî's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*: Four Texts," *Tarbiz* 33 (1964): 198–213 (Heb.); Sh. Abramson, "Toward a Study of Isaac Ibn Ghiyath's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*," *Qiryat Sefer* 52 (1977): 156–72 (Heb.); H. Mittelman, "A Commentary on Ecclesiastes in Judeo-Arabic Ascribed to Isaac Ibn Ghiyath," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1999 (Heb.); idem, "Asceticism in the Commentary on Ecclesiastes Attributed to Ibn Ghiyath, with Comparison to Islamic Mysticism," *Da'at* 48 (2002): 57–80 (Heb.).

includes arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, natural science, music, medicine, logic, grammar, rhetoric, poetics, and metaphysics.[22]

Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most influential, exegete of the Andalusian tradition was Abraham Ibn Ezra. Although he wrote in Hebrew rather than Arabic and completed his works outside of Islamic Spain, his writings represent the final flowering of Spanish *peshat*.

Ibn Ezra was a prolific author. He composed poetry; works of grammar and philosophy; introductions to mathematics, astronomy, and astrology; and biblical commentaries, often producing two versions of the same text. His extant biblical commentaries include explications of the Pentateuch, Isaiah, the twelve Minor Prophets, Psalms, Job, the Five Scrolls, and Daniel. Most of these commentaries include philosophical and scientific digressions. His main interest is in mathematics, astronomy, and astrology, but he touches on other subjects as well, especially Neoplatonic philosophy.[23]

The most famous excursus in Ibn Ezra's commentaries is in his long commentary on Exodus. After a brief explication of Exod. 33:20–1 ("And He said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live; And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock"), he proceeds with a detailed explanation of the names of God and the knowledge of God, in light of arithmetic and arithmology; he then presents a lengthy introduction to astrology and astronomy, including discussion of the 12 constellations, 7 planets, 48 forms, 120 conjunctions, and 7 climes and of the relationship between celestial movements and the four elements. He ends his excursus with an attempted resolution to the problem of astral determinism – that human beings can overcome celestial causation through prophecy.[24] This he supports with a parable, perhaps borrowed from *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*,[25] and concludes as follows:

> Imagine the following: The seven moving stars are like horses that run along a path. They do not run with the intention of doing good or bad. They act in accordance with their nature. Now imagine that a blind man is in their path. The blind man does not know how the horses act. He does not know

[22] See *Hamēš megillot*, p. 168. For examples of science in the commentary, see G. Vajda, "Quelques observations en marge du commentaire d'Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth sur l'Ecclésiastes," *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 518–27; idem, "Ecclésiastes XII, 2–7 interprété par un auteur juif d'Andalousie du XI^e siècle," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 27 (1982): 33–46.

[23] For mathematics, astronomy, and astrology in his commentaries, see Y. T. Langermann, "Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of Abraham Ibn Ezra," in I. Twersky and J. Harris, eds., *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 28–85; D. Schwartz, *Astrology and Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999) (Heb.); idem, *Studies in Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); S. Sela, *Astrology and Exegesis in the Thought of Abraham Ibn Ezra* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999) (Heb.); idem, *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); M. Gómez-Aranda, "Ecl 12,1–7 interpretado por Abraham Ibn Ezra," *Sefarad* 52 (1992): 113–21; idem, ed. and trans., *El Comentario de Abraham Ibn Ezra al Libro del Eclesiastés* (Madrid: Instituto de Filología del CSIC, Departamento de Filología Bíblica y de Oriente Antiguo, 1994); idem, "Teorías astronómicas y astrológicas en el Comentario de Abraham Ibn Ezra al Libro del Eclesiastés," *Sefarad* 55 (1995): 257–72; idem, "Aspectos científicos en el comentario de Abraham Ibn Ezra al Libro de Job," *Henoch* 23 (2001): 81–96. Most recently, Josefina Rodríguez Arribas ("La Astrología en la Exégesis de Abraham Ibn Ezra," Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2004), has singled out all or most of the astrological digressions, translated them into Spanish, and provided brief commentary. I thank her for sending me a copy of her dissertation. For Ibn Ezra's philosophy more generally, see J. Cohen, *The Philosophical Thought of Ibn Ezra* (Rishon le-Zion: Shai, 1996) (Heb.).

[24] This excursus has been discussed most fully by Sela, *Astrology and Exegesis*, Part 1. For the discussion of astral determinism, see also C. H. Manekin, "Freedom within Reason? Gersonides on Human Choice," in C. H. Manekin, ed., *Freedom and Moral Responsibility*, (College Park: University Press of Maryland, 1997), pp. 165–204, especially the appendix.

[25] For this suggestion, see Langermann, "Some Astrological Themes," p. 80 n. 67.

when they go to the right and when they go to the left. The blind man depends on a person with sight who knows the way the horses run. Now the person with sight will guard the blind man. When the horses run to one side he will lead the blind person to the other side. The course of the horse's running does not change but the blind man is saved. It is because of this that Scripture states: "The sun and the moon and the stars even all the host of heaven which the Lord thy God has allotted unto all the peoples under the whole heaven" [Deut 4:19]. . . . This is what the Rabbis mean by "Israel has no constellation" as long as they keep the Torah. If Israel does not keep the Torah, then the star rules over them, as has been proven, for any conjunction combined with Aquarius is an evil arrangement. It results in harm befalling Israel. This is admitted by the astrologers.[26]

Ibn Ezra's commentaries were read widely in Christian Europe, where Hebrew rather than Arabic was the language of Jewish culture. In many cases, Jews in Europe had their first taste of the sciences through his commentaries on the Bible. Beginning in the thirteenth century and continuing into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a supercommentary tradition developed as well. The supercommentators generally focused on the philosophical and scientific exegesis. They provided relevant scientific background and explanation in their efforts to decode Ibn Ezra's unstated "secrets."[27]

MAIMONIDES AND MAIMONIDEANISM

A turning point in the history of exegesis, as in so many other areas, came with the work of Moses Maimonides, the last major Jewish scholar from Andalusia. Maimonides was born in Cordoba in 1138, fled the Muwahhid persecutions in 1148, and settled in Egypt, where he died in 1204.

Although Maimonides did not write a proper biblical commentary, his *Guide of the Perplexed* is largely concerned with exegesis. It presents a well-developed theory of philosophical interpretation, sets forth an allegorical lexicon, and gives model explications of key biblical texts. These texts include the story of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28), Moses' request for knowledge of God (Exodus 33), the story of creation and the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1–5), the chariot visions (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1 and 10), the Book of Job, the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22), and Jeremiah 9:22–3, which he explains in relation to philosophical debates about the final aim of human existence, whether active or contemplative. He also singles out and discusses other verses and stories in relation to miracles, prophecy, divine providence, and the problem of evil.[28]

[26] Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch*, trans. and annot. H. Norman Strickman and A. M. Silver, Vol. 2, Exodus (New York: Menorah, 1996), p. 702 (Long Commentary on Exod. 33:21).

[27] For the supercommentaries, see U. Simon, "Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries," in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra*, pp. 86–128; D. Schwartz, *Old Wine in New Bottles: The Philosophy of a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Neoplatonic Circle* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1996) (Heb.); idem, "On the Philosophical Interpretation of Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentaries," *Alei Sefer* 18 (1996): 114–71 (Heb.); idem, *Astrology and Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*; idem, *Amulets, Properties, and Rationalism in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2004), pp. 67–93 (Heb.); idem, *Studies in Astral Magic*; T. Visi, "The Early Ibn Ezra Supercommentaries: A Chapter in Medieval Jewish Intellectual History," Ph.D. dissertation, Central European University, Budapest, 2006.

[28] There is a large scholarship on Maimonides as exegete. See especially S. Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Stories about Adam/Man in Genesis* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1987) (Heb.); idem, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Story about the Creation of the World* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1988) (Heb.); idem, "Maimonides' Interpretations of Jacob's Dream about the Ladder," *Bar-Ilan Year Book* 22–3 (1988), 329–49 (Heb.); idem, "Maimonides' Commentaries to Proverbs 1:6," in M. Hallamish, ed., *'Alei Shefer*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), pp. 121–32 (Heb.); idem, *King Solomon and Philosophical Esotericism in the Thought of Maimonides* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996) (Heb.). For earlier research, see J. Dienstag, "Biblical Exegesis of Maimonides in Jewish Scholarship," in G. Appel, ed., *S. K. Mirsky Memorial Volume* (New York: Yeshiva University, 1970), pp. 151–90; idem, "Bibliography of Maimonides as Exegete," in B. Z. Luria, ed., *Sefer Hayyim Gevaryahu: Mehqarim ba-miqra'*

Maimonides identified problematic texts but did not explain them in detail. In addition, although he introduced a method of interpretation, he did not apply it to the Bible as a whole. Instead, he left this task to his followers in Provence and Italy, who devoted themselves to finishing what the master had begun. His impact is felt throughout the exegetical developments in Christian Spain and the later Islamic East as well. Each of these four areas – Provence, Italy, Christian Spain, and the Islamic East – are surveyed here.

The Provençal Tradition

The history of Jewish philosophy and philosophical exegesis in southern France (called "Provence" in Jewish sources) is especially interesting. Over the course of 150 years, from around 1150 to 1306, this ancient center of talmudic and midrashic learning was transformed into the most active center of Jewish philosophy of the time. Supported by the patronage of local scholars and helped by the arrival of refugees from Islamic Spain, Judeo-Arabic and Arabic works were translated into Hebrew and served as the basis for encyclopedias, philosophical summas, and scientific and philosophical explications of the Bible and rabbinic literature.[29]

The first major philosopher-exegete in southern France was Samuel Ibn Tibbon (ca. 1165–1232), the translator of the *Guide of the Perplexed* into Hebrew. Building on Maimonides, Ibn Tibbon wrote a commentary on Ecclesiastes, in which he discussed several philosophical and scientific ideas. He also wrote a philosophical-exegetical treatise entitled *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-mayim* (Treatise on "Let the Waters be Gathered" [Gen. 1:9]) and planned two additional commentaries: one on the internal meanings of Proverbs and an esoteric explanation of Genesis, entitled *Ner ha-Hofeś* (A Candle for Him Who Searches; cf. Prov. 20:27).[30]

u-ve-mahševet yisra'el, muggaš lo he-haggi'o le-śevah, ed. (Jerusalem: ha-Ḥevrah le-ḥeḳer ha-Miḳra be-Yiśra'el, 1988–91), pp. 346–65. See also: L. V. Berman, "Maimonides on the Fall of Man," *AJS Review* 5 (1980): 1–15; W. Z. Harvey, "Maimonides' Interpretation of Genesis 3:22," *Da'at* 12 (1984): 15–21 (Heb.); idem, "Maimonides and Aquinas on Interpreting the Bible," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 55 (1988): 59–77; idem, "Maimonides on Job 14:20 and the Story of the Garden of Eden," in S. Nash, ed., *Bein historiyah la-sifrut, Festschrift for Isaac Barzilay* (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbuts ha-Me'uḥad, 1997) (Heb.), pp. 143–8; idem, "On Maimonides' Allegorical Readings of Scripture," in J. Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 181–8; S. Rosenberg, "Notes on Biblical and Aggadic Exegesis in *The Guide of the Perplexed*," in S. Pines, ed., *Ya'aqov Friedman Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Institute for Jewish Studies, 1974) (Heb.), pp. 215–21; idem, "On Biblical Exegesis in the *Guide of the Perplexed*," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981): 85–175 (Heb.); idem, "Philosophical Exegesis of Song of Songs: Introductory Remarks," *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 133–51 (Heb.). And see the recent summary statements by S. Klein-Braslavy, "The Philosophical Exegesis"; idem, "Bible Commentary," in K. Seeskin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 245–72; G. Freudenthal, "Maimonides' Philosophy of Science," ibid., pp. 134–66, on pp. 156–9.

[29] On this transformation, see especially I. Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," *Journal of World History* 11 (1968): 185–207; repr. in H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger, eds., *Jewish Society through the Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971). For the translations, see G. Freudenthal, "Les sciences dans les communautés juives médiévales de Provence: Leur appropriation, leur rôle," *REJ* 152 (1993): 29–136; idem, "Science in the Medieval Jewish Culture of Southern France," *History of Science* 33 (1995): 23–58; M. Zonta, *La filosofia antica nel Medioevo ebraico: La traduzioni ebraiche medievali dei testi filosofici antichi* (Brescia: Paideia, 1996); J. Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval Provence," in J. Harris, ed., *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 193–224.

[30] For Ibn Tibbon's life, philosophy, and exegesis, see A. Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension," in E. E. Urbach, R. J. Z. Werblowsky, and Ch. Wirszubsky, eds., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on His Seventieth Birthday* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 1–32; R. Ben-Meir, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Preface to the Commentary on Ecclesiastes," *Maimonidean Studies* 4 (2000): 13–44 (Heb. section); R. Eisen, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 79–110; C. Fraenkel, *From Maimonides to Samuel Ibn Tibbon: The Transformation of the Dalalat al-Ha'irin into the Moreh ha-Nevukim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press,

In what way was Ibn Tibbon's exegesis Maimonidean? The best example is his interpretation of verses from Genesis 1. Following Maimonides' hint in *Guide* 2.30 – that Aristotle's *Meteorology* is the key to understanding the "Account of the Beginning" – Ibn Tibbon translated that work into Hebrew and used it in his interpretation of Genesis.[31] He also used it in the explanation of several additional biblical texts, especially Psalm 104 and (as is seen later) verses from Ecclesiastes.

Here are several other examples of philosophy and science in Ibn Tibbon's commentaries.[32] He explains Ecclesiastes 1:3 and the locutions "under the sun" and "under the heavens" in terms of meteorological theories about light and reflection. The phrase, "a generation comes and a generation goes" (Ecc. 1:4), he interprets in relation to the eternity of matter. He explains the going and coming of the sun (Ecc. 1:5–6) in light of the rival astronomical models of Ptolemy and al-Biṭrūjī. The sea that never fills (Ecc. 1:7) is expounded through a meteorological discussion of rivers and evaporation. He interprets the pairs of "times" (Ecc. 3:1–8) – as Ibn Tibbon calls them – in terms of the Aristotelian notion of time, motion, and celestial influence on generation and corruption. He discusses "man has no preeminence above the beast" (Ecc. 3:19) in light of Aristotelian embryology, citing and explaining Aristotle's rule that "man comes from man and the sun." He understands the image of the crackling thorns under a pot (Ecc. 7:6) in relation to thunder and lightning. Finally, in his explication of Ecclesiastes 7:10 and the asking of improper questions, he discusses the unusual properties of limestone, which can be heated by cold water. Ibn

2007) (Heb.); G. Freudenthal, "(Al-)Chemical Foundations for Cosmological Ideas: Ibn Sīnā on the Geology of an Eternal World," in S. Unguru, ed., *Physics, Cosmology, and Astronomy, 1300–1700: Tension and Accommodation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 47–73; J. Kugel, "Some Medieval and Renaissance Ideas about Biblical Poetry," in I. Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 57–81; A. Ravitzky, "The Thought of Rabbi Zeraḥyah b. Isaac b. She'altiel Ḥen and Maimonidean-Tibbonian Philosophy in the Thirteenth Century," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1978 (Heb.); idem, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of *The Guide of the Perplexed*," *AJS Review* 6 (1981): 87–123; idem, "The Secrets of the *Guide of the Perplexed*: Between the Thirteenth and the Twentieth Centuries," in I. Twersky, ed., *Studies in Maimonides* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 159–207; idem, "Aristotle's *Meteorology* and Maimonidean Exegesis of the Account of Creation" (Heb.), *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990): 225–50; idem, *'Iyyunim maimoniyim* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 2006); J. Robinson, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* and the Philosopher's Prooemium," in I. Twersky and J. M. Harris, eds., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 83–146; idem, "The First References in Hebrew to al-Biṭrūjī's *On the Principles of Astronomy*," *Aleph* 3 (2003): 145–63; idem, "The Ibn Tibbon Family"; idem, "From Digression to Compilation: Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Immanuel of Rome on Genesis 1:11, 1:14, 1:20," *Zutot* 4 (2006): 81–97; idem, "Maimonides, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, and the Construction of a Jewish Tradition of Philosophy," in J. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 291–306; idem, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes, The Book of the Soul of Man* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); idem, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes: Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with Commentary and Introduction* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, forthcoming); idem, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Peruš ha-Millot ha-Zarot* and al-Fārābī's *Eisagoge* and *Categories*," *Aleph* 9(1) (2009): 41–76; J. Sermoneta, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Critical Remarks on Maimonides' Theory of Intellects," *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1977), 3: 315–19 (Heb.); G. Vajda, "An Analysis of the *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-Mayim* by Samuel b. Judah Ibn Tibbon," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1959): 137–49.

31 For an edition, translation, and general discussion, see R. Fontaine, *Otot ha-Shamayim: Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew Version of Aristotle's Meteorology* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); idem, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Translation of the Arabic Version of Aristotle's *Meteorology*," in G. Endress and R. Kruk, eds., *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 85–100; and see Fontaine's contribution to the present volume, Chapter 12. For the use of meteorology in exegesis, see A. Ravitzky, "Aristotle's *Meteorology* and the Maimonidean Modes of Interpreting the Account of Creation," *Aleph* 8 (2008): 361–400. For its influence on the later tradition, see Schwartz, *Old Wine*, esp. pp. 63–116. See also Y. T. Langermann, "'The Making of the Firmament': Rabbi Hayyim Israeli, Rabbi Isaac Israeli, and Maimonides," *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume*, Part 1: *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7 (1988), 461–6 (Heb.).

32 For the examples listed, see Robinson, "The First References"; idem, *Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*.

Tibbon also introduces considerable medical material into his commentary, although it is mostly philosophical and ethical rather than scientific; he focuses on standard themes of diet, exercise, and psychosomatic illness. Still he does present some interesting material in the commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:2–7. Drawing on the rabbis, Ibn Ghiyath, and Ibn Ezra, he adds some novel remarks about the different functions of veins and arteries.

Ibn Tibbon was the founder of a Maimonidean tradition of philosophical exegesis in Provence.[33] He was followed by his son Moses (fl. 1244–83), who wrote a philosophical explication of Song of Songs, as well as several short philosophical-exegetical monographs.[34] Samuel Ibn Tibbon's son-in-law Jacob Anaṭoli (ca. 1194–1256) produced a collection of sermons, *Malmad ha-talmidim* (A Goad for the Students), which contains dozens of philosophical explications of Psalms and Proverbs.[35] This tradition spread outside the family as well. For example, Samuel Ibn Tibbon's contemporary David Kimhi (ca. 1160–1235) wrote Maimonidean commentaries on Genesis 2:7–5:1 and Ezekiel 1 and used philosophical ideas in many of his commentaries.[36] Levi ben Abraham (ca. 1235–after 1305) wrote *Livyat ḥen* (The Graceful Garland; cf. Prov. 1:9; 4:9), an encyclopedia of philosophy and religion, which includes several chapters devoted to philosophical exegesis.[37] Even Menaḥem ha-Meiri (1249–1315), the leading legal scholar of thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Provence, was bitten by the Maimonidean bug. His commentaries on Psalms and Proverbs include philosophical and scientific explanations borrowed from Maimonides, Ibn Tibbon, and especially Anaṭoli.[38]

[33] For this tradition, see especially Ravitzky, "Zeraḥyah b. Isaac b. She'altiel Ḥen." See also J. Robinson, "We Drink Only from the Master's Water: Maimonides and Maimonideanism in Southern France, 1204–1306," in Sh. Berger and I. Zwiep, eds., *Studia Rosenthaliana 40: Epigonism in Jewish Culture* (2007–8), pp. 27–60; idem, "Maimonides, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, and the Construction of a Jewish Tradition of Philosophy," in J. Harris, ed., *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and his Influence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 291–306.

[34] See C. Sirat, "La pensée philosophique de Moïse Ibn Tibbon," *REJ* 138 (1979): 505–15; O. Fraisse, *Moses Ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohenlied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

[35] On Anaṭoli, see in general M. L. Gordon, "The Rationalism of Jacob Anaṭoli's *Malmad ha-talmidim*," *Da'at* 20 (1988): 91–115 (Heb.); C. Sirat, "Les traducteurs juifs à la cour des rois de Sicile et de Naples," in G. Contamine, ed., *Traduction et traducteurs au moyen âge* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1989), pp. 169–91; M. Saperstein, "Christians and Christianity in the Sermons of Jacob Anaṭoli," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 225–42; repr. in *Your Voice like a Ram's Horn: Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1996), pp. 55–74; J. Robinson, "Secondary Forms of Transmission: Teaching and Preaching Philosophy in Thirteenth-Century Provence," in H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked, and S. Stroumsa, eds., *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism, and Science in the Mediterranean World* (forthcoming).

[36] The allegorical commentary on Genesis was published as an appendix to *The Commentary of David Kimhi on Isaiah*, L. Finkelstein, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), pp. liii–lxxiv. The allegorical commentary on Ezekiel is included as an appendix in *Miqra'ot Gedolot ha-Keter*. For philosophy and science in his commentaries, see F. Talmage, "David Kimhi and the Rationalist Tradition," *HUC Annual* 39 (1968): 177–218; idem, "David Kimhi and the Rationalist Tradition II: Literary Sources," in C. Berlin, ed., *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History, and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1972), pp. 453–78. For his work in general, see: F. Talmage, *David Kimhi: The Man and the Commentaries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); M. Cohen, "The Qimhi Family," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 388–415; idem, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[37] See H. Kreisel, *Levi b. Abraham b. Hayyim, Livyat Ḥen 6:3, Ma'aśeh bere'šit* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2004); idem, *Levi ben Avraham's Livyat Ḥen: The Quality of Prophecy and the Secrets of the Torah* (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2007) (Heb.). For a general survey of the work, see W. Z. Harvey, "Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche's Controversial Encyclopedia," in S. Harvey, ed., *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias of Science and Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 171–190.

[38] For background on Menaḥem ha-Meiri, see G. Stern, "Menaḥem ha-Me'iri and the Second Controversy over Philosophy," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1995; M. Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom: Menaḥem ha-Me'iri and the Maimonidean Halakhists in Provence* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000) (Heb.). For his exegesis and influence of Anaṭoli on it, see Robinson, "Secondary Forms of Transmission."

One example can illustrate the way these writings respond to and build on one another. In the first sermon of *Malmad ha-talmidim*, Anatoli presents a full verse-by-verse explication of Proverbs 30. Borrowing ideas from *Guide* 1.31–4 and 2.30, he explains the chapter in Proverbs as a commentary on the account of creation in Genesis 1. Following Anatoli's lead, Levi devotes one chapter to Proverbs 30 in his explication of the "Account of the Beginning" in *Liwyat hen* (Part 2, 6.3.9), whereas ha-Meiri incorporates passages from both Anatoli and Levi in his verse-by-verse explication of Proverbs 30 in his commentary on that book.

Provence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

The most creative period of philosophical exegesis in Provence was the thirteenth century, but the tradition continued into the fourteenth as well. Thus Gersonides (1288–1344), the most original Jewish philosopher of the later Middle Ages, wrote commentaries on several biblical books, including the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Kings, Isaiah, Job, Proverbs, the Five Scrolls, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. In these commentaries, Gersonides borrows from Maimonides and others, but starts to move in new directions as well. Thus he incorporates into them many of his own novel ideas from the *Wars of the Lord* and develops a new style of presentation, dividing his commentaries into exegetical, grammatical, and philosophical insights.[39]

One example of this interface between the commentaries and the *Wars* is his explanation of Genesis 1.[40] According to Gersonides, the "Account of the Beginning" in Genesis 1 represents the creation of the upper world and the lower world, but not from nothing. Rather, everything, in both the celestial and sublunar realms, derives from a preexistent something, what he calls a "body with no form" or a "body that does not retain its shape." The original state of chaos, of *tohu* and *bohu*, refers to this antemundane unformed stuff, whereas the verses that follow describe the causal relation of all things that come into existence from it: "Light" refers to the celestial intelligences, the "firmament" to the celestial bodies, the water above and below the firmament to celestial and sublunar matter, and so on. The question is, What is this preexistent stuff? Is it the Platonic receptacle? Aristotelian

[39] A full bibliography on Gersonides is now available: M. Kellner, "Bibliographia Gersonideana: An Annotated List of Writings by and about R. Levi ben Gershom," in G. Freudenthal, ed., *Studies on Gersonides* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 367–414; updated in *Aleph* 3 (2003): 345–74. For his exegesis, of special note are the two commentaries translated into English – A. Lassen, *The Commentary of Levi ben Gerson (Gersonides) on the Book of Job* (New York: Bloch, 1946) and M. Kellner, *The Commentary on Song of Songs by Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) – and the following studies: S. Feldman, "Gersonides and Biblical Exegesis," appendix to *The Wars of the Lord*, trans. S. Feldman, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), pp. 213–47; M. Kellner, "Maimonides and Gersonides on Astronomy and Metaphysics," in F. Rosner and S. Kottek, eds., *Moses Maimonides: Physician, Scientist, and Philosopher* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), pp. 91–9; idem, "Gersonides on the Song of Songs and the Nature of Science," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1994): 1–21; idem, "Gersonides on the Role of the Active Intellect in Human Cognition," *HUC Annual* 65 (1994): 233–59; idem, "Gersonides on Imitatio Dei and the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1995): 275–96; R. Ben-Meir, "Gersonides' Commentary on Ecclesiastes: Analysis and Text," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1993 (Heb.). The question of Gersonides' method of exegesis and its relation to Christian scholasticism has been discussed recently, with contradictory results. See S. Klein-Braslavy, "Les introductions" in C. Sirat, S. Klein-Braslavy, and O. Weijers, eds., *Les méthodes de travail de Gersonide et le maniement du savoir chez les scolastiques* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2003), pp. 193–215; C. Sirat, "Méthode de travail et liberté de penser," ibid., pp. 287–90; G. Freudenthal, "Gersonide, génie solitaire," ibid., pp. 291–317.

[40] See C. Touati, *La pensée philosophique et théologique de Gersonide* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); J. Staub, *The Creation of the World according to Gersonides* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); *The Wars of the Lord*, trans. S. Feldman, Vol. 3 (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), pp. 428–69; idem, "In the Beginning God Created: A Philosophical Midrash," in D. Burrell and B. McGinn, eds., *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 3–26; G. Freudenthal, "Cosmogonie et physique chez Gersonide," *REJ* 145 (1986): 295–314.

prime matter? Gersonides rejects both possibilities, arguing instead that it is the same quasi-matter he had hypothesized in his astronomical investigations; namely, he had established the existence of an interspherical quasi-matter that is a residue of the original "body that does not retain its shape."

Another interpretation worth mentioning is Gersonides' explanation of Joshua 10 – the sun's standing still in Gibeon – which caused particular ire in the later tradition.[11] In his commentary on the relevant verses he rejects the simple reading of the text and argues that the miracle was not astronomical but political or military: The Israelites' victory was so swift that it only seemed as if the sun had stood still. For Gersonides, had the sun really stood still the results would have been catastrophic: The lower world, the existence of which depends on celestial motion, would have been immediately destroyed. A literal reading of the story would violate his conception of miracles as well, for he considers miracles to be the product of the Active Intellect; yet the Active Intellect, the lowest of the celestial intelligences, cannot operate on superior bodies or intelligences.

Several other philosopher-exegetes of fourteenth-century Provence are worthy of note. Nissim ben Moses of Marseilles (fl. 1315–30) wrote *Ma'aśeh nissim*, which includes philosophical explications of biblical pericopes, preceded by a systematic discussion of several key philosophical and theological problems.[12] Joseph Ibn Kaspi (1279/80–1347) wrote commentaries – sometimes in duplicate or even triplicate – on most of the Bible, in which he introduces philosophical ideas and uses logic to unravel the mysteries of Holy Writ.[13] Later in the fourteenth century, Moses Narboni (1300–64), who, despite his name, seems to have lived more in Spain than Provence, also produced philosophical commentaries on the Bible as well as supercommentaries, including a peculiar explication of Ibn Ezra's commentary on Exodus 33:20–1.[14]

Much less is known about fifteenth-century Provence, but one important school of commentators is worth mentioning.[15] Its members did not write biblical commentaries per se, but rather commentaries on Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* and Levi ben Abraham's *Liwyat ḥen* and philosophical poem *Batte ha-nefesh ve-ha-leḥashim*. They explained all of these texts, even the *Kuzari*, in light of Maimonides, Ibn Tibbon, and Anatoli. Moreover, the emphasis in their writings is not only on philosophy but also on philosophical exegesis; they aimed to fully explain the exegesis found in the work of their predecessors.

The philosophical content of these writings is generally not original or creative. Yet it is precisely for this reason that the writings are important. They represent something like a

[11] For discussion of this interpretation and the later criticisms of it, see M. Kellner, "Gersonides and His Cultured Despisers: Arama and Abravanel," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976): 269–96. See also S. Feldman, "Sun Stand Still: A Philosophical-Astronomical Midrash," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9, C (Jerusalem, 1986): 77–84; B. R. Goldstein, "Galileo's Account of Astronomical Miracles in the Bible: A Confusion of Sources," *Nuncius* 5 (1990): 3–16; D. Schwartz, "Did the Sun Stop for Joshua? A Chapter in the Theory of Miracles in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Da'at* 42 (1999): 33–62 (Heb.).

[12] See H. Kreisel, ed., *Ma'aśeh nissim: Perus la-Torah* (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 2000).

[13] See, e.g., I. Twersky, "Joseph Ibn Kaspi: Portrait of a Medieval Jewish Intellectual," in idem, *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 231–57; B. Herring, *Joseph Ibn Kaspi's Gevia Kesef: A Study in Medieval Jewish Philosophic Bible Commentary* (New York: Ktav, 1982); S. Rosenberg, "Logic, Language, and Exegesis in the Writings of R. Yosef Ibn Kaspi," in M. Hallamish and A. Kasher, eds., *Religion and Language* (Tel Aviv: Mif'alim universita'iyim le-hotsa'ah le-or, 1981) (Heb.), pp. 105–13; H. Kasher, ed., *Joseph Ibn Kaspi, Sulḥan kesef* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1996) (Heb.).

[14] See A. Altmann, "Moses Narboni's Epistle on *Shi'ur Qoma*," in idem, *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 225–64. See also M. R. Hayoun, *La philosophie et la théologie de Moïse de Narbonne (1300–1362)* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989).

[15] See D. Schwartz, "The *Kuzari* Renaissance in Jewish Philosophy," pp. 1*–10* (Heb. section) in I. Twersky and J. M. Harris, eds., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

scholastic tradition of Maimonidean philosophy and philosophical exegesis in later medieval Europe.

The Italian Tradition

Maimonides and Samuel Ibn Tibbon, along with Jacob Anaṭoli and Judah ben Solomon ha-Kohen (ca. 1215–after 1247), stand at the beginning of the Italian tradition of philosophy and philosophical exegesis. In particular, Anaṭoli, who spent several years at the court of Frederick II, was responsible for spreading the methods and ideas of the Provençal Maimonidean tradition on Italian soil. The writings of these figures, together with those by Averroes and Latin scholastics (Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome), contributed to the emergence of a distinctive school of philosopher-exegetes, including Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben She'altiel Ḥen (fl. 1277–91), Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome (ca. 1261–before 1336), and Judah ben Moses ben Daniel Romano (ca. 1292–after 1330).

Judah ha-Kohen was originally from Toledo but moved to Italy, where he translated his encyclopedia of philosophy and science, *Midrash ha-Ḥokmah* (Search for Wisdom), into Hebrew.[46] In this encyclopedia, Judah incorporated exegetical sections, including philosophical commentaries on select verses from Genesis, Psalms, and Proverbs. Later figures in the Italian tradition cited and developed these sections.[47]

Like Judah ha-Kohen, Zeraḥyah Ḥen was from Spain; he was born in Barcelona, but moved early to Rome, where he was active as a translator, philosopher, and exegete.[48] His translations include works by Aristotle, Themistius, and Averroes, as well as the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis* – a text that would become particularly popular among the Italian philosopher-exegetes. Zeraḥyah wrote a commentary on the *Guide* and two philosophical commentaries on Scripture – on Proverbs and the book of Job.[49] Both commentaries draw heavily from the Provençal tradition, but start to introduce Neoplatonic ideas as well, especially from the *Liber de causis*.[50]

The most creative of the Italian philosopher-exegetes was Judah Romano.[51] Like Zeraḥyah, he was a translator, but of Latin scholastic rather than Arabic texts; these he

[46] See in general R. Fontaine, "Judah b. Solomon ha-Cohen's *Midrash ha-Ḥokhmah*: Its Sources and Use of Sources," in *The Medieval Hebrew Encyclopedias*, pp. 191–210.

[47] See D. Goldstein, "The Commentary of Judah b. Solomon Hakohen Ibn Matqah to Genesis, Psalms and Proverbs," *HUC Annual* 52 (1981): 203–52.

[48] See Ravitzky, "Zeraḥyah b. Isaac b. She'altiel Ḥen."

[49] The *Guide* commentary remains in manuscript form, but both biblical commentaries have been published. See *Tikvat Enosh*, ed. I. Schwartz (Berlin, 1868), pp. 169–293; *Imre Daath: Commentar über die Sprüche Salomo's von R. Serachja ben Isaac ben Shealtiel aus Barcelona*, ed. I. Schwartz (Vienna, 1871). The most recent discussion of the commentary on Job is Eisen, *The Book of Job*, pp. 111–45.

[50] See, e.g., A. Ravitzky, "The Hypostasis of Divine Wisdom," *Italia* 3 (1981): 7–38 (Heb.).

[51] On his work see J. Sermoneta, "Judah Romano's Commentary on the First Parashah of Genesis and its Sources," *Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1969), 2: 341–2 (Heb.); idem, "Judah and Immanuel of Rome: Rationalism which in the End is Mystical Faith," in M. Hallamish and M. Schwartz, eds., *Revelation, Faith, and Reason* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1976) (Heb.), pp. 54–70; idem, "Jehuda ben Mosheh ben Daniel Romano, traducteur de Saint Thomas," in G. Nahon and C. Touati, eds., *Hommage à Georges Vajda* (Louvain, 1980), pp. 235–62; idem, "Prophecy in the Writings of R. Yehudah Romano," in I. Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 337–74; idem, "'Thine Ointments Have a Goodly Fragrance': Rabbi Judah Romano and the Open-Text Method," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9 (1990): 77–113 (Heb.); idem, "Light: Its Substance and Function in Genesis according to Judah b. Moses b. Daniel Romano," in M. Oron and A. Goldreich, eds., *Massuot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1994), pp. 343–60 (Heb.); C. Rigo, "Judah Romano's Commentaries on the Bible: His Philosophical System as Contained in them and his Sources in Jewish Thought and Christian Scholasticism," PhD dissertation, Hebrew University, 1996 (Heb.); idem, "Human Substance and Eternal Life in the Philosophy of Rabbi Judah Romano," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 14 (1998): 181–222 (Heb.).

used in his commentaries on the Bible.[52] In general, his exegetical method represents an open encounter with the biblical text in light of the latest works of Latin science and philosophy. In Romano's opinion, the Bible is the product of the divine intellect; thus it contains every possible philosophical development, past and future. This premise leads to the peculiar result that Romano's commentaries are fluid and evolving, offering several different interpretations of the same verse, all in response to contemporary developments in science and philosophy. In a sense, then, the biblical commentary develops together with science; they are interrelated processes contributing to the gradual unfolding of divine truth.

Immanuel of Rome was far less creative and original than his younger cousin Judah, but he is no less interesting a figure in the history of philosophical exegesis.[53] Although he is known primarily for his poetry – he is called the "Hebrew Dante" for his Hebrew sonnets and short imitation of the *Divine Comedy* – Immanuel was also an exegete who produced voluminous commentaries on the Bible. These are mostly compilations rather than original works; they are composed of texts borrowed from his predecessors, including Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, Anaṭoli, and Judah ha-Kohen, as well as Zeraḥyah and Judah Romano.[54] It seems that Immanuel was interested not only in finding science and philosophy in the Bible but also in disseminating what had already been found. Through the collection and compilation of these sources he aimed to create an authoritative framework for the philosophical and scientific approach to the biblical text.

One final philosopher-exegete-anthologist is worth mentioning. Hanoch ben Solomon Alconstantini's *Mar'ot elohim* (Visions of God; fourteenth century), a philosophical explication of the chariot visions of the Bible (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1 and 10; and Zechariah), collects and synthesizes relevant passages from Maimonides' *Guide* and Ibn Tibbon's *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-mayim*, together with texts from Averroes and other philosophers, deriving from both Latin and Arabic sources.[55]

Christian Spain

Although Jewish scholarship in Christian Spain was often mystical, kabbalistic, and anti-philosophical (see the later discussion), there were important philosophical developments as well. A few examples are given in this section.

Already in the early thirteenth century, Jewish scholarship in Spain was tending toward kabbalah instead of philosophy. Gerona, Barcelona, Toledo, and Burgos were early centers

[52] For Judah Romano's sources and translations, see especially the articles by C. Rigo: "Un antologia filosofica di Yehuda b. Mosheh Romano," *Italia* 10 (1993): 73–104; "Yehudah b. Mosheh Romano traduttore di Alberto Magno (commento al De Anima III, II, 16)," *Henoch* 15 (1993): 65–91; "Le traduzioni dei commenti scolastici al De Anima eseguite da Yehudah b. Mosheh nella tradizione filosofica ebraico-italiana dei secoli XIII–XIV," in F. Vattioni, ed., *Atti della VII settimana: Sangue e antropologia nel Medioevo* (Rome: Primavera, 1993), pp. 1973–93; "Egidio Romano nella cultura ebraica: le versioni di Yehudah b. Mosheh Romano," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 5 (1994): 397–437; "Yehudah b. Mosheh Romano traduttore degli Scolastici latini," *Henoch* 17 (1995): 141–70.

[53] See D. Goldstein, "The Commentary of Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome on Chapters I–X of Genesis: Introduction, Hebrew Text, Notes," Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1966; idem, "Longevity, the Rainbow, and Immanuel of Rome," *HUC Annual* 42 (1971): 243–50; D. Schechterman, "The Philosophy of Immanuel of Rome in Light of his Commentary on the Book of Genesis," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1984 (Heb.).

[54] For Immanuel's sources see, in addition to the references cited earlier, D. Goldstein, introduction to *The Book of Proverbs with the Commentary by Immanuel of Rome, Naples, ca. 1487* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981) (Heb.); A. Ravitzky, "On the Sources of Immanuel of Rome's Proverbs Commentary," *Qiryat Sefer* 56 (1981): 726–39 (Heb.); Robinson, "From Digression to Compilation."

[55] See C. Sirat, *Les visions divines*, Hanokh b. Salomon al-Qonstantini, Introduction, traduction at notes (Jerusalem,

of kabbalah. Moreover, it was in these cities where the most vocal opponents of philosophy and philosophical exegesis were found. Yet the situation in Spain was in no way neat and uniform. Thus Isaac Albalag (thirteenth century), an Averroist, incorporated philosophical explications of Genesis 1 and Genesis 28 into his *Tiqqun ha-de'ot* (Improvement [or Correction] of the Opinions),[56] whereas Shem-Ṭov Falaquera (thirteenth century) seems to have produced a philosophical commentary on at least select passages from the Bible.[57]

Even those who tended toward kabbalah made use of philosophical and scientific ideas in their commentaries. For example, Isaac Ibn Laṭif (ca. 1210–80) drew extensively from Maimonides and the Maimonidean tradition in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, *Ša'ar ha-šamayim* (Gate of Heaven), and other works.[58] Naḥmanides (1194–1270), the great critic of Maimonides, himself used philosophy in his explication of creation and other texts, whereas Baḥya ben Asher (thirteenth century), who would become the authoritative exegete in the tradition of Naḥmanides, included not only literal, midrashic, and kabbalistic interpretations in his Torah commentary but also explications by way of philosophy.[59] Indeed, a major desideratum in scholarship is to systematically examine all of Baḥya's philosophical exegeses in relation to his predecessors and in the context of the history of philosophy.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were two other important developments in Spain and also in Provence and Italy: commentaries on the *Guide* and, as already mentioned, supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra. Many of the commentaries on the *Guide* focus not only on its philosophical content but also on its exegesis; they explain, expand, and develop Maimonides' interpretations of key biblical texts. The supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra show interest primarily in science and philosophy. Their authors were especially attracted to the astrological interpretations, providing fuller discussion, identifying relevant sources, and revealing the secret knowledge that Ibn Ezra had so carefully concealed.

Iraq, Egypt, and Yemen

All of the post-Maimonidean developments discussed thus far took place in Europe and in Hebrew. Exegetes and philosophers responded to and built on the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, which were written in Hebrew, and the *Guide of the Perplexed*, in its Hebrew translation. Yet during Maimonides' lifetime and after his death, a Judeo-Arabic exegetical tradition continued to develop in the Islamic East as well. This was especially the case in Iraq, in Egypt, and in Yemen.

[56] Or, more fully: Improvement/Correction of the Opinions of the Philosophers Presented in al-Ghazālī's *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*. For Albalag's work, see G. Vajda, *Isaac Albalag: Averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur d'al-Ghazālī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1960); *Isaac Albalag, Sefer Tiqqun ha-de'ot*, ed. G. Vajda (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1973). For a discussion of Albalag's exegesis, see S. Feldman, "In the Beginning God Created: A Philosophical Midrash," in *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium*, pp. 3–26.

[57] See R. Jospe, *Torah and Sophia: The Life and Thought of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera* (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1988), pp. 459–84; R. Jospe and D. Schwartz, "Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's Lost Bible Commentary," *HUC Annual* 64 (1993): 167–200.

[58] See S. Heller Wilensky, "Isaac ibn Latif's 'The Gate of Heaven': A Mystical Guide of the Perplexed," in M. A. Shulvas, *Perspectives in Jewish Learning*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 17–25; idem, "Isaac Ibn Latif – Philosopher or Kabbalist?" in A. Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 187–223; idem, "Towards the Study of Isaac Ibn Latif's Sources," in *Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1969), 2:4, pp. 317–26 (Heb.); idem, "The 'Guide' and the 'Gate': The Dialectical Influence of Maimonides on Isaac Ibn Latif and Early Spanish Kabbalah," in R. Link-Salinger, R. Long, and C. Manekin, eds., *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture in Honor of Arthur Hyman* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), pp. 266–78. See also the discussion of the anonymous *Doreš rešumot* (Seeker/Explainer of Traces/Mysteries) by Y. T. Langermann, "Cosmology and Cosmogony in *Doresh Reshumoth*, A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Torah," *HTR* 97 (2004): 199–227.

[59] For Naḥmanides and Baḥya b. Asher, see later notes.

Maimonides' near contemporary Abū al-Barakāt (d. after 1164), the maverick philosopher and physician of Baghdad, wrote a full philosophical commentary on Ecclesiastes, in which he introduced several of the original ideas found in his *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar*.[60] For example, in the commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:8 and 3:16, he discusses at length problems of fate and astral determinism. In the commentary on 5:7 he explains the limits of human knowledge and the need for tradition and authority, citing not religious tradition as the proper model but the a priori method of Euclid's *Elements*. In the commentary on 7:10 he considers the unreliability of secondhand reports and compares them to the inconsistent nature of natural phenomena. In the commentary on 10:4 he criticizes the astrologers of his time and people who make decisions based on horoscopes. And in the commentary on 12:9 he speculates about the literary history of Ecclesiastes in relation to other wisdom collections.

In the following century, Abraham ben Maimonides (d. 1237) and Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi (d. 1291), the "Ibn Ezra of the East," wrote commentaries on much of the biblical corpus, building on the grammatical insights of Ibn Ezra and the philosophical insights of Maimonides.[61] In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the writings of Maimonides stimulated the emergence of a rich tradition of philosophy and exegesis in Yemen as well. It took the form of Judeo-Arabic commentaries on the Bible as well as midrashic collections (in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Judeo-Arabic) that include many philosophical and scientific explanations, homilies, and digressions.[62]

All of these Eastern figures and movements had somewhat different philosophical interests than the Jewish scholars of Christian Europe. In particular, they gave more attention to Avicenna and post-Avicennan philosophy than to Averroes and had a stronger tendency toward Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Sufi, and Ismaili ideas and doctrines than to Aristotelian concepts. However, structurally they represent the same tradition of philosophical exegesis, which began in the early Middle Ages and continued through the fifteenth century and into the Renaissance.

ANTI-MAIMONIDEANISM

Although opposition to philosophical exegesis existed already in the early Middle Ages, it continued and gained increasing intensity in response to the spread of Maimonideanism. A series of "Maimonidean" controversies divided communities between those who defended and those who opposed philosophy and philosophical exegesis, and mystical-pietistic exegetical traditions that took the undermining of Maimonides and the Maimonidean tradition as their point of departure emerged. In the fifteenth century, this anti-philosophical tradition crystallized into a tradition of its own, with strong connections to contemporary trends of late medieval and Renaissance anti-Aristotelianism. All of these developments are surveyed here.

[60] See Poznanski, "Aus Abū-l-Barakat Hibat-Allahs arabischen Kommentar"; S. Pines, "Studies in Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Poetics and Metaphysics," in *Studies in Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadi: Physics and Metaphysics* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), pp. 329–31, especially nn. 207–208; idem, "Toward the Study of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*: Four Texts," *Tarbiz* 33 (1964): 198–213 (Heb.); S. Stroumsa, "On the Maimonidean Controversy in the East: The Place of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī," in H. Ben-Shammai, ed., *Hebrew and Arabic Studies in Honor of Joshua Blau* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Humanities Faculty and Jerusalem: Hebrew University Department of Asian and African Studies, 1993) (Heb.), pp. 415–22.

[61] See P. B. Fenton, "The Post-Maimonidean Schools of Exegesis in the East: Abraham Maimonides, the Pietists, Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi and the Yemenite School," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 133–55.

[62] See Y. T. Langermann, *Yemenite Midrash: Philosophical Commentaries on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

The Maimonidean Controversies

Near the end of Maimonides' life and after his death there were four major controversies – one in the East and three in the West – in Christian Spain and Provence. There were several smaller skirmishes as well. All of these controversies related, in one way or another, to the legitimacy and permissibility of philosophical exegesis.

During his lifetime, in the 1180s, Maimonides was accused by the Gaon Samuel ben 'Eli and others of denying the religious dogma of resurrection.[63] Samuel seems to have based this accusation on some reports from Yemen and on the philosophy of his contemporary in Baghdad, Abū al-Barakāt. It seems that it was an unsuccessful reply to Samuel by Maimonides' pupil, Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shim'on, that prompted Maimonides himself to issue a statement on the subject. This took the form of his *Treatise on Resurrection* (1191), which is not only a defense of his position on resurrection but also an apologia pro vita sua. Among other things, he discusses and defends his method of allegorical exegesis.

The resurrection controversy repeated itself in the West.[64] Beginning with a query by Meir ben Todros Abulafia to the scholars of southern France (ca. 1202), it developed into a full intercommunal controversy: Abulafia suggested that Maimonides had denied resurrection, whereas Aaron ben Meshullam, the designated Provençal apologist, defended the master's orthodoxy. Like the controversy in the East, this one, too, ended with the publication of the *Treatise on Resurrection* – this time in Hebrew translation. The news of Maimonides' death in 1204 also seems to have contributed to a (temporary) cessation of hostilities.

Controversy broke out again in the 1230s,[65] when Solomon ben Abraham of Montpellier and his two disciples – Jonah Gerondi and David ben Saul – attempted to suppress the study of Maimonides and of philosophy among the Jews of southern France. Solomon appealed to the sages of northern France for support; when they issued a ban against the study of Maimonides, a local dispute turned into an international cause célèbre. At the center of the debate was the legitimacy of allegorical explications of the Bible and rabbinic literature. The dispute came to an end with the public burning of the *Guide* and *Book of Knowledge* in Montpellier around 1235.

The final "Maimonidean" controversy, in 1303–6, was most directly concerned with the dangers of philosophical exegesis.[66] Maimonides himself was no longer a target; instead it was his disciples and enthusiasts who were singled out for reproach and censure. This controversy began with the agitations of Abba Mari, a conservative Maimonidean who feared the public teaching of esoteric doctrines; it peaked with a ban by Rashba (Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Ibn Adret) on the study of philosophy in 1305 and ended with the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306. In the intervening years, many letters were sent between

[63] For background, see Stroumsa, "On the Maimonidean Controversy in the East"; idem, "Twelfth-Century Concepts of Soul and Body: The Maimonidean Controversy in Baghdad," in A. Baumgarten et al., eds., *Self, Soul, and Body in Religious Experience* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 313–34; idem, *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy in the East: Yosef Ibn Shim'on's Silencing Epistle concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999) (Heb.); Y. T. Langermann, "Samuel b. 'Eli's Epistle on Resurrection," *Qovez al yad* 15(25) (2001): 41–94 (Heb.).

[64] For background, see especially B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[65] For this controversy, see ibid.

[66] For this controversy, see especially G. Stern, "Menahem ha-Me'iri and the Second Controversy over Philosophy," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1995; idem, "The Crisis of Philosophic Allegory in Languedocian-Jewish Culture (1304–6)," in Jon Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 187–207; idem, "Philosophy in Southern France: Controversy over Philosophical Study and the Influence of Averroes upon Jewish Thought," in D. Frank and O. Leaman, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 281–303. The last two articles include references to earlier studies.

Provence and Spain supporting and attacking the study of philosophy and the practice of philosophical exegesis. Most famous is Rashba's critique of philosophical preachers, who say that Abraham and Sarah represent matter and form, and the twelve tribes the twelve constellations.

Anti-Philosophical Exegesis

The controversies were never completely resolved; nor did the bans and censures prove to be an effective deterrent. Philosophy and philosophical exegesis continued unabated into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, there developed a more subtle and more effective way to combat philosophy, science, and philosophical exegesis. This was through the writing of mystical, non-philosophical, and anti-philosophical commentaries on the Bible.[67]

In fact, a kabbalistic and anti-philosophical tradition of biblical exegesis began to develop already in the early thirteenth century. At exactly the same time that Samuel Ibn Tibbon and Jacob Anaṭoli were promoting Maimonideanism, kabbalists in Provence and Catalonia were beginning to write kabbalistic and anti-philosophical commentaries on the Bible. Many of the early kabbalists – such as Azriel of Gerona, Ezra of Gerona, and Jacob ben Sheshet – also incorporated anti-philosophical readings into their systematic works and exegetical monographs.

The most important developments in anti-philosophical exegesis were the writings of Naḥmanides and his followers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the writings of Isaac Arama, Isaac Abarbanel, and other anti-Aristotelian exegetes in the fifteenth century. These figures and their writings are the focus of this section.

Naḥmanides and the Barcelona Tradition. Naḥmanides – legal scholar, communal leader, kabbalist, poet, and exegete – was the second major influence on later Jewish thought. He was born in 1194 in Gerona, spent most of his life in Gerona and Barcelona, and died in Acre, where he completed his commentary on the Torah. Although during the controversy of the 1230s he defended Maimonides, he spent much of his later life criticizing and undermining the work of his predecessor in law and in philosophy. This is evident in his critical glosses on the *Book of Commandments* and throughout his commentary on the Torah.[68]

Naḥmanides' commentary on the Torah, like Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, represents a turning point in the history of exegesis. Building on and criticizing the midrashic, grammatical, and philosophical interpretations of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Maimonides, and drawing from kabbalistic traditions to introduce explanations "by way of truth," Naḥmanides developed a rich and detailed, yet often enigmatic, exegetical style.[69] Throughout the commentary he is generally critical of philosophy and science; yet, as indicated earlier, he does cite philosophers, scientists, and physicians in positive ways as well – to help explain a difficult point in the text or to agree with their evaluations of nature. This "acceptance and

[67] For the history of kabbalistic exegesis, see in general M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[68] For background on Naḥmanides in general, and additional bibliography, see Y. Elman, "Moses ben Naḥman / Naḥmanides (Ramban)," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Vol. 1, Part 2, pp. 416–32.

[69] For Naḥmanides' exegetical method, see especially B. Septimus, "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Naḥmanides and the Andalusian Tradition," in I. Twersky, ed., *Rabbi Moses Naḥmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 11–34; E. Wolfson, "By Way of Truth: Aspects of Naḥmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic," *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 103–78; M. Halbertal, *By Way of Truth: Naḥmanides and the Creation of Tradition* (Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2005) (Heb.).

devaluation" of science[70] gives the commentary an interesting dynamic. There is a constant tension between the miraculous and the natural, between a dogmatic call for total resignation to divine will and the admission of evidence for the workings of natural law.

This tension is particularly evident in Naḥmanides' discussion of miracles. Thus he writes (commentary on Exod. 13:16) that "a person has no portion in the Torah of Moses unless he believes that all things that happen to us are miracles; they have nothing to do with nature or the customary order of the world."[71] This and similar proclamations are modified and moderated in several places in the commentary. For example, he does admit the usefulness of medicine as well as other practical sciences. Nevertheless, the view that science is subordinate to religion generally prevails in his writings. In his opinion, the Torah contains all the wisdom of the philosophers and more; it teaches a spiritual science that links directly to the divine, a spiritual medicine that gives the righteous and pious special power with which they can triumph over the evil effects of this unredeemed world of matter.[72]

The tendency away from science and philosophy and toward the magical is evident in Naḥmanides' discussion of sacrifices. Contrary to Maimonides' famous historicist reading, Naḥmanides claims that the sacrificial cult was not instituted for the purpose of weaning the Israelites from ancient pagan practices but has value in its own right. Sacrifices help realign powers in the upper sefirotic world and also, it seems, bring down spiritual forces into the sublunar realm. His "secret of sacrifice" was particularly appealing to later students and supercommentators; some interpreted it in the direction of the theurgic, whereas others explained it in relation to hermetic traditions, linking the sacrifices to notions of talismanic magic.[73]

The anti-Maimonidean and anti-philosophical influence of Naḥmanides is felt throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially in Catalonia. He was succeeded by Rashba – who proclaimed a ban against philosophy in 1305 – followed by two generations of legal scholars, exegetes, and kabbalists. Of particular note are R. Yom Ṭov ben Abraham al-Ishbili (the Ritba), whose *Sefer Zikkaron* (Book of Remembrance) attempted to harmonize the teachings of Maimonides and Naḥmanides; Baḥya ben Asher, whose commentary on the Torah anthologized many of Naḥmanides' interpretations; Isaac of Acre, whose supercommentary on Naḥmanides' commentary on the Torah explains and emphasizes its kabbalistic as well as its anti-Maimonidean elements; and Joshua Ibn Shuayb, the first preacher to

[70] See Y. T. Langermann, "Acceptance and Devaluation: Naḥmanides' Attitude towards Science," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 1 (1992): 223–45.

[71] Trans. D. Berger, "Miracles and the Natural Order in Naḥmanides," in *Rabbi Moses Naḥmanides (Ramban)*, pp. 107–28, on p. 113.

[72] Several recent studies of Naḥmanides' theory of miracles have attempted to minimize the miraculous and emphasize the rational. See, e.g., Berger, "Miracles and the Natural Order in Naḥmanides"; M. Nehorai, "Naḥmanides' Theory of Miracle and of Nature and its Connections to Rabbi Yehudah ha-Levy," *Da'at* 17 (1986): 23–31, with a reply by Berger, in *Da'at* 19 (1987), 169–70; D. Novak, *The Theology of Naḥmanides Systematically Presented* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Langermann, "Acceptance and Devaluation"; M. Halbertal, "The Theory of Miracles which Underlies the Concealed Miracle: Aspects of the Chain of Being in Ramban's Thought," *Kabbalah* 7 (2002): 257–80. Cf. J. Feldman ("The Power of the Soul over the Body: Corporeal Transformation and Attitudes towards the Body in the Thought of Naḥmanides," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1999), who emphasizes the spiritualistic.

[73] See D. Schwartz, "From Theurgy to Magic: The Evolution of the Magical-Talismanic Justification of Sacrifice in the Circle of Naḥmanides and his Interpreters," *Aleph* 1 (2000): 165–213. For a discussion of the philosophical background, see also J. Stern, *Problems and Parables of Law: Maimonides and Naḥmanides on Reasons for the Commandments (Ta'amei Ha-Mitzvot)* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), chapter 6. For the supercommentators on Naḥmanides in general, see D. Abrams, "Orality in the Kabbalistic School of Naḥmanides: Preserving and Interpreting Esoteric Traditions and Texts," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 85–102.

introduce extensive kabbalistic material into his sermons.[74] The tradition continued into the fifteenth century as well. After the Black Death, in the mid-fourteenth century, Rabbenu Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi (the Ran) reestablished Barcelona as a major center of halakhic scholarship and anti-rationalism. Yet he, and his most famous disciple, Ḥasdai Crescas, started to move in a different direction as well. They drew on the emerging anti-Aristotelian philosophy of the later Middle Ages to undermine Aristotle and the Aristotelians with Aristotle's own tools.[75]

The Fifteenth Century. Rabbenu Nissim, Crescas, and the apostate Abner of Burgos (Alfonso de Valladolid)[76] are the first major figures of late medieval Jewish anti-Aristotelianism. Yet they were followed by many others, especially in fifteenth-century Spain, when disputations and increased conversionary pressures forced Jews to learn the ideas and techniques of Christian scholasticism. The two most famous and influential late-fifteenth-century Jewish anti-Aristotelians were Isaac Arama (ca. 1420–94) and Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508). A few remarks about each of these figures are followed by one illustration of their anti-philosophical exegesis.

Arama was the last great Jewish preacher of Christian Spain.[77] His magnum opus is *Aqedat yiṣḥaq* (Binding of Isaac), a collection of sermons on the weekly Torah portion. The sermons are long and detailed and generally follow a formal pattern. Each begins with the citation of a rabbinic dictum or aggadah, presents a systematic discussion of a philosophical or theological problem, explains the verses in the pericope, and then returns to the rabbinic dictum.[78] Throughout his sermons Arama foments against the philosophers and uses philosophy, in quite remarkable ways, to undermine philosophy. In many cases, he shows greater knowledge and mastery of philosophy than do the philosophers he criticizes.

[74] For background on Baḥya b. Asher, see E. Gottlieb, *Kabbalah in the Writings of R. Baḥya ben Asher Ibn Halawa* (Jerusalem: *Qiryat Sefer*, 1970) (Heb.); for Isaac of Acre, see A. Goldreich, "*Sefer Me'irat Einayim* by R. Isaac of Acre: A Critical Edition," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1981; for Ibn Shuayb, see C. Horowitz, *The Jewish Sermon in Fourteenth-Century Spain: The Derashot of R. Joshua Ibn Shu'eib* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[75] For Rabbenu Nissim b. Reuben (the Ran), see especially the editions of his sermons and biblical commentary by L. Feldman: *Derašot ha-Ran ha-šalem* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 2003); *Peruš 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem: Makhon Shalem, 1968). See also S. Klein-Braslavy, "Vérité prophétique et vérité philosophique chez Nissim de Gérone: une interprétation du Récit de la Création et du Récit du Chariot," *Revue des études juives* 134 (1975): 75–99; idem, "The Gathering at Mount Sinai in the Thought of Rabbi Nissim b. Reuben Gerondi," *Sinai* 53 (1977): pp. 26–37 (Heb.); A. Ravitzky, "Kings and Laws in Late Medieval Jewish Thought: Nissim of Gerona vs. Isaac Abrabanel," in L. Landman, ed., *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and Other Cultures* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1990), pp. 67–90; W. Z. Harvey, "Nissim of Gerona and William of Ockham on Prime Matter," *Jewish History* 6 (1992): 88–98; idem, "Liberal Democratic Themes in Nissim of Girona," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 3, pp. 197–211; M. Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law: Secularizing the Political in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001). For Crescas and his anti-Aristotelianism, see H. A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929); W. Z. Harvey, *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998).

[76] For Abner's anti-Aristotelianism, see, e.g., J. Hecht, "The Polemical Exchange between Isaac Pollegar and Abner of Burgos/Alfonso of Valladolid according to Parma MS 2440," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1993, pp. 113–14.

[77] For background on Arama, see especially S. Heller-Wilensky, *Isaac Arama and his Philosophical System* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1956) (Heb.); idem, "Isaac Arama on the Creation and Structure of the World," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 22 (1953): 131–50; B. Septimus, "Yitzhaq Arama and Aristotle's Ethics," in Yom Tov Assis and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1999), pp. 1–24.

[78] For the formal nature of the late medieval sermon, see M. Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800, An Anthology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 66–79.

If Arama was the most creative exegete and preacher in late medieval Spain, Abarbanel was the most refined.[79] He was the last in a long history of Hispano-Jewish statesmen, was the leader of Spanish Jewry at the time of the expulsion, and was also a philosopher, exegete, and messianic theorist. His massive commentaries on the Bible were completed after the expulsion, in Italy and elsewhere, but they represent – sometimes literally – the intellectual developments of pre-expulsion Spain. In his commentaries, Abarbanel cites and criticizes Maimonides and Gersonides, undermining their Aristotelian positions in every area of philosophy and theology – from the theory of knowledge and the Active Intellect to the arguments regarding the origins of the world. In response, he introduces ideas that would become standard doctrines of later anti-Aristotelian thought.

One fairly simple and straightforward example of Arama's and Abarbanel's anti-philosophical and anti-Maimonidean exegesis is the story of Jacob's dream of the ladder in Genesis 28, which was one of the key texts singled out by Maimonides.[80] In the preface to the *Guide*, Maimonides identifies it as a paradigmatic example of a biblical allegory and then explains it in two different ways in two chapters of the *Guide*. In *Guide* 1.15 he explains it politically: The angels ascending are the prophets, who ascend to God through study and then descend to rule the people. In *Guide* 2.10, by contrast, he hints at a cosmological explanation. Every part of the dream corresponds with some aspect of the natural world: The ladder itself represents the cosmos or chain of existence, which extends from the sublunar world into the celestial world; the rungs are the planets and spheres; the angels of God ascending and descending are celestial intelligences; and the Lord above is the first cause or prime mover.

These different interpretations were combined, expanded, and modified throughout the later Middle Ages by Samuel Ibn Tibbon, Jacob Anaṭoli, Isaac Albalag, Gersonides, Ibn Kaspi, Nissim of Marseilles, and many others.[81] They understood the dream as an injunction of sorts to ascend the ladder of wisdom toward knowledge of God. In the fifteenth century, in contrast, Abarbanel and Arama set out to sever any connection between Jacob's dream and the claims of philosophy. Abarbanel did this by means of philosophy itself.[82] How can the philosophers associate cosmological ideas with Jacob's dream, he asks, when Aristotle himself had shown that dreams are not a legitimate source of theoretical knowledge? For his part, Arama took an indirect exegetical approach.[83] Even if the dream is cosmological, he argued, its lesson is not philosophical but anti-philosophical. For no matter how far one ascends the ladder of wisdom, no matter how much one masters knowledge of the cosmos, God is still above the ladder. In other words, reason, no matter how well developed, will always remain subordinate to the inscrutable wisdom of God.

[79] For Abarbanel, see especially E. Lawee, "Isaac Abarbanel's Intellectual Achievement and Literary Legacy in Modern Scholarship: A Retrospective and Opportunity," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 3, pp. 213–48; idem, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance toward Tradition: Defense, Dissent, and Dialogue* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001); S. Feldman, *Philosophy in a Time of Crisis: Don Isaac Abravanel, Defender of the Faith* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

[80] For the interpretation by Maimonides, see S. Klein-Braslavy, "Maimonides' Interpretations of Jacob's Dream about the Ladder," *Bar-Ilan Year Book* 22–3 (1988): 329–49 (Heb.); J. Diamond, *Maimonides and the Hermeneutics of Concealment: Deciphering Scripture and Midrash in the Guide of the Perplexed* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), pp. 29–130.

[81] For the history of exegesis of the ladder, see especially Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension"; M. Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillar, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), pp. 167–204.

[82] See Don Isaac Abarbanel, *Peruš 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem: Torah ve-Da'at, 1964), commentary on Genesis 28 (pp. 313–20).

[83] See Isaac Arama, *'Aqedat Yiṣḥaq* (Pressburg, 1849), Vol. 1, pp. 184b–90b.

CONCLUSION

During the Middle Ages, philosophy and exegesis were closely linked: Philosophical ideas were taught and developed in relation to biblical texts, and biblical texts were explained in light of philosophy. This symbiotic relation between science and Scripture developed in response to a basic epistemological and theological problem: the need to resolve or harmonize contradictions between reason and revelation. In the later centuries, though, especially in Christian Europe, philosophical exegesis had practical functions as well. In particular, writing philosophy as exegesis helped create an authoritative framework for philosophy; it helped legitimize, defend, and even "naturalize" the study of "foreign" ideas and principles. Moreover, because the Bible was read by all, philosophical exegesis was a powerful pedagogical tool, an instrument of mass media, as it were, by which novel ideas and opinions could be introduced to the general public. Indeed, in many cases Jews had their first encounter with the sciences not in straightforward philosophical works but in commentaries on the biblical text.

These different motivations and functions of philosophical exegesis were active, in various degrees and combinations, in all the main periods and centers surveyed in this chapter, including the Islamic East, Andalusia, Provence, Italy, and Christian Spain. They apply in other areas as well, such as Byzantium during the fourteenth and fifteen centuries and Italy and Salonika during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[84] Indeed, philosophical exegesis, with all its problems and concerns, continued to flourish into the seventeenth century. However, by the early modern period, the critical opinions and approaches of Arama and Abarbanel regarding philosophy itself and the relationship between philosophy and Scripture were beginning to predominate. In fact, there is a direct link between Crescas, Arama, and Abarbanel, on the one hand, and Benedict Spinoza, the founder of the modern critical study of the Bible, on the other. Thus with Arama and Abarbanel we can recognize the beginning of the end for philosophical exegesis. The Middle Ages were coming to a close; the interactions between philosophy and Scripture were moving in new directions.

[84] For Byzantium, see, e.g., D. Schwartz, "Conceptions of Astral Magic within Jewish Rationalism in the Byzantine Empire," *Aleph* 3 (2003): 165–211; D. Lasker, "Byzantine Karaite Thought," in *Karaite Judaism*, pp. 505–28; D. Frank, "Karaite Exegetical and Halakhical Literature in Byzantium and Turkey," ibid., 529–58. For Salonika, see, e.g., J. Sermoneta, "Scholastic Philosophical Literature in Rabbi Taitazak's 'Portat Yosef,'" *Sefunot* 11 (1971–7): 135–85 (together with the other articles on Saloniki in the same volume); K. Bland, "Issues in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Exegesis," in D. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 50–67; Y. T. Langermann, "David ibn Shoshan on Spirit and Soul," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (2007): 63–86.