

the demand that one risk his life in battle against the *resha'im*, see too *Sha'are Teshubah*, 3:188; but cf. 3:199.

142. See Num. 25:14.

143. *Sha'are Teshubah*, 3:162-167.

144. *Ibid.*, 3:164.

145. *Ibid.*, 3:160.

146. *Ibid.*, 3:152. But the downfall of the *resha'im* ought not to be the occasion for rejoicing; see *Perush Abot*, pp. 70f.; cf. too *ibid.*, p. 51.

147. *Perush Mishle*, 19:10.

148. *Sha'are Teshubah*, 3:82.

149. *Perush Mishle*, 16:20.

150. *Ibid.*, 21:12; *Perush Abot*, p. 9.

151. *Perush Mishle*, 12:9.

152. *Sha'are Teshubah*, 3:38.

153. *Perush Abot*, p. 88, quoting Ibn Gabirol's *Mibhar ha-Penanim*.

154. *Talmide R. Jonah, Alfasi Berakot*, 44b (s.v. *be-kol*).

155. *Perush Mishle*, 21:25.

156. *Perush Mishle*, 18:9; see too *ibid.*, 12:9; *Perush Abot*, pp. 11f.

157. *Perush Mishle*, 21:5.

158. *Perush ha-Mishnayot, Abot*, 4:5; *Mishneh Torah, Talmud Torah*, 3:10-11. I hope, in a forthcoming study, to trace the history of this ideal in medieval Spain.

159. *Perush Abot*, pp. 20f., 41f., 62f.

160. *Perush Mishle*, 18:23.

161. *Ibid.*, 10:5.

162. *Ibid.*, 24:3.

163. Millàs i Vallicrosa, *Documents*, nos. 17-22,

164. "Shire Meshullam da Piera," pp. 24f.

165. *Perush Mishle*, 14:24 and 11:11.

166. *Ibid.*, 16:20; cf. this and the previous passage to the lines quoted above from Meshullam da Piera.

167. *Sha'are Teshubah*, 3:149. The centrality, for R. Jonah, of the struggle between *zaddiqim* and *resha'im*, may explain his consistent use of the term "*zaddiq*" rather than "*hasid*;" see Y. Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, II (Jerusalem, 1961), 657, note 12.

10

Joseph ibn Kaspi Portrait of a Medieval Jewish Intellectual

Isadore Twersky

The Study of ibn Kaspi

This paper might well be entitled Joseph ibn Kaspi *redivivus*—resurrected and revisited—for throughout modern times this prolific Provençal writer (1280-1340) was a relatively obscure figure.¹ His name was mentioned in standard works and histories accompanied by encyclopedia-like blurbs, bibliographical summations, or stereotype characterizations—varying in length from a few lines to a few pages.² His reputation—fame or notoriety—was nurtured by direct knowledge only of his ethical will, published in 1844 (ed. E. Ashkenazi), an indisputably important document of intellectual history, and his twin commentaries on the *Moreh Nebukim*, published in 1848 (ed. S. Werbluner and D. Kircheim), very significant chapters in the story of Maimonidean exegesis and the dissemination of philosophic views and values.³ His own descriptive bibliography, *Kebuzat Kesef*, listing about 30 works, was also published by I. Benjacob in 1844 and the existence of many of these works in manuscript was noted. Passivity, however, reigned supreme and no serious attempt was made to push back the frontiers of Kaspi study. It was primarily the achievement of a dedicated English paleographer, Isaac Last, who at the fin de siècle began to publish many of these manuscripts, that made the study of Kaspi possible once again. Yet, the scholarly yield is still meager and Kaspi's works, recently reprinted, are still to a great extent forlorn, unexamined and unmonographed, while many are still unpublished. One thinks of two pioneering articles by W. Bacher (1912),⁴ a noteworthy little German dissertation (1930),⁵ a penetrating Hebrew essay by S. Pines.⁶ He thus remains a fetching figure, with a determination still to be made as to how original, influential, or interesting; even if careful analysis shall sustain the impression of mediocrity, he may still remain historically important and instructive, for, as has been noted elsewhere, articulate, aggressive mediocrities may surpass great "classical" thinkers in their significance for intellectual history and their writings may be more protean and influential.⁷ We have here incidentally a paradigm for the slow process of scholarly absorption of new material into the mainstream of monographic analysis and textbook synthesis.⁸

Let me add immediately that, in referring to the fact of Kaspi's relative

obscurity, I purposely emphasized "in modern times" in order to dissipate the notion of censorship, of any conspiracy of silence or premeditated concealment of his works. It would appear that for several centuries at least he was known and studied—quoted, criticized, or supported. He elicited strong feelings of approval or censure, never an attitude of indifference or nonchalance. On the crucial issue of Talmud study, for example, he is mercilessly indicted by R. Joseph Jabez, the forceful sixteenth-century antagonist of philosophic culture in the *Or ha-Hayyim*, and enthusiastically commended by that colorful Renaissance figure Leo de Modena in the *Behinat ha-Kabbalah*.⁹ This vertical relationship is, in itself, of obvious historical significance. It tells us not only about Kaspi's *Nachleben* and the representative, typological value of his works; the search for pedigree by later (in this case, sixteenth-century) writers reveals much about the self-consciousness of a period vis-à-vis the phenomenon of continuity and change and the concomitant justification or repudiation of change or the attempt to root apparently novel attitudes in certain precedents.¹⁰ In any event, only in premodern and modern times do his writings, along with those of many Provencal contemporaries like R. Menahem ha-Me'iri, Yedaya ha-Penini, Moses Narboni, Kalonymos b. Kalonymos and Gersonides, fall into oblivion and the manuscripts are left to collect dust in libraries.

From a formal-material point of view, that is, the approach used by a cataloguer or bibliographer, Kaspi should be characterized and classified as an exegete, with a special yen for logical-philological interpretation, for his works are primarily exegetical. There is some "pure" philosophy, for example, an epitome of Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles' Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Middle Commentary*,¹¹ but the center of gravity is Biblical exegesis. Moreover, self-consciousness as an exegete suffuses his literary creativity and, while an author's self-evaluation may not be precise and need not be normative for the historian, it is always significant per se. Kaspi never tired (his readers may become weary) of underscoring the ardor of his aspirations and the originality of his achievements in exegesis; he was totally obsessed with the importance of his method and its value as a precision instrument that would enable sensitive students to interpret Scripture correctly, that would accelerate the progress of speculative thought and rational understanding. He insisted that he would not repeat or summarize, would not write postscripts or hackneyed ideas but would regularly aim to focus on novel insights; it is almost as if he were responding to the charge-challenge of his contemporary R. Yedaya ha-Penini, who asserted that only poets are creative and truly original while thinkers are only able to collect and repeat old, classical ideas. The eclectic, repetitive philosopher is contrasted with the innovative, inspired poet.¹² In any event, this simple bibliographical fact has compounded the difficulties of scholarly analysis, for exegetical writings are particularly knotty, frequently recalcitrant, sometimes repetitious, sometimes inconsistent (ranging from apparent or outright contradiction to subtle divergences of emphasis), and the attempt to systematize

non-systematic writings, to extrapolate rigorously structured concepts from soft, pliable molds, is problematic. Kaspi may be said to dramatize the scope and intensity of rational exegesis and to illustrate the attendant difficulties of systematization and conceptualization on the part of students. Even his *Sefer ha-Sod*, an avowedly systematic classification of the principles of exegesis, that is, a brief methodological prologue to his exegetical oeuvre, which especially stressed the freedom of interpretation given to an exegete, is rife with problems of this kind.¹³

However, from a substantive-typological point of view, he should be characterized as a "Maimonidean," as an energetic zealous intellectual, a broker of rationalistic ideas and ideals rather than as a Bible commentator or grammarian: exegesis was the vehicle for his philosophic activity. Joseph ibn Kaspi belonged to that group I have described elsewhere as "sensitive, remarkably industrious, versatile, deeply committed writers eager to disseminate and vindicate philosophy, to prove that it was not an upstart discipline alien to religious concerns. They defended the cause of philosophy with elegance and persuasiveness, sometimes with a touch of lyricism, always with passion."¹⁴ Specifically, he saw himself as a protagonist of Aristotelian rationalism, as a continuator of the school of R. Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides, the two great original influential authors of Spanish Jewry that were linked together, either for praise or criticism, by many fourteenth-century writers (for example, Ritba, R. Shem Tob, Joseph ibn Wakar). It is not only that he wrote supercommentaries on the *Perush* of ibn Ezra and the *Moreh* of Maimonides, but their writings are the pivots of his entire enterprise. Their influence is pervasive, their stimulus profound. Even when he departs from their specific views—and he deliberately underscores his freedom—his indebtedness to them is regularly and meaningfully acknowledged; moreover, the indebtedness is discernible even when not openly admitted. Kaspi is thus a major contributor to the so-called "fourteenth-century ibn Ezra Renaissance,"¹⁵ in which the writings of ibn Ezra were carefully studied and commentaries and supercommentaries composed; he is also a sturdy prop in the spread of Maimonideanism. In short, Kaspi, together with other post-Maimonidean philosophers or devotees of philosophy (Samuel and Moses ibn Tibbon, Jacob Anatoli, Zerachiah b. Shealtiel Hen, Hillel of Verona, Moses Salerno, Yedaya ha-Penini of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century come to mind as do Joseph b. Shem Tob or Abraham Bibago of the fifteenth century), accepts the philosophic (Maimonidean) interpretation of Judaism, its ethos and its logos, as an Archimedean point; Maimonidean positions may be criticized, modified, or extended but they are axial, and essentially paradigmatic.

Seen from this vantage point, the study of Kaspi is, in my opinion, most appropriately located in the discipline of history of ideas rather than history of philosophy (or, for that matter, even history of exegesis). It is not only that he is not in the class of his predecessor, who serves as a paradigm for him, R. Moses Maimonides, or his contemporary, whom he apparently did

not know, R. Levi Gersonides, but the real value of his works is to be found in the attitudes he formulates and postures he adopts. We must understand what intellectual-spiritual problems concern him and what positions typify him, what influences molded him and what aspirations propelled him, what was the nature of the intellectual revolution he wanted to strengthen and perpetuate. It is, of course, possible to add Kaspi footnotes to the history of philosophy concerning most of the major problems and themes that preoccupied medieval Jewish philosophers: faith and reason, prophecy, creation of the world, causality and natural law, miracles, free will, providence, ethical theory, rationalization of the halakah, and similar problems or details thereof. The results would most likely be a pale florilegium of views.¹⁶

What seems to be most worthwhile and enlightening is a reconstruction and appraisal of his attitude toward central, abiding issues in Jewish cultural life and intellectual history, issues concerning which there was room for considerable latitude, variation or selective identification with prototypical patterns. He may be seen, in other words, as a typical intellectual—and thus analysis of his works may help us construct a phenomenology of medieval Jewish intellectualism—without necessarily blurring his individual inclinations or emphases. Use of a historical phenomenology must be clear and flexible, so as to identify standard typological features as well as individual divergences and whims—accentuation or attenuation of recurrent tendencies. This flexibility bridges the gap between intellectual history, which might become ensnared in *Zeitgeist* theories and exaggerated sociologizing, presumptions of excessive homogeneity or uniqueness of periods, and history of ideas, which uncovers continuity, identity, or similarity of basic attitudes and intellectual postures in various periods. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of historical analysis need to be balanced. The following topics are illustrative examples, not an exhaustive enumeration, and each one could be analyzed at length, put in historic context and its ramifications outlined: (1) attitude to Talmud study, examination of its presumed centrality, and the whole complex of the relation of Talmud study to other areas as formal curricular subjects (Bible, grammar, philosophy, kabbalah, history); (2) approach to aggadah, that is, continuation of the quest for an exegetical methodology which, by disciplined allegorical interpretation, would present aggadah as a treasure trove of philosophic ideas and, at the very least, eliminate difficulties or embarrassments; (3) the literal and unliteral in Scriptural interpretation; (4) the role of language study, the nature of grammar and the proper methods for its study (involving criticism, sometimes quite strident, of ibn Janah and R. David Kimhi and marked differences with Rashi) and the whole issue of language and logic; (5) the (declining) role and status of poetry; (6) relationship of the beliefs of intellectuals and those of the masses—the whole crucial issue of elitism, esotericism together with the progressive enlightenment of the philosophically naive and untutored; (7) the quest for spirituality and the dangers of antinomism and a double-barreled polemic (contra Christian indictments as well as

material for internal debate) concerning Judaism as a religion of spirituality; (8) the question of originality and innovation in medieval writing, particularly the insistence upon freedom of interpretation; (9) rabbinic leadership of the community and its socio-intellectual critics, with special emphasis upon criticism for intellectual-spiritual shortcomings; (10) the sporadic intensification of historical thought in medieval Jewish writing and its various uses and applications (for example, for purposes of causal explanation, specifically the recognition of intermediate causes in the historical process) concern with a philosophy of history, and the role of messianism; (11) openness to non-Jewish culture, particularly Judeo-Arabic philosophy and Christian scholasticism with particular attention to the quantitative aspect (how much use and influence) as well as the axiological (what were its repercussions, if any, with regard to attitudes, tolerance, relativism or skepticism); (12) anti-Christian polemics, particularly the significant shift from formal disputations to literary (historical-theological) attacks on the foundations of Christianity. Full analysis of these issues would help provide a "character study" (to use the phrase of A. R. Hall, *The Scientific Revolution*) of the intellectual revolution which Kaspi and his colleagues supported—not a scholastic analysis of philosophic problems and not even an intellectual profile of one significant protagonist but a sensitive, repercussive study in the history of ideas and their origin and impact.

Literary Oeuvre and Ideology

A few observations about his milieu and some generalizations about his literary achievement will provide a suitable background against which to present a brief exposition of two of the issues listed above: his exegetical methods, particularly a special kind of literalism, historicism and naturalism in Bible study; his attitude to Talmud study. Kaspi was the child of a dedicated philosophic movement, tested through many turbulent years, with a record of advance and regression, influence and frustration. The prolonged and heated controversy concerning the legitimacy of philosophy, culminating in the 1305 promulgation of the ban against its study and a counter-proclamation denouncing the advocates of this ban, was fresh in his memory. He may have been one of the anonymous, zealous, not too influential supporters of the philosophic party. We know that some of his townsmen, scholars of Argentière, took part in the controversy and aligned themselves with the anti-philosophic camp of Rashba.¹⁷ The turbulence was apparently a stimulant for Kaspi, not an irritant or a deterrent. Kaspi's commitment and his determination to advance the cause of philosophy were most likely deepened, not diminished. His confidence in rationalism was pure and simple, his enthusiasm for the application of logic and philosophy to religious tradition was unabated; his goal was to prove that the victory of the Maimonidean antagonists was pyrrhic, because, like Maimonides, he considered an unphilosophical religion illegitimate, a historical and phenomenological aberration. He displayed an intransigent attitude to unphi-

losophical culture, insisting that there was no alternative, no room for compromise. One uses and pursues reason not as an expression of hubris, in the sense of "aggrandisement of man against God," but as a fulfillment of a religious commandment, as an attempt to ally human reason with divine norm, to bring man closer to God via knowledge. Inasmuch as philosophy was an indispensable component of Judaism, he would rather risk being accused of imprudence and impudence in elaborating philosophic insights than of insincerity or inconsistency in concealing them.¹⁸

Furthermore, the usual evolutionary view, which we sometimes use unreflectively, almost dogmatically, and which, therefore, can be quite arbitrary, is clearly not applicable here. Kaspi wrote intensely and intensively over the course of a few decades; his writings are steady and consistent, with salient, easily identifiable leitmotifs, characterized by uniformity of goal and immutability of method.¹⁹ His life is characterized by intellectual restlessness but ideological steadfastness, a variety of media but consistency of vision.

This leads one to emphasize the paradox, at first glance rather strange but really quite natural, which surrounds the activity of Kaspi (and many of his contemporaries). He is an intellectual, acutely aware of the gap, sometimes widening into a complete breach, between the insights and rationalizations of philosophers vis-à-vis beliefs and assumptions of the masses (often described as foolish, dormant, unfortunate, poor in knowledge), but nevertheless he seeks relentlessly, if not to bridge the gap, at least to win adherents, to spread philosophic enlightenment and raise the level of philosophic sophistication, and this with the zeal and verve of a proselytizer. There is, needless to say, an inevitable residuum of esotericism and tension consisting, on one hand, of ritualistic assertions that not everything may be told, that there are interpretations which must not be disseminated, that in fact he does "not wish to reveal all the secrets," and on the other, that, inasmuch as full congruence between the philosophers and the masses will not be forthcoming, one should not be deterred from the truth by mass criticism or disagreement, but basically the movement is from shyness and restraint and elitism to articulateness and boldness and democratization.²⁰ This dialectic is, of course, not limited to philosophy; it is also typical of kabbalah, which emerges from the shadows of a tight, almost impenetrable, esotericism to the center stage of an energetic movement attempting to popularize and proselytize. Any religious-intellectual movement which possesses special insight must eventually propagate it and become public or else it faces the serious charge of egotism; if one does not make it possible for others to benefit from his achievement, he is guilty of withholding the good from him to whom it is due and of destroying important, hard-won knowledge. As Maimonides put it in the introduction to part 3 (another apology for publicizing his philosophical positions) of the *Moreh Nebukim*: "If I had omitted setting down something of that which has appeared to me as clear, so that that knowledge would perish when I perish, as is inevitable, I should have

considered that conduct as extremely cowardly with regard to you and everyone who is perplexed. It would have been, as it were, robbing one who deserves the truth of the truth, or begrudging an heir his inheritance."²¹ It is not for the philosopher to sit in solitary dissatisfaction, lamenting the lowly state of true learning and the prevalence of error. He must skillfully share his insights, gradually dispel error and elevate the state of philosophic knowledge. In any event, this exoteric thrust, nurtured by a medley of motives, in turn exposes the protagonists to the charge of breaching a necessary, consensual esotericism, of indiscriminate dissemination of secret teachings. In the case of Kaspi, we find this at the core of Kalonymos b. Kalonymos' indictment of him: even if everything Kaspi taught was true and unimpeachable—and Kalonymos clearly does not think that this is the case—he should still be faulted for lack of discretion, because philosophic popularization, which substitutes provocative interpretations for bland restatements of comfortable propositions, could loosen the fabric of traditional beliefs and erode the institutions of the religious community.²² Nevertheless, the intellectual, in various degrees, has the temerity to attack features of popular religion and hence blur objects on which the popular religious consciousness focuses. He risks the danger that the unsophisticated may miss the import and impact of his philosophic interpretations and fall into total confusion, but an inner compulsion drives him onward.²³ In sum, the antithetical tendencies cannot really be united nor can the pressures be eased.

Almost a corollary of this situation is the high degree of self-consciousness in his writing, not merely with regard to exegesis, the frequency of first person references, confessional obiter dicta concerning method, motive and goal, and direct address to the reader. His ethical will is, in essence, a kind of spiritual-intellectual autobiography, a genuine *apologia pro vita sua* belonging, *mutatis mutandis*, to the genre of Plato's Seventh Letter, Avicenna's *Autobiography*, or Peter Abelard's *Historia*. It emerges as a vigorous summary of his approach to law, religion and philosophy, alerting us (through his son) not to succumb to the pressures and distortions of the opposition. Maimonides' immunity to *genut he-hamon* (the contempt which the masses feel toward the elite) reverberates, while the desire to benefit every reader in accord with his capacity is also a driving force. In many respects, it resembles, and, I would suggest, was greatly influenced by Maimonides' *Ma'amar Tehiyyat ha-Metim*, which is concerned with the central, expansive issues of religious phenomenology and axiology rather than the clearly circumscribed problem of corporeal resurrection and is thus a defense of his life's work. It is a vigorous restatement and defense of his standard, life-long approach to issues of law, religion, and metaphysics, alerting the reader to the fact that the opposition to his view in this case is not an isolated matter but is symptomatic of divergent, perhaps irreconcilable, religious conceptions. Kaspi's will, which gives us a clear vignette of a fighting intellectual, is similarly a distillation of his views and a vindica-

tion of his life's work, reflecting intellectual skirmishes with adversaries or efforts at protecting philosophic positions which must never be abandoned, for they are the bastions of traditional, rationalistic Judaism. A prominent component of this apologia is the emphasis upon his own consistency as well as originality. The heavy, obvious self-consciousness of the will is characteristic of his entire corpus.²⁴ We may picture him, in sum, as a crusty, probably intractable, self-confident and self-conscious, indefatigable author.

Bible Exegesis: Literalism and Historicism

Perhaps the most salient feature in Kaspi's approach to Bible interpretation is the far-reaching, relentless quest for literalism. To be sure, no exegete is ever a complete literalist and least of all a philosophically oriented exegete for whom the use of allegory is axiomatic and compelling. Yet there is dialectical divergence in both the quantitative as well as qualitative relationship between philosophic literalism and philosophic nonliteralism. Most assume that a measure of nonliteralism is mandatory; the differentiation concerns the extent and reasons for its use, and the differences may be quite substantive. While Kaspi's exegesis has its share of allegory, what is novel and striking is the way he is uniformly and stressfully critical of nonliteral interpretations. He goes so far as to suggest that, in the absence of clear hermeneutical canons or tight textual-philological restraints, they lead to anarchy, to intellectual *laissez-faire*. Interpretation which is not guided by context and grammar, by *higgayon*, must inevitably be wobbly; interpretation which fails to project the Biblical text against its linguistic, geographic, and socio-historical background, thereby according primacy to natural or grammatical explanations, must fall wide of the mark.²⁵ These are the parameters of literalism within which the exegete should move. We may add briefly that this literalism, in addition to the emphasis on some exegetical relativism, also contains a measure of "exegetical agnosticism": certain things may not be known because we have no analogies, no similar experience, no corroborating evidence. Inasmuch as the exegete is committed to rigid canons of literalist interpretation, he must be careful not to foist unintended meanings upon the text. Kaspi shows extraordinary sensitivity to the exegesis-eisegesis syndrome and this results in restraint or readiness to withdraw and be silent.

We must be more specific and note that his extensive literalism is really a two-tiered construction. The use of grammar and logic, which adds some precision and rigor, of philology in the broadest sense of the term, all of which has precedents and sequels,²⁶ is only the first phase; this in turn culminates in a novel, intriguing exegetical dimension, highly suggestive and very repercussive, which deserves careful description and evaluation. Kaspi frequently operates with the following exegetical premise: not every Scriptural statement is true in the absolute sense. A statement may be purposely erroneous, reflecting an erroneous view of the masses. We are not dealing

merely with an unsophisticated or unrationalized view, but an intentionally, patently false view espoused by the masses and enshrined in Scripture. The view or statement need not be allegorized, merely recognized for what it is. Where did such a radical hermeneutic originate? How could Kaspi validate such an unusual methodological construct?

The key factor is Kaspi's use of the well-known rabbinic dictum: *dibrah Torah bileschon bene adam*, "The Torah speaks in the language of men," famous for its medieval use in the realm of anthropomorphism. Actually, in its original context, this statement, a cardinal rule of the school of R. Ishmael, applies to a wide range of grammatical-lexical-interpretive issues but never to anthropomorphism.²⁷ Maimonides, foreshadowed by R. Judah ibn Koreish, R. Nissim Gaon, R. Abraham ibn Ezra,²⁸ is responsible for converting this dictum into the basis and rallying point for all anti-anthropomorphic interpretations.

You know their dictum that refers in inclusive fashion to all the kinds of interpretation connected with this subject, namely their saying: "The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of man." The meaning of this is that everything that all men are capable of understanding and representing to themselves at first thought has been ascribed to Him as necessarily belonging to God, may He be exalted. Hence attributes indicating corporeality have been predicated to Him in order to indicate that He, may He be exalted, exists, inasmuch as the multitude cannot at first conceive of any existence save that of a body alone . . . In a similar way one has ascribed to Him . . . everything that in our opinion is a perfection in order to indicate that He is perfect in every manner of perfection and that no deficiency whatever mars Him. Thus none of the things apprehended by the multitude as a deficiency or a privation are predicated of Him.²⁹

As Maimonides continues to establish the foundations for his theory of attributes, he parenthetically defines *leshon bene adam*: "However, in accordance with the language of the sons of man, I mean the imagination of the multitude." In its Maimonidean adaptation, the rabbinic dictum may then be paraphrased as follows: "The Torah speaks in conformity with the imagination (and frequently crude perception) of the multitude" and therefore uses anthropomorphic imagery when speaking of divine attributes.

Now, Kaspi rather boldly takes a third step and more or less systematically extends the parameters of this philological principle to include issues and problems totally unrelated to anthropomorphism. In so doing, he converts it from a pedagogic principle which provides a license for allegorical interpretation to an hermeneutical principle which provides a lesson in what we would call historicism. Many scriptural statements, covered by this plastic rubric, are seen as errors, superstitions, popular conceptions, local mores, folk beliefs, and customs (*minhag bene adam*), statements which reflect the assumptions or projections or behavioral patterns of the people involved rather than an abstract truth. In its Kaspiian adaptation, the rabbinic

dictum may then be paraphrased as follows: "The Torah expressed things as they were believed or perceived or practiced by the multitude and not as they were in actuality." *Leshon bene adam* is not just a carefully calculated concession to certain shortcomings of the masses, that is, their inability to think abstractly, but a wholesale adoption of mass views and local customs. With regard to the latter, Kaspi is almost adumbrating—and I am wary of modernization or precursorism—the *Sitz-im-Leben* approach. There is here in embryo a general historicistic position.

We may find snippets of historicism, occasional forays into historical explanation, in the writings of some predecessors (R. Abraham ibn Ezra, R. Samuel b. Meir),³⁰ but the influence seems to be Maimonides' use of the principle of *leshon bene adam*. Indeed, the impetus provided by Maimonides (ibn Ezra is also a recognized force here) is fully acknowledged by Kaspi, who repeatedly emphasizes the significance of Maimonides' interpretation but also, quite confidently, sees his extension of the principle from anthropomorphism into other areas where the Torah reflects the imagination of the multitude as perfectly natural and indisputable.³¹

There are, however, converging influences and precedents, also Maimonidean in the first instance, which most likely contributed to the full crystallization of Kaspi's method. The following example will concretize the method, elaborate its implications and repercussions, and clearly illustrate the Maimonidean impetus and inspiration.

The Torah prohibits us from cursing: "You shall not curse the deaf" (Levit. 19:14). In the *Sefer ha-Mizvot*, Maimonides explains, at some length, the nature of the act and the reasons for its prohibition.

When a person is moved by a desire to revenge himself on one who has wronged him by inflicting upon him an injury of the kind which he believes he has suffered, he will not be content until he has requited the wrong in that fashion; and only when he has had his revenge will his feelings be relieved, and his mind cease to dwell on the idea. Sometimes a man's desire for revenge will be satisfied by merely cursing and reviling, because he knows how much hurt and shame this will cause his enemy. But sometimes the matter will be more serious, and he will not be content until he has completely ruined the other, whereupon he will be satisfied by the thought of the pain caused to his enemy by the loss of his property. In yet other cases the matter will be more serious still, and he will not be satisfied until he has thrashed his enemy or inflicted bodily injury upon him. Or it may be even more serious, and his desire for revenge will not be satisfied except by the extreme measure of taking his enemy's life and destroying his very existence. Sometimes, on the other hand, because of the lightness of the offense, the desire for vengeance will not be strong, so that he will find relief in uttering angry imprecations and curses, even though the other would not listen to them if he were present. It is well known that hot-tempered and choleric persons find relief in this way from the (annoyance caused by)

trivial offenses, though the offender is not aware of their wrath and does not hear their fulminations.

Now we might suppose that the Torah, in forbidding us to curse an Israelite, (was moved by) the shame and the pain that the curse would cause him when he heard it, but that there is no sin in cursing the deaf, who cannot hear and therefore cannot feel hurt. For this reason He tells us that cursing is forbidden by prohibiting it in the case of the deaf, since the Torah is concerned not only with the one who is cursed, but also with the curser, who is told not to be vindictive and hot-tempered.³²

The upshot of this ethical-psychological explanation, which emphasizes the desire for revenge and the ethical shortcoming of the one who curses, is to deny the efficacy of the act: cursing is not really effective in the sense that it produces malevolent results.³³ It is prohibited because it reflects moral weakness of the one who utters the curse.

In the *Moreh Nebukim*, in the context of his discussion of criminology and penology, Maimonides again has occasion to discuss the nature of the act of cursing. Having stated that severity of punishment according to the *halakah* is commensurate with the severity, frequency, and enormity of the culpable act, Maimonides notes that transgressions in which there is no action are not even punishable by flogging for they "can only result in little harm . . . and it is also impossible to take care not to commit them for they consist in words only." Why then is cursing one's fellow man one of the three exceptions to this rule? Maimonides answers parenthetically, almost nonchalantly, that the Torah dealt stringently with cursing "for in the opinion of the multitude the injury resulting from curses is greater than that which may befall the body." The popular view, "the opinion (and imagination) of the multitude," erroneous and without foundation in truth or reality, is sufficient reason for the law. In a word, the Torah takes into account psychological tendencies, fears, and beliefs, and popular perceptions which, even though philosophically unfounded, exert influence and, therefore, have their own "reality."³⁴

Kaspi picks up this parenthetic explanation, elaborating it and extending its applicability. In essence, he has converted this new historical awareness into a vehicle for philosophical enlightenment. If one recognizes superstition and popular error, one is in a position to neutralize or eliminate them. The Torah did not endorse or validate these views; it merely recorded them and a proper philosophic sensibility will recognize them. As a matter of fact, in certain matters—for example, the efficacy of blessing and cursing or the harmful consequences of counting the members of the community—Kaspi claims that one may readily discern a continuum of folk belief from Biblical to contemporary times.³⁵ This claim provides a dash of "empiricism" for the apriori philosophic sensibility which determines the direction of the interpretation.

There is thus no limit to the kinds of difficulties that may be resolved by this interpretive mechanism, which is based on a new form of historical awareness and a concomitant critical philology. It should be emphasized that this philological method did not entail text criticism or emendation, as was the case with the emergent humanist method of Petrarch and Valla. The issue was not the authoritativeness, accuracy, or sanctity of the text but its literal understanding; the method was primarily, almost exclusively, philosophical insight and application of *higgayon*, that special blend of logic and grammar, and not actual historical research or anthropological observation, which of course, could on occasion be utilized quite effectively. *Leshon bene adam*, which insists that the text be interpreted in accord with all rules of language as well as all realia, including folk beliefs, enables the exegete to sustain a literalist-contextual approach, thus obviating the need for excessive allegory and yet not doing violence to philosophic conviction. Kaspi declares that *zeh ha-ma'amar . . . matir rob ha-sefekot*; various kinds of textual and conceptual problems, apparently intractable, may thus be solved.³⁶ Furthermore, they may be solved without various forms of philological-textual criticism. Kaspi was critical of his predecessors because they in effect tampered with the text; a by-product of this criticism is his assertion that his explanations are more profound, sophisticated, and unassailable than those of his famous predecessors.³⁷ He proposes an alternate exegetic procedure, simple yet far-reaching, which will yield a literal understanding of the text without adding or emending or shuffling. This procedure combines exegetical naturalism—trying to understand everything in context of ordinary experiences—and historicism—noting cultural realities, differences in manners, habits, geography, expression.

This approach is clearly provocative. Kaspi, acutely aware of this, frequently appeals for God's forgiveness if he has erred or claims to rely on God's scrutinization of his pure, constructive intentions,³⁸ but there is no indication that Kaspi intended it to be latitudinarian or corrosive, to desecralize or humanize Biblical history or to secularize the understanding of the whole of Jewish history. His vision of Jewish history is indeed dynamic; he assigns a role to intermediate causes (in a way that adumbrates Vico) and emphasizes the contingencies of the historic process, but it would be incorrect to equate a measure of naturalism and human secondary causations with secularism or repudiation of providential patterns. It was a sharp tool for a philosopher, helping dispel intellectual foginess. It also could be used to vanquish Christian claims and Christian attacks on Jewish spirituality.³⁹ These are, in fact, the twin axes around which Kaspi's entire literary corpus revolves: an inner-directed program of spreading rationalism and an outer-directed polemic for silencing Christian criticisms. Bible interpretation, congruent with logical rules and philosophic assumptions, is the key to both the inner- as well as outer-directed concerns and is thus his major preoccupation.

Talmud and Philosophy

This logical-philological approach to Scripture, particularly its philosophical-spiritualist implications, as well as the very pronounced emphasis on the special importance of this study for understanding God's word and thereby attaining intellectual-religious perfection, helps focus also on the novelty of what we shall see to be his pejorative attitude to Talmud study. The setting in which this novel attitude is to be assessed is clear.

Judaism is halakocentric.⁴⁰ One corollary of this insistence upon norms and normative behavior is the centrality, often the exclusivity, of Talmud study; for study is the handmaiden of practice and Talmudic lore is the prerequisite for and source of halakic practice. Now, periodically, the legitimacy and justification of this intellectual-curricular pattern (almost an axiom) are disputed, as devotees of other disciplines vigorously contend that study of Talmud is not completely self-sufficient; it must be supplemented, and each one, needless to say, focuses on the worth and importance of his own expertise as the most important supplement. For example, R. Jonah ibn Janah argues passionately for the indispensability of grammar and language study, complaining that Talmudists with very skimpy philological knowledge condescendingly belittle the field.⁴¹ Some will raise their voices and pens against that excessive preoccupation with Talmud which results in neglect of Scripture.⁴² The most persistent and passionate claims come from the philosophers and the kabbalists and the various interminglings thereof, from those protagonists who aim to construct or sustain a spiritual, meta-halakic framework for halakah. In this context, we see Maimonides insisting unqualifiedly upon the necessity of moving from halakah to meta-halakah; actually he advocated the complementarity and reciprocity of halakah and philosophy, affirming that the religious commandment of Talmud Torah includes metaphysics as an integral, indispensable component.⁴³ The same is true for the religious conceptions elaborated by kabbalists, pietists, and the like, each with their own meta-halakic goals and definitions, pressures and projections.⁴⁴ These various programs—criticisms, challenges, curricular constructions or reconstructions—all recognize the centrality and universality of Talmud study but insist that it be regularly related to and supplemented by meta-halakic disciplines in order to guarantee its spirituality. There is agreement concerning the indispensability of purely legal study on one hand and its theological spinelessness on the other. Extending the parameters of study should not be viewed as optional or supererogatory but as the mandatory fulfillment of a religious obligation, the continuous pursuit of religious perfection. Philosophers and kabbalists agree completely concerning the principle, differing only with regard to the content of the meta-halakah. They agree, moreover, that this meta-halakah is not only the indispensable complement but constitutes the pinnacle of religious cognition and experience.

Against this background and from this perspective, Kaspi's approach and intellectual demands are quite revolutionary. While acknowledging the centrality of halakah—antinomism is not an issue here at all⁴⁵—he denies the correlative centrality of Talmud study. He not only wants to supplement it but he would have philosophy supersede it. Others point out deficiencies in the study of Talmud which can be remedied with spiritual exertion and intellectual determination, but he is ready to relinquish the Talmud's academic-scholarly centrality and distinction. All others, while assigning axiological primacy to the meta-halakic disciplines, underscored that one should first of all be a Talmudist and only then proceed to complement and elevate this achievement by the cultivation of philosophy (or kabbalah or hasidism).⁴⁶ Kaspi in effect proclaimed that proficiency in Talmud was not imperative, was not even an ideal, for everyone. His argument actually results in total inversion of the traditional scale of values: the truly universal subjects of study now become physics and metaphysics, the subject matter of the first four commandments. "Now, the knowledge of God is the primary precept of all our 613 laws, as may be seen from the texts enforcing this knowledge. It is the basis of the four precepts enumerated by Maimonides at the beginning of his Code. He specifically terms them the Foundations of the Torah. These four precepts are (1) to know that there is a First Cause, (2) to recognize that He is One, (3) to love Him, and (4) to fear Him. They are designated the Foundations of the Torah, for they are at once the purpose and the root of all the commandments, the observance of which is the whole end of man."⁴⁷ These are absolutely indispensable for individual perfection and cannot be achieved vicariously or collectively; they should be known "by way of demonstration" (*derek mofet*) not "by way of tradition" (*derek kabbalah*). Talmudic knowledge, on the other hand, may be professionalized; one's knowledge of law need be neither direct nor comprehensive. Expertise in Talmud is seen simply and starkly as one "area of concentration," a field of specialization similar to any other field in which one acquires special skills.

But "if there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment," as regards any of these practical laws, follow the ordinance of Scripture, "Arise and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose." Note the selection of terms. "Thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites and unto the judge," "and thou shalt *do* according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall declare unto thee." It is written, "thou shalt *do*," and not, "thou shalt *know*." The Scripture had previously defined the kind of law to which this rule—(of seeking expert advice) was to apply. It starts with a very wide category, "between blood and blood," and further adds "between plea and plea," another general category, and then qualifies by the phrase, "even matters of controversy within the gates." The implication is that we are not all bound to know every detail of the law of the "four bailees," of "claimant and respondent," of "loan and deposit." Acquaintance with such matters is commendable, yet is it enough for us if there be available in our age a

judge or judges familiar with the law, who "shall judge the people at all times." That is to say, if I am able to pass my whole life without litigation, then ignorance of the law as to disputes is no defect in my soul. And if, God forbid, contention should arise between me and another and I go before one of the Rabbis expert in these affairs, again it is no defect at all in my soul.⁴⁸

Kaspi shows no appreciation of pure Talmud study, utilizing *Nezikin* as the obvious example of dispensable halakic subjects. "As the Sage Ibn Ezra remarks: 'If all men are righteous, there would be no need for the tractate concerning Torts.' Yet it would certainly be a defect in my soul if, when occasion arose for applying the law, I transgressed it."⁴⁹ This, to be sure, is somewhat of a topos in medieval writing but its significance is not lost. His candid confession concerning the limitations of his own study and his aggressive conclusion concerning the relative merit of law versus philosophy are quite striking.

I will confess to thee, my son! that though in my youth I learned a great portion of the Talmud, I did not acquire (for my sins!) a knowledge of all the posekim. Now that I am old and grey, I have often to consult rabbis younger than myself. Why should I be ashamed of this? Can one man be skilled in every craft? If, for instance, I want a gold cup, I go to the goldsmith, and I feel no shame; and so with other products, I turn, in case of need, to those whom God has gifted with the requisite skill.

Once I made a great feast at which all kinds of delicacies were served. I had the table prepared, I invited my friends to eat and drink with me, for it was a family party. Then the luckless handmaid put a milk spoon into the meat pot. I did not know the ritual law, how one ought to estimate the lawfully permissible proportion of intermixture. Perturbed in mind, as well as famished in body, I went to one of the rabbis held high in popular repute. He was (for my sins!) at table with his wife and family, eating, and drinking wine. I waited at his door until the shades of evening fell, and my soul was near to leave me. He then told me the law, and I returned home where my guests and the poor were awaiting me. I related all that had happened, for I was not ashamed to admit myself unskilled in that particular craft. In this I lack skill, but I have skill in another craft. Is not the faculty of expounding the existence and unity of God as important as familiarity with the rule concerning a small milk spoon?⁵⁰

It follows naturally that he will endorse the reliance on codes, particularly the *Mishneh Torah*, inasmuch as the textual-conceptual underpinning of study is completely superfluous; the fullness and richness of the method and substance of halakah—the interpretive process, the dialectical flow, the use of analogy and inference, the entire experience of "surfing" on the refreshing, often turbulent, waters of the "sea of the Talmud"—are remorselessly forfeited in favor of the stark normative conclusion. He even chides those contemporary scholars who seek proofs and explanations for the command-

ments rather than being content with the apodeictic, codified traditions of the *Mishneh Torah*.⁵¹ There is, in sum, a definite *odium Talmudicum*, which was detected and detested by R. Joseph Jabez in his *Or ha-Hayyim*.⁵²

Now, I would suggest that R. Joseph Jabez not only perceptively characterized and passionately condemned Kaspi's position (the ridicule of Talmudism) but he devised an ideological strategy for the defense and exaltation of Talmudism. When he dismisses philosophy's claim to axiological primacy by asserting that, whereas science studies the work of God, Torah studies the very essence of God, it appears quite certain that this is part of his confrontation with and refutation of Kaspi. It is as if he were discussing the philosophic question of the nobility of sciences and he concludes unequivocally that Torah is the noblest. The fact that the Talmud is so difficult proves its cardinal importance; for if indeed the noblest and most edifying subject of study were metaphysics, we would have been given a simple bare-bones listing of commandments, free of controversy, dialectic and argumentative development. It is, therefore, foolish to straitjacket Torah study into a narrow frame of relevance and functionality; debate and its complexities, dialectical unfolding of laws—all the accepted insignia of rabbinic discourse—are intrinsically significant.⁵³

This confrontation continues when we find the Maharal of Prague vehemently denouncing those who ridicule the study of *Nezikin* while revering the study of physics; he repeatedly exposes the fallacy of such argumentation. If we were to look ahead, we could see the Maharal's position as a historical fulcrum: on one hand reacting against the position established by Kaspi and on the other setting the stage for that position usually attributed to the two great contemporaries and antagonists of the beginning of the nineteenth century: R. Hayyim of Volozhin and R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi, the two great ideologues of pure Talmud study which is, in the final analysis, to be perceived as study of God's essence. All Talmud study is useful and perennially relevant; expending time and energy in order to understand even the discarded opinion in a debate or the wrong view in a controversy is unquestionably meritorious, for it is study of the word of God, it is thinking God's thoughts. Study per se is practical and need not seek to anchor itself in an external, self-transcending relevance. All Talmud study is self-validating and its universality should be the ideal for all. This, of course, is the absolute antithesis of Kaspi's restrictive attitude which would make Talmudic knowledge a purely professional concern nurtured by pragmatic or utilitarian criteria.⁵⁴

In summary, this attempt to present in compressed form a bifocal view of Joseph ibn Kaspi—as a typical Jewish intellectual sharing certain common concerns and commitments with others of this rationalist persuasion and as one who carried certain attitudes or projections to new, atypical extremes—could actually be restructured around three specific criticisms leveled at Kaspi by contemporaries and followers: Kalonymos' charge of a breach of

esotericism; Abravanel's indictment for misinterpreting the Bible and radicalizing Maimonides' *Guide*; Jabez' condemnation for ridiculing and demeaning Talmud study.

Of the two themes which were investigated, it may be said that the impact of his exegesis, a blend of literalism, naturalism, historicism, and selectivity, was not too great but his attitude to Talmud study provoked considerable discussion, direct and indirect, in the medieval as well as modern periods.

NOTES

1. See, most recently, the information made available by Richard Emery, "Documents Concerning Some Jewish Scholars in Perpignan in the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries," *Michael* (Diaspora Research Institute), IV (1976), 27-49. A condensed version of the first part of this article appeared in *Juifs et Judaïsme de Languedoc*, ed. M. Vicaire and B. Blumenkranz (Toulouse, 1977), pp. 185-205.

2. See, e.g., H. Graetz, *Dibre Yeme Yisrael* (Warsaw, 1897), V, 290-294; H. Gross, *Gallia Judaica*, (Paris, 1897), pp. 67-69; H. Hirschfeld, *Literary History of Hebrew Grammarians and Lexicographers* (London, 1926), p. 94; A. Neubauer and E. Renan, *Les Ecrivains Juifs Français* (Paris, 1893), pp. 131 ff.; *Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, 600-601; Y. Zinberg, *Toledot Sifrut Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1956), II, 107-144; M. Steinschneider, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1925), I, 89 ff.

3. His commentaries boldly undertake to elucidate and interpret the esoteric parts of the *Moreh Nebukim*. In his own commentary on the *Moreh* (e.g., I, 7, 8, 14 and *passim*), R. Isaac Abravanel wrathfully indicts Kaspi for radicalizing Maimonides. (My student Lawrence Kaplan had occasion to illustrate this in his dissertation on R. Mordecai Jaffe (Cambridge, 1976), which dealt, *inter alia*, with problems in the history of Maimonidean exegesis. In *Mif'alot Elokim*, (reprinted, London, 1961), II, 1, Abravanel also damns Kaspi, together with Narboni and Albalag, for belonging to that "cursed sect" which apparently believed in the eternity of the world. See also G. Vajda, *Isaac Albalag* (Paris, 1960), pp. 273-274. Moshe Edelman in his dissertation on R. Abraham Abulafia (Jerusalem, 1975), 12, has observed that Kaspi was apparently the first to quote Abulafia's commentary (*Sitre Torah*) on the *Moreh*, a radicalization of a different kind.

4. W. Bacher, "Joseph ibn Kaspi als Bibelerklärer," *Judaica: Festschrift zu Hermann Cohen* (Berlin, 1912), pp. 119-135; *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, LVI (1912), 199 ff. See also H. Stourdzke, "Les Deux Commentaires d'Ibn Kaspi sur les Proverbes," *REJ*, LII (1906), 71-76.

5. B. Finkelscherer, *Die Sprachwissenschaft des Joseph ibn Kaspi* (Breslau, 1930).

6. S. Pines, "Histabrut ha-Tekumah Me-Hadash shel Medinah Yehudit lefi Joseph ibn Kaspi u-lefi Spinoza," *Iyyun*, XIV (1964), 289-317; and see J. Schlanger, *REJ*, CXXIV (1965), 450-452. See also S. Pines, "La Conception de la Conscience de Soi chez Avicenne," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, XXI (1954), 23, note 4. See also the compressed, impressionistic review by H. R. Rabinovitz, *Bet ha-Mikra*, XV (1970), 352-359. When I wrote this chapter I had not yet seen the recently published (Leiden, 1976) dissertation of B. Mesch. S. Rosenberg's disser-

tation on "Logic and Ontology in Fourteenth Century Jewish Philosophy" (Jerusalem, 1974) devotes considerable attention, and analysis, to Kaspi. In connection with Professor Pines' argument, I would submit that the recognition of natural historical forces does not automatically presuppose a non-sacral attitude or a non-providential view of history. The quest for secondary causes does not negate ultimate divine causation. The link between Kaspi and Spinoza is thus quite flimsy.

7. See my article cited below, note 14; on the importance of "minor" writers, see, in a different context, A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 19-20.

8. Cf. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, 600-601, with *Encyclopedia Judaica*, X, 809-811. Emery's article (note 1 above) shows that even biographical information is still forthcoming. The same is true for the bibliographical record; see, e.g., A. M. Haberman, "Shene Hibburim shel Hokmah u-Musar," *Minhah li-Yehudah* (Jerusalem, 1950), p. 179. His commentary on *Song of Songs* was edited by I. Akriš, *Sheloshah Perushim* (Constantinople, 1567). See now the brief treatments, and bibliographic entries, in the following Keter surveys: C. Sirat, *Hagut Pilosofit* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 325 ff.; J. Dan, *Sifrut ha-Mussar v'ha-Derush* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 98 ff. (concerning his will). Additional writings of Kaspi, some of which I have examined at the Hebrew University Institute for Manuscripts, still await publication.

9. J. Jabez, *Or ha-Hayyim* (Lublin, 1912), chap. 9 (p. 88); L. de Modena, *Behinat ha-Kabbalah*, pp. 34-35. See also Moses Rieti, *Mikdash Me'at* (Vienna, 1851), whose judgments are indeed strange; he puts ibn Kaspi in paradise together with the Tibbonides and R. Eleazar ha-Rokeah. Caution is, of course, called for in making claims concerning the extent of later acquaintance with Kaspi's exegetical oeuvre, for the *Will* and *Moreh* commentaries are clearly the most prominent and the most frequently cited.

10. Of related interest is the polemical tract (*Minhat Kena'ot*) of R. Jehiel of Pisa, ed. D. Kaufmann (Berlin, 1898) against the *Iggeret ha-Hitnazlut* of R. Yedaya ha-Penini or the critical attitude of R. Joseph Ashkenazi (see the selections published by G. Scholem, *Tarbiz*, XXVII [1959], 59 ff.), toward ha-Penini. At the same time, R. Moses Isserles cites the *Iggeret* approvingly; see *Teshubot*, ed. A. Ziv (Jerusalem, 1971), 7 (p. 29). Concerning the intellectual stance of R. Jehiel of Pisa, see the new material published by A. Rosenthal, *Kobez 'al-Yad*, VIII (1976).

11. See L. Berman, "Greek into Hebrew: Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, Fourteenth Century Philosopher and Translator," *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, 1967), p. 297.

12. See, e.g., *Sharshot Kesef*, p. 6; *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 8, 65, 183; II, 31, 46, 214; *'Adne Kesef*, I, 137, and *passim*; note how in *Menorat Kesef* (*'Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 77) this emphasis on originality serves paradoxically (and perhaps tongue in cheek) to justify his open treatment of esoteric themes, for it is possible that he is not really revealing anything inasmuch as everything he writes is his own.

בי ארלי אין אני מגלה דבר ממה שהורא על אמתו כי לא באה

לי קבלה כלל לא מפי סופרים ולא מפי ספרים. גם... אין

אני זוכר כי מעולם שאלתי לאיש על זה.

This dialectical interlacing of original interpretation and exoteric presentation is noteworthy. See the significant observation (*'Asarah*, I, 184 on Ecclesiastes) that exegesis is after all not subject to absolute demonstrations; also *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 6

(beginning of *Sefer ha-Sod*). This "exegetical relativism" is tempered only by the persuasiveness of the interpretation and the degree of natural harmoniousness with the underlying text; cf. *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, p. 28 (on possibility of intrinsic plurality of meanings). Cf. R. David Kimhi, *Joshua*, intro. (and see F. Talmage, *David Kimhi* [Cambridge, Mass., 1975], p. 215). For Y. ha-Penini, see his *Sefer ha-Pardes*, in *Ozar ha-Sifrut*, III (1889-90), chap. 8. This should be correlated with attitudes in Talmud study; note especially Nahmanides, *Milhamot*, intro.

To what extent this emphasis on *hiddush* and originality should be correlated with the growing general contemporary emphasis on modernity and "subtlety of the moderns" (*subtilitas modernorum*) needs to be investigated. See the general work of E. Gössmann, *Antiqui und Moderni im Mittelalter* (Munich, 1974), and the special study of M. T. Clanchy, "Moderni in Education and Government in England," *Speculum*, II (1975), 671ff. The theme of intellectual progress, of cognitive advance, conceptual breakthrough, and interpretive innovation (see Gersonides, *Milhamot ha-Shem*, intro.) is also relevant here. See also *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 65, 86, 90; *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 127 (*lo kidmani 'adam*); *Tam ha-Kesef*, p. 8.

13. The *Sefer ha-Sod* (on the secrets [*sodot*] of the Torah) gives a good picture of rationalist exegesis; the first part contains general propositions and the second deals with select Biblical themes and topoi. Its major concern is Biblical narrative (as distinct from halakah), which, like rabbinic aggadah, has often been ignored or dismissed nonchalantly.

One of his arguments for freedom of interpretation is the fact that it is illustrated by distinguished predecessors, e.g., ibn Ezra and Maimonides. This becomes a prominent theme of Hebrew literature; see, e.g., Azulai, *Ba'ale Brit Abram* (Vilna, 1874), intro., p. 1. R. Menahem Tamar (fifteenth-century Spain) makes a similar point at the beginning of his interesting, as yet unpublished, work ("Tanhumot 'El") by referring to Rabad's strictures against Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. Obviously, the defense of freedom of interpretation and the possibility of intellectual progress are interwoven. Note the theory developed by R. Zerachyah ha-Levi in the introduction to the *Sefer ha-Ma'or*.

14. I. Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," *Journal of World History*, XI (1968), 203; see also *A Maimonides Reader* (New York, 1972), p. 23. John Noonan's comment about scholastic authors is equally applicable to this case: "The scholastic field, in which the authors work within a common tradition and constantly refer to each other's work, is a particularly easy one in which to determine which authors were representative, influential, original, or astute." J. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, 1957).

15. See, e.g., A. Altmann, *Studies*, pp. 196-197. Such a fourteenth-century commentary as *Mekor Hayyim* of R. Samuel Sarsa is also representative. Note also Ritba, *Sefer ha-Zikkaron* (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 69. Kaspi's relationship to ibn Ezra, whose influence on his exegesis was formative, warrants careful study; significant correlations may be established between parenthetical remarks of ibn Ezra and more elaborate emphases of Kaspi. See generally his Commentary on "Sodot ha-Torah le-ben Ezra," *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 147 and *passim*. Note, however, such a comment as *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 98, where he laments that "the sage ibn Ezra" failed to use logic.

16. See, e.g., G. Vajda, *L'Amour de Dieu dans la Théologie Juive du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1957), p. 252, note 2.

17. *Minhat Kena'ot*, p. 101. See most recently Ch. Touati, "La Controverse de

1203-06," *REJ*, CXXVII (1968), 21 ff. also idem., "Les Deux Conflits autour de Maimonide et des Etudes Philosophiques," *Juifs et Judaïsme de Languedoc*, pp. 173-185. On his acute awareness of controversy, see *Mishneh Kesef*, II, 43.

ועדיין בני פלג אנחנו, כלנו בני ריב ומדון ומחלוקת, והיא
שתחריבה את ביתנו, ועדיין במקומה עומדת.

Also *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 72 (following *Moreh Nebukim*, III, 29, which he does not cite). This is a leitmotif in his writing.

18. See I. Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia, 1926), I, 131 ff. The definition of hubris is found in W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, I (New York, 1965), 168, a sharp antithesis to Maimonides, *Hilkot Teshubah*, X, 6, or *Moreh*, III, 51 and 54, and Kaspi, *passim*.

19. In a very helpful seminar which I conducted on ibn Kaspi, students were able to demonstrate, by independently analyzing different parts of the extensive literary oeuvre, that almost any commentary (on Genesis, Ezekiel, or Ruth) is a real microcosm of all his methods and goals. The uniformity of style, interpretation, criticism, and emphasis is striking. Indeed he suggests that he is developing a coherent, unified system, based on clear logical criteria, historical-philological guidelines, and general methodological principles which may be transferred from one work to another; e.g., *Mishneh Kesef* II, 49. For reservations concerning the usefulness of the evolutionary view in general—e.g., Werner Jaeger's assumption that conflicting statements and conceptual problems in Aristotle should be seen as consequences of a slow evolution (in the case of Aristotle, from idealism to realism)—see N. F. Grayeff, *Aristotle and His School* (London, 1974), p. 10, and before that, M. Greene, *A Portrait of Aristotle* (London, 1963), pp. 15 ff.

20. E.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, p. 2; *Menorat Kesef*, intro. See, however, such a statement (*Adne Kesef*, II, 44) as

והטעם לכלל האומה כי ליחידים יש אותות אחרים הכרחיים כפי
תנאי האותות והדאיות והמופתים לפי ההגיון.

Note also his sardonic introduction to the commentaries on the Scrolls:

וגם ראיתי המונינו צועקים בחג השבועות מגלת רות כמו שקבעו
להם חובה לצעוק כלם בקול רם מגלת איכה בליל צום אך לאבל
ומגילת אסתר בליל יום הפורים לשמחה, אשר זה דבר טוב וראוי
בלי ספק, אך כי יבינו תחלה הענין בדבור הפנימי עד שישמיעו
לאזנם מה שירציאו בפיהם.

'*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 3. In his interpretation of Job (*Asarah Kle Kesef* I, 176) we find an interesting typology of religious people together with a suggestive statement about tolerance of various types and about the fact and desirability of mobility from a lower to a higher stage. Nevertheless, he frequently notes that he chooses to remain esoteric, e.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 2, 65, 67. His genuine contempt for the masses comes to full expression in the anecdote reported in *Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 37-38. The entire section combines ridicule with prudent comments on how to talk to and deal with the ignorant.

21. This Maimonidean statement is referred to in a very clever way by Kaspi, *Menorat Kesef*, intro. ('*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 77). The idea is a pivot of his thinking and writing; see also the beginning of the commentary on ibn Ezra, '*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 147. Note, of course, *Sanhedrin*, 91b.

22. Kalonymos b. Kalonymos, *Teshubah* (*Sendschreiben*), ed. J. Perles (Munich, 1879).

23. *Mishneh Kesef*, pp. 9, 10, and *passim*; *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 19, 23. Leo Strauss' evaluation of Kaspi as "a competent reader of the *Guide* who wrote an esoteric commentary on it" is one-sided, undoubtedly reflecting Strauss' own desideratum of "an esoteric interpretation of an esoteric interpretation of an esoteric teaching." See L. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago, 1952), p. 56.

24. For Maimonides' *Ma'amar Tehiyyat ha-Metim* as an apology for his life, see my forthcoming *Introduction to the Mishneh Torah* (New Haven, 1979), chap. VI. On *genut he-hamon*, see *Moreh*, intro., end, *Kobez Teshubot ha-Rambam*, II, 16b; Kaspi, '*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 187; *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 8; I. Abrahams, *Wills*, I, 152 and note; A. J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization* (London, 1964), pp. 120 ff., 136 ff. Sometimes the difference between the masses (*hamon*) and those who understand—in this case understanding based on grammar and logic—is so great as to affect accepted customs; see '*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 28, where his explanation of the last verse of *Lamentations* eliminates its stinging, condemnatory tone thereby making the public repetition of the penultimate verse, which is of a petitionary-consolatory nature, unnecessary.

והנה לפי זה יהיה זה הסיום נחמה ואין צרך למנהגינו, לחזור
השיבנו, ואם הוא טוב בעבור האומה.

Also *Mishneh Kesef* I, 16:

כי תועלתו להמון יותר רב מתועלתו להיחידים השרידים.

25. E.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 19; II, 254, 286; *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 5, 7, 20 and *passim*; *Adne Kesef*, I, 137. In *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 79 he describes allegory, nonliteralism, as an extreme measure; it is like strong medicine which should be taken only on very rare occasions. See also *Mishneh Kesef*, II, 254, where in arguing for the absolute supremacy and indispensability of literalism, he does not spare even the Talmudic sages or the authoritative Aramaic translation of Onkelos. Non-literalism is always fraught with grave dangers.

His philological approach differs sharply from that of the Spanish grammarians. While they tamper with the text—emending, changing the order of letters or words, in the name of and under the banner of grammar—he proposes a different principle of interpretation, simple yet far-reaching: by recognizing the plurality of meanings, it is possible to understand a text without changing its syntax or sequence. Every apparently awkward or wayward construction is, in the final analysis, grammatically defensible. See '*Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 11 and cf. "Sefer ha-Emunah voha-Bittahon," *Kitbe Ramban*, ed. C. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1964), II, p. 379. His grammar is logical and analytical; see S. Rosenberg, *Logic*, p. 15. In this context, note how he insists that the rabbinic statement *mine'u benekem min ha-higgayon* cannot possibly refer to logic. A similar, very sharp statement is made by his Italian contemporary (1275-1355) Shemarya ha-Ikriti in characterizing his Bible commentary: *Ozar Nehmad*, II (1857), 91.

בכל אלה הספרים אסרתי עלי באיסור כרת ונשמרתי בנפשי לאמר שיש במאמר אחד מכל כתבי הקדש אורת אחת יתרה או חסרה, ק"ו תיבה... כי המדבר כאלה הוא כופר בכל המכתב הקדוש, אמנם לא בכונה מאתו, כי כל מי שיפרש מאמר אחד מן המקרא ויספ ויגדע אות אחד מן הכתוב מושכל ראשון הוא שפירושו שקר וכזב, ולא הוא כונת הכתוב. ואיך יסכל לב אדם לאמר על נותני התורה והמדברים ברוח הקדש שטעו בדבריהם ולא ידעו לדבר כראוי, ואיך יסכים הלב להאמין להם אם גם לדבר לא ידעו.

He in turn emphasizes the literalism of his own commentary and notes particularly that it contains absolutely no aggadah, which he explicated in his Talmud commentary (his major works, available in manuscript, are *Sefer Amaziah*, *'Elef ha-Magen* and *Sefer ha-Mora*). This rigid compartmentalization is noteworthy. Later, an original exegete such as R. Eliezer Ashkenazi (*Ma'aseh ha-Shem*) explains his exclusion of aggadic materials from his commentary as a consequence of the invention of printing: inasmuch as aggadic texts are now readily available, there is no longer any need, or justification, for incorporating them into Bible commentaries.

For Kaspi's "exegetical agnosticism" see, e.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 1, 63.

In addition, for logical as well as methodological reasons, his exegesis is general, not specific; he repeatedly explains why detail may be omitted, why certain words should be seen as ornamental and rhetorical and therefore not subject to microscopic interpretation, and that his task is to give the essence, the conceptual framework and message (see, e.g., repeated emphasis concerning the Five Scrolls—*'Asarah Kle Kesef*, II). In other words, proper exegesis is characterized by restraint and selectivity—not all details need to be explained. This principle, rooted in the nature of language and contingencies of communication, helps the exegete get to the point. We may recall in this context Maimonides' observations (*Moreh*, intro.) concerning the metaphorical interpretation of prophetic parables and, *mutatis mutandis*, his approach (*Moreh*, III, 26) to the rationalization of the commandments which dwells on the general import and omits details. Contingency must be recognized.

Furthermore, his socio-historical approach has certain sharp emphases which are noteworthy: (1) There is the need to predicate interpretation upon naturalism, i.e., understanding scriptural passages in light of ordinary, rather than unusual, experiences. This ipso facto rules out excessive allegorizing. (2) The exegete assumes a continuity of practices and mores, learning from fourteenth-century Egypt about Egypt in the time of Moses and the Pharaohs. In other words, not only does the exegete endorse and utilize the historical approach, but he assumes that the contemporary cultural and anthropological differences he observes or learns about existed also in antiquity and thus provide insight into the text. Kalonymos b. Kalonymos is quick to challenge and, indeed, to demolish this assumption; even granted the historical approach, there is clearly change over the centuries. (See J. H. Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian* [Oxford, 1958], p. 101, who describes Voltaire as being guided by the assumption that human nature does not change and hence the historian should use his observation of contemporaries to understand the past.) Note the following ex-

amples of historical explanation: *Mishneh Kesef* II, 162, 182, 183; *Mazref le-Kesef*, pp. 19, 27. Note in this context Nahmanides, *Deut.* 16:22 (*vegam ha-yom 'osin ken*). As for Hebrew, Kaspi suggests that it is the holy tongue because it is grammatically correct; *'Asarah Kle Kesef* II, 17 and II, 78; cf., of course, Maimonides, *Moreh*, III, 8, and the multiple explanation of R. Judah b. Solomon (*Midrash ha-Hokmah*) cited by B. Dinur, *Yisrael ba-Golah*, II, V, 6, 19; also Profiat Duran, *Ma'aseh 'Efod* (Vienna, 1868), pp. 177-178. On the inadequacy of all translations from Hebrew, see *Mishneh Kesef*, II, 4. Preservation of the integrity of the scriptural text is thus the motive for his contextual-syntactical-historical approach and his criticism of the Spanish grammarians.

26. Particularly noteworthy is the introduction of Jacob Anatoli (author of the provocative *Malmad ha-Talmidim*) to his Hebrew translation of Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry:

ידוע שאין כח באדם ממנו לעמוד כנגד הפקחים משאר האומות החולקים עלינו, אם לא ילמד החכמה הזאת. ומפני שראיתי כי רבו ההוללים הרעים המתפארים עלינו בדרך המחלוקת והניצור קנאתי בהם... והתעורר תשוקתי להעתיק החכמה הזאת כפי אשר תשיג ידי.

27. *Berakot*, 31b; *Yebamot* 71a, and parallels.

28. E.g., S. Abramson, *R. Nissim Gaon* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 281; R. Judah ibn Koreish, *Iggeret*, ed. M. Katz (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 58; *Ozar Nehmad*, II (1857), 213; R. Abraham ibn Ezra, *Perush*, Gen. 6:6 (and see Exod. 32:14). *Ozar ha-Geonim*, *Berakot*, I, 131; II, 92; *Hagigah*, 30. For a partial history, see S. Abramson, "Ma' amar Hazal u-Perusho," *Molad*, 421 ff.

29. *Moreh Nebukim*, I, 26 (and see I, 33, 46, 59); *Ma'amar Tehiyat ha-Metim*, ed. J. Finkel (New York, 1939), p. 8; *Mishneh Torah*, *Yesode ha-Torah*, I, 9, 12. See R. Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Hobot ha-Lebabot*, I, 10; Judah ha-Levi, *Kuzari*, V, 27; Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah* (repr. Jerusalem, 1961), intro., p. 2a.

30. A. ibn Ezra, *Perush*, Exod. 12:8, where he quotes and rejects such a view in the name of one of the scholars of Spain; 20:3 (*keneged mahshebot*); 23:9 (*da'ki minhag ha-Torah ledaber 'al ha-hoveh*). On Exod. 19:23 he quotes the "Gaon" in such a context. And note the application of this by R. Isaac Arama, *Akedat Yizhak*, chap. (*sha'ar*), 44, pt. 2. R. Samuel ben Meir, *Perush*, Gen. 25:33 (*keminhag bene 'adam*), 45:19; also Exod. 17:9; Levit. 11:34; 13:2, and others; Nahmanides, Exod. 28:2. See Maimonides, *Perush ha-Mishnah*, *Nedarim*, VII, 6; *Moreh* III, 39 (about the animals selected for sacrifices); *Mishneh Torah*, *Ma'akalat 'Asurot*, XVI, 9; *Ishut*, XXV, 2.

31. *'Ammude Kesef* on *Moreh*, I, 26.

...ראה פירושו נכבד שעשה המורה לאמרו... ז"ל דברה תורה... והנה זאת ההקדמה רצוני האומרת ד"ח כלשון בני אדם, בפי' המורה הוא דבר יותר כולל מן הפחותים, בענין ציור האל, כי גם זה נמצא בכל המקרא אע"פ שאינו נוגע בשם או מלאך, רק

בדברים השפלים מאד. וזה מה שכתוב יהושע (ב:ז) והאנשים רדפו אחרתם, ואמר כפי מחשבות הרודפים, כמו שבאר א"ע ובכלל כל המקרא מליאה מזה המין, רצוני שידבר הכתוב כפי מחשבת רבים או יחידיים או יחיד... וזה ענין נכבד מאד, והנני מעיר על זה במקומות רבים מיתר ספרי.

The example of Joshua 2:7 is found in ibn Ezra, Exod. 4:14 and the second example from Jeremiah 28:10 (which is omitted here from the Hebrew quotation) is briefly alluded to by ibn Ezra, Exod. 20:3. The significance of this is self-evident but it should be noted that ibn Ezra does not invoke the principle of *dibrah Torah*. See also, e.g., *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 21, 24; *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 19, 42, 46, 49 (where he says that this solves all problems); 149; 162; II, 162; *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 139. In at least one place, *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, II, 27 where his own use is conventional, i.e., related to anthropomorphism, he explicitly attributes this first extension to ibn Ezra, and reserves credit for the second extension for himself (va'ani zerafti 'inyan shelishi le-'elah . . . vehu yakar me'od). This sharply underscores the complex nature of the relation of his system to ibn Ezra's sporadic comments.

32. *Sefer ha-Mizvot*, 317; cf. *Mishneh Torah, Sanhedrin*, XXVI, 1-2; *Teshubah*, IV, 3.

33. Cf. *Sefer ha-Hinnukh*, 23. See, Rashba, *Teshubot*, 408; R. Nissim, *Shnem 'asar Derushim* (Jerusalem, 1959), p. 85.

34. *Moreh Nebukim*, III, 41.

35. E.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 43; *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 26, 32.

36. E.g., *Tam ha-Kesef*, p. 24; *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 49.

37. *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 1; II, 190; *Sharshot Kesef*, p. 6.

38. E.g., *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 18, 24, 34. The notion that the Torah writes *ad captum vulgi* really has no connection with the principle of *dibrah Torah*, for the assumptions, intentions, and conclusions differ radically; see, e.g., Y. Yovel, "Bikkoret ha-Dat u-Perush ha-Mikra: Ben Spinoza le-Kant," *lyyun*, XVII (1966), 259, note 49.

39. E.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, II, 254ff.; *Tam ha-Kesef*, pp. 1, 41. Indeed, the eight theses (*derushim*) which constitute the *Tam ha-Kesef* may be seen as an attempt to revolutionize the basis of polemic; a major goal is the reaffirmation of the eternity of the Covenant and the spirituality of Judaism. See also *Adne Kesef*, II, 45.

40. See my formulation in "Religion and Law," *Religion in a Religious Society*, ed. S. Goitein (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 70 ff.

41. *Sefer ha-Rikmah*, ed. M. Wilensky (Berlin, 1910), p. 19. See also J. Kimhi, *Sefer ha-Galuy*, ed. H. J. Mathews (reprinted, Jerusalem, 1967), p. 3.

42. E.g., the references to R. Isaac ibn Latif in my article (note 40 above). Kaspi himself is a forceful spokesman for this view; e.g., *Adne Kesef*, II, 6. For earlier neglect of Bible study, see also S. Lieberman, *Midreshe Teman*, pp. 27-31.

43. E.g., *Mishneh Torah, Yesode ha-Torah*, IV, 13; *Talmud Torah*, I, 11, 12; *Teshubah*, X, 6; *Moreh*, III, 51. I dealt with this at length in chapter 6 of my *Introduction to the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides* (New Haven, 1979).

44. On the *Haside Ashkenaz* see H. Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in the Sefer Hasidim," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, I (1976), 311 ff.; I. Ta-Shema,

"Mizvat Talmud Torah . . . be-Sefer Hasidim," *Bar Ilan Annual*, XIV-XV (1977), 98 ff.

45. Cf. I. Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, 128-129. Various statements about the unimpeachability and absolute indispensability of halakah are strewn throughout his writings, in addition to the unequivocal passages in the Will; e.g., *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 18, 150, 175; III, 164; *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 6-7, 159, and many others.

46. See, e.g., an additional statement to this effect by R. Shem Tob ibn Gaon, cited by D. S. Löwinger, *Sefunot*, VII (1963), 23.

47. *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, p. 132. Note that he regularly uses *mizvot libiyot* (i.e., *sikliyot*) for rational commandments. See *'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 11, 17, 171.

המקיים כל המצוות המעשיות, ואע"פ שעם זה ידע הלביות דרך קבלה, אין מעלתו כמעלת המקיים כל המצוות המעשיות, ועם זה ידע הלביות מה שנקרא ידיעה על דרך האמת רצוני במרובה)

Moses is lauded (I, 176) for punctilious observance of all commandments, first via tradition (*kabbalah*) and then via demonstration (*mofet*). In I, 184, they are designated as *ikkar ha-Torah*. The introduction to the fourteenth-century abridgement of R. Bahya ibn Pakuda's *Hobot ha-Lebabot* echoes this mood and emphasis; see B. Dinur, *Yisrael ba-Golah*, II, 6, 52.

48. *Wills*, pp. 138-139. See *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 10. A striking parallel both to the supremacy of meta-halactic studies as well as to the idea of professionalization or specialization in Talmud studies is found in the recently published letters of R. Asher of Lemlein (fourteenth-century Germany) where knowledge of the commandments is deemed relevant for all; otherwise, Talmud is a subject for specialists, just like any other profession. See E. Kupfer, *Kobez 'al Yad*, VIII (1975), 403-406, 416. The language is extremely sharp.

49. See *Yesod Mora* (Prague, 1833), chap. 1 (p. 15b). R. Abraham ibn Daud, *'Emunah Ramah*, II, intro. (p. 45) that if all men were honest and did not wrong each other the legal profession would be superfluous; J. Ezobi, *Ka'arat Kesef*, (Berlin, 1860), p. 29; R. Isaac Polkar, *'Ezer ha-Dat* (reprint, Jerusalem, 1970), p. 5; Kalonymos b. Kalonymos, *'Eben Bohan*, ed. A. M. Haberman (Tel Aviv, 1936), p. 56.

50. *Wills*, p. 151 (and see above, note 47). A similar confession is made by Netanel ha-Rofe, translator of part (*Seder Kodashim*) of Maimonides' *Mishnah Commentary* into Hebrew.

ואני לא למדתי בערבתי גמרא אלא מעט מהרבה... רק גדלתי במלאכת הרפואה ועמדתי על מקצת ספרי חכמות.

Other contemporaries complain about the difficulties of Talmud study; e.g., R. Aaron ha-Levi, *Pekudat ha-Leviyim*, intro. I would suggest that when dealing with Kaspi, as well as other "intellectuals" who are quite critical of Talmudism, it is useful and enlightening to construct a "Talmudic profile" in order to determine their Talmudic education, their literary output, if any, in the realm of rabbinics, and their ability to use Talmudic ideas, or even idioms, creatively and compellingly. For Kaspi, see his Biblical commentary *Mishneh Kesef* I, 141, where he states that he will not deal with *Mishpatim* and refers the reader to *Nezikin*. He obviously is not competent in this area. His comments (*'Asarah Kle Kesef*, I, 51) on the *'ir ha-nidahat* are noteworthy, as is his apt use of the halakic maxim (*mesirat maf-*

teah koneh) in 'Asarah II, 75. His various declarations of intention and motivation, or statements of achievement all revolve around Bible study, (*ba-Torah uva-mikra' kulah*) e.g., *Kebuzat Kesef*, at the beginning of 'Asarah Kle Kesef, I, XX; and see above note 42. Although he dissociates himself from the quest for reasons of the laws, asserting that Maimonides' system is definitive, he does nevertheless suggest explanations for those Temple laws concerning which Maimonides suspended judgment, e.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 5 (and *Moreh Nebukim*, III, 46). He was preceded in this by Samuel ibn Tibbon (unpublished ms., on select *ta'ame mizvot*). See also notes 20, 52.

51. See my "Beginnings of *Mishneh Torah* Criticism," *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 172.

52. *Or ha-Hayyim* (Lublin, 1912), p. 144b. A careful reading of Kaspi's oeuvre reveals a frequently flippant and sardonic tone concerning excessive Talmud study or even the groundlessness of certain customs; see, e.g., *Mishneh Kesef*, I, 90, 159; 'Asarah Kle Kesef, II, 1, 28; certain characterizations, like that in the Will, combine *ad hominem* and *ad rem* criticism or disdain; see 'Asarah Kle Kesef I, 17; II, 87 (a cynical description of the long-bearded elder who uses a mantle of piety to camouflage his ignorance or insensitivity, which is reminiscent of Samuel ha-Nagid's famous beratement of such a type; see *Diwan*, ed. D. Yarden (Jerusalem, 1966), p. 228. His treatment of the famous passage in *Pesahim*, 94b, presenting an astronomical issue concerning which the opinion of the Gentile sages prevailed against that of the Jewish sages, is a barometer of his attitude. The passage has a long history of interpretation, reflecting various moods: embarrassment, perplexity, satisfaction, with some attempts at harmonization or reinterpretation or restricting the significance of the report. Kaspi seems to be very pleased, finding here support for his universalist-rationalist position. The non-Jewish sages of the world have something to teach us. The following references illustrate the range of approaches, thereby providing perspective for Kaspi. *Moreh*, II, 8; referred to by R. Moses ibn Tibbon, *Sefer ha-Pe'ah* (and see R. Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Yikkavu ha-Mayyim* [Pressburg, 1837], p. 16); R. Abraham Maimonides, "Ma'amar 'al Derashot," *Milhamot*, ed. R. Margaliyot (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 86 ff., esp. p. 88, note 31; R. Shemarya ha-Ikriti, *Sefer ha-Mora*, p. 4; R. Menahem b. Zerah, *Zedah la-Derek*, I, chap. 22, p. 33; R. Moses Alashkar, *Teshubot*, 96; R. Elijah Mizrahi, *Teshubot*, 57; R. Moses Isserles, *Torat ha-Olah*, III, chap. 38; R. David Ganz, *Nehmad ve-Na'im*; R. Joseph Ashkenazi, in *Tarbiz*, XXVIII (1959), 219, note 50. For the astronomical background, see G. Zarfati, *Tarbiz*, XXXII (1963), 140 ff. Note the kabbalistic approach of R. Todros Abulafia in the fragment edited by L. Feldman, *S. Baron Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1975), p. 310.

53. *Or ha-Hayyim*, pp. 21a, 33b, 42a; on the difficulty of Talmud study, see R. Menahem b. Zerah, *Zedah la-Derek*, p. 8; R. Joseph Albo, *Ikharim*, III, chap. 28 (p. 262). Ha-Me'iri, *Bet ha-Behirah*, intro., deals with this in a different context; also Profiat Duran, *Ma'aseh 'Efod*, p. 5. On the nobility of sciences, see H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, I, 157. Note also Jabez' rebuttal of the philosophic position that knowledge of God (metaphysics) is indispensable for religious perfection for the following reason: this would mean that Aristotle is more important than Moses. What would then be the fate of all those who lived before Aristotle? And he quickly adds (15a) that this is like the Christian view that those who lived before Jesus were denied salvation.

54. See *Tiferet Yisrael*, chap. 10

אנשים שואלים על למוד התורה במצותיה ובדקדוקיה ובנזק השור
הבור וכירצא בזה שהיה נראה בדעתם כי יותר יצליח כאשר
ישיג בענין היסודות ובמהות הגלגלים ובשכלים הנפרדים. לכן
דעתם כי הצלחת האדם בהשגת הדברים האלו ודעתם בהשגחת הנפש
שנשאר השכל אשר קנה האדם בחייו וזהו שנשאר אחר המות...
כפירה גמורה.

This should be compared with the more restrained yet unequivocal formulation in *Netivot 'Olam*, *Netib ha-Torah*.

כי מי שחשב כי עקר הלימוד לאדם בחכמה שישג בממצאים
ובגלגלים ובמלאכים ולא נתנה מדדנה זאת לתורה, לנזיקין,
ולמלאה ולמודה, דבר זה הוא ממשלה גדולה מאד.

It is noteworthy that Maharal belonged to that school which opposed primary reliance on codes (*Mishneh Torah* or *Tur*); he based his halakic study directly on the Talmud.

Chapter 11 of *Tiferet Yisrael* goes a step further in the reaction against the Kaspi-type position and the vindication of pure Talmud study.

יותר ראוי שנתהי ההצלחה על ידי התורה ממה שנתהי בזולת זה
ואל יחשוב כאשר קונה הידיעה בארבעה אבות נזיקין שהוא קונה
הידיעה בשור ובבור... כי כאשר יקנה האדם הידיעה בהזיק ד'
אבות נזיקין וכירצא בו ממשפטי התורה נחשב זה שקנה הידיעה
בזרת השם ית'.

In the history of ideas, this may be seen as setting the stage for R. Hayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*, *sha'ar*, IV, chaps. 6, 10.

Let me note here that Profiat Duran (Efodi) justified his work on astronomy by asserting that it combines two noble, actually the noblest, studies, both of which deal with God's work—nature and Torah. I describe this work (*Hesheb ha-'Efod*) in my forthcoming monograph on Duran.

Studies in
Medieval Jewish History
and Literature

EDITED BY

Isadore Twersky

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Cambridge, Massachusetts
and London, England*

1979