33.4. Moses ben Nahman / Nahmanides (Ramban)

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Sources: H. D. CHAVEL, *Penishe Hatora Lerabbenu Moshe ben Nahman (Ramban)*, 1-2 (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kuk 1969/70); M. Z. EIZENSTADT (ed.), *Perush Haramban 'al Hatorah*, I. Bereshit-Vayishlah (New York: 'Zikron Yosef' 1958/59), II. Vayeshev-Vayehi (New York 1959/60).

Studies (on editions of Ramban's Commentary on the Torah): E. GOTTLIEB, 'Biqoret 'al Mahadurat Kitbe Haramban shel Harav H. D. Chavel", *Qiryat Sefer* 40 (1964/65) 1-9; idem, *Mehqarim Besifrut Haqabbalah* (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv 1976) 88-96, 516-36; K. KAHANA, "Tosafot Haramban Leperusho Latorah", *Hama'yan* 9 (1968/69) 25-47; Y. MARSHEN, *Tif'eret Lemoshe: Haga-hot Vetuqqunim Beperush Haramban 'al Bereshit-Shemot* (Amsterdam 1918/19) (Dutch); idem, *'al Vayiqra-Devarim, Hatsofe Lehokmat Yisrael* 7 (Budapest 1922/23) 133-52; M. SABBATO, "'Al Nusah Perush Ramban Latorah", *Megadim* 23 (1994/95) 71-81.

1. Biographical and General Remarks

Studies on the historical background: D. BERGER, "Review Essay: The Barcelona Disputation" [on R. Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*; see below], *AJS Review* 22 (1995) 379-88; H. H. BEN-SASSON, "Moshe ben Nahman: Ish Bes'ivkei Tequfato", *Molad* 1:4 (5728 [1967/68]) 360-66; R. CHAZAN, "The Barcelona 'Disputation' of 1263", *Spec.* LII (1977) 834-42; idem, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1992); H. D. CHAVEL, *Rabbenu Mose ben Nahman: Toledot Hayyav, Zemano Vehibburav* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook 5727 [1966/67]); B. Z. KEDAR, "Yehudei Yerushalayim (1178-1267) ve-Heleq ha-Ramban be-Shiqqum Kehilatam", *Peraqim be-Toledot Yerushalayim bi-Ymei ha-Benayyim* (ed. B. Z. Kedar; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi 5739 [1978/79]) 122-36; M. FOX, "Nachmanides on the Status of Aggadot: Perspectives on the Disputation at Barcelona, 1263", *JJS* 40 (1989) 95-109; C. ROTH, "The Disputation at Barcelona (1263)", *HTR* 43/2 (1950) 117-18; B. SEPTIMUS, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1982); Y. SHAHAR, "Hotamo shel ha-Ramban", *Peraqim Be-Toledot Yerushalayim Bi-Ymei Ha-Benayyim* (ed. B. Z. Kedar; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi 5739) 137-47; D. J. SILVER, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1965).

Moses ben Nahman (Lat. Nahmanides, often called by the acronym RaMBaN), was one of the most influential scholars that Spanish Jewry produced, one whose versatility and scope still astonish. He was a penetrating talmudist and legalist, a mystic whose early training in medieval Jewish philosophy nevertheless remained a living influence in his thought, an accomplished courtier and communal leader. Withal, he was a prolific writer, producing some 50 works or more, including talmudic *novellae*, legal and ritual treatises, biblical commentaries, occasional poetry and sermons, and at least one anti-Christian polemic which became a classic, an account of his Barcelona debate with Pablo Christiani in the presence of the royal court of King James I of Catalonia.

Moses ben Nahman, born in Gerona, Catalonia, in 1194, practiced medicine under the name of Bonastrug da Porta; born into the rabbinic and economic elite, he received an excellent education, and was one of the first in Spain to be initiated into the talmudic methods of the tosafists of Northern

France; in addition, he was familiar with the works of the schools of Provence. His disciples included the leading halakhists of the next generation.

His role in public life apparently began in 1232, when he entered the then raging Maimonidist controversy, attempting to find a compromise between the two sides. Even at that early stage in his career, he was consulted by the king on matters affecting the internal life of Catalonia's Jewish community. He may have acted as Chief Rabbi of Catalonia after the death in 1264 of his cousin, R. Jonah Gerondi. It is certain that in the next year he was forced into a debate with the apostate Pablo Christiani in the presence of the king and the leaders of the Dominicans and Franciscans, a disputation he won, receiving 300 dinars from the king. Despite this, he was eventually forced to leave Spain and arrived in Eretz Israel in 1267, where he completed his Pentateuchal commentary and was active in the Jewish communities of Jerusalem and Acre until his death in 1270.

In general, Nahmanides was less an innovator than a remarkable systematizer who adapted and extended methods and insights which he inherited, and combined them within a system of his own devising while putting his own stamp on them. As a Spanish Jew, he was the heir of the Spanish penchant for systematization, but his teacher R. Yehudah b. Yakar enabled him to become a master of the newly devised dialectic developed by Rabbenu Jacob Tam (ca. 1100-71) in Northern France. It was apparently from R. Yehudah that he received his kabbalistic traditions as well.

2. Aspects of Nahmanides' Exegetical Method

General works on rabbinic exegesis: M. FISHBANE (ed.), *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought and History* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1993); D. W. HALIVNI, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1991); J. M. HARRIS, *How Do We Know This: Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1995); J. L. KUGEL / R. A. GREER, "Interpreters of Scripture", *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1986) 52-72; R. LOEWE, "The 'Plain' Meaning of Scriptures in Early Jewish Exegesis", *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies* I (1964) 140-86; D. STERN, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard UP 1991).

Special studies on Nahmanides' exegesis: Y. ELMAN, "It Is No Empty Thing: Nahmanides and the Search for Omnisignificance", *The Torah U-Madda Journal* IV (1993) 1-83; idem, "The Status of Deuteronomy as Revelation: Nahmanides and Abarbanel", *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, Thought and History Presented to Dr. Norman Lamm in Honor of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Y. Elman / J. Gurock, 1997; New York: Yeshiva UP 1997) 229-50; A. FUNKENSTEIN, "History and Typology: Nachmanides: Reading of the Biblical Narrative", *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press 1973) 98-121; Y. GOTTLIEB, "'Ein Muqdam u-Me'uhar' be-Perush Ramban la-Torah", *Tarbiz* 53 (1984) 41-62; M. IDEL, "We have No Kabbalistic Tradition on This", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (ed. I. Twersky; Cambridge: Harvard UP 1983) 51-73; E. KANARFOGEL, "On the Assessment of R. Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) and His Literary Œuvre", *Jewish Book Annual* 51 (1993/94) 158-72; D. NOVAK, "Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah", *The Solomon Goldman Lecture Series* V (1990) 87-104; H. NOVETSKY, "The Influence of Rabbi Joseph Bechor Shor and Radak on Ramban's Commentary on the Torah" (Master's Thesis, Bernard Revel Graduate School, Yeshiva University 1992); J. PERLES, "Über den Geist des Commentars des R. Moses ben Nachman zum Pentateuch und über sein Verhältnis zum Pentateuch-Commentar Raschi's", *MGWJ* 7 (1858) 81-

98, 117–62; idem, "Nachträge über R. Moses ben Nachman", *MGWJ* 9 (1860) 184–95; M. Saperstein, "Jewish Typological Exegesis after Nachmanides", *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993/94) 158–70; B. Septimus, "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (ed. I. Twersky; Cambridge: Harvard UP 1983) 11–34; idem, "Introduction", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban)* (ed. I. Twersky; 1983) 1–10; E. R. Wolfson, "By Way of Truth: Aspects of Nachmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic", *AJS Review* 14 (1989) 103–78.

As a biblical commentator Nahmanides saw himself as the heir of the Spanish school of Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164), with its emphasis on the plain meaning and linguistic understanding, along with the more midrashically oriented commentary of Rashi (1040–1105), who, though stressing the importance of the *peshat* – the plain meaning of the biblical text, included more than a flavoring of rabbinic non-*peshat* teaching, both legal and aggadic, in his commentary. Indeed, Nahmanides' commentary may be considered one of the first great super-commentaries on Rashi; according to one study, he adverts to Rashi in some 38% of his comments in his Pentateuchal exegesis.[1]

A third major acknowledged source, especially in his more philosophical locumbrations is Maimonides (1135–1204). Underpinning all his work is a thorough knowledge of classic rabbinic sources – not only the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, but also the halakhic and aggadic Midrashim, geonic works, as well as such mystical works as *Sefer Ha-Bahir*, which he introduced to a wider audience through the medium of his Pentateuchal commentary.

Despite the close attention to his immediate predecessors of the previous century-and-a-half, he does not hesitate to differ from any of his major sources, classic rabbinic literature excepted, though he treats Rashi and Maimonides, who were also talmudists and legalists, with noticeably greater respect than he does Ibn Ezra.[2]

Formally speaking, Nahmanides' exegetical efforts are mainly to be found in his mystical / midrashic commentary to the Song of Songs, his commentary to Job, which blends a linguistically based plain meaning approach leavened with liberal doses of philosophical and theological discourse, and, above all, his Commentary on the Pentateuch, beyond doubt his *magnum opus* in this area, a work in which both his versatility, insight, and erudition are on display. In it his feeling for structure and theme, historical context, psychological verity, and a balanced theological approach combining both philosophical and mystical foundations – all find their metier. The result is a highly nuanced, often open-ended, multileveled interpretation of the Pentateuch, in which literal meaning, moral and legalistic exegesis, and eschatalogical and mystical interpretation all find their place.

[1] "Le-Darko shel ha-Ramban", *Te'udah* 3, *Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmud, bi-Leshon Hazal uve-Parshanut ha-Mikra* (Tel Aviv 1983) 227–33, esp. 228–30.

[2] See Yehudah Cooperman, "Tokhahat Megullah ve-Ahavah Mesutteret", in his collection *Li-Pshuto shel Miqra* (Jerusalem 1963/64) 161–86.

2.1. Omnisignificance

To one degree or another, most Jewish commentators both before and after Nahmanides' time have followed a program laid out for them by the classic rabbinic midrashic and talmudic texts. That is, they have been concerned with questions of meaning and meaningfulness within their restricted rabbinic sense.

Recently James Kugel has proposed the term 'omnisignificance' to describe the essential stance of the rabbinic exegesis of Scripture. According to him, 'omnisignificance' constitutes

> the basic assumption underlying all of rabbinic exegesis that the slightest details of the biblical text have a meaning that is both comprehensible and significant. Nothing in the Bible ... ought to be explained as the product of chance, or, for that matter, as an emphatic or rhetorical form, or anything similar, nor ought its reasons to be assigned to the realm of Divine unknowables. Every detail is put there to reach something new and important, and it is capable of being discovered by careful analysis.[3]

If we equate Kugel's "something new and important" with ethical / theological (aggadic) or legal (halakhic) insights, his definition is a restatement of the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 32:47 – "For it is not an empty thing for you, it is your very life, and if [it appears] devoid [of moral or halakhic meaning] – it is you [who have not worked out its moral or legal significance]".[4] Kugel's "meaning that is both comprehensible and significant" thus in rabbinic terms has a sharply limited and highly focused range of admissible interpretation; omnisignificance is restricted to interpretations which give the text a moral or legal dimension.

With relatively few exceptions – Ibn Ezra comes to mind, even those who eschewed the midrashic method in favor of a rationalistic Spanish plain sense interpretive stance were nevertheless concerned with such questions. The tension between the biblical text, and its concern for matters historical, geographical and genealogical, and the rabbinic relegation of such matters to unimportance was constant.

The comment of the mid-third century Palestinian authority, R. Simon b. Lakish's, as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (*Hul.* 60b) demonstrates this tension. "There are verses (*miqra'ot*) which are worthy of being burnt, but they are [after all] essential components of Torah". There follow attempts to tease moral significance from the geographical and historical data recorded in Deut 2:23 and Num 21:26, which are explained as demonstrating how God arranged matters so that Israel could conquer Philistine and Moabite land while still maintaining the oath which Abraham swore to Abimelekh

[3] This term has gained some currency through its use by James Kugel in his *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven / London 1981) 103–04. Most recently, Richard Steiner has studied one consequence of the principle at "ground level", and traced its use even among those exegetes most devoted to "pashtanic" (plain sense) readings. See his "Meaninglessness, Meaningfulness, and Super-Meaningfulness in Scripture: An Analysis of the Controversy Surrounding Dan 2:12 in the Middle Ages", *JQR* 82 (1992) 431–50.

[4] *y. Ketub.* 8:11 (32c), based on Deut 32:47.

(Gen 21:23) and the prohibition of "vexing Moab" at Deut 2:9. It is worth quoting the talmudic redactors' response to Deut 2:23, which reports on the geographical location of the Avvites' settlements: "What difference does this make?"

Thus, 'omnisignificance' describes not only a fundamental assumption of the rabbinic view of Scripture, it also serves to guide rabbinic interpretation into certain fairly well-defined channels, and establishes a hierarchy of preference in regard to exegetical alternatives.

Historically, 'omnisignificance' reflects a rabbinic view of Scripture rather than a complete exegetical program. It describes an ideal *which was never actually realized.* Not every feature of Scripture has been interpreted either halakhically or aggadically. Our collections of Midrashim hardly constitute an omnisignificant corpus; not only do they fail to deal with many verses, and even whole biblical chapters, but features which are considered significant – legally or morally – in one context are ignored in others. The rabbinic program or programs do not even attempt to provide a complete commentary, in whatever mode, to any biblical book, chapter, or passage.[5]

Despite the ancient grounding of this concern, Nahmanides was able to translate his sensitivity to matters of structure, proportion and sequence into developing and systematizing sporadic rabbinic insights into novel and enduring omnisignificant approaches to the Pentateuch, and thereby advancing the rabbinic omnisignificant program in ways which would have amazed his predecessors, and, despite his vast prestige, often escaped his successors.

2.2. *Structure and Theme*

Among the signal characteristics of Nahmanides' Pentateuchal commentary is his sensitivity to structure, and his preference for structural explanations of exegetical cruces. To an immensely greater extent than his predecessors, both Spanish and French, his concern for such matters engendered an ongoing investigation into the Pentateuch's choice, order and arrangement of expositions, incidents and narratives, and into questions of the themes which were expressed by such structures.

Thus, for example, the division of the Pentateuch into *five* books could not be taken for granted, but must be given meaning. It is characteristic of Nahmanides that his search for the meaning of each of these books on its own gave full weight to the content of each, structure played a role as well. Thus, the chronological gap between the end of Genesis (the death of Joseph) and the beginning of Exodus (a resumptive repetition of the descent of the Israelites into Egypt some seventy years *before* Joseph's demise), and that between the end of Exodus (the descent of the divine Presence, which in reality does not occur until Lev 9:23) and the beginning of Leviticus. Thus, for Nahmanides,

[5] The one consistent exception may be Targum, but the relation of this genre in early times to the rabbinic movement is still unclear. In any case, Targum in the strict sense, as represented by Onkelos, seems relatively unconcerned with the omnisignificant ideal.

these two chronological gaps serve to delimit the contents of Exodus in a way which *expresses* the book's essential theme.

The entrance of the Israelites into Egypt is a true "descent", by which they lose the company of the divine Presence, which is only regained with the construction and dedication of the Tabernacle. The heterogenous materials of the book of Exodus – the enslavement, the plagues, the exodus, the theophany at Sinai, followed by the civil and criminal code of the Book of the Covenant, another account of the Sinaitic theophany, the construction of the Tabernacle, interrupted by the idolatrous worship of the Golden Calf, the renewal of the covenant, additional legislation and, finally, the actual construction of the Tabernacle – are subsumed under the thematic heading of "exile and redemption". The loss of the divine Presence represents for Nahmanides, as it did for the Rabbis, the essence of exile, and so the construction of the Tabernacle represents the Israelites' reestablishment of their relationship with God. Thus, the resumptive repetition at the beginning of Exodus, together with the forshadowing of the future descent of the divine Presence at its end, sound the theme of the book as a whole.

In the case of Numbers, however, theme and structure are somewhat at odds. Nahmanides notes another chronological inconnicity at the beginning of Numbers, which is dated to first day of the second month of the second year since the exodus, while Num 9:1 is dated to the first month (see below, 2.4. Sequence). Nahmanides sees these chapters as a sort of appendix to Leviticus, complementing that book's exposition of ritual law with matters dealing with the encampment in the wilderness. The question of why, then, these chapters are placed in Numbers rather than Leviticus becomes urgent, and Nahmanides provides an response of a sort in his introduction to Numbers.

Numbers is devoted, on the whole, to matters which concern the Israelites in the wilderness, rather than providing legislation for future generations. These timely, rather than timeless, rules regarding the encampment therefore fall under this rubric and properly belong in Numbers rather than Leviticus.

Thus, the introductions he composed for three of the books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) express his view of the purpose of each of them in terms of content and theme. In contrast, however, he also discerned an overarching theme of divine revelation within the last four books of the Pentateuch, coalescing into three great periods – that of the Sinaitic theophany and the giving of the Book of the Covenant, that which took place after the incident of the Golden Calf and the subsequent renewal of the covenant, and the law code revealed in the Tabernacle and encapsulated within Exodus 33–Numeri 31, and the final covenant concluded with the new generation about to enter the land of Canaan, that of Deuteronomy. The subsequent tension was never altogether resolved and the two views of the Pentateuch were not entirely integrated.

2.3. *Patterning*

Closely related to Nahmanides' concern with structure is his sensitivity to recurrent narrative patterns; these are often related to matters of chronology and sequence. For example, in rejecting the midrashic explanation (as adopted by Rashi ad loc. and to be found in *Genesis Rabba* 39:7) of why Terah's death is recorded in Gen 11:32 rather than in its proper chronological place in Genesis 22, he notes that "this is the custom of all recorded [Pentateuchal history] to narrate the life of the father, his begetting a son and [then] dying, and after that to begin [the narrative] regarding the son['s life]" (Gen 11:32).

Again, he rejects Rashi's midrashic explanation for the repetition of the word *ve-hayu* in Exod 4:9, "take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and it will become (*ve-hayu*) – the water that you take from the Nile – it will become (*ve-hayu*) blood on the dry ground". According to Rashi ad loc., the repetition of this verb indicates that the water did not turn to blood until it had *hit the dry ground*. In contrast, Nahmanides notes that:

> The meaning is not as the Master gives it, and there is no need for his midrashic comment, for the masters of language [study] have already discovered that it is the custom of many verses to repeat (*likhpol*) words for need (*le-naḥaz*) and for strengthening (*le-ḥizzuq*) or because of the lengthy space (*mitsu'a arokh*) which comes between them.[6]

Nahmanides offers other examples of this syntactic "resumptive repetition", and cites Lev 27:3; Deut 18:6; Exod 1:15–16; and Gen 46:2 as examples.

Likewise, at times he employs the existence of a small-scale, though not purely syntactic repetitions, in furthering his larger – halakhic-exegetical aims. In his commentary to Num 7:1 he does not explicitly note that the clause "[When] he had anointed and consecrated them" at the end of the verse, may be seen as a resumptive repetition of "he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings" at its beginning, but he clearly recognized it as such. He uses the repetition as proof against Ibn Ezra's contention that the consecration was by blood and not oil, since both clauses refer to the same action, the object of which was the Tabernacle in both cases; Ibn Ezra's proof-text requires that we see Lev 8:15, which mentions the blood of the sin-offering in this connection, as a parallel. This may be the intent of Nahmanides' phrase *le-naḥats* ("for [explanatory?] need") in his comments on Exod 4:9, just cited.

Thus, his recognition of narrative and linguistic patterning serve to support a plain-sense reading of the text even against his midrashic and exegetical sources. In particular, his great respect for Rashi never impelled him to withhold his criticism or to soften his rejection of Rashi's interpretation. His commentary is sprinkled with responses such as "it [=his interpretation] is not correct".

[6] So too in his comments on Gen 6:9. As to the "masters of language study" (*ba'alei ha-lashon*), see Ibn Janah, *Sefer ha-Rikmah* (ed. Wilenski) 296: lines 18 f, and see Chavel ad loc., n. 27.

2.4. *Sequence*

A long-standing consensus counterposes the views of Rashi and Nahmanides as to the degree to which chronology governs the order of Pentateuchal narratives. Like much of medieval exegesis, the roots of this issue lie in the past, in the midrashic / talmudic observation that *ein muqdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*, "the Torah departs from chronological order".

The *locus classicus* for derivation of the rule is to be found, inevitably, in the Babylonian Talmud, and no justification for the asequentiality is presented. The Talmud's only proof is drawn from an instance which is beyond dispute, the relation of Num 1:1–19 and succeeding passages to 9:1–8. The date of the first is "the first of the second month of the second year" (1:1) of the Exodus era, while the second is dated sometime in "the first month" (9:1) of the same era.[7]

As far as the rule itself goes, no one can deny that this example illustrates the point. It is the conclusion to be drawn from this case that is at issue. Is this typical, or is it the exception that proves the rule, as Nahmanides contends?

Nahmanides and, following him, Don Isaac Abarbanel,[8] reject the hitherto traditional understanding of the talmudic / midrashic view that the Torah often violates strict chronological order, while Rashi and Ibn Ezra accept this rule, extending its application beyond its historic bounds (see below). Moreover, implicit in the consensus-view is the assumption that Rashi and Ibn Ezra represent a plain-sense view of Scripture.[9]

Like most matters of consensus, there is considerable truth to this simplified view of Nahmanides' position. Still, such a view overstates matters and thus overlooks the complexities which such statements mask, remaining satisfied with less than a full account which a more complete analysis of the data allows.

To begin with, Nahmanides and Abarbanel do not reject *in toto* the principle of *ein muqdam*. There are a number of instances in which such rejection is simply impossible, since the framework of the Torah's narrative makes the departure from sequentiality abundantly clear.

Nahmanides argues that the Torah clearly shows its concern with dating and chronology, since it does "inform" us of its departure from sequential order, as in the case of Num 1:1 and 9:1. In essence, he reinterprets the Talmud's proof. Rather than applying to the general principle of asequentiality – *ein muqdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*, the Talmud's proof applies not to the principle itself, but to a proviso thereof: that the narrative and exposition do not depart from chronological order *unless* the reader is explicitly informed of this, either

[7] *Hodesh* here may refer to Rosh Hodesh, the first of the month; see the commentary of R. Joseph Bekhor Shor, ad loc. The talmudic passage ist at *Pesah.* 6b.

[8] On this spelling of the name, see S. Z. Leiman, "Abarbanel and the Censor", *JJS* 19 (1968) 49, n. 1.

[9] On Nahmanides' view of the matter, see EncBibl VIII (Jerusalem 1982) 686–87; E. Z. Melammed, *Mefarshei ha-Mikra*, 434–35, 539–42, 939–40. To Melammed's list of instances in which Rashi claims "*ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*" add Gen 6:3; Exod 4:20, and 19:11; to his list of Ibn Ezra's, add Num 16:1 and 16:16.

by means of dates, as in Num 1:1, or by means of chronological data of some other type, such as genealogical data regarding births and deaths, etc. His parade example of the latter is Gen 11:32, where Terah's death is "prematurely" recorded, as can easily be demonstrated in light of the chronological data regarding Abram's birth. If Terah was 70 at Abram's birth (11:26), Abraham was 135 at his death, which therefore should have been recorded in Genesis 22. In his response to Ibn Ezra's claim that this reflect's the Torah's achronological order, Nahmanides suggests the Torah will complete a generational narrative – or, we may add – an exposition, before continuing on to the next generation's history, even at the expense of some chronological inconnicities.

Applying this insight to the text of the entire Torah, Nahmanides thus requires that every narrative be approached with the assumption that the Torah's order reflects the order in which the events recorded took place, when there is no compelling evidence to the contrary. He writes:

> In my opinion, the whole Torah is in order, for in all places in which it postpones [narrating] the earlier [event] it explains [the matter], as for example "God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai" in this book [= Lev 25:1], [or], for example "On the day Moses completed setting up the Tent" [Num 7:1] in the second book, and similar cases. That is why it states here "after the death", to tell us that this occurred immediately after their death.[10]

Thus, those cases in which the narrative signals its violation of the rule of sequentiality serve as a point of departure for Nahmanides. From these cases he applies his insight to the rest of the Pentateuch, albeit with varying degrees of success. By focusing on these cases, Nahmanides raises the question of when and why these departures take place, a matter to which Rashi does not always attend.

It is important to note that, in taking the position he does, Nahmanides goes counter to his own exegetical tradition on this issue; not only do Rashi and Ibn Ezra assert the contrary, but the thrust of the Talmud's short discussion, especially in light of R. Papa's caveat, seems to support them as well. In the light of all this, his rejection of the rule assumes greater importance.

The dispute between Nahmanides and Abarbanel, on the one side, and Rashi and Ibn Ezra on the other, centers about the question of dating those passages or events whose relation can be determined only by inference. How strained do we allow our reading to become in attempting to interpret the order of narrative as reflecting the historical order?

Furthermore, even when such departures from sequential order are acknowledged, how do we account for them? Or need we account for them at all, or account for all of them? Here, the matter of omnisignificance obtrudes, and this is often the real ground upon which the debate takes place.

For example, the proper interpretation of the dates contained within the self-contained Flood narrative are an issue between Rashi and Nahmanides. Rashi forces each date into the framework demanded by the midrashic state-

[10] See his commentary to Lev 16:1; the last sentence means that the following section is displaced, and that its place is really between Lev 10:20 and Lev 11:1. He too seems to have seen this as a programmatic statement, and refers to it in his animadversions against Ibn Ezra at Num 16:1, as the similar wording would indicate.

ment that the Flood lasted a year.[11] To do so, he interprets "the seventh month" of Gen 8:4 as "the seventh month from Kislev, in which the rain ceased".[12] As a consequence, he must add the 150 days during which the floodwaters receded to the forty days of the Flood proper rather than taking the entire 150 day period as *including* the forty days during which the rains fell.

This is problematic, since the date of the beginning of the forty days is the seventeenth day of the second month (2/17), and the end of the 150-day period is thus the seventeenth day of the seventh month (7/17). Nahmanides, assuming months of thirty days each, calculates the 150 days as beginning 2/17, with the start of the Flood, and ending 7/17.[13] Moreover, he notes that in order to sustain his interpretation, Rashi must continually change the dating system in use, taking the date given in 7:11 as referring to start of the Flood, that of 8:4 to the end of the rain, and that of 8:5 (the very next verse!) once again to the start of the Flood.[14]

Nahmanides himself interprets all dates as referring to the same era (= Noah's life, as is evident from 7:11[15]), a procedure more in keeping with the plain meaning of the text.[16]

There is more involved here than the use of a midrash, however, for the positions taken by Rashi and Nahmanides here reflect their sense of narrative time. Since Rashi does not expect sequential order, he is not dismayed when successive dates in the same passage refer to different starting points; Nahmanides is much more concerned in providing a unitary reading of the sequence.

Moreover, Nahmanides' sensitivity to matters of precedence and sequence impelled him to the view that expository prose obeys the same rule of sequentiality as does narrative. Again, and in contrast to Rashi, he insisted that sequentiality *within* a section must be maintained, and an exegete must account for departures from it.[17] Examples of this tendency involve descriptions of rituals which acquire a narrative character, such as Leviticus 16 on the high priest's temple service on Yom Kippur, or the procedure due on the appearance

[11] A solar year; see Rashi to 8:14 s.v. *be-shiv'ah*. The source of this opinion is *Mishnah 'Ed.* 2:10 and *Genesis Rabbah* 28:9.

[12] S.v. *ba-ḥodesh ha-shevi'i*.

[13] See his lengthy comments on 8:4 s.v. *va-tanaḥ ha-teivah*.

[14] See Rashi's (midrashic-style) defense of this procedure in his comments to 8:5.

[15] And not Anno Mundi, as Chavel remarks in his notes to 8:4, unless, of course, Noah was born on Rosh Hashanah. Since the calendar consisted of twelve months of thirty days each and could therefore hardly have been a lunar calendar, or even a lunisolar one similar to the one inaugurated just before the Exodus, identifying this calendar with any of the historical Anno Mundi calendars perpetrates the very anachronism Nahmanides is at pains to disavow.

[16] Nahmanides' justification for doing so is significant: "since Rashi [himself] in other places subjects midrashim to searching examination (*medaqdeq aḥar midreshei ha-haggadot*) and labors to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture, he has permitted us to do so as well, for there are seventy facets to Torah, and there are many conflicting midrashim in the words of the Sages".

[17] See, for example, Nahmanides' trenchant comments regarding (at least by implication) Rashi's understanding of the *Sifra*'s midrashic handling of Lev 14:43-44 in his commentary on 14:43, in which he asserts, i.a., that "it is impossible to cut them [= these verses] with a knife, to move them backward and forward (*lehakdim u-le'aher*) in a matter which is not at all their meaning (*mashma'am*)".

of a house fungus in Leviticus 14. But, his attention to matters of sequence is far more pervasive than that. Far more than Rashi, he traces the order of topics within a passage, or the sequence of passages within a greater whole. Among his most characteristic phrases in this endeavor are *(ve)-ḥazar ve-amar / u-feresh / u-ve'er / ve-hizkir / ve-tsivvah* and the like, and they appear more than a hundred times in his commentary. In some instances he is most concerned with sequence pure and simple, but most involve some sort of repetition; it is significant, however, that his account of these repetitions nearly always involve some sort of sequence, narrative or expositional.

For example, we may illustrate his concern for sequence pure and simple by pointing to his discussion of the order of laws in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21–23), in which he demonstrates that the sequence is not arbitrary.

> The first exposition (*mishpaṭ*) begins with [the topic] of the Hebrew slave, since it involves the matter of freeing the slave in the seventh year, a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, mentioned in the first Commandment ... And when he completes the exposition (*mishpaṭ*) of this *mitsvah* regarding Hebrew slaves, he begins the exposition (*mishpaṭ*) of "you shall not murder", since it[s prohibition] is the most severe, and [continues] with honor of parents, and stealing, and returns to the exposition (*ḥazar le-mishpaṭ*) of one who strikes [another] non-fatally, and after that to murder of a slave, which is more heinous than killing embryos [as a result of a mistaken blow which leads to miscarriage], and after that to the [injury] of the limbs of Israelites and slaves, and after that to damages to livestock by death – and all the passages are in order and proper intent (*kavvanah*).[18]

As to the second category, where his attention to sequence comes about as a result of the need to account for repetitions of all sorts, see his remarks regarding Pharaoh's double-barrelled accusation of impropriety against Abram in Gen 12:11–13.

> It would seem that the exposition of the verses is that Sarah did not accept upon herself to say so [i.e., to claim sisterhood rather than a marriage-tie with Abraham] ... She remained silent, and did not tell that [she was] his wife, [but] Abraham told of his own that she was his sister, and therefore he was benefitted because of her. And this is [the reason] the verse states "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?". First he blamed him in not telling Pharaoh that she was his wife when he saw her being taken, and blamed him as well (*ḥazar ve-he'eshim*) him for saying to the nobles after this that she was his sister. He did not blame the woman at all, for it is not fitting that she contradict her husband ...

It may be noted that the essential purpose of this comment is to account for the fact that Pharaoh did not blame Sarah for the deception; despite this, Nahmanides cannot forbear explaining the sequence of Pharaoh's claims against Abraham.

Nahmanides' keen attention to the matters of order and sequence goes beyond the expositional or narrative progress. Far more than his predecessors, he views the order of elements in all manner of sequences as significant. As a result, he formulated an impressive array of hierarchies to interpret such lists.

He thus employs no fewer than fourteen of these hierarchies: birth order when siblings are listed, either in genealogical contexts or otherwise;[19] order

[18] From his comments on 21:2. Such comments are common, though Num 5:5 should be singled out for mention, because it accounts for the incorporation of ritual material within a narrative context.

[19] See his commentary on Num 32:2.

of importance, whether of person, ritual object or other;[20] order of preference or love;[21] order of greater population when clans are listed[22] or otherwise.[23] Likewise, prohibitions and sins will be listed in order of (decreasing or increasing) severity;[24] elements in order of place in the chain of causation;[25] number of people affected;[26] or fearsomeness as perceived by a biblical character.[27] Rules which obtain for the indefinite future (*le-dorot*) precede those which are of temporary validity.[28] Precedence may also indicate initiative,[29] high motivation,[30] or frequency.[31] Finally, as noted above and as a fifteenth category, temporal or narrative sequence may be indicated.[32] In short, sequence almost always has a substantive significance for Nahmanides; it is hardly ever haphazard or mechanical: such is the omnisignificant imperative. While concern for these matters surfaces in midrashic texts, to some extent, they are far more prominent in Nahmanides' commentary.

2.5. *Proportion and Placement*

Nahmanides' sensitivity to structural concerns carries over to another realm; that of proportion. For example, in his comments on Exod 37:8, he enumerates the five-fold appearance of descriptions of the Tabernacle in Exodus 25–30 and 35–40 and ascribes them to the Tabernacle's importance to God (*derekh ḥibbah ve-derekh ma'alah*), explicitly comparing it to Eliezer's re-telling of his journey to Padan Aram in Genesis 24. He quotes the midrashic statement quoted above:

[20] See Gen 6:10; 36:12; 46:18–19; Exod 25:1 (the order of the Tabernacle vessels, with the most important first), Lev 23:40 (the citron mentioned first of the "Four Species"); 26:4 (rain is the most crucial of all blessings); Num 1:32 (the tribe of Ephraim before that of Menasseh; see Gen 48:17–20). But compare his discussion of the placement of Japhet as last of the brothers in Gen 6:10; he was the first-born, but second to Shem in rank, and his status as first-born was insufficient to overcome his inferiority to Shem. The result was that Shem was listed first, Ham, the youngest, second, and Japhet brought up the rear. Such is the power of sequentiality!

[21] Deut 28:11.

[22] Gen 46:18–19 or Num 1:32.

[23] Exod 35:22, where those who brought shittim-wood are mentioned after those who donated blue and purple wool, since the former were fewer in number.

[24] Exod 20:3 and Deut 23:5, respectively.

[25] His comments on Lev 26:4 may be interpreted in this way, though in this case its placement may be connected with the importance of rain, but see Deut 2:24, where God's role is adumbrated before the action which He causes is detailed.

[26] See on Lev 16:1, where the sections dealing with the issue of the prevention of the consequences of ritual impurity for the general community of Israel are placed before those which affect only one individual, in this case, Aaron.

[27] Gen 39:8–9, where Potiphar's wife shows greater fear of her husband than of God.

[28] Num 8:4.

[29] Num 14:24.

[30] Gen 17:26.

[31] See Lev 15:54, where he surveys the sequence of sections in Leviticus 13–14, and explains their order in terms of frequency of occurence.

[32] Exod 25:1, Lev 8:30. Of course, birth order and initiative (see Num 14:24) may be considered under this rubric, as may causation.

> The conversation of the servants of the patriarchal households are more pleasing to God than the Torah of their descendants, for the section [detailing] Eliezer['s journey takes] two or three columns [of text] while [the important rule] that the blood of a dead creeping thing causes ritual impurity is derived from one letter.[33]

Nahmanides' keen sense of proportion shows itself in these matters, and he will inquire as to why Scripture devotes more or less attention than he deems proper to one or another matter. In the cases just discussed, his solution, which relates importance to repetition, provides a more global solution, though one not less omnisignificantly oriented. As noted above, for Nahmanides, the number of repetitions a topic receives testifies to that topic's importance.

In discussing the function of Lev 8:1–3 within the complex of sections devoted to Aaron's induction into the priesthood, Nahmanides in his comments to 8:2 refers to the *ma'alah* and *hibbah* of Aaron and his sons "before God" — the same words he used in his comment regarding the Tabernacle in Exod 37:1.

The short section then is part of the five-fold series of repetitions, in general and in particular, which Nahmanides mentions in his comments on Exod 37:8. There his enumeration includes: (1) the detailed instructions of Exodus 25–27; (2) the general summation of Exod 31:6–11; (3) "at the time of construction (*bi-she'at ma'aseh*) he mentioned them in general terms", to Exod 35:10; (4) a detailed exposition "which is missing in the Torah, but certainly Moses had to tell the skilled craftsmen who carried out the work" what needed to be done in detail at the time the work commenced; and (5) the general summation of the work done in Exod 35:5.[34] In any case, this short section is part of the larger complex which serves to emphasize the importance of this project to God's plan of restoring the spiritual fortunes of the Israelites, which is akin to the duplications of the story of Eliezer's getting a wife for Isaac, a mission which would determine the destiny of the Israelite nation to be, which Nahmanides also mentions in this connection.

Thus, once again, as in the Eliezer narrative, the importance of the matter is in direct proportion to the number of repetitions it warrants.

Importance need not be measured on a cosmic scale. For example, the twelve-fold enumeration of the dedication offerings of the princes, each one identical with the other, is an index of the importance of each prince. Why not, asks Nahmanides, summarize all but the first?

> The correct understanding of this passage is that the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to give honor to those who fear Him. ... Behold, the princes all brought this offering upon which they had agreed, on one day, and it is impossible but that one must precede his fellow. ...[35] But

[33] *Genesis Rabba* 60:8; see Rashi on Gen 24:42 s.v. *va-avo ha-yom*.

[34] As he remarks in his comments on 35:5, "Behold, Moses had to tell the whole congregation [about] all the work which God had commanded him [to have done], in order to inform them of the necessity of bringing large donations, for the [amount of] work [to be done] was great. And therefore he told them: 'the Tabernacle and its tent, and its cover, etc.' — he mentioned all of it *in general terms*".

[35] Since they could not be brought simultaneously, by God's command; see his comments below.

> [God] wished to mention them by name and [give] their offerings in detail, mentioning each one's day separately, and not to mention and honor the first — "this is the offering of Nahshon son of Aminadav" — and then state: "and thus the princes, each one on his day, brought [his offering]", for this would infringe on the honor of the others (*qitsur bi-khevod ha-aherim*).[36]

Thus, the importance of proportion is also related to the rabbinic concern with repetition. Here the impossibility of giving each tribal head his proper due within a twelve-day ceremony impelled a long and repetitious account of the offerings. In contrast to his usual practice, Nahmanides negates the significance priority is usual given by balancing that with the equal treatment accorded each offering. In this case, proportion thus counters sequence.

The role of proportion or repetition in indicating intensity appears in his comments on legal passages as well. In most cases, repetition serves as an alternate means, alongside priority in sequence, of indicating relative importance. A heinous sin will be mentioned before a less heinous one; likewise, a heinous sin will be mentioned more often. Thus, the prohibition, once again, of idolatry in Exod 23:24, prompts this comment: "The Torah repeatedly warns [against idolatry], and even though these verses are redundant (*meyuttarin*), there is no [need] to be concerned with this, because of the severity [of the sin of idolatry]".

Proportion, or repetitiveness, serves other functions which the classic rabbinic system did not necessarily acknowledge. In his comments to Lev 26:8, Nahmanides explains the parallelistic structure of 26:7–8 (ABA'A"B) as occasioned by the need "to give them [= the Israelites] courage and valor to pursue five hundred". The need to encourage and condole provided a rationale for juxtapositions which were otherwise difficult to explain, as in his remarks regarding the placement of the section on drink-offerings in Numeri 15. Since drink-offerings, like the additional festal sacrifices of Numeri 28–29, were to be brought only in the land of Israel, the giving of this section after the debacle of the spies episode, served "to console them and to reassure them (*lehavtiham*), since they were discouraged, saying: "Who knows what will be after forty years?" ... And therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, saw fit to console them, for by instructing them regarding the *mitsvot* which depend on [residence] in the land He reassured them that it was revealed before Him that they would come and take possession of it" (Num 15:2).

As noted above, Nahmanides' sense of proportion led him to inquire into either the length at which Scripture dilated on various points, or even into why the passage was included in the Pentateuch altogether. At times the disproportionate amount of attention a particular matter garners in Scripture leads Nahmanides to prefer a typological interpretation for the narrative. Thus, his well-known discussion in his commentary to Gen 27:20, regarding the disputes between Isaac and the Philistines anent the wells Isaac had dug, opens with the inquiry: "Scripture dwells at length in regard to the matter of the wells, [though] there is no [moral] utility nor great honor to Isaac in the plain sense of this narrative ... but there is in this thing a hidden matter, for it comes to in-

[36] From his comments on Num 7:2.

form [us] of future matters." Thus, the very narrative of such apparent inconsequentals impells a deeper meaning to the story.[37]

Conversely, his sense of proportion plays a central role in his disagreement with Rashi over the identity of the "king in Israel" mentioned in Gen 36:31, in connection with the "kings of Edom who reigned before a king reigned for the children of Israel". Rashi identifies the king as Saul, and thus categorizes the passage as a prophetic "future history", while Nahmanides identifies this unnamed king with Moses, and thus sees it as history plain and simple. His reason is that "why should prophecy mention these?" In other words, though it is important to list these kings as evidence of the fulfillment of Isaac's blessing to Esau, such an intention is not sufficient reason for providing a prophetic history. Nahmanides's sense of proportion thus provides us with a sort of "Law of Conservation of Prophetic Energy".

In the same vein, Nahmanides will inquire into the reason for the repeating of information already given, as in his comment to Num 10:14, where the list of the tribal princes, already provided in chapter 2, arouses his interest. His quasi-casuistic explanation, that this repetition informs us that they actually led the tribes on their march through the wilderness, and that the same princes remained in office throughout this period, seems to have been unsatisfactory to him, since he prefaces it with a "perhaps".

2.6. *Historical Sense*

The combination of Nahmanides' sensitivities to sequence and chronology, along with his appreciation of the proportion of space the Pentateuch devotes to matters which, from the rabbinic point of view, were evanescent, led him to a recognition of the historical context of the Pentateuchal narrative. He points out that no detail regarding the production of the golden hooks for the courtyard hangings around the Tabernacle is provided, nor of the rings used to join the wall-boards together – all because they were familiar to the craftsmen of that generation.[38] Nahmanides suggests that the very selection of rules of inheritance to appear in the Pentateuch, in Num 27:6–11, was predicated on the demographic situation of the generation of the wilderness. The very shape of the Pentateuch as a whole is therefore depentant on the demographic, technological, cultural, etc. situation into which it was introduced. This is of course not far from Maimonides' understanding of the purpose of many of the commandments.[39]

[37] On Nahmanides' typological interpretations, see Amos Funkenstein, "Parshanuto ha-Tipologit shel ha-Ramban", *Zion* 45 (1979/80) 35–49; a condensed English version appeared in Joseph Dan / Frank Talmage (eds), *Studies in Jewish Mysticism: Proceedings of Regional Conferences Held at the University of California, Los Angeles, and McGill University in April 1978* (Cambridge, MA 1982) 129–50, and see David Lieber's response on pp. 151–52.

[38] See his comments to Exod 26:24.

[39] In *Guide of the Perplexed*, III. 34–49.

3. Aspects of Nahmanides' Thought

Studies on Nahmanides' thought: D. Berger, "Miracles and the Natural Order in Nahmanides", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (ed. I. Twersky; Cambridge: Harvard UP 1983) 107–28; H. Hanoch, *Haramban Kehoqer Umequbbal: Hagute Hatoranit Mitokh Parshanuto Lemitzvot* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Makhon Harry Fischel 1978); M. Idel, "R. Moshe ben Nahman – Qabbalah, Halakhah Umanhigut Ruhanit", *Tarbiz* 64 (1995) 532–80; D. Novak, *The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented* (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1993); B. Safran, "Rabbi Azriel and Nahmanides: Two Views of the Fall of Man", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban)* (ed. I. Twersky; 1983) 75–106; J. Stern, "Nachmanides' Conception of *Ta'amei Mitzvot* and Its Maimonidean Background", *Community and Covenant: New Essays in Jewish Political and Legal Philosophy* (ed. D. Frank; Albany: SUNY Press 1995) 141–72.

3.1. *Theological Principles*

Nahmanides clearly saw his Pentateuchal commentary as a vehicle for providing theological and legal guidance for laymen whose time for study was limited, but who made it a practice to review the weekly Torah reading with an appropriate commentary. With this pragmatic view in mind we may understand Nahmanides' long excursions on such matters, even when they do not necessarily contribute greatly to the understanding of the verse(s) at hand.

Perhaps the most thoroughgoing and elaborate series of discussions Nahmanides carries on in this manner concerns his understanding of the workings of divine Providence and the question of "hidden miracles" within a natural or essentially occasionalist context (e.g., see his comments at Gen 18:19, Deut 11:13 and Exod 13:16). Indeed, the difference in the thrust of his discussion in his Pentateuchal commentary and that in his commentary on Job, which is more Maimonidean, may perhaps inhere in the audience to which each was directed (or, alternatively, the *change* he perceived in his audience between the time he composed the one and the completion of the Pentateuchal commentary at the end of his life).

Among the many discussions contained in his exegetical works, three stand out: his denial of the appropriateness of the role of natural law to a believing Jew in his long comment on Exod 13:16 ("for no one has a portion in the Torah of Moses our Master until he believes that all our activities and all that happens to us are all miracles [which] have no natural law or 'way of the world' in them"), contrasted to the elaborate scheme which he offers in his comments anent Job 36:7, where he allows for an admixture of natural law and "minor miracles" for an intermediate group of humans who cannot maintain a continuous state of "cleaving" to God; and his comments on Lev 26:11, where he asserts that "all these blessings [of Lev 26:3–13] are all miracles – it is not natural that rains should come and that we will be at peace from enemies ... And though they are hidden miracles by which the world operates, they become known by their constancy".

3.2. Psychological Insights

Because of his openness to varying exegetical approaches, and his keen insight into the vagaries of human nature, his views of biblical characters are often more rounded than those of his predecessors, who relied more on the midrashic principle of attributing wickedness to the wicked, and righteousness to the righteous (*B. Bat.* 119b). Thus, for example, he rejects Rashi's pejorative understanding of Isaac's comment on the disguised Jacob's un-Esau-like speaking style ("the name of Heaven is not common in his mouth") by noting that, in Isaac's view, Esau was indeed a pious person (Gen 27:21). He does not hesitate to condemn Abraham for his duplicity and lack of faith in claiming Sarai as his half-sister without her permission (Gen 12:8). His delicate and nuanced understanding of the difficult relationship between Jacob and his sister-wives, where guilt and blame, jealousy and passion all intertwine is a particularly good example of his technique (see his comments Gen 30:1 and 15), especially when contrasted with his legal views of the permissibility of concubinage in his own time (*JQR* OS V [1892] 116f). His openness to alternate interpretations of the same passage serves him in good stead in this aspect of his commentary; see for example his comments on Gen 30:30.

3.3. Esoteric Interpretations

As Elliot R. Wolfson has remarked, "Perhaps no one figure is more responsible for the legitimization of kabbalah as an authentic esoteric tradition of Judaism than [Nahmanides]".[40] While it has been estimated that only about 8% of Nahmanides' comments include matters of kabbalistic exegesis, he undoubtedly intended the readers of his commentary to become aware of the mystical reading of the Pentateuch. The method he employed was symbolic: "Know that in the true sense Scripture speaks of lower matters and alludes to supernal matters".[41] As Wolfson notes, Nahmanides relates the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to the ten *sefirot*, and, more particularly,

> the dynamic of these days involves the unification and balancing of the attributes of mercy and judgement, the masculine and feminine aspects of God: 'Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment in mercy, and Yom Kippur the day of mercy in judgment'. This kabbalistic truth is alluded to, moreover, by the astrological fact that the sign of this month is Libra, depicted by the scales of balance. Hence, the cosmic phenomenon structurally parallels or mirrors the theosophic reality.[42]

[40] See Wolfson, By Way of Truth (1989) 103-78; the quote is from p. 103.
[41] See his comments to Gen 1:5 (ed. Chavel) p. 15.
[42] Wolfson, ibid. 114-15.