

REDAK'S COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF HIS METHOD AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

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Introduction

David Kimhi is one of the popular commentators on the Bible. He views himself unpretentiously as a simple teacher. His importance, in a sense, rests more on his pedagogic skill than on his thinking. Kimhi draws freely upon his predecessors. He is imbued with the teachings of the Jewish rationalists and is well acquainted with the works of Saadia, Ibn Daud, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Maimonides. Most of the biblical commentaries of his time reflect the midrashic or homiletic approach. The philosophical approach to biblical exegesis is more congenial to Kimhi. He prefers to consider the obvious meaning of the text.

The Book of Genesis, dealing as it does with such themes as God, creation, the nature of man, the problem of good and evil, etc., lends itself especially to scientific treatment. Here Kimhi is afforded an opportunity to apply the store of philosophical knowledge he has accumulated. The importance of his commentary on Genesis rests precisely on the fact that Kimhi is not an obscure philosopher writing for a limited audience. Instead, he writes for the common people and his Genesis commentary serves as a pedagogic means of introducing the Jewish masses to philosophic subjects which had hitherto been closed to them.

The intent of this study then is to examine Kimhi's commentary on Genesis in depth; to discern this new philosophic

approach, to analyze it in light of the established schools of Jewish philosophy, and to indicate, wherever possible, any innovations that the author makes.

Chapter I

Historical Background

Biblical commentaries were written to help the student arrive at a fuller comprehension of the text and its implications. In turn, by examining the methods and viewpoints by which the commentators deal with the biblical text, we can open a window on the world in which they lived. Each commentator will have something unique to offer and thus will give us particular insight into his time. No one offers a more comprehensive view of the situation of late twelfth and early thirteenth century Jewry than does Rabbi David ben Joseph Kimhi. In his writings we observe the internal struggle within the Jewish community between the forces of reason and science on the one hand, and the forces of traditional religion on the other. In his encyclopedic approach, Kimhi lays out for us all that has come before him and all that exists in his own world, side by side. Although he often adds his own opinions, he nevertheless conveys to us in an objective manner a broad compendium of views held by his contemporaries.

In addition to the quantitative scope of his writings, their clear and lucid style is worthy of note. Apparently his purpose is not to appeal to an exclusive audience, but, on the contrary, to make his material accessible to the masses. He is a teacher whose priorities are to approach his subject with enthusiasm and integrity; to penetrate it

as deeply as possible, and most important, to convey his learning to others, regardless of their training, in the most direct and efficient way.

One can more readily understand Kimhi's love of scholarship and teaching when his background and family are considered. The family origins are traced to Spain.¹ Kimhi's father, Rabbi Joseph ben Isaac Kimhi (known by the acronym RiKaM, 1105-1170),² was forced to flee Spain and move north into the section of southern France known as Provence. His flight was occasioned by the persecutions resulting from the Almohade invasion and conquest of Andalusia, which began about 1143 and ended with the fall of Cordova in 1148.³ Many Jews moved to Christian Spain where Toledo became the new center for Jewish learning.⁴ However, some scholars found new homes further north in Catalonia, which was adjacent to Provence. Indeed, in the early twelfth century, sections of Provence came under Spanish control and were annexed to Catalonia.⁵ This annexation made for closer relations between the Provencal schools and the academies of Barcelona.⁶

It was under these circumstances that, in the late 1140's, Joseph Kimhi settled in Narbonne, the leading academic center of Provence. Narbonne was famous as a city of scholars and writers.⁷ It is probable that Joseph Kimhi lived the life of a scholar and teacher of modest means in

that city until his death in 1170.⁸ He was among the first to bring the influence of Spanish Jewry to Provence. The Jews of Spain were devoted primarily to philological and philosophical studies; the Jews of France were concerned with the Talmud and rabbinic disciplines.⁹ At that time the Jews of Provence and especially Narbonne were not well acquainted with Hispano-Judaic culture and scholarship. They were rather under the influence of the talmudic academies of northern France and their devotion to midrashic exegesis. Narbonne had been the home of Mosheh HaDarshan, who was given to long discourses based on aggadic sources. He did much to popularize a mode of interpretation in accordance with the derash as opposed to the peshat.¹⁰ This was a factor with which David Kimhi would later have to contend in tempering his scientific, rationalist approach to scriptural analysis.¹¹

Because until the middle of the twelfth century the Jews of Provence had been ruled by the Carolingian dynasty, their cultural and spiritual life followed the Franco-German mode.¹² In the area of scholarship this meant a devotion to the Talmud and the midrashim, almost to the exclusion of all else.¹³

In addition to their being located in a geographically central position, between the cultural centers of Spain, Italy, and Franco-Germany,¹⁴ the Jews of southern France

enjoyed more security than did their brethren in the north. Many of the Provencal Jews were moneylenders; others were involved in agriculture, especially in viticulture.¹⁵ In the mid-fourteenth century the Jewish community numbered fifteen thousand.¹⁶

The Hispanic influence was more readily accepted in Provence than in the smaller, less cosmopolitan areas to the north, where any change or secular intrusion was viewed as a danger to the Jewish way of life. In the north the people derived spiritual solace from the study of the traditional teachings and aggadic sources. Yitzhak Baer takes note of this:

The talmudical academies which they [Rashi and the Tosaphists] had founded were able to give the Jews of the small communities of Europe farther north a more homogeneous education and to inspire them with a more harmonious spirit than was possible in the south, so full of conflicts and contradictions.¹⁷

This difference manifested itself in its most extreme form in the controversy between the Maimonists and anti-Maimonists in 1232, in which David Kimhi played an important role in defending Maimonides.

Joseph Kimhi's works deal with both grammar and exegesis. In his major grammatical work, Sefer Hazikkaron, he makes several important contributions to Hebrew linguistics, especially in the area of vocalization.¹⁸ He divided the vowels into five short and five long forms:¹⁹

As he followed the Sephardi pronunciation, he arranged them thus: long: A, O, I, E, (EI) U, and correspondingly short: A(patach), O, I, E, U. He gained three vowels, short O(kametz katan), the short I(chirik katan) which is not followed by Yod, and Kubutz, short U, represented by three dots. 20

He also recognized the piel and hofal as separate and distinct conjugations. 21 RiKaM wrote another book, Sefer Hagalui, which deals with the debates and differences between Menachem ben Aruk and Dunash ben Labrat over Menachem's Machberet, the first Hebrew dictionary. It is also a reaction to Rabbenu Tam's handling of the controversy in his Sefer Hahakra'ot. 22 Joseph Kimhi also wrote a polemical work called Sefer Habrit which refuted Christian attacks against the Jews. The book, in dialogue form, contrasts the views of the "believer" (ma'amin) and the "heretic" (min). It deals specifically with the connection of usury and the Jews; it also challenges the Christian doctrines of original sin, incarnation, and it protests against negative references by Christians to Jewish morality and the manner in which Christians interpret the Bible. 23 Joseph Kimhi wrote commentaries on the Torah, Prophets, Proverbs, and Job. David Kimhi utilizes some of them in his commentaries. 24

Joseph Kimhi had two sons, Mosheh and David. Mosheh, the elder, is known by the acronym ReMaK. He also wrote on grammar and exegesis, but never attained to his father's or his younger brother's scholarly eminence. Mosheh is believed

to have been born in 1130 and to have died in 1190.²⁵ His works include commentaries on the books of Proverbs, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which are attributed erroneously to Abraham ibn Ezra,²⁶ as well as a text book on grammar entitled Shevilei Hada'at.²⁷ Mosheh Kimhi's importance lies in the fact that he was responsible for rearing and educating David, since their father died when David was still a child. Indeed, Cohen notes that David never refers to his father as "my teacher," but rather restricts this term of honor to his brother.

The sources indicate that David Kimhi, known more commonly by the acronym ReDaK, read widely as a youth and was well schooled in Talmud, grammar, and exegesis.²⁹ We know very little about his personal life. It is highly probable that he taught Talmud to the young³⁰ in order to earn some income by which he could further his own studies. We have no evidence for any writings which can be attributed to ReDaK before he reached the age of forty.³¹

ReDaK was also known as David Hasephardi, referring to his Hispanic ancestry.³² In the French language he was known as Maistre Petit (corn ground fine) in a play on the root kemah.³³ As his reputation grew, a play on words involving the phrase in Avot 3:21 was applied to him;

אם אין קמח אין תורה, that is to say, without Kimhi there would be no true Torah learned or taught.³⁴

Kimhi's first literary work was Sefer Mikhlol, a two part grammatical-lexicographical treatise which appeared in 1205. The first section, called Helek Hadikduk, is patterned largely on the works of the tenth century Spanish philologists Hayyuj and Ibn Janah. His father's influence is also evident here.³⁵ Kimhi deals most comprehensively with the verb, providing complete tables of conjugations, in addition to a full discussion of vocalization.³⁶ The book, which is written in a very lucid style, represents a selective summary of all grammatical principles known up to that time. The second part, called Helek Ha'invan and also Sefer Hashorashim is lexicographical; it has its origins in an earlier work of the same name by Ibn Janah.³⁷ Waxman stresses the originality of Kimhi's treatise in that it includes all forms of the verb and its derivatives, in addition to nouns and adjectives.³⁸ ReDaK also adds remarks of an exegetical nature on those verses in the Bible where the specific root mentioned appears.³⁹ Kimhi writes in Hebrew rather than Arabic, in order to meet the needs of the average reader.⁴⁰

Kimhi's Et Sopher is a manual for those engaged in copying the Bible. It deals with rules of punctuation, vocalization, accents, and matters of masoretic interest.⁴¹

In the field of biblical exegesis ReDaK began with a commentary on Chronicles, in response to a request made

of him by one of his father's students. He felt that he was filling a gap in the exegetical literature by emphasizing the peshat.⁴² By the term peshat he understands the simple and literal meaning of the text. Exegetical works which followed were devoted to Psalms, the Prophetic books, and Genesis, in that order.⁴³ He also wrote allegorical, philosophical commentaries on the Hexaemeron in Genesis and on the first chapter of Ezekiel.⁴⁴ These differed from ReDaK's other commentaries in that they dealt with the Ma'aseh Bereshith and Ma'aseh Merkavah⁴⁵ in a most speculative and non-scientific manner.

There is some question as to whether ReDaK wrote commentaries on the other four books of the Torah. While there is no doubt that he makes exegetical reference to passages in these books in his other writings, e.g., the Mikhlol, it is likely that he did not actually write complete commentaries on these books as he did for Genesis.⁴⁶ It has been conjectured that they were indeed written and that the manuscripts were somehow lost; however, this does not seem probable, given the popularity and immediate acclaim which ReDaK's other exegetical works received.⁴⁷ Lauding Kimhi, Shelomoh Ibn Melekh wrote in his Mikhlol Yofi that there were no commentaries by Kimhi on the last four books of the Torah, the Five Megillot, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, and Ezra.⁴⁸ Geiger advances the theory that ReDaK started with the least holy and progressed to the most holy in

writing his commentaries. The reason for completing Bereshith last was וְרַךְ לְעֵלֹת בְּקוֹדֶשׁ.⁴⁹ In reality, it is difficult to determine the precise order in which the commentaries were written from the references made in the text, because most of them were revised in ReDaK's lifetime.⁵⁰

In general, all of the biblical commentaries are marked by a simple, relaxed, non-technical style. ReDaK explains everything step by step. He is concerned with historical continuity and perspective;⁵¹ perhaps he reflects the influence of Moses Ibn G'ikatilla of Cordova.⁵² He remains faithful to the text, displaying a very high regard for the masorah; often he cites several Targumim in order to determine the correct reading.⁵³ He consulted many manuscripts; often he travelled about collecting them in order to insure faithfulness to the masorah.⁵⁴ In order to be certain he interpreted both the kerei and ketiv where they differ.⁵⁵

ReDaK is usually careful to cite his sources properly.⁵⁶ They include other biblical passages, the Targumim, Geonic materials, philologic works of the Judaeo-Arabic tradition, Talmudic and Rabbinic sources, and the philosophical writing of the RaMBaM and his disciples. Baker and Nicholson in their introduction mention that Kimhi cites over one hundred and fifty different works.⁵⁷ Geiger lists

some of the more important influences:

b.Naphtali
b.Asher
Joseph b.Gurion
Eldad HaDani
Asaf HaRofeh
Ali b.Yehudah HaNazir

Geonim

Rav Saadia Gaon
Rav Amram Gaon
Mar Rav Hafetz Gaon
Rav Sherira Gaon
Rav Hai Gaon
Rav Shmuel b. Hophni Gaon

Africa

R. Yehuda b. Kerish
R. Yitzhak b. Shelomo
R. Dunash b. Labrat
R. Nissim

Spain

Menachem b. Saruk
R. Yehuda Hayyuj
R. Yitzhak b. Shaul
R. Yonah b. Janah
R. Shmuel HaNagid

Spain

R. Solomon b. Gabirol
R. Bahya b. Pakuda
R. Yitzhak Giyat
R. Moshes G'ikatilla
R. Yehudah b. Bilaam
R. Yakov b. Eliezer
R. Yitzhak b. Beniste
R. Mosheh b. Ezra
R. Yehuda Halevi
R. Joseph b. Tzaddik
R. Abraham b. Ezra
R. Abraham Halevi
R. Mosheh b. Maimon

Italy

R. Nathan

Northern France

R. Shelomoh b. Yitzhaki

Provence

R. Abraham b. Hiyya
R. Joseph Kimhi
R. Mosheh Kimhi
R. Shmuel b. Tibbon

While we will deal more comprehensively with the distinctions which ReDaK draws between peshat and derash in the chapter on textual analysis, a few general statements are in order here. If we speak of peshat as the literal meaning of the text, ReDaK always favors the peshat over the derash. However, he does not exclude midrashic and rabbinic interpretations from his commentaries. If Ibn Ezra is to be the model of strict adherence to the peshat from a scientific and linguistic point of view; and Rashi is the model of a freer approach to peshat, which relied heavily on rabbinic and

other homiletic sources; then ReDaK must take his place on the spectrum between the two.⁵⁹ He does not combine the two approaches, but rather sets them down side by side, offering the reader either alternative.⁶⁰ He often favors the more literal interpretation and then suggests that others find the derash more acceptable. He does this out of respect for the Rabbis and tradition. Although his utilization of midrashim varies greatly, he feels an obligation to bring them to the attention of his students. This is consistent with his thorough and encyclopedic approach to scholarship and his acceptance of tradition.⁶¹ More specific instances of how ReDaK functions as an exegete will be included in the following chapters which deal with his commentary on Genesis.

Toward the end of his life ReDaK becomes involved in the Maimonidean controversy of 1232. He defends RaMBaM against the attacks of the traditionalists of northern France and their allies to the south in Spain. Provence becomes the heart of the pro-Maimonidean movement. The more traditional Jews accuse Maimonides and his followers of heresy, because of their reliance upon philosophy, science, and secular learning. Among the staunchest critics of the Maimonists is Judah Alfakhar of Toledo, who is ruthless in his attacks both on RaMBaM and ReDaK, often resorting to the most vile personal insults.⁶² The correspondence between Alfakhar and

Kimhi is instructive on two counts. First, it shows the commitment on the part of ReDaK to RaMBaM and the philosophical rationalism for which he stands, and, second, the nature of the correspondence sheds light on the character of ReDaK. Despite the verbal abuse heaped upon him, he remains humble, polite, and even-tempered. The following examples taken from the correspondence between Alfakhar and Kimhi illustrate this:

[Alfakhar to ReDaK:] God rebuke you, you Satan...David the petty one. Whence come you wandering in the land and travelling its length and breadth, provoking quarrel and strife... 63

[ReDaK to Alfakhar:] ...I have written this brief not to you, the prince and the noble, the wise and learned sage, R. Judah the Physician...I would have fain seen your esteemed face and exulted in your company... 64

I shall not cease to speak to you, if you have showered words upon me, I said that it is good to hear the rebuke of a sage and to obey him in that in which the Lord is with him....You wrote, "May God rebuke you O Satan!" while I say, "May God rebuke Satan and him who hates the Lord and embraces and chooses Satan and hates his enemies." If you have called me small, I am indeed small and contemptible in my own sight... 65

As a result of the clarity and precision with which he writes, many of the Christian scholars in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries use ReDaK as a source of information for dealing with Hebrew grammar and scriptures. The Mikhlol directly influences Johannes Reuchlin's dictionary,

De Rudimentis Hebraicis. ⁶⁶ In his German translation of the Bible, Luther makes use of Reuchlin's work, and in turn, Luther influences the Geneva and King James versions. ⁶⁷

The importance of ReDaK is to be attributed not so much to his originality, but rather to his method of selection and arrangement of materials. Both as grammarian and as exegete he culls the most important works existing at the time and through his pedagogic skill not only preserves the teachings of centuries, but often improves upon them. His exegetical and grammatical works complement one another. ⁶⁸ He embodies in his exegesis trends of both the Spanish and Franco-German schools. His work is always guided by reason, moderation, and the search for the true meaning of a verse in context. In the following chapters I hope to demonstrate these elements in his commentary on Bereshith.

Notes for Chapter I

- ¹ Frank Talmage, "Kimhi, Joseph," Encyclopedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), Vol.10, p.1006.
- ² W.O.E. Oesterley and G.H. Box, A Short Survey of the Literature of Rabbinical and Medieval Judaism, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 223.
- ³ Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1898), Vol.III, p. 363.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Alexander Shapiro, "Provence," Encyclopedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), Vol.13, p.1263.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ M.H. Segal, Parshanut Hamikra, (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1943), p. 84.
- ⁸ Oesterley and Box, A Short Survey, p. 224.
- ⁹ Louis Finkelstein, The Commentary of David Kimhi on Isaiah, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), p.xvii.
- ¹⁰ Segal, Parshanut Hamikra, p. 84.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 89.
- ¹² Shapiro, "Provence," p. 1263.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1260.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1259.

- 17 Yitzhak Baer, A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961), Vol.I, p.97.
- 18 Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature, (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1930), Vol.I, p. 180.
- 19 Talmage, "Kimhi, Joseph," p. 1006.
- 20 Waxman, History, p.180.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Talmage, "Kimhi, Joseph," p. 1007.
- 24 Segal, Parshanut Hamikra, p. 84.
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- 26 Oesterley and Box, A Short Survey, p. 224.
- 27 Waxman, History, p. 180.
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- 29 Finkelstein, Commentary, p. xviii.
- 30 Cohen, Commentary, p.xii.
- 31 Finkelstein, Commentary, p. xviii.
- 32 Oesterley and Box, A Short Survey, p. 226.
- 33 Ibid., p. 225.
- 34 Ibid.

- 35 Ibid., p. 226.
- 36 Waxman, History, p.181.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Frank Talmage, "A Study of David Kimhi," (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1965), p.18.
- 41 Waxman, History, p. 181.
- 42 Segal, Parshanut Hamikra, p.87.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Talmage, "Study," p. 26.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Abraham Geiger, Kevutzat Ma'amarim, (Warsaw: Lewin-Epstein, 1910) p. 240.
- 48 Ibid., p. 241.
- 49 Ibid., p. 240.
- 50 Talmage, "Study," p. 27.
- 51 Ibid., p. 116.
- 52 Baker and Nicholson, Commentary, p. xiv.
- 53 Segal, Parshanut Hamikra, p. 89.

- 54 Talmage, "Study," pp.84-87.
- 55 Ibid., p.87.
- 56 Finkelstein, Commentary, p.xxix.
- 57 Baker and Nicholson, Commentary, p.xiv.
- 58 Geiger, Kevutzat Ma'amarim, pp. 231-232.
- 59 Baker and Nicholson, Commentary, p. xiv.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Talmage, "Study," pp. 126-133.
- 62 Ibid., pp.5-12.
- 63 Ibid., p. 266.
- 64 Ibid., pp.264-265.
- 65 Ibid., pp.285-286.
- 66 Ibid., p. 59.
- 67 Ibid., p. 60.
- 68 Ibid., p. 111.

Chapter II

Rational Elements

Rationalism, as a school in Jewish thought, begins in the Middle Ages as a response to both Christian and Islamic culture and philosophy.¹ Jewish thinkers, who championed the Bible as the ultimate authority for religious truth, found themselves hard pressed to justify revelation in philosophic terms. Jewish philosophy drew heavily upon Islamic Kalam and came into contact with Neoplatonism through Arabic translation.² Aristotelianism was mediated to them through such Arabic philosophers as al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes.³ One of the early challenges by the Islamic philosophers forced Jewish thinkers to re-examine the entire problem of anthropomorphism.⁴ The Parsees questioned biblical passages which they found contrary to reason.⁵ The atmosphere was completely conducive to open discussion.⁶ In Bagdad, thinkers of various religions agreed to conduct their discussions solely on the basis of reason rather than revealed authority. Such conditions also fostered a rationalistic reformation within Islamic philosophy and gave birth to the Mu'tazilites, who now challenged the Kalam.⁷ The Mu'tazilites placed Islam on a philosophic foundation by seeking to prove the existence and unity of God and by providing rational proof for the necessity of revelation. Medieval Jewish philosophers were greatly influenced by the Mu'tazilite school.

Isaac Israeli, of the ninth century, and Saadia, of the tenth century are the earliest Jewish rationalists. They undertook to prove that God's law cannot be changed, since it rests on the unalterable nature of the divine will.⁸

Hiwi of Balkh (second half of the ninth century) wrote a work highly critical of the Bible. He sought to rationalize the miracles of the crossing of the Red Sea and the manna. He attacked biblical anthropomorphism and questioned God's omnipotence, omniscience, and ethics.⁹ Karaism, in its attack upon Rabbinic halakhah, provided a fresh impulse for reexamination of the Bible in a rationalistic spirit.

The medieval Jewish thinkers were greatly interested in creation.¹⁰ The biblical doctrine of creatio ex nihilo was rationalized as creation from a primary, pre-existent matter which sometimes was also identified with the primary elements of either water or air.

Saadia, who fundamentally followed the Kalam school but with Mu'tazilite revision, formulated for future Jewish thinkers the relationship between reason and revelation.¹¹ Reason is the common denominator of all religions, and the content of revelation is identical with it. Saadia felt this to be true not only with regard to the metaphysical truths imparted by revelation, but also with relation to its moral content. He considered revelation to be beneficial for

those lacking in intellectual power; it also serves as a check by which philosophy can test its conclusions. Instead of viewing philosophy as antagonistic to religion, Saadia believes that philosophy discerns truths which are already known through revelation. The rational person therefore is the religious person. Rationalism had to oppose the literal interpretation of Scripture when it seemed to be offensive to reason. Saadia extends this principle also to the theological realm and holds that the belief in the existence of God is also subject to rational proofs.

In a similar vein, Joseph ben Abraham al-Basir (early eleventh century) accepted the miracles of the prophets only when he could first determine through reason that the being who sent them intended our good and was not a deceptive spirit. Even more radically than Saadia, al-Basir sought to prove the superiority of reason over revelation.¹²

Neoplatonism was first introduced into Jewish circles by Isaac ben Solomon Israeli (ca. 850-950).¹³ However, as with the teachings of Aristotle, Neoplatonism was accommodated to biblical thought. Thus the biblical idea of creation was combined with the Neoplatonic concept of emanation, which held that things emanate by degrees from higher substances of which the highest is the intellect, created by God Himself.¹⁴ According to this view the soul is part of the process of emanation and is considered to be a substance which is

independent of the body. The individual human soul ultimately joins the upper soul and rises to a level of pure spirit, if man conducts himself morally. ¹⁵

Ibn Ezra (ca. 1092-1167) is considered the last of the Jewish Neoplatonists. ¹⁶ Ibn Ezra's theology is heavily tinged with pantheism; God is the primeval force that permeates the entire world and from whom all other powers flow. Ibn Ezra understands all intelligible substances to be composed of both matter and form. His tendency toward pantheism also led him to interpret the immortality of the soul as a return of the soul to its natural source. ¹⁷

By the middle of the twelfth century Aristotelianism had replaced Neoplatonism as the dominant influence on Jewish thought. This change can already be noticed in the writings of Ibn Ezra, but the first real work which represents Jewish Aristotelianism is Abraham Ibn Daud's Emunah Ramah. ¹⁸ The Neoplatonic concept of emanation that extends also to matter was abandoned and God was viewed as the ultimate source of form which may shape matter, but otherwise the two were quite distinct. God is highest thought. In line with this new thinking the soul was no longer viewed as having emanated from the universal soul, but was rather viewed as the form of the body. Individual immortality was attributed to the thinking part of the soul. Ibn Daud held that the

human intellect is merely potential insofar as it has the capacity to know. When we acquire knowledge, our potential intellect becomes an "active intellect" and by further knowledge, an "acquired intellect." The transition from potentiality to actuality presupposes a moving principle which brings us to the idea of an "active intellect." ¹⁹

Maimonides (1135-1240) is the most forceful synthesizer of Aristotelianism and biblical revelation. ²⁰ For Maimonides, religious faith is really a form of knowledge, but this knowledge is limited. We cannot understand the essence of God, nor can we understand the world beyond the senses. Thus man's reason is limited to the comprehension of the earthly sphere in which he lives. ²¹ Wherever a religious event lends itself to natural interpretation, Maimonides adopts it. This attitude manifests itself in his view on miracles. Having negated the Aristotelian system of necessity, Maimonides allowed for the possibility of miracles, but sought to explain them as far as possible naturalistically by claiming that miracles had been implanted in nature at the time of creation. ²² Those miracles in the Bible which do not lend themselves to naturalistic explanation and which are especially offensive to reason are interpreted by him allegorically or as figments of the prophet's imagination. ²³

Since for Maimonides philosophic knowledge was really

supreme, he considered the various laws of the Torah as a means for teaching philosophic truths. He therefore sought to give rational explanations for the various commandments. Some commandments, such as the Sabbath, lend themselves readily to rational explication, while others, such as the dietary laws, are explained by him historically as a means of fighting paganism. ²⁴

Kimhi, as will be seen below, adopts in the main the Maimonidean position on the questions discussed above. However, he is not always consistent: elements of both Neoplatonism as well as Aristotelianism can be found in his commentaries.

ב:כא ויפל יהוה אלהים תרדמה על האדם
וישן... והפיל יהוה תרדמה עליו כדי שלא
ירגיש כאב בקחתו אחת מצלעותיו ואף על פי
שיוכל האל לעשות את זה שלא ירגיש האדם
בכאב בקחת הצלע דע שלא יעשה האל מופת
במקום שאין צריך מופת והפלת התרדמה אינה
מופת (חירוש כי פעמים רבים ירדם האדם
בשנתו)

2:21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept:...God caused sleep to fall upon him in order that he might not feel any pain when He took out one of his ribs. Even though God was able to do this without man's feeling pain when He removed the rib, know that God does not perform a miracle in a place where there is no need of a miracle. The causing of sleep to fall is not a miracle nor a novelty because man falls asleep many times.

Kimhi is careful to indicate that the term חרומה , usually translated as "deep sleep," must not be understood in any supernatural sense. He agrees both with the Targum, which renders it שנתא , "sleep," and with Ibn Ezra, who considers it to be the deepest form of sleep,²⁵ but nevertheless still natural. The general tenor of this comment suggests that Kimhi is willing to concede only grudgingly that miracles do occur. Yet we know from many of his other comments that he does not deny outright the possibility of miracles. However, it is not always clear what exactly Kimhi means by miracle. In general he seems to understand miracles as phenomena that are part of the natural order of the universe and which do not tend to contradict the laws of nature. Kimhi's attempt here at rationalizing the deep sleep that came upon Adam as a natural phenomenon deals with the problem of miracles in a very narrow and technical sense. For it is clearly not only the nature of חרומה that determines the miraculous element here, but rather that God occasioned it at a particular time, and that God, being totally non-physical was nevertheless able to remove Adam's rib. These more philosophical objections were not beyond Kimhi's area of concern and the fact that he chooses to ignore them here indicates his selective approach to problems.

2:א והנחש היו ערום מכל חית השדה אשר עשה
 יהוה אלהים: יש לשאול על ענין אמירת הנחש
 לאשה איך היה ואם היה דרך מופת... ויש אומרים

כי הנחש לא דבר אלא בצפצוף רמז לאשה והאשה
 הכירה ברמיזות הנחש וידעה כי זה רצה לומר
 וזה רחוק שתבין האשה הדברים האלה ברמיזות
 ועור אם האשה הבינה רמיזות הנחש איך הכין
 מענה האשה? ... והקרוב בכל מה שכתבנו הוא
 שהיה דבור הנחש על דרך מופת לנסות בו
 האשה... שיש בזה נסתר גדול והוא העיקר
 למביני המדע...

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made: One must ask concerning the matter of the snake's speaking to the woman, how did it happen and whether or not it was a miracle... There are those who say that the snake did not speak, but rather by hissing he hinted to the woman and the woman understood the hint of the snake and knew that this is what he meant to say. This is far fetched that the woman would understand these things in hints, and further, if the woman understood the hints of the snake, how did he understand the answer of the woman?.... The most likely of all that we have written is that the speech of the snake was by means of a miracle in order to test the woman.... There is a great mystery here which is hidden and that is the object of study for those who understand science...

Kimhi's sense of the natural is obviously outraged by the idea of animal speech. While he could have explained the serpent's speech as hissing, he opts not to choose this technicality. He was too much the honest rationalist to interpret something as natural which is inherently contrary to the laws of nature. There is a reasonable dividing line beyond which Kimhi does not step. This also helps to explain his rejection of Ibn Ezra's explanation that the serpent did indeed have human speech and originally walked erect.

If that were so, argues Kimhi, why then was not the serpent separated from all the other animals, but is still classed with them?

When all rational explanations fail, Kimhi often falls back on a miracle. The speech of the serpent cannot be explained in terms of the נגלה but must be sought in the נסתר. Such esoteric meanings constitute a basis for Kimhi's system of rational explanations. While his interpretation is tantamount to a concession that animal speech is inexplicable, he yet seeks to salvage something of reason from this entire episode by suggesting that the miracle served only as a means to achieve the higher rational end of testing the woman.

גִּיכָא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּתְנוּת
עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם: אֵין לְשִׁאוֹל אֵיךְ עָשָׂה הָאֵל הַכְתְּנוּת
הָאֵלָה כִּי אֵין זֶה פֶּלֶא גְדוֹל מְכַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר
בָּרָא....וְאֵין צָרִיךְ לְכָל זֶה כִּי הָאֵל צוּה וְנִבְרָא
כְּמוֹ הַלּוּחֹת.

3:21 And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them: There is no need to ask how God made these garments, for this is no greater miracle than any of His other acts of creation....And all this [various midrashic explanations] is unnecessary for God commanded and it was created, just as were the tablets.

Kimhi's inconsistency can be discerned by comparing this with his commentary on 2:21. In the earlier passage he does not question how God is able to remove Adam's rib, yet here he feels compelled to explain the word וַיַּעַשׂ with reference to

אלהים. His explanation of וַיֵּצֵא is similar to his rendering of בָּרָא , i.e., creation by command. While Kimhi calls it a miracle, he does not give us any further details, preferring this vagueness to some of the midrashic renderings which he considers far-fetched. Having dealt with the problem of בָּרָא as equivalent to עָשָׂה in the matter of creation, and having explained the terms to his satisfaction as being consistent with reason, Kimhi now applies his interpretation of עָשָׂה to God's making of the garments and sees this in rational terms. While Kimhi does use the term "miracle" here, it should be remembered that for him miracles are built into the process of creation from its very beginning.

ד:ט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל קַיִן בֹּא אֵלַי
הַדְּבָר לַהוֹדִיעַו כִּי לֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לְהַסְתֵּר
מִמֶּנּוּ וְכָל עֲנִינֵי בְנֵי אָדָם גְּלוּיִים לִפְנֵי

4:9 And God said to Cain: The revelation came to announce to him that man is not able to hide from Him, and that all the affairs of man are known to Him.

Kimhi, like Rashi,²⁶ understood אֵי הֵנָּה אַחֶיךָ as not a real question. For if the question were to be taken literally it would imply that God is not omniscient, and Kimhi insisted, following Maimonides, upon the Divine omniscience.

ד:טו וַיִּשֶׂם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת: שֵׁם לוֹ אוֹת
בְּלִבּוֹ כְּלוּמַר חֵזֶק לִבּוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יִפְתָּר שִׁכְחָה אוֹתוֹ
כָּל מִצְוָהוּ . . .

4:15 And He placed a sign upon Cain: He placed a sign upon his heart, that is to say, He imbued Cain with courage so that

he would not be afraid that everyone who meets him would strike him...

It is not obvious that Kimhi rationalizes more in one instance than in another. To place a sign upon Cain is not different, after all, from making clothes for Adam and Eve. Yet Kimhi chooses to understand the sign figuratively, "He gave Cain courage." One could speculate that Kimhi was unwilling to assume that a miracle was done for a murderer.

ה:א ביום ברא אלהים אדם בדמות אלהים
עשה אותו: פירש ביום שבראו, בדמות מלאך
בראו בנשמה העליונה שנתן בו...

5:1 In the day that God created man in the image of God did He make him: The explanation is that on the day that He created him He created him in the image of an angel, with a higher soul which He gave him...

The Jewish Aristotelians like Abraham Ibn Daud and Maimonides, whom Kimhi followed, adopted in the main Aristotle's view that a succession of ten intelligences emanated from God. These intelligences are identified with the angels in the Bible. The Active Intellect which was connected in particular with the human faculty of reason emanated from one of these intelligences. Kimhi may therefore be implying here more than the obvious avoidance of an anthropomorphism, when, falling back on the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, he substitutes an angel for God. The "higher soul" may mean for him, in this case, that man was created as a rational being. (Cf. 3:22)

הַיּוֹם וַיִּקְרָא אֹת שְׁמֵם אָדָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא:
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא קָרָא אֹתָם כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר נִעֲשָׂה אָדָם
 בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּי לִכְךָ בָּרָאָם שִׁיְהִיו אָדָם וְלֹא בְהִמָּה
 וְעוֹף וְהָאִשָּׁה נִקְרְאָתָא אָדָם כִּי עַל שְׁנֵיהֶם אָמַר
 נִעֲשָׂה אָדָם כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר וַיִּרְדּוּ וְכֵשֶׁם הַבְּרִיָּלִם
 מִשָּׂאֵר הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר בָּאָדָמָה כִּי נִשְׁמַח הָאָדָם הִיא
 עֲלִיוֹנָה אֲלֵא שֶׁבִּן חֵלֶק מֵאָדָמָה יֵעָן כִּי הַבּוֹף
 נִבְרָא מֵאָדָמָה לְפִיכֶךָ אִם יִמְשֹׁךְ הָאָדָם אַחֵר סָבַע
 הָאָדָמָה הָרִי הוּא כְּאִילוֹ כּוֹלּוֹ מֵאָדָמָה וְכְאִילוֹ
 אֵין בּוֹ חֵלֶק עֲלִיוֹנִי .

5:2 And He called their name Adam on the day that He created them: On the day that He created them He called them Adam as it is written, "Let us make man in our image," because for this did He create them; that they be man and not beast or fowl, and the woman was called man because it is written, "They will rule." And by name He divided them from the rest of the living things which are on the earth. For the soul of man is one of the highest level, except that part of it is from the earth, because the body is created from the earth. Therefore if man inclines toward earthiness, then he is as if he were entirely from the earth and as if there were nothing of the higher level in him.

Kimhi follows Maimonides and the Aristotelians in his view of the soul. Man's soul is not material, nor is it a mere quality of the body; it is rather a substantial entity. Kimhi appears to be rejecting the pure Platonic view that the soul is totally psychical. Man's soul is comprised of the earthly and heavenly elements, and human activities are therefore psycho-physical and not purely psychical. Yet Kimhi partially adopts Plato's view that the body serves as an instrument for the soul.

The "higher soul" of which Kimhi speaks is therefore given to man in potentia along with the lower instincts. Man's functioning as a higher being is not guaranteed, but is something that he actively chooses to do and he is aided in his choice by his faculty of reason.

גז: ותפקחנה עיני שניהם: עיני לבנם
וזהו שאמרו, וידעו' ולא אמר, ויראו'...

3:7 And the eyes of both of them were opened:
The eyes of their hearts and this is what
was meant when it was written, "and they
knew," and not "and they saw."

Kimhi follows Rashi here.²⁷ True knowledge is based not on sense perceptions, through sight, but on an appreciation of the Active Intellect which is connected with the universal intelligences and which man internalizes in his "heart" through the faculty of reason. The elevation of sense experience to higher levels of conceptual thought is accomplished through the Active Intellect.

ה:כד ואינונו כי לקח אותו האלהים: אמר
ואינונו כי לא חלה ולא כאב בעת מיתתו ולא
עלה ברעת בני דורו שימות בהצי ימיו אלא
יארין בהם כמו האחרים הדומים לו ולא
הרגישו בו עד שמת זהו ואינונו ואמר לקח
אותו אלהים כלומר לקח נפשו והעלה אותן אל
העליונים...

5:24 And he was not, for God took him: it
is written, "And he was not," because he was
not sick and felt no pain at the time of
his death. It did not occur to those of
his generation that he would die halfway
through his life, rather that he would
lengthen [his life] like the others who
resembled him, and they did not sense it

until he died. This is the meaning of "he was not," that is to say, that He took his soul and raised it up to the heavens.

Like Rashi ²⁸ and Ibn Ezra, ²⁹ Kimhi understood ואינו רationally, i.e., that Enoch simply died. What needs to be clarified here is what Kimhi meant by לקח נפשו והעלה אותו

אל העליונים, for we do not possess a clear statement on his view of the immortality of the soul. The Aristotelians held that as a result of the Active Intellect's operating within man, a new intellect, the Acquired Intellect, is developed within him. It is this Acquired Intellect alone that constitutes the immortal part of man; it is nurtured by intellectual activity. Averroes held that the individuality of the Acquired Intellect lasts only so long as the body lives. When man dies his Acquired Intellect is absorbed by the universal Active Intellect that exists for the entire human species. According to this view there is, of course, no personal immortality. This, in essence, is also the Maimonidean position. Gersonides accepted the idea of the Active Intellect but continued to hold on to the belief in its individuation and thus he remained a proponent of personal immortality. Kimhi's use of עליונים suggests that he veers toward Maimonides on this question.

ו:ב ויראו בני האלהים: בני השופטים
והגדולים ומנהיגי המדינות כי הם נקראים
אלהים ...

6:2 And the sons of God saw: The sons of judges, prominent men and leaders of the countries, for they were called "Elohim"...

Along with other Jewish commentators such as the Targumist, Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Kimhi avoids taking אלהים literally. While Kimhi operates with the Neoplatonic concept of emanations, he clearly limits himself to the realm of the non-corporeal. This vestige from pre-Israelitic mythology was obviously offensive to him as it was to the other commentators.

ו:ר הנפילים: הנפילים הם הענקים ויקראו
נפילים והטעם שיפול הרואה אותם מרוב חמיון
ובהלה כאשר הם גבוהים מאד ממנו שאר בני אדם.

6:4 The Nephilim: The Nephilim were descendants of Anak; they were called Nephilim because he who sees them falls down out of great surprise and fright since they are much greater in stature than the rest of mankind.

The Nephilim, as hinted in Ibn Ezra,³⁰ were probably the fallen sons of God. Kimhi prefers the more rational explanation of Ibn Ezra and understands them to have been of gigantic stature, inviting awe.

ו:ט את אלהים החהלך נח: רבוק היה בו
וכל דרכיו לשמו וזה היה כח גדול משכלו
שהחבר על טבעו כי הוא היה בדור של רשעים
וחמסים ולא למד ממעשיהם והוא לבדו החבור
בעבורה האל.

6:9 Noah walked with God: Noah was attached to Him and all his ways were for His name. This was due to the great strength of his intellect, that he was able to overcome his nature, because he lived in a generation of evil and violent people and did not learn from their actions; he was utterly alone in the worship of God.

כִּי מַחֲסוֹ לִי : כִּי לֹאֵל הִיָּה גִלּוּי הַחֲסָא
 אִם עֲבַר מִצְוֹתָיו וְהוּא שָׁצוּה לִבְנֵי נֹחַ עַל אִשָּׁה!
 אִישׁ כִּמּוֹ שִׁכְחֵנוּ וְאִפִּילוֹ לֹא צִוָּה עֲלֵיהָ בַּפֶּרֶס
 הַשֶּׁכֶל מוֹרָה עֲלֵיהָ וּמִי שֶׁנֶּחֱנָן שֶׁכֶל בָּאָדָם כֹּאֵלּוֹ
 צִוָּהוּ עַל כָּל דָּבָר רָע וְהַחֲמַס שִׁיעֲשֶׂה הָאָדָם
 לַחֲבֵרוֹ הוּא כְּנֹגֵד הַשֶּׁכֶל וְהוּא מַפְסִיד סִידוֹר
 הָעוֹלָם וַיִּשׁוּבוּ.

20:6 From sinning against me: Because the sin was known to God if he transgressed His commandments, and it was He who had commanded the sons of Noah concerning adultery as we have written, and even if He did not command it specifically, the intellect teaches this prohibition. By implanting reason in man, God, as it were, commanded him against doing every evil thing. The violence which a man does to his neighbor is contrary to reason; it destroys the order of the world and its tranquility.

The figurative interpretation of **אֵת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְחַלֵּךְ בָּהֶם** goes beyond asserting Noah's loyalty and faithfulness to God. It suggests in addition that for man to be able to draw close to God, he must be able to develop his higher intellect. By implication we can deduce from this comment that God's knowledge is equivalent to the supreme, universal, intellect and that man, through the refinement of his own intellectual powers is able to communicate with God and approach Him on a common "wave length." Here Kimhi differs somewhat with Maimonides, who holds that God's knowledge is totally different from that of man. Kimhi is much closer to the position of Gersonides.

Kimhi agrees with Maimonides in equating the power of intellect with moral discernment. This concept was

propounded by the early Jewish philosophers; it is emphasized by Saadia, who believed that most moral and ethical precepts could be deduced from reason and wisdom.

Wisdom lays down that bloodshed must be prevented among human beings, for if it were allowed people would annihilate each other. That would mean, apart from the pain suffered, a frustration of the purpose which the Wise [God] intended to achieve through them. Homicide cuts them off from the attainment of any purpose He created and employs them for.... Wisdom further imposes the prohibition of theft; for if it were permitted some people would rely on their ability to steal some other peoples' property, and would not do any productive work nor amass wealth. 31

Kimhi then suggests that this interconnection between man's intellect and his moral sense provides each person with a kind of built-in moral compass which makes it possible for him to choose good over evil, independently of what the rest of society does. In this there is the very strong insinuation that the responsibility for man's moral behavior derives not only from the written laws, but ultimately from the divinely given intellect. For even the laws cannot escape man's rational scrutiny. Thus the murder of Abel occurs before the promulgation of an explicit prohibition against killing. Kimhi's position would be that Cain was nevertheless culpable because this is something that he should have recognized as evil on the strength of his own intellect.

מִיֵּד וְהָיָה בְּעֵינֵי עַמּוֹ: אֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה עַל יָדִי
סִבּוֹת אֲמוּצִיּוֹת שְׂצוּיָתִי.

9:14 And when I bring a cloud: I will bring a cloud by intermediary agents whom I have commanded.

בִּיד אֱלֹהֵי תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ: אֱלֹהֵי שׁוֹכֵר
בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית כִּי הֵם תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ
אֲךָ עַל פִּי שֶׁהָאֵל עָשָׂה הַכֹּל כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר וַיִּכְרַא
וַיַּעַשׂ הוּא עָשָׂה אֲבָל עַל יְדֵי אֲמוּצִים וְהֵם
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ.

2:4 These are the generation of heaven and earth: Those which are mentioned in the saga of creation, for they are the productions of the heaven and the earth. Even though God made everything, as it is written, "And He created and He made," He operated through intermediaries; namely, the heavens and the earth.

The סִבּוֹת אֲמוּצִים constitute part of the system of intermediaries intended to remove God from direct involvement with physical phenomena. While such intermediaries may be angels, it is also possible that they are simply causes which respond to God's command. Kimhi related this to God's omnipotence. As the Ruler of the Universe everything is under His control, both animate and inanimate, and everything is responsive to His command. In 2:4 we see that these אֲמוּצִים include the heavens and the earth.

יֵאָדָּה וּרְאִשׁוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם: רִ"ל שִׁיְהִיָּה הַמְּגוֹל גְּבוּהָ
כְּמוֹ עֲרִים גְּדוּלוֹת וּבְצוּרֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם כְּלוּמַר בְּגוּבַת
הָאוֹר.
וְנַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ שֵׁם: כְּלוּמַר אִם יִהְיֶה לָנוּ מְקוֹם
גְּבוּהָ בְּזֹאת הָעִיר יִהְיֶה שֵׁם לְכָל אֶחָד מֵמֵנוּ
שֶׁאִם יֵצֵא חוּץ מִגְּבוּל הָעִיר יִזְכּוֹר אֶת הָעִיר
וַיֵּשׁוּב עָלֶיהָ.

11:4 And its head in the heavens: That is to say, that the tower will be high, as in "Great cities and fortresses up to the heavens." that is to say, high in the air.

And let us make a name: That is to say, that if there will be a high place in this city, there will be a name for every one of us, for if someone goes out beyond the border of the city he will remember the city and return to it.

Kimhi's rationalization of "heaven" is in conformance with his overall insistence upon the distance between man and God. Man is earthbound and God is transcendent. Communication between the two is never to be physical, but only through the means of the Active Intellect. Even while subscribing to a modified form of the system of emanation, which through gradations allows for contact with God, Kimhi is nevertheless offended by any suggestion of direct approach, which he considers as an infringement on the concept of God's non-physical character.

The text is not explicit as to the nature of the sin committed by the people who built the tower of Babel. The traditional commentaries have generally understood it to be a challenge to God in some way. Kimhi's rational interpretation is novel and understands the height of the tower in a positive rather than negative sense.

יבניו על דבר שרי : ולא יאמרו כי דרך
מקרה היה.... ודרך הפשט שפרעה פשפש ברעחו
למה היו אלה הנזעים וחשב שמא אשת איש היא
ושאל את שרי שתאמר לו האמת

12:17 Because of Sarah: And they will not say that this happened by chance.... According to the peshat Pharoah searched in his mind why these plagues were occurring and he thought perhaps she is married He asked Sarai to tell him the truth....

Kimhi tends to avoid those mediocre interpretations which either burden the imagination or are based on the supernatural. The Tanhuma comments: "For the angel who executes plagues says, 'This is because of Sarai.'" Kimhi prefers the more natural explanation that Pharoah himself could deduce the cause of his difficulties.

Kimhi is not offended here by the use of plagues as the means of divine interpretation, because they are not unusual phenomena. The miracle is not the plagues themselves, but rather their timing. Kimhi would probably put this in the category of מופת. His ambivalence with regard to miracles manifests itself in supernatural occurrences and those events which contradict the established order of the universe. (Cf. also 18:23 where Kimhi renders ויש as an approach to a place in order to avoid the suggestion that Abraham and God were facing one another as might two people holding a conversation.)

טו:יג בארץ לא להם... אבל רז"ל פירשו
כי מאתאים ועשר שנים היו במצרים כמנין
רד"ו שאמר יעקב לבניו רדו שמה וכן היה...

15:13 In a land not their own:...But the sages explained that they were in Egypt for 210 years, as may be deduced from the numerical value of רדו [go down] which Jacob said to his sons, "Go down there," and so it was.... [ReDaK computes the number of years by compiling the dates from the birth of Jacob to the time of the Exodus.]

Kimhi's computation of the events in the Patriarchal narratives which leads him to the conclusion that the Israelites spent only 240 years in Egypt as opposed to the biblical figure of 430, is indicative of a new scientific and analytical method in exegesis. While the results of this new approach hardly seem revolutionary in our time, it must nevertheless be seen as a forerunner of a more critical form of interpretation.

כִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: אַחֲרֵי שֶׁתַּפְסוּהוּ בְּאֶשֶׁר
עָשָׂה כִּי לֹא כְדִין עָשָׂה שְׂאֵל שִׂיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מִפְּנֵי
מָה עָשָׂה זֶה מָה רָאָה כִּי אִי אֲפֹשֶׁר לֵאדָם כְּמוֹהוּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבַר בְּלֹא טַעַם.

20:10 Abimelech said: After they had apprehended him [Abraham] in that which he had done, for what he did was not just, he [Abimelech] asked that he [Abraham] tell him why he had done this, and what he expected, for it is impossible for a man such as Abraham to do something without a reason.

Kimhi does not attempt to exculpate Abraham, as does the Midrash. Instead, Kimhi's reliance upon reason as the source of right behavior will not allow even Abraham to escape from guilt. Abraham's reputation can be saved here only at the price of asserting the principle that the end sometimes does justify the means.

אִכְכָּ אַחַת הַמִּים בַּיָּמִים: וְהִאֲמִירָה אֵינָהּ לָהֶם
מִמֶּשׁ כִּי אֵינָם בְּנֵי דַעַת שִׁיבּוֹא אֲלֵיהֶם מֵאֲמֹר
אֱלֹהִים אֵלָּא רִצּוֹן הָאֵל הִיא בָהֶם כְּאִילוֹ אֲמֹר לָהֶם

1:22 The waters and the seas: The recitation [of the command to the fish and other animals to be fruitful and multiply]

was not really for them, because they were not rational beings that the word of the Lord should come to them, rather, the will of God was in them as if He had spoken to them.

Kimhi veers away from the supernatural and prefers instead a figurative or poetic interpretation whenever the incident is grossly offensive to reason, e.g., that animals have an understanding of speech. However, it is compatible with reason that the will of the Creator should be comprehended by all His creatures, so that they will conform to His desires for them. Since all of nature is really an expression of the Divine Will, Kimhi's point is simply that the animals acted in accord with natural law which was established by God.

לב:לא פנים אל פנים: לאחר הפירושים
שפירשנו שלבש גשמיות היה לו דבר זה חידוש
אחר שהבין שהוא מלאך וראהו בהקיץ ממש פנים
אל פנים מה שלא ראה כן פעמים אחרות כי
ראיתי אלהים פנים אל פנים חמה איך נצלה
נפשו ממנו אחרי שראהו ממש ומראה המלאך
נורה מאד....
ותנצל נפשי: מה שלא אמר כן במראות אחרות
ולפי שפרשנו שהכל היה במראה הנבואה אמר
פנים אל פנים למה שהיתה הנבואה הזאת
מבוארת לו עד שעשה בה מעשה עם המלאך
במראה ונאבק עמו כאשר יעשה איש עם רעהו

32:31 Face to face: According to one of the explanations which we have given that he took on corporeal form, this was a new thing. After he [Jacob] understood that he [the man] was an angel, he saw in reality, face to face what he had not seen at other times. For I have seen the Lord face to face. You should wonder how his life was spared after he saw Him in reality, for the appearance of the angel is quite awesome....

And my life is spared: This he did not say after other visions, and according to what we have explained, that everything took place in the prophetic vision. He said "face to face" because this prophecy was so clear to him that he acted with the angel in the vision and wrestled with him as would one man with another....

Surprisingly, Kimhi does not attempt to offer a non-literal explanation here. What is puzzling is that Kimhi should feel that it is a new thing for an angel to take on corporeal form. For, in fact, this is how most of the angels appear in the Bible. We should note especially the case of Abraham and the three angels. In the beginning the text speaks of them as שלשה אנשים and it is only later as the events unravel that Abraham discovers that they were in reality angels. (Cf. also Judges 13 ff. where the מלאך יהוה is seen by Manoah's wife as an איש אלהים . For the inconsistency within Kimhi's commentary cf. 32:35.³² However, the suggestion that man may in fact see God "face to face" is offensive to Kimhi. Even though the entire episode occurred in a prophetic vision, he still feels impelled to explain "face to face" figuratively as "clear."

יא:ל ותהי שרה עקרה: ספר כי שרה הייתה
עקרה ולא ילדה רק על ידי נס שעשה האל עם
אברהם נס בחור נס כי הייתה עקרה וילדה ועוד
שהייתה בת חשעים כשילדה....

11:30 And Sarah was barren: It is told that Sarah was barren and was bale to give birth only be means of a miracle which God performed for Abraham, a miracle within a miracle - for she was barren yet gave birth, and furthermore that she was ninety years old and gave birth....

Kimhi's approach to miracles is to rationalize those miracles that lend themselves to naturalistic explanations. It is not always clear where he draws the line of incredulity.

Generally, he accepts the textual version of a miracle when he feels that it goes so far beyond the line of reason that he could not possibly explain it in any rational way. This ambivalence on his part leaves us with the clear impression that while he accepts miracles, he nevertheless seeks to minimize them whenever possible. It would therefore appear from this comment that barrenness and old age were considered by Kimhi sufficiently outside the natural order for him to put them in the category of "miracle."

כבא ויהי אחר הדברים האלה: י...יש
מאמינים ויש שאינם מאמינים ומיום שבטלה
עבודת הצלמים והאלילים מאמינים רוב העולם
בתורה משה רבינו ובספריה אלא שחולקים
עלינו על המצוות שאומרים כי דרך משל נאמרו

22:1 After these things: [Concerning the Torah]...There are those who believe and those who do not believe, and from the day that idolatry was abandoned most of the world believes in the Torah of M_osheh Rabbenu and in its stories, but they differ with us on the commandments, which some hold to be symbolic....

Kimhi accepts the Maimonidean view that those who have given up idolatry are the spiritual heirs of Judaism. The fact that so many people in the world have accepted the essential teachings of the Torah bears out the faith that Abraham showed.

כח:יג והנה יהוה נצב עליו:.... והנה יהוה
 נצב עליו על הסולם או על יעקב ויהיה הסעם
 להשכילו וסעם עולים תחלה ואחר כך יורדים
 לפי החלמדות האדם שהוא ממטה למעלה וההנהגה
 היא מלמעלה למטה סוף דבר ההנהגה הזאת
 שהיתה להשכיל את יעקב הנהגת העולם האין
 היא ושהיא על ידי אמצעים ולפי שהיה בורח
 הראה לו זה וכי המנהיג הגדול ימשול בכל
 ומשנה ההנהגה כאשר ירצה לשעתו....

28:13 And behold the Lord stood beside him:
 And behold the Lord stood beside him on the
 ladder, or by Jacob, and the reason was to
 enlighten him. The reason that they first
 go up and then go down is according to the
 learning process of man which is from the
 lower to the higher, and Providence which
 is from above to below. The final end of
 this Providence is to enlighten Jacob as
 to the Providence of the world, how it
 operates and that it is carried out by
 intermediaries and because fleeing, God
 illustrated this to him, and that as
 great Leader, He rules over all and changes
 Providence as he will please according to
 the moment in time....

Kimhi reacts here to a symbolic interpretation. The angels
 as intermediaries can take on many forms. They may serve as
 intellects, personal agents, or learning concepts and facts.
 This is a good example of Kimhi's use of the נסתר to advance
 a rational explanation.

The avoidance of anthropomorphisms in the Bible is
 to be found already in the Targum and is traceable to the
 earliest commentators. Maimonides has provided us with the
 classical formulation against attributing human character-
 istics to God. The following passages indicate that Kimhi
 remains scrupulously loyal to the Maimonidean position and
 the school of the rationalists in this regard.

ג'ח וישמאו את קול יהוה אלהים מתהלך בגן:
 ...בעוד שהיה אדם מתהלך בגן שמע את קול
 אלהים ומאחר שאמר וישמאו היה לומר מתהלכים
 והנכון כי טעם מתהלך על קול יהוה כי מצאנו
 בו לשון הליכה קולה כנחש ילך....

3:8 And they heard the voice of God walking in the garden:...while man was still walking in the garden, he heard the voice of God and since it is written, "and they heard," it should have been written "walking." However, it is correct for the reason that "walking" refers to the voice of God. For we have found that kol is used with a verb of motion: "The sound thereof shall go like the serpent's."

ו'ו וינחם יהוה כי עשה את האדם: מה
 שאמר וינחם דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם כי
 על דרך האמת לא אדם הוא להתנחם כי אין
 שנוי חפץ בו יתעלה ויתברך.
 ויחעצב אל לבו: זה גם כן דרך משל כי אין
 לפניו בדרך האמת לא שמחה ולא עצבון ולא
 ישתנה ממדה למדה.

6:6 And God repented that He made man:
 How is it written "and He repented?"
 The Torah speaks in the language of men,
 because in truth He is not a man to
 repent, because there is no change in
 the will of God.

And he was sad at heart: This also is figurative, for in truth He does not experience either happiness or sadness. He does not change from one mood to another.

ח'א ויזכר אלהים את נח: אין שכחה ואין
 זכרון לפניו יתברך כי לשון זכרון הוא אחר
 השכחה אלא דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם להבין
 השומעים....

8:1 And God remembered Noah: God has no forgetfulness nor memory, memory naturally follows forgetfulness, but rather the Torah speaks in the language of man in order to enable the listeners to understand....

ת:כא וירח יהוה את ריח הניחה: דברה תורה
כלשון אדם ודרך משל הוא

8:21 And God smelled a pleasant smell:
The Torah speaks in the language of man
and this is figurative....

ס:טו וזכרתי את בריתי: דברה תורה כלשון
בני אדם כי אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודו .

9:15 And I will remember My covenant:
The Torah speaks in the language of man
because God does not forget.

לא:ג ויאמר יהוה: כי המלאך נקרא בשם
אדוניו ואמר דברי שליחותו כלשון אדוניו
כאילו הוא מדבר .

31:3 And the Lord said: For the angel
is called by the name of His master
and he related the words of his mission
in the language of his master, as if He
were speaking.

לא:יג אשר נדרתי לי: כבר כתבתי כי
המלאך ידבר כלשון אדוניו כאילו הוא מדבר כי
יעקב לא נדר למלאך אלא לאל .

31:13 Where you vowed to me: I have
already written that the angel will
speak in the language of his master
as if He were speaking, because Jacob
did not vow to the angel, but rather
to God.

Kimhi also focuses on the question of the rational
and non-rational commandments:

כ:ה מצותי חקותי וחורותי: כלל לכל מצות
השכל המפוסמות ושאינם מפורסמות גם יש בשבע
מצות שבצטוו בני נח שאין סעמם נגלה אלא לחכמים
והם הרבעת בהמה והרכבת האילן ואבר מן החי
לפיכך אמר חקותי ואמר מצותי כלל לכל המצות
השכליות בין בלב בין ביד ובין בפה מצות עשה
ולא מעשה .

26:5 My commandments, my laws, my ordinances: This includes all the commandments, those which are obvious to the mind and those which are not obvious. There are certain commandments among the seven commandments of the sons of Noah, the reasons for which were revealed only to the wise: these are the prohibitions against the interbreeding of animals, grafting of trees, and [the tearing of a] limb from a living thing. Therefore He said, "My ordinances," He said, "My commandments," which include all rational commandments whether they are of the heart, the hand, or the mouth, positive or negative commandments.

Kimhi, in the rationalist tradition of Saadia and Maimonides, divides the commandments into the rational mitzvot and the non-rational hukot. However, in this comment he further subdivides the mitzvot into מפורסמות and אינן מפורסמות. He does not however give us a clue as to what he means by that or what are the criteria by which we could determine which are which. Since Kimhi does not deal with the subject elsewhere, we can only assume that he is following Maimonides. Maimonides maintains that reason could only tell us which of the commandments are true or false, but not right or wrong.³³ The moral element in the laws Maimonides terms מפורסמות.³⁴

כ:ו ידעתי כי בתם לבבך: ולא אמר בנקיון
כפך כי דבר זה מסור ללב ולא ידע כי אם האל.
מתנו לי: כי לאל היה גלוי החטא אם עבר
מצותיו והוא שצוה לבני נח על אשת איש כמו
שכתבנו ואפילו לא צוה עליה בפרט השכל מורה
עליה ומי שנתן שכל באדם כאלו צוהו על כל
דבר רע והחמס שיעשה האדם לחברו הוא כנגד
השכל והוא מפסיד סידור העולם וישובו.

20:6 I know that in the uprightness of your heart: And He did not say "in the cleanness of your hands," for this thing is related to the heart, and only God [would] know.

From sinning against me: Because the sin was known to God if he transgressed His commandments, and it was He who had commanded the sons of Noah concerning adultery as we have written, and even if He did not command it specifically, the intellect teaches this prohibition. By implanting reason in man, God, as it were, commanded him against doing every evil thing. The violence which a man does to his neighbor is contrary to reason; it destroys the order of the world and its tranquility.

It is difficult precisely to determine Kimhi's position on the laws. His ideas are not presented in a well laid out philosophical system, but rather in sporadic comments. These do not always appear to be fully consistent, so that we can only come away with a general impression that Kimhi did make a distinction between the rational and non-rational laws. Thus in this comment he seems to be in greater sympathy with Saadia, rather than Maimonides, in maintaining that reason unaided by revelation can arrive at moral law. Reason becomes the ultimate determinant for man's conduct and obligates man as fully as specifically revealed commandments. Like Saadia and Maimonides, Kimhi believes that all the biblical laws can be understood rationally, even if the reasons underlying them are not always obvious to us. Apparent irrationality stems from our imperfect knowledge.

יִזְיָא וְהִיּה לְאוֹת בְּרִית וּלְפִיכֶךְ צוּהוּ
הָאֵל בְּאוֹתוֹ אֵכֶר לְפִי שְׂרֹב הָעֲבֻרוֹת יַעֲשֶׂה עַל
יָדוֹ לְפִי שֶׁהוּא רֹאשׁ הַתְּאוֹת הַבְּהֵמִיּוֹת וְלֹא
יְהִי כְּבִהְמָה לִבְעוֹל כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא אֵלָּא בְּמִוְחָר
לוֹ וּלְהִשְׁאִיר זֶרַע וּלְרִפּוּאָה .

17:11 And it was for a sign of the covenant: And therefore God commanded him to set the sign on this very organ because most transgressions will be committed by means of it, because it is the focus of the animal desires. When a man is about to sin, he will see the sign on his flesh and he will refrain from committing the sin and not be like an animal which copulates at random, but rather he will restrict himself to that which is permitted to him in order to propagate and for the sake of health.

Circumcision (as with laws which designate certain days to be holier than others) is not readily explicable in terms of reason. Kimhi simply speculates on why this particular rite was selected as the sign of the covenant. The male genital organ symbolized man's ability to function on the level of the beast. The covenant, of course, represents man's contractual agreement with God to abstain from such behavior.

לִּזְכָּר אֲשֶׁר מִצָּא אֵת הַיָּמִים: פֶּרֶשׁוֹ אוֹתוֹ
פֶּרֶדִים וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאֵמֶר בְּרַעְיוֹתוֹ אֵת הַחֲמוֹרִים מִצָּא
בְּדַעְתּוֹ שִׁירְכִיב הַחֲמוֹר עַל הַסּוּסִיָּה לִרְאוֹת מֶה
יֵצֵא מֵהֶם וַיֵּצֵא פֶּרֶד אוֹ הַרְכִּיב הַסּוּס עִם הַחֲמוֹרָה
כִּי מִשְׁנֵי הַמִּינִים יֵצֵא פֶּרֶד אוֹ פֶּרֶדָה וְאָמְרוּ רַז"ל
כֹּל אֲזַנּוֹ קִטְנוֹת אִמּוֹ סוּסִיָּה וְאָבִיו חֲמוֹר וְכֹל
שֶׁאֲזַנּוֹ גְּדוּלוֹת אִמּוֹ חֲמוֹרָה וְאָבִיו סוּס וְזֶה עֲשֶׂה
כְּנֹגֵד רְצוֹן הָאֵל כִּי הָאֵל יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּרֵא הַנְּבִרָאִים
וְהַצְמָחִים כֹּל אֶחָד לְמִינּוֹ לְפִיכֶךְ אֲסִר הַכְּלָאִים .

56:24 Who found the hot springs: They explain it as mules. And so it is written - while he was shepherding the asses it occurred to him to mate the

ass with a mare to see what the offspring would be. The result was a mule. Or, he mated a horse with a female ass, because from those two species issues a male or female mule. The Rabbis said; "Every mule whose ears are small, his dam was a horse and his sire an ass; every mule whose ears are large, his dam was an ass and his sire was a horse." And he did this against the will of God, for God created the creatures and the plants each according to its own specie. Therefore He forbade interbreeding.

Interbreeding generally falls into the category of an ordinance for which the Torah gives no explanation. Kimhi suggests here that to improve on God's work is somehow an affront to Him. He seems to be echoing the commonly expressed attitude that that which is natural is divine and therefore good.

א:כא לכם יהיה לאכלה: זה הנזכר כאן בפסוק
ולא התיר להם הבשר לאכול עד אחר המבול ולא
ידעתי למה ואולי לפי שהיה גלוי וידוע לפניו
המבול עתיד להיות ונתן עתיד להציל עמו שאר
החיים ואמר לחתם לו חלף עבודתו בהם שאין
הקב"ה מקפה שכר כל בריה כל שכן האדם.

1:29 It [seed bearing vegetation] will be for you for food: That which is mentioned here in this verse. And He did not allow them to eat meat until after the flood, I do not know why. Perhaps because God knew that the deluge would come and that Noah would save the other living creatures, and God decided to give them to Noah as compensation for his labor, since God does not deprive any creature of its rightful due, and certainly not man.

ס:ד אך בשר: אף על פי שנחתי לכם כל בשר
רמש לאכל לא תאכלו אותו עם נפשו שהוא דמו
כלומר כל זמן שהבשר עם הנפש והוא עוד חי
אלא קודם תזבחנהו ואחר כך תאכלוהו שכן זו
דרך אכזריות לחתוך בשר מן החי ולאכלו ונראה
כי לפיכך התיר הבשר לנח לפי שמרת בבהמה

ובחיה וברמש ובעוף להחיות אותם בחיבה כי
 לצורך האדם נבראו בין למלאכתו ובין לאכילתו
 אלא שלא הותר להמיתם ולאכלם עד נה לפי
 שטרה בהם.

9:4 But meat: Even though I allow you to eat all flesh that moves, you shall not eat it with its soul which is its blood, that is to say, all the time that the flesh is still alive and has a soul. But first you sacrifice it and then you may eat it. For it is very cruel to cut flesh from a living animal and eat it. It appears therefore that He permitted meat to Noah, because he toiled with the beasts and animals and crawling things and fowl to keep them alive on the ark, because they were created for the needs of man, whether to work for him or for his food, except that he was not permitted to kill them and eat them until Noah, because he toiled for them.

Initially Kimhi admits to ignorance as to why the eating of animal flesh becomes permissible for man. However, this does not stop him from speculating on some of the reasons. While this could easily be explained in line with his earlier expressed attitudes that the entire world was created for man's sake, Kimhi brings in the additional factor of toil to indicate that man must do something active to merit this privilege.

Notes for Chapter II

¹ Julius Guttman, Philosophies of Judaism, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p.47.

² Ibid., p. 48.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p.50.

⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

⁶ Ibid., p.53.

⁷ Ibid., p.55.

⁸ Ibid., p.56.

⁹ Ibid., p.57.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.59.

¹¹ Ibid., p.62.

¹² Ibid., p.78.

¹³ Ibid., p.84.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.86.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.87.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.118.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.119.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.134.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.149.

Notes for Chapter II

²⁰ Ibid., p.152.

²¹ Ibid., p.155.

²² Ibid., p.170.

²³ Ibid., p.176.

²⁴ Ibid., p.181.

²⁵ Ibn Ezra, Genesis 2:21 תרדמה: יותר משינה ושינה יותר מננומה
deep sleep: more than sleep and sleep is more than a nap.

²⁶ Rashi, Genesis 4:9 אי הבל אחיך: להכניס עמו בדברי נחת
Where is Abel your brother?: in order to enter [the conversation with Cain] with him with words of calm....

²⁷ Rashi, Genesis 3:7 ותפקחנה וגו': לענין החכמה דבר הכתוב ולא
.... לענין ראייה ממש - their eyes were opened: the verse speaks here concerning the matter of wisdom, and not concerning the matter of really seeing....

²⁸ Rashi, Genesis 5:24 כי לקח אותו: לפני זמנו. - For He took him: [he died] before his time....

²⁹ Ibn Ezra, Genesis 5:24 כי לקח אותו אלהים: מה. - For God took him: he died....

³⁰ Ibn Ezra, Genesis 6:4 ופירוש נפילים שיפול לב הרואה אותם
- שיחמה מגובה קומתם - And the explanation of Nephilim is that one who saw them, his heart would fall that he would be surprised at the height of their stature.

³¹ Alexander Altmann, ed., Three Jewish Philosophers, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960), p.98.

Notes for Chapter II

32 ReDaK, Genesis 32:25

ויאבק איש עמו: איש מלאך וכן והנה איש
עומד לנגדו והאיש גבריאל ונקראו אישים
המלאכים ושמדברים עם בני אדם ונראים להם
בצורת איש כמוהם במראה או בהקיץ ושלח האל
זה המלאך ליעקב לחזק לבו שלא ירא מעשו....

And a man struggled with him: man,
angel. Thus: "And behold a man stands
opposite him," "And the man Gabriel."
The angels were called men. And when
they speak with men they appear to them
in the form of man, like themselves, in
a vision or in a waking state. And God
sent this angel to Jacob in order to
give him courage so that he would not
fear Esau....

33 Isadore Twersky, ed., A Maimonides Reader, (Philadelphia:
Jewish Publication Society, 1972), pp.365-366.

34

: ירושלים, הקדמות לפירוש המשנה, ערך, מדוכי דב רבינוביץ
ע קזב, (תשכ"א, מוסד הרב קוק

Chapter III

Prophecy

Kimhi deals with the concept of prophecy in great detail, as do many of the medieval Jewish philosophers. Important issues are not only the essence of prophecy and the various stages of prophecy, but also the personal attributes necessary in order to become a prophet. The medieval discussions are based to a large extent on the Aristotelian view of prophecy. This view includes the necessity of God's action and the indirect transmission of prophecy by means of the Active Intellect. Moreover, the prophet must maintain the highest level of moral and intellectual virtue, with the intellectual virtues reigning supreme. Finally, it is indicated that there is no precise formula for those who aspire to prophecy, implying an element of grace in the process of divine selection.¹

Saadia, who may be termed the first real Jewish philosopher who sought to reconcile Greek philosophy with Judaism, did not fully subscribe to the premise that one could become a prophet by training and by possession of reasoned qualities. The initiative, for Saadia, rested with God and not with man. The prophets were not angels, but ordinary men who were given special powers for a limited time by God, to prove that He had sent them and to command the people's attention.

If however, the prophets are men like ourselves and we find that they are doing things which we are actually powerless to do and which are entirely the work of the Creator, it becomes evident to us that they are sent by His word. Knowing as I do that His wisdom is above everything, I nevertheless venture to declare that the reason why he left them in every respect in the same condition as the rest of mankind, and yet at the same time made them different by enabling them to do things which all other men are powerless to do, was to verify His sign and to establish His prophecy. I declare that for this reason also, He did not cause them to perform miracles continually or to know the hidden thing continually lest the people should think that they are possessed of a peculiar quality to which this power is due, but He made them do this at certain periods and to have such knowledge at certain appointed times. In this way it became clear that this originated from the Creator and not from them. 2

While reason plays a major role in Saadia's thought he is nevertheless unwilling to claim that it is self-sufficient. Prophecy is not to be displaced by reason but it to serve, on the contrary, as a check on it.

[Some say] that men do not need prophets, and that their reason is sufficient to guide them aright according to their innate cognition of good and evil.... Mankind is fundamentally in need of the prophets, not solely on account of the revelational laws, because their practice cannot be complete unless the prophets show us how to perform them....[e.g., prayer, rules of marriage, property, etc.] So the prophets presented us with an equitable decision on every single point relating to these matters.... If we had had to rely on our own judgment in these

matters, we should have opposed each other and never agreed on anything. 3

The supernatural origin of prophecy, according to Saadia, does not exclude reason altogether. His view is a compromise in line with his rationalist position, namely, that just as prophecy is needed to verify our reason, so reason is to serve as a check on prophecy. Saadia maintains that prophetic signs and miracles produced in support of doctrines which are contrary to reason cannot be accepted as evidence for their truth. For "no miracle can prove the rationally impossible." 4 He further asserts:

So it is with everyone who claims to be a prophet. If he tells us "My Lord commands you to fast today," we ask him for a sign of his prophecy and if we see it, we believe it and shall fast. But if he says "My Lord commands you to commit adultery and to steal,"... we shall not ask him for a sign because he brings us a message which neither reason nor tradition can sanction. 5

Halevi's view of prophecy accords with that of Saadia's to the extent that both trace its origin to God. Halevi rejects the Aristotelian view that prophecy represents the highest developed stage of man's natural powers. Prophecy for him is not dependent upon the perfection of man's intellect, but has to do with a special "inner sense" 6 where an individual experiences the presence of God. Prophecy is existential in nature; it has to do with devotion and with pious acts. It is therefore essentially the religious person

raised to a higher degree who qualifies to be a prophet. While for the Aristotelians prophecy is mediated through the Active Intellect, for Halevi it comes through sensual manifestations. For Halevi prophecy is hereditary; only a born Jew can be a true prophet. Just as a certain spot may be especially suitable for certain plantings, so is Palestine the most suitable place to receive prophecy. Whatever prophecies were received outside of Palestine were given with reference to Palestine. It stands to reason that according to this view Israel must serve as an intermediary in order for other nations to approach God.

In contrast to Halevi, Maimonides is much closer to the Greek position. To him prophecy is mediated through the Active Intellect. He believes that the development of one's rational powers, his imagination, and morals to the fullest degree is a necessary prerequisite to prophecy. While this makes one eligible to be a prophet, it is no guarantee that one must therefore automatically become a prophet. The final choice rests with God who can withhold prophecy from anyone even though he be qualified. This ultimate dependence on God brings Maimonides close to the traditional views of both Saadia and Halevi, but unlike them he assigns to God a negative role. Maimonides classifies prophets into eleven degrees and recognizes various levels of prophecy. True dreams and visions are likely to come when the senses are at rest and

when the intellect is at its sharpest. For Maimonides the difference between dream and vision is in degree and not kind. Whether it is stated explicitly or not, prophecy in the Bible always comes through an angel and in a dream or vision. However, when there is no angel and only a voice is heard, this is not to be considered true prophecy. In line with his rational outlook Maimonides believes that the primary function of the prophet is to teach the people to follow the law of Moses; in this capacity he is to use both his intellect and imagination to employ language and parables that would appeal to the masses.

For an understanding of Kimhi's views on prophecy we shall now examine the following passages from his commentary on Genesis:

ט:ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל נָח וְאֵל בָּנָיו: אֲפֹשֶׁר שָׁגַם בְּנִי
חִיו נְבִיאִים אוֹ אִם לֹנֵה שִׂימֵר לְבָנָיו

9:8 And He said to Noah and his sons: It is possible that his sons also were prophets, or He said to Noah that he should tell his sons....

כ:ג וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל אַבִּימֶלֶךְ בַּחֲלוֹם הַלַּיְלָה:
וְכֵן נֹאמַר בִּלְבָן כִּי לְכַבֹּד הַצְדִּיקִים יָבֹא
לְאִנְשֵׁי מֵהָאוֹמוֹת בַּחֲלוֹם שֶׁל נְבוֹאָה

20:3 And God came to Abimelech in a dream at night: And so it is said of Laban - for in honor of the righteous will He come to gentiles in a dream of prophecy....

לא:כד וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים: כְּמוֹ שֶׁבָּא אֶל אַבִּימֶלֶךְ
לְכַבֹּד יִצְחָק כֵּן בָּא לְלָבָן לְכַבֹּד יַעֲקֹב.

31:24 And God came: Just as He came to Abimelech for Isaac's sake, so He came to Laban for Jacob's sake.

Kimhi attempts to deal here with the problem of whether it is possible for a non-Israelite to be a true prophet. As was noted earlier, Halevi strongly maintains that true prophecy is hereditary with the Israelites and, in fact, can be received only on the soil of Palestine. Halevi even goes so far as to exclude the convert from becoming a prophet.⁷ Maimonides, while not quite as outspoken on the subject as Halevi, does seem to agree. The most that he would grant the gentiles is a kind of inferior level of prophecy.⁸

Kimhi here agrees with Ibn Ezra that Noah was indeed a prophet. It could be that Kimhi feels it justifiable to consider Noah a prophet because he antedates the Hebrew people. There is also the other possibility that Noah's righteousness plays a significant role for Kimhi. For while he must accept the explicit biblical statement that God spoke to both Noah and his sons, Kimhi yet observes that the sons might have received their message from Noah and not directly from God. Kimhi may well have been troubled by the fact that no righteous deeds were ascribed to the sons and that consequently they were lacking in merit. This would tend to suggest to him that moral perfection is requisite for prophecy. In this Kimhi would seem closer to Halevi's position than to that of Maimonides, who gives a higher priority to intellectual attainment, though he does not exclude moral perfection.

While Kimhi generally accepts the views of Halevi and Maimonides that prophecy is limited to the Hebrew people, he seems to go somewhat beyond them in suggesting that gentiles may be eligible to receive prophecy when this is for the benefit of Israel. Thus Abimelech and Laban received prophecies not because of their own merit, but rather because of Isaac and Jacob. Since neither Abimelech or Laban could be considered "righteous," we would have to conclude that, when a non-Israelite is utilized as an instrument for prophecy, no special pre-requisites are required. Thus Kimhi here differs with Maimonides and Halevi in terms of "intellectual" and "existential" qualifications that they posit as pre-requisites to prophecy. In this particular instance, Kimhi is much closer to the position of Saadia, who, with regard to prophecy, places the initiative primarily with God.

It is also possible, though Kimhi is not explicit, that he considers the dreams experienced by gentiles to be inferior in quality to those through which true prophecy is received. Thus he writes:

לז:ס ויחלם: החלום הזה מבואר הפתרון
 כי השמש והירח הם אביו ואמו ואחד עשר
 כוכבים הם אחיו שהיו אחד עשר והחלומות
 שנכבים שבאו דרך משל והירה כמו חלומות
 יוסף וחלום המשקה והאופה וחלום פרעה וחלום
 נבוכדנצר וחלום גדעון בן יואש שהתאמתו
 לפי הפתרון כי היה בהם חלק גדול מהנבואה
 והיו מאת האל לצורך עבדיו.

37:9 And he dreamed: This dream. The interpretation is clear that the sun

and moon are his father and mother, and the eleven stars are his brothers. The dreams which were mentioned, that came in the form of a symbol or riddle, such as the dreams of Joseph, the dreams of the cup-bearer and the baker, the dream of Pharoah, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the dream of Gideon ben Yoash, came true according to the interpretation because they were mostly prophecies and they were from God for the needs of his servants.

מאז והנה עמד על היאור: והחלום
 היה מאת אל כדמות נבואה כמו שאמר הכתוב
 ויקרא רעב על הארץ וכי נחקיים החלום כאשר
 פתר יוסף והחלום מבואר הפתרון היה לכל
 מבין אלא שאבדה חכמת חכמיו כדי שיפתרוהו
 ויעלה לגדולה על ידי הפתרון

41:1 And behold he stood by the Nile:
And the dream [of Pharoah] was from God in a form resembling prophecy, as it is written, "And a great famine will occur in the land." The dream came true as Joseph had interpreted. The dream was clear and the solution was patent to all who understood, but the wisdom of the sages [of Egypt] was nullified in order that he [Joseph] could solve it. As a result of his interpretation he rose to greatness....

Kimhi does not clearly delineate for us the gradations in the quality of dreams. It may be deduced from these comments that he considers some dreams to be of a higher level than others. Pharoah's dream in 41:1 is described by him as כדמות נבואה, implying that it was not quite equal to prophecy itself. Kimhi's explication that "the dream was clear and the solution patent to all who understood" suggests that no special prophetic gifts or insights were required to interpret

it and that it was more like a normal dream. By contrast Kimhi points out that the dreams in 37:9 "came in the form of a symbol or riddle" and were true dreams which came from God. There is a strong hint expressed here that the dream that is more esoteric and symbolic is of superior prophetic quality. Yet Kimhi is neither clear nor consistent on this point for he allows that Pharoah, his cup-bearer and baker, as well as Nebuchadnezzar are eligible to receive full prophetic dreams. The only clue that we are given that Pharoah's dream (41:1) was somewhat inferior is that it was patently clear to all who possessed understanding. Kimhi thus seems to suggest that the nature of prophetic knowledge is hidden and different from rational knowledge. This view differs somewhat from his predecessors. He leaves us at a loss as to how to distinguish dreams as *כדמות נבואה* and *נבואה*. Although Saadia does insist that prophecy must be consonant with reason, he nowhere suggests that its veracity is to be tested by its complexity. Maimonides implies that the message of the prophecy is clear and is intended to be used to admonish the masses to follow the teachings of the Torah. It is the prophet himself, who, by use of his imagination, is expected to use parables and symbols to convey his prophecy to the people.

כזכור ויברכהו: אחר שאמר ראה ריח בני
 כריח שדה ברכהו אלא הקדימו להודיעם כי שמח
 לבו מחור המאכל והמשתה וריח הטוב ומחור כר
 שרתה עליו רוח הקודש וברכו

27:27 And he [Isaac] blessed him [Jacob]:
After he said, "Behold the smell of my son
is as the smell of the field," and he
blessed him, but prior to that he announced
that the food and the meal had made him
happy, and so the Holy Spirit was upon him
and he blessed him.

מה:כז ורחמי רוחו: שהיתה כמו מטה כמו שאמר
ויפג לבו ורוחו"ל אמרו כי זה רוח נבואה שפירשה
ממנו מיום שיצא יוסף בי אין רוח הנבואה
שורה אלא מחוץ שמה וכוון ששמע בבשורה בנו
חזרה אליו רוח נבואה....

45:27 And his [Jacob's] spirit revived:
For he had been as a dead man, as it was
said, "And his heart became weak." The
Sages said that this was the spirit of
prophecy which left him on the day that
Joseph left, for the spirit of prophecy
does not prevail without happiness.
When he [Jacob] heard the news about his
son, the spirit of prophecy returned to
him.

The assertion that ~~השכל~~ the intellect - is a requisite
part of prophecy indicates that Kimhi in this respect followed
Maimonides rather than Halevi. By claiming that prophecy is
possible only in time of happiness and when the prophet is
free of material preoccupations, Kimhi is suggesting that
prophecy is subject to historical circumstances. He further-
more insinuates that human conditioning has a role to play
in bringing down the spirit of prophecy. Man may help
induce the prophetic spirit by placing himself in a preparatory
state; where, through the removal of sadness and material
concerns, he makes himself receptive. Thus Kimhi tends to
assign a good part of the initiative to man, though he does

not necessarily deny that the ultimate source is God. God's role would then be mostly negative in withholding prophecy even when man's preparations had fulfilled the basic pre-requisites. Somewhat surprising, in the light of the textual evidence, is Kimhi's contention that the spirit of prophecy is withheld when happiness is lacking. The prophetic spirit often manifests itself precisely when one is in danger and in dire straits, and generally comes with a suddenness.

לב:לא וחנצל נפשי: מה שלא אמר כן במראות
 אחרות ולפי שפרשנו שהכל היה במראה הנבואה
 אמר פנים אל פנים למה שהיתה הנבואה הזאת
 מבוארת לו עד שעשה בה מעשה עם המלאך
 במראה ונאבק עמו כאשר יעשה איש עם רעהו
 לפיכך אמר פנים אל פנים כמו שאמר בנבואה
 משה ודברי יהוה אל משה פנים אל פנים: ואמר
 פנים בפנים דבר יהוה עמכם לפי שהיתה המראה
 גדולה ומבוארת בקולות וברקים ואמר גם כן
 וחנצל נפשי ואף על פי שהיה במראה הנבואה
 הנה נסאר בו דבר כאילו היה ממש.

32:31 And my life is spared: This he did not say after other visions, and according to what we have explained, that everything took place in the prophetic vision. He said "face to face" because this prophecy was so clear to him that he acted with the angel in the vision and wrestled with him as would one man with another. Therefore he said "face to face." As was said in the prophecy of Moses, "face to face." Scripture says "Face to face God spoke with you," because the vision was so great and clear with thunder and lightning. He also said: "And my life is spared," because this was a great miracle that I wrestled with an angel and my life was saved. Even though this was in a prophetic vision, behold, the thing remains with me as if it really happened.

לבוכו ויגע בכף ורכו: וכל המעשה הזה
אפשר שהיה במראה הנבואה בחלום אף על פי
שמצא עצמו צולע בהקיץ היה לו זה מאת האל
להיות בו זה לאות לפי שהיה פוסח במחשבתו
אחר כמה הבטחות אשר עשה עמו האל מדה כנגד
מדה להיות פוסח בגופו כי אף על פי שהיה
בוטח באל ככל לבו אלא שחשב שמא יגרום חטא
אף על פי כן אחר כמה הבטחות לא היה לו
להרהר ולחוש לעשו ולקראו כמה פעמים אחי
ולשלוח לו מנחה גדולה ולהשתחות לו כמה
פעמים ובזה חטא ושלם לו האל כזה העולם
ולקה בגופו עונש מחשבתו ואם חרצה תאמר
כי המעשה הזה היה בהקיץ ממש ולא היה לו
אלא דמיון לבר שנדמה לו ולא היה כמו שנאמר
במלאך יהושע ובמלאך גדעון ונוכל לומר כן
במלאכי אברהם ולוט כי כל זה היה יכול להיות
בדמיון אבל זה היה בגייע ואי אפשר בלא גוף
לפיכך נאמר שלבש גשמיות לשעתו על דרך המופת
וזהו שנגע בכף ירך יעקב והיה צולע כי זה
היה נגיעה ממש.

32:26 He touched the hollow of his thigh:
It is possible that this entire incident
occurred in a prophetic vision in a dream,
even though he found himself limping when
he awoke. This was a sign to him from
God because he was vacillating in his mind
after God had made several promises to him.
Measure for measure he was physically lame,
for even though he trusted in God with all
his heart, he thought perhaps he might
commit a sin. After several promises he
should not have thought or worried about
Esau, nor called him "my brother" several
times, nor sent him a great tribute, nor
bowed to him several times. This was his
sin and God punished him in this world by
afflicting his body in punishment for his
thoughts. And, if you like, you can say
that this incident took place while he was
fully awake and nothing happened to him,
rather it was his imagination alone and it
did not take place, as it was said concerning
the angel of Joshua and the angel of Gideon
and we can also say the same concerning the
angels of Abraham and Lot, and it was possible
that all this was his imagination. However,
this was with a physical touch, which is

impossible without physical contact. Therefore let us say that the Divine Spirit took on corporeal form for the moment by means of a miracle, and it was this which touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh. He was limping because this was a real touch.

According to Maimonides the vision ranks higher than the dream and takes place while the prophet is in a waking state. Kimhi essentially shares this view. It is possible for the vision to be so clear as to be almost indistinguishable from reality.

Kimhi offers several explanations for Jacob's limp. The first is in line with his general rationalistic approach and holds that Jacob's meeting with the angel was not real, but rather in a prophetic vision. He suggests that the sense of reality can be heightened to such a degree that one may indeed be left with a physical impediment. Such psychosomatic phenomena are certainly not unknown. In the second explanation Kimhi seeks to separate Jacob's limping entirely from any contact with the angel. Instead he pursued the more traditional path and attributed the limp simply to God's punishment for Jacob's lack of faith. Finally, in his third explanation, in order to account for the physical effect upon Jacob, Kimhi resorts to the miraculous in asserting that the Divine Spirit assumes physical form. In this last attempt, Kimhi appears to be inconsistent with his own general positions that seek to rationalize the miraculous and veer away from anthropomorphisms.

כזו לפני יהוה: הוסיפה לו לפני יהוה
מה שלא אמר הוא כדי לתכנים בלבו של יעקב
דבר גדול הוא ברכה אביו כי לפני יהוה
תהיה כלומר בנבואה שתשרה עליו בעת הברכה
יברכהו.

27:7 Before the Lord: She [Rebecca]
added this in order to convince Jacob
that his father's blessing was an im-
portant thing - for you will be before
the Lord, that is to say, before the
spirit of prophecy which will be upon
him at the time of the blessing.

מסיב ולבן שנים מחלב: וכל הענין הזה
אמר יעקב אביו ברוח נבואה שבאתהו כשקרא
לבניו ואמר לכל אחד כפי שהראתהו הנבואה.

49:12 And his teeth white with milk:
And this entire matter Jacob related
by means of the spirit of prophecy
which came upon him when he called his
sons and spoke to each one as the
prophecy had instructed him.

מחסו המלאך הגואל: לפי שמעשה האל הוא
על ידי אמצעים והמלאכים הם שלוחים מהאל
אל עבדיו לשומרם ולהסיב מעשיהם

48:15 The angel who redeems: Because
divine action is carried out by inter-
mediaries, and the angels are sent by
God to protect His servants and prosper
them in their deeds.

In Maimonides' classification of prophecy into eleven levels,
the **רוח הקודש** - the Holy Spirit - is on the second level and
therefore rated low as true prophecy. While Kimhi does not
offer us a step by step classification of the levels of
prophecy, it is quite clear that in the main he accepts
Maimonides' view. Kimhi tends to equate the **רוח הקודש**
(Holy Spirit) with the **רוח הנבואה** (spirit of prophecy).

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It is clear from his language in these comments that he considers the **רוח הנבואה** as an instrument of prophecy. As indicated in Kimhi's comments on 48:15, God's work on earth is carried out by intermediaries. Along with the angels, He also employs the Holy Spirit and the Prophetic Spirit to carry out his purposes. Halevi defines the **רוח הקודש** as a "subtle spiritual substance" ⁹ from which God's will constructs spiritual forms which appear to the prophets during their prophetic experience. This "subtle spiritual substance" acts on the analogy of sunlight upon the clouds which produces the colors of the rainbow. ¹⁰

Kimhi does not dwell on the nature of the **רוח הקודש** as does Halevi, but leaves it vague. However, its inferior status as a form of prophecy can be deduced from the fact that Kimhi shares with Maimonides the view that prophecy manifests itself through the Active Intellect. While Maimonides insists on moral perfection as a prerequisite to prophecy, he makes intellectual perfection the more important qualification. According to this view one reaches the highest state of prophecy as his senses recede into the background and his intellect rises to the fore. In the textual references cited here it is obvious that both Rebecca and Jacob are in full possession of their senses and for this reason were probably not experiencing the highest level of prophecy.

ס:כ ויחל נח איש האדמה: ... כי מתחלה היה
הדבור עמו כמו שאמר ואל בניו כמו שפרשנו...
וראה האל כי זרע עתיד להיות רע ונתן בפני
נח לקללו כי נביא היה ונתקיימו קללתו.

9:20 And Noah, man of the soil, began:
... For from the beginning the word
[God's word] was with him as he spoke .
and was with his sons as we have explained
....When God saw that the future of the
seed of Canaan was to be evil, He assigned
Noah to curse him, for he [Noah] was a
prophet and his curse would be enduring.

מ:ה הלא לאלהים פתרנים: כמו שהחלומות
שלו והוא יחלים בני אדם ומראה לו העתידות
כן שלו הפתרונים שישכיל בני אדם להבין
דברי החלומות ופתרונם שאם לא ימצא פותר
חלומות יהיו החלומות לבטלה

40:8 Are not the interpretations God's:
Just as the dreams are His and He causes
man to dream and shows him the future,
so the interpretations are His, in order
that He may enlighten man that he may
understand the matters of dreams and
their interpretations. For if he does
not find an interpreter of dreams, they
will be in vain.

מט:א את אשר יקרא: ואמר להם ברוך
הנבואה קצת מאשר יקרא אותם יש בחלוקתם
ויש בהצלחתם במלחמה עם אויביהם.

49:1 That which will happen: And he told
them with the spirit of prophecy a little
of what will happen to them, concerning
their division and their successes in war
with their enemies.

The role of the prophet is perceived here by Kimhi in various
ways. The prophet could simply be a means for conveying clear
information from God about the future. This could happen
either by the prophet's actually seeing an image or hearing

words directly. This, according to the Maimonidean classifications, approached the highest forms of prophecy. It is also possible, however, that what the prophet received is not direct information, but merely the key to unlock the secrets of dreams which harbor the content of true prophecy. (Cf. 40:8) It is thus evident that Kimhi must have considered wisdom to be an important prerequisite for the prophet. Wisdom, according to Kimhi, distinguishes the Hebrew prophet from the pagan "wise man," magician, or professional dream interpreter. The latter operate within a realm of wisdom that is outside the sphere of the divine; their powers of magic and interpretation are part of their own skill by which they hope to manipulate and control their deities. In the case of the Hebrew prophet, however, while he employs similar media, e.g., dreams, it is made abundantly clear that both the dream and its interpretation stem not from the prophet but from God. This is in harmony with both Halevi and Maimonides who contend that God acts with free will and not out of necessity. In other word, God is not subject to manipulation, but quite the opposite, He will Himself utilize certain intermediary means by which to guide the destinies of men.

In addition to the above, the prophet could be utilized as a means for effecting God's punishment. (Cf. 9:20) Again we note that the curse in itself does not possess any magical

powers, but is realized only if verbalized by the prophet. There is the strong suggestion that the prophet is endowed with special mystical powers that derive from God.

יְהוָה כַּחַם הַיּוֹם: רִאִל כִּי נִרְדָּם הָיָה לַחֲמִימוֹת
הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְרָאָה הַמֵּרָאָה הַזֹּאת כִּשְׁהוּא נִרְדָּם וְקוֹדֵם
שֶׁדָּבַר עִמּוֹ בְּדִבְרֵי סִדּוֹם הָרָאָהּ בְּנִבְוָאָה שְׁלֹשָׁה
מַלְאָכִים הַגְּדוֹל שֶׁבָּהֶם בִּישׁוּר שֶׁחִלַּד שָׂרָה וְאָף עַל
פִּי שֶׁכָּבַר אָמַר לוֹ הָאֵל כִּשְׁצוּהוּ עַל הַמִּילָה שֶׁב־
לְבַשְׁרוֹ עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ לַחֲזֹק הַדָּבָר בְּלִבּוֹ וְעוֹד
כִּדִּי שֶׁהָאָה שָׂרָה שׁוֹמֵעַת מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶאךָן וְאָף עַל פִּי
שֶׁהִדְבֵּר הַזֶּה כּוֹלּוֹ הָיָה בְּמִרְאָה פַעֲמִים יִשְׁמַע קוֹל
הַדְּבָר מִי שֶׁהוּא עִם הַנְּבִיא כִּמוֹ שֶׁרָאִינוּ בְּמִרְאֹת
דְּנִיָּאל שֶׁאָמַר וְהַאֲנִשִּׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עִמִּי לֹא רָאוּ
אֶת הַמֵּרָאָה אֲבָל חֲרָדָה גְּדוֹלָה נִפְלָא עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּבְרָחוּ
בְּהֻנְכָּה נִרְאָה מִזֶּה כִּי קוֹל הַמֶּלֶאךָן שָׁמְעוּ וּלְפִיכֵךְ
חֲרָדוּ לְאוֹתוֹ הַקּוֹל וְהַנְּבִוָּאָה הַזֹּאת הִיחָה פֶתַח
הָאֵהָל וְשָׂרָה שָׁמְעָה כִּשְׁהִיחָה בָּאֵהָל .

18:1 In the heat of the day: He [Abraham] was napping due to the great warmth of the sun and he saw this vision while he was sleeping. Before He [God] spoke with him concerning the matter of Sodom, He showed him three angels in a prophecy. The most prominent of them brought the news that Sarah would give birth. Even though God had already told him when he commanded him concerning the circumcision, He again told him by means of an emissary in order to strengthen the matter in his heart, and furthermore, that Sarah might hear it from the mouth of the angel. Even though the entire episode occurred in a vision, there are times when someone who is with the prophet will hear the spoken voice. As we have seen in the vision of Daniel, as it is written: "And the people who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them and they fled into hiding." It is apparent from this that they heard the voice of the angel and therefore trembled at that same voice. This prophecy occurred at the entrance of the tent and Sarah heard it while she was in the tent.

יחבב וישתחו ארצה: כי נדמה לו אנשים
 גדולים ואמרו רז"ל כי אברהם שהיה כחו יפה
 בנבואה נדמו לו כאנשים פירוש שהיה כל כך
 כחו יפה ורביל בה עד שלא היו מראות המלאכים
 נורא בעיניו אלא כמו ראיית האנשים לוס שהיה
 כחו רע נדמו לו כמלאכים....

18:2 And he bowed to the ground: For they
 appeared to him as prominent men. The Sages
 said that they appeared to him as men, for
 his power of prophecy was great. The
 explanation is that his power [of prophecy]
 was so strong and he was so experienced in
 it that the appearances of the angels did
 not seem to him extraordinary, rather it
 was like seeing men. They appeared as
 angels to Lot, whose power [of prophecy]
 was poor....

Kimhi seems to be basing himself here on the last four stages
 of the Maimonidean classification of the levels of prophecy,
 namely, when a prophet sees an image, hears words, sees a man
 speaking, or sees an angel speaking.¹¹ Abraham and Sarah
 are both involved in this prophetic experience, but according
 to Kimhi they perceive it on different levels. Sarah was
 standing in the door of the tent and probably heard only words
 without either seeing an image or the angel speaking. Kimhi
 therefore suggests that it is possible for two or more people
 to be exposed to the same vision or prophecy and that not
 everyone present will have the identical experience or receive
 the message with the same directness. Sarah's medium is clearly
 inferior or less complete than that of Abraham. This idea
 is expressed already by Maimonides, who, in reference to the
 revelation at Mount Sinai, contends that the people were

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merely eyewitnesses to a prophetic experience which directly affected only Moses. Kimhi furthermore advances the view that being *רַגִּיל בְּנִבְיָא* - "schooled in prophecy" - acts to diminish the sense of awe and may therefore result in two different perceptions depending on the individual involved. Thus, to Abraham the angels appear as mere men because of his expertise in prophecy, but to Lot, whose prophetic perceptions were weaker, they appear as angels.

On the basis of this sampling of Kimhi's comments it appears that his view of prophecy constitutes a conflate of Saadia, Halevi, and Maimonides, with a strong bent toward the last. While in the main, following Maimonides in seeing various gradations in the levels of prophecy and maintaining the importance of intellectual perfection as a qualification to be a prophet, Kimhi yet gives due emphasis to the moral prerequisites so characteristic of Halevi. Kimhi is not at all times rigidly consistent with regard to his general scientific and rational outlook or even with reference to prophecy itself. Thus we see that he allows the possibility for the divine to assume physical form. In the case of prophecy he agrees that it is mediated through the intellect, clearly implying a stage of preparation on the part of man. Yet Kimhi also allows that a man may be selected by God through no merit of his own and for non-intellectual reasons. His view of the term *רוח הנביא* implies the involvement of

sensory faculties, although he holds this to be of a lower level of prophecy. Kimhi's position on prophecy must thus be seen as a compromise.

Notes for Chapter III

- ¹ Harry A. Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," Jewish Quarterly Review - New Series 32 (April 1942) : 350-353.
- ² Alexander Altmann, ed., Three Jewish Philosophers, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960), pp.107-108.
- ³ Ibid., pp.103-105.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 113.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 114.
- ⁶ Eliezer Schweid, "Judah Halevi," Encyclopedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), Vol.10,p.363.
- ⁷ Judah Halevi, The Kuzari, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld, (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p.79.
- ⁸ Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, trans. M. Friedlander, (New York: E.P.Dutton and Co., 1904), pp.242-243.
- ⁹ Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," Jewish Quarterly Review - New Series 33 (July 1942): 80.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 50.
- ¹¹ Maimonides, Guide, p.244.

Chapter IV

Providence

The doctrine of providence, namely, that God extends his care and protection to every individual, constitutes a pillar of biblical thought. God's noting the acts of man also implies that He rewards or punishes them accordingly. This reward and punishment helps to establish justice in the world. Medieval Jewish rationalists were deeply concerned with this subject because it was connected with such basic philosophic problems as the power of God, divine knowledge, and determinism. Thus Saadia maintains that God's preknowledge does not mean that all future events are already determined. He asserts that there is an essential difference between man's knowledge, which is derived from the senses, and God's knowledge which is based on Himself. Later, Ibn Daud strongly opposes determinism and opts for man's freedom of choice, arguing that God's ignorance of man's choice does not imply any defect in Him. The Jewish rationalists generally seek to find a synthesis between Greek philosophy as represented by Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism on the one hand, and the Bible's position on the other hand. The attempt is reflected in the very terminology that Jewish medieval philosophy has to create for this purpose, namely, **הנהגה**, which refers to universal providence dealing with the natural order of things and **השגחה**, which has to do with individual providence. The

results of this effort to synthesize seemingly opposite positions are not always successful and at times appear artificial and inconsistent.

The Neoplatonists believe that in the terrestrial world there exists only general providence except for those men who enjoy particular divine protection. According to the Neoplatonist emanationist theory, God is the primeval power responsible for the many other separate powers. A chain connection extends from God to the lower levels of the reality of the senses. God's concern has to do only with the causal interconnections of these powers.

Aristotelianism equates providence with the natural purposiveness of the world and limits it to the general order of things. Maimonides basically accepts the Aristotelian view; he holds that for the subhuman world only general providence exists. Maimonides seeks, however, to reconcile his philosophic views with the biblical position and therefore admits that of all the creatures only man enjoys individual providence. Man becomes worthy of special attention because he is able to link up with the divine through his gift of knowledge. God's protection manifests itself in his warnings to man of impending dangers, and man is then able to take the necessary protective steps. In this way Maimonides avoids equating providence with divine interference with nature. Providence is then interpreted naturalistically as having to do with man's

inner life and is made contingent on intellectual rather than on ethical considerations.

In the main Kimhi adopts Maimonides' position. He does, however, discuss the possibility of providence for animals when their actions affect humans, and he tends to assign a special providence to the Jewish people, especially when they are in their own land.

כִּנֹּא וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם:....
וַיִּגְמְרוּ כֹּלָם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי וּמִכָּאן וְאֵילָךְ אֵין
כָּל חֹדֶשׁ אֵלָּא הַדּוּבְרִים שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ עַל יְדֵי מוֹפֵת וְאֵף
עַל פִּי כֵן בְּבִרְיָאֵת הַדּוּבְרִים בִּשְׁשַׁת יְמֵי הַבְּרָאשִׁית
שֶׁם הָאֵל בִּסְבָּעָם לַהֲנִיחַ סְבָעָם אוֹ לַהֲתַחַדֵּשׁ בָּהֶם
טַבַּע בָּאוֹתָם הַיָּמִים שֶׁנִּתְחַדְּשׁוּ כָּל אֶחָד בְּזִמְנֹו וְכֵן
אָמְרוּ אִמֵּר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן תְּנָאִי הַחֲנֻה הַקְּבִ"ה עִם
הַיָּם שִׁיחָא בְּקֶרַע לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵחָא דְכַתִּיב וַיִּשָּׁב
הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בְּקֶרַע לִפְנֵי תְּנָאִי לַחֲנֻה עִמּוֹ
אִ"ר יִרְמְיָה בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר לֹא עִם הַיָּם בְּלִבְר הַחֲנֻה
הַקְּבִ"ה אֵלָּא עִם כָּל מָה שֶׁנִּבְרָא בִּשְׁשַׁת יְמֵי בְּרָאשִׁית
הַהִ"ד אֲנִי יְדִי נָטוּ שָׁמַיִם וְכָל צְבָאָם צוֹיִתִּי
צוֹיִתִּי אֵת הַיָּם שִׁיקְרַע לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה אֵת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וְהַיָּרֵחַ שִׁיעָמְדוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ צוֹיִתִּי אֵת הָעוֹרֵבִים
שִׁיכְלְלוּ אֵת אֱלֹהֵיוּ צוֹיִתִּי אֵת הָאוֹר שֶׁלֹּא חֲזִיק
לְחַנְנִיָּה מִיִּשְׂאֵל וְעֲזַרְיָה צוֹיִתִּי אֵת הָאֲרִיּוֹת שֶׁלֹּא
יִזְיָקוּ אֵת דְּגִיָּאל צוֹיִתִּי אֵת הָדָג שִׁיקִּיא אֵת
יוֹנָה וְכֵן לְשָׂר הַמוֹפְתִּים .

2:1 The heavens and the earth and all their host were finished.... And they all were finished on the sixth day and from here on there was nothing new, except for those things which were done by a miracle. And even so in the creation of the things during the six days of the beginning, God put it on their nature to set their nature aside, or to take on a different nature in those same days in which everyone is changed in his time. And thus they said, Rabbi Yohanan said that God made a condition with the sea that it would part before Israel, as it

is written: "And the sea returned to its strength in the morning," according to the condition that [God] made with it. Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eliezer said that not only with the sea did God make conditions, but rather with everything which was created in the six days of creation, as it is written: "I, my hands, stretched out the heavens and I have commanded all their hosts." I commanded that the sea part before Moses, that the sun and moon stand still before Joshua. I commanded the ravens to provide for Elijah, I commanded the flame that it not damage Hananiah, Misha'el, and Azariah. I commanded the lions that they not harm Daniel, I commanded the fish that it vomit up Yonah, and so on for the rest of the miracles.

It follows, according to Kimhi, that as God's chosen people the Jews are the recipients of God's providence in a way that the gentiles are not. This is based not so much on historical considerations, but it is rather built into the natural order of things. Thus a kind of contractual agreement was worked out with nature and the animal kingdom to cooperate in extending providence to the Jewish people. In effect, Kimhi asserts that God uses natural phenomena as intermediaries to carry out His will.

While the gentiles as a species are not entitled to God's providence, this does not mean that an individual gentile who possesses merit may not receive God's protection. On the other hand, a Jew may be deprived of providence if he lacks in merit.

ד:כד כי שבעתים יקם: והיה הספור הזה
להודיע כי מקום היתה אמונת בני אדם מהשגחת
האל בחתונות גומל טוב לסובים ורעה לרעים
ופעמים מאריך אפו לאחר יותר מאחר.

4:24 For he [Cain] will be avenged seven-
fold:....And this story comes to inform
(us) that from ancient times the faith
of man was in the providence of God over
mortals, that He rewarded the good with
good and the evil with evil, and at times
He is more gracious to one than another.

Kimhi follows the Maimonidean view that providence is extended
to the individual in direct proportion to his spiritual
development, which includes both intellectual and moral qualities.
Conversely, providence is reduced as one veers away from such
spirituality. This, of course, implies that providence is
closely tied to the idea of justice and is based on the con-
cept of reward and punishment.

ו:ז מאדם עד בהמה: ועוד כיון שהיו
המים על פני האדמה לא היו יכולים הבהמות
והחיות והעופות להנצל אם לא על ידי מופת
ואין השגחת האל עליהם אלא על המין והמין
לא נמחה שהרי צוה לבת על קיומו:

6:7 From man to beast:....And further,
since the waters were upon the earth,
the animals, beasts and birds could save
themselves only by means of a miracle,
since divine providence does not extend
to them [individually], but only to the
species, and the species was not destroyed
since He commanded Noah concerning its
preservation....

While divine providence does not extend to the animals
individually, they are yet subject to individual reward and
punishment. Thus Kimhi states that animals killed by other

animals probably receive their due for their past sins and that animals are subject to reward and punishment insofar as their actions touch human beings either for good or bad.

חֹכָם כִּי יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעוּרָיו: קִרְאוּ
 יֵצֵר לִפִּי שְׁנוֹצֵר עִמּוֹ וְאִמֵּר מִנְעוּרָיו כִּי יֵצֵר
 הָרָע הוּא בָאָדָם קֹדֶם יֵצֵר טוֹב כִּי אֵין בּוֹ יֵצֵר
 טוֹב בְּפוּעַל עַד שִׁגְלוֹל וִיקְנֹהוּ מֵעַם מֵעַם
 וְכִיּוֹן שִׁיֵּצֵר הָאָדָם רָע כִּי כֵן רָאִיתִי בְּחִכְמָתִי
 לִבְרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי כֵן צִרִיךְ לִפִּי טַבַּע הַמְצִיאָתָה הוּא
 חֹסֵט בְּרֹב אִם לֹא אֶחָד מִנִּי אֵלֶּף לִפְיִכֶךָ לֹא אוֹסִיף
 לַהֲכֹחַ אֶת כָּל חַי בַּעֲבוּרָו כֹּאשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי.

8:21 For the nature of man's heart is evil from his youth: They called it "nature" [yetser] because man is created [notsar] with it, because the evil inclination is in man before the good inclination. He has no good inclination in actuality until he matures and little by little acquires it....And since the nature of man is evil, for thus I have seen in my wisdom to create him, because it must be so according to the reality of existence. He sins greatly unless he is one in a thousand, therefore, I will not continue to strike at all living things because of him, as I had done.

God's providence is directed only to man for his own sake. The animals are under His providence as species, but only instrumentally for the benefit of man. Kimhi seems to be elaborating on the basic theme expressed in the story of creation: everything which is brought into being during the first five days is solely for the benefit of man, who is formed last. Similarly, in the story of the flood the world is destroyed only because of man's evil ways. Although the Bible indicates, "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth,"

it is clear that the narrative intends to emphasize man's wickedness. Providence is extended to the animals, according to Kimhi, and indirectly also to man, simply because man is by nature an habitual sinner and either God must exterminate all living things or tolerate man's imperfect condition.

יֵאָחַז וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה: בַּהֲשֹׁחַת הָאֵל בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה הַשְּׁפִלִים
יִכְנֶה הַכָּחוּב כַּעֲנִין הַזֶּה לִשְׁוֹן יִרְיָה וְכֵן-בַּעֲנִין
סָדוֹם לִפְנֵי שִׁירְיָה אֶזֶל כְּבוֹדוֹ הִיא לַהֲשִׁיבָה
בַּחֲתוּבִים .

11:5 And God descended: Scripture terms divine providence with regard to mortals as veridah, "descending," and it was thus in Sodom, because God's descent was in order to oversee the lower beings.

Kimhi believes that man's soul contains higher and lower elements. When man seeks moral perfection and develops his intellectual powers he comes to resemble the angels and to become God-like. On the other hand man's turning earthward puts him in the class of the animals and for all intents and purposes he forfeits God's providence. Since the Sodomites, by indulging their sensuous passions, had become morally corrupt, Kimhi suggests that God began to treat them like animals and that His descent on Sodom had to do with a different kind of providence, namely that of the animal species.

יְבִיב וְהָיָה כִּי יֵרָאוּ אוֹתָךְ הַמַּצְרִים: וּמִזֶּה
פָּחַד אֲבָרָהָם וְלֹא סָמַךְ עַל הַבִּטְחָתָא הָאֵל שֶׁהִבְטִיחָו ...
וְכֵן פָּחַד יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוֹ אַחֲרֵי הַבִּטְחָתָא הָאֵל וְכֵן רָאוּ
לְכָל צָדִיק שֶׁלֹּא יִסְמֹךְ בַּמָּקוֹם שֶׁכֵּנָה עַל הַנֶּס
וַיִּשְׁמֹר עֲצָמוֹ כְּכֹל הַחֲבוּלָה אֲשֶׁר יוּכַל

12:12 And it shall come to pass when the Egyptians see you:....And because of this Abraham was afraid and did not rely on the promise which God made to him...and so Jacob feared after the promise of the Lord, and so it is fitting that every righteous man in a dangerous situation should not rely on a miracle and should take care of himself by all clever means which he can....

לב:יד מן הבא בידו: ברשותו וכן וכל יש
לו נתן בידו ולא בא המלאך שהיה חשובה חפלתו
עד שהכין המנהגה ושלחה לפניו וזה להודיע
כי האדם שהוא בעת צרה אפילו יהיה צדיק לא
יסמוך על הנס אלא ישמור את עצמו בכל אשר
יכול ויכין עצמו לשלשה דברים להפלה לחת
ממון ולמלחמה ועל הכל ישים לבו לאל ויבטח
בו והוא יעשה.

32:14 Of that which he had: Of his property, and so "And all that he had he put in his hand,"and the angel who was the answer to his prayer did not come until he had prepared a gift and sent it before him. This is to make known that a man in time of trouble, even though he be righteous, should take care of himself in every way possible and prepare himself for three things: for prayer, to give money, and for war. And for everything he should put his faith in God and trust in Him and He will do it.

These comments are inconsistent with Kimhi's strong belief in God's omnipotence and readiness to use miraculous action in behalf of his faithful. The comments tend to suggest that God's providence cannot be depended upon in real emergencies. This can hardly be Kimhi's real position. While these comments suggest an active role for man, his overall view tends to favor a more passive role.

כאִסּוּ ויִכְלוּ הַמֵּיִם: וּנְכַתֵּב כָּל זֶה לְלִמּוֹ
שֶׁלֹא יִבְהַל אָדָם לְצָרוֹת אִם יִבּוֹאוּהוּ וַיִּבְטַח בְּאֵל
שֵׁשִׁים הָאַחֲרִית לְטוֹב וּנְכַתֵּב גַּם כֵּן לְהוֹדִיעַ מֵהַ
עוֹשֶׂה הָאֵל לְאַהֲבֵי שְׁמוֹ כִּי לִשְׁפָחַת אֲבֹרָהֶם נִגְלָה
הַמֶּלֶאךָן פְּעָמִיִּים וְעָשָׂה עִמָּה וְעַם בְּנֵה פְּלֹאֹת .

21:15 And the water was finished: All this is written to teach that man should not fear troubles if they come to him, but he should trust in God that He will set things right in the end. It is also written to inform [us] what God does for those who love Him, because for the sake of Abraham's handmaid the angel appeared twice and performed miracles for her and her son.

Kimhi's view here contrasts with his comments above, but it is a truer representation of his position. As a strong advocate of the reward and punishment concept he believes that God's providence to man rests on a quid pro quo basis. Therefore, when one finds himself in trouble he can rely upon previous acts of virtue in order to claim his right to deliverance.

כְּדֹג ואלהי הארץ: כלומר שהוא שופט גם
על החתחונים ומשגיח בהם ולא תחשוב כי אם
תעבור על השבועה שלא יפקד עונך כי כן
יעשה כי הוא אלהי הארץ כי הוא היה יודע
זה בעצמו . . .

24:3 And God of the earth: That is to say that He is also judge over the lower beings and watches over them. Do not think that if you violate your oath, your sin will not be punished, for He will do so because He is God of the earth just as He is God of Heaven. But when Abraham said of himself, "The Lord, God of Heaven, who has taken man," it was not necessary for him to say God of the earth, because he knew this by himself.

In line with the comment above (21:15) this is an example of how providence manifest itself negatively. For Kimhi, the various biblical citations referring to providence both positively and negatively are clear proofs for God's justice upon earth.

כֹּזֵב וִירָא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה: אֹלֵי הִיָּה בִדְעָתוֹ
לִרְדָּת מִצְרִימָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִיו מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָב לִפְי
שֵׁשׁ שָׁם שׁוֹבַע גָּדוֹל יוֹתֵר מִשָּׂאֵר הָאָרְצוֹת לִפְי
שֶׁהִנָּהר מִשְׁקָה אוֹתָהּ לִפְיִכֶךְ נִגְלָה אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹוֹמִנְעוֹ
מִרְדָּת שָׁם

26:2 And the Lord appeared to him: Perhaps it was in his [Isaac's] mind to go down to Egypt as his father had done because of the famine, for there was there a great abundance, more than in the other lands because the river irrigated it. Therefore God revealed himself to him and prevented him from going down there....

כֹּהֵכ וִיֵּהִי יִצְחָק: לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי גַם עָמוֹ עָשָׂה
הָאֵל טוֹבָה גְּדוֹלָה כִּי אֲשַׁחֲזֵה הִתְּחָה עֲקָרָה וְלֹא הִיָּתָה
רְאוּיָה לִלְדָּת כִּי אִם עַל יְדֵי נִס כִּי הוּא הִיָּה בֶן
אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה כְּשֶׁלָּקְחָהּ וְעַמְדָּה עַד עֶשְׂרִים שָׁלָא
יִלְדָה וְהִיָּתָה סִיבָה מֵאֵת הָאֵל לִהְיוֹת הָאִמְתָּחוֹת
עֲקָרוֹת לְהִרְאוֹת לְבְנֵי הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהָאֵל הִיָּה אֲרֻחָב
אֵת אֲבִרָתָם וִיִּצְחָק וְעָשָׂה עִמָּהֶם נִס.

25:20 And behold Isaac: This is to make known that God did a great kindness for him [Isaac] also, because his wife was barren and was not fit to bear children, unless it was by a miracle. Because he was forty years old when he took her [as wife] yet she did not give birth for twenty years. And God was the cause that the matriarchs were barren - in order to show the world that God loved Abraham and Isaac and performed miracles for them.

There are occasions when God manipulates man or situations in order to make His providence manifest. Kimhi's point here is

that providence is evidence for man's faith in God as well as proof of His justice. Thus we have occasions, such as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, which are intended to display God's might and inspire faith in Him. In 25:20 we see how God can manipulate for a positive cause. The ethical and moral questions in terms of human suffering and using man instrumentally are beyond Kimhi's purview and should not disturb us.

לא:ט ויצל: ענין הסרה ושלילה לפי שהוא
גוזל אותי ומחליף משכורתי לפיכך היה מאת
האל והיו יולדות רוב הצאן כמשכורתי וכן
הראני האל בחלום להודיעני כי מאתו נהיה
הדבר הזה ולא דרך מקרא כי האל משגיח
ביראיו להצילם מיד עושיהם ולהטיב להם.

31:9 And He took: A matter of removal and negation, because He took me away and changed my wages. Therefore, this was [done] by God and the large number of new-born cattle were my wages. And so God showed me in a dream to inform me that this thing will be from Him and not by accident, because God watches over those who fear Him, in order to save them from their oppressors and to make them prosper.

ל:מא ליהטנה במקלות:....והיה כל הספור
הזה להודיע כי השגחת האל לצדיק להצילו מיד
רשע שלא יוכל לו....

30:41 That they might conceive near the rods:.... And this whole episode is to inform [us] that there is divine providence for the righteous to rescue him from the evil man, so that the scoundrel cannot prevail against the righteous.

God will not shrink from using even trickery in behalf of his faithful. For Kimhi, God's providence is all pervasive

and nothing happens to man unless He wills it. To assume otherwise would be tantamount to admitting that God's omnipotence is not complete and that man has a source for protection other than God.

יְהוָה אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי שֹׁד: פִּירוֹשׁ חֹזֵק מְנַח....
אָמַר לוֹ אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֶשְׁתָּךְ עֲקָרָה וְזָקְנָה וְאֵינָה
רְאוּיָה לִילֵד וְאֵף כִּי אַתָּה זָקֵן וְחָלוּשׁ כַּחֲךְ כִּי
בֶן צִ"ס אַתָּה וְאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁתְּחַלִּישׁ כַּח הַזֶּרַע עוֹד
אֲנִי מְנַח הַכֹּל כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי שֹׁד וְהַטְבַּע וְהַחֲלֹדָה
מִיָּד הוּא וּבִיָּדִי לַעֲשׂוֹת וּלְשַׁנוֹת כֹּאשֶׁר אֲרַצָּה....

17:1 I am a God of might: The explanation of this is strong, a conqueror.... And He said to him: Even though your wife is barren and old and not fit to bear children, and even though you are old and weak because you are ninety-nine years old, and even though your virility is reduced, I am still the conqueror of all because I am a God of strength, and nature and reproduction come from me, it is in My hands to do and to change that which I please....

יְהוָה יֵד הַיִּפְלָא מִיְהוָה דְּבַר: הַדְּבָרִים הַמוֹדִיעִים
נִפְלָאִים בְּעֵינֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְנִפְלָא וְנִכְסָה מֵהֶם אֵין
יָכוֹל לִהְיוֹת אֲבָל מִיְהוָה לֹא יִפְלָא דְּבַר כִּי כָל
דְּבַר יוֹכֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּנִבְרָאִים וּלְהַפּוֹךְ הַטְבַּע כְּשִׁירָצָה
כִּי לֹא יִפְלָא מִמֶּנּוּ דְּבַר.

18:14 Is there anything too miraculous for the Lord?: These strange things were miraculous in the eyes of the people. How it was possible for them to occur was wonderful and hidden from them, but nothing is too miraculous for the Lord, for He is able to do everything with his creations, and to reverse nature as He pleases, because nothing is too miraculous for Him.

It is clear that for Kimhi, God's providence is a coefficient of His absolute might and rule. Kimhi seeks to enhance His

omnipotence by an unreserved endorsement of His miraculous power. Kimhi appears to take a position on miracles in 18:14 which, for him, may be seen as somewhat extreme. He generally tends to offer a rationalistic interpretation for those miracles which require a reversal of the natural order. However, it may be that God's omnipotence takes a higher priority in his system of thought and as a result he was willing to use hyperbole with regard to miracles.

כח־יָהּ וַיִּצֶק שֶׁמֶן עַל רֹאשָׁהּ: . . . וְכָל זֶה הָיָה
לְאוֹת וּלְטִימָן שִׁירְשׁוֹ בְּנֵי אֵת הָאָרֶץ כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב
בְּאַבְרָהָם וּבִיצְחָק כִּי שָׁנִיחַם עָשׂוּ בָאָרֶץ כְּרִצּוֹנָם
כִּי הִנֵּה יַעֲקֹב לָקַח הָאֶבֶן הַהִיא וְשָׂם אוֹתָהּ מִצְבָּה
וְאֵין מִי שֶׁלָּקַח אוֹתָהּ לְצִדְכּוֹ וְאִפְּלִלוּ בְּעַל הַשָּׂדֶה
וְכָמוֹ שֶׁהֻצִּיבָה כֵּן מִצְבָּה וּבִנָּה שֶׁם מִצְבָּה כְּשׁוּבוֹ
כְּאִדָּם הַבּוֹנֶה בְּשֵׁלוֹ וְאֵין מוֹתָהּ בְּעֵדוֹ וְקָרָא לְמָקוֹם
הַהוּא בֵּית אֵל שֶׁהָיָה שְׁמוֹ לֹז בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה וְהַסְכִּימוּ
אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וְזוֹלָתָם עַל יָדוֹ וְכֵן לְאַבְרָהָם
וְלִיצְחָק כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּחִפְרֵת הַבְּאֵרוֹת וּבְבִנְיַת
הַמִּצְבָּחוֹת כִּי שֶׁם הָאֵל מוֹרָאם וְאַהֲבָתָם בְּלֵב אֲנָשֵׁי
הָאָרֶץ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר אֵל חֲגֹעוּ בְּמִשְׁחֵי וּבִנְיָאֵי אֵל
תִּרְעוּ .

28:18 And he poured oil on its [the stone's] top:....And all this [the anointing of the rock with oil] was for a sign and for a symbol that his sons would inherit the land as we have written about Abraham and Isaac, because both of them did as they pleased in the land. For behold Jacob took the stone and erected it as a monument and no one took it for his needs, not even the owner of the field. And he found it just as he had set it up and built an altar there on his return, as a man who builds his own and no one protested. He called the place Bethel, its name was originally Luz and the local inhabitants and others beside agreed with him. And so it was with Abraham and Isaac as it is written about the digging of the wells and the building of the altars,

because God placed respect and love for them in the hearts of the inhabitants of the land, as it is said, "Do not touch my anointed and do not do evil to my prophets."

God's providence may take many forms and may range from direct intervention, whether for reward or punishment, to more subtle expressions. A not uncommon means is to cause someone to find favor in the sight of others. Thus the Hebrews were made likeable to the Egyptians so that they would lend them their belongings.

מח:יד שכל את ידיו: כלומר נתן שכל לידי
כאלו עשה בשכל ובחכמה מה שעשה כי מנשה היה
הבכור וראה בנבואה כי הוא יהיה קטן בכרחה
כי אם היה נותן ימינו על ראש מנשה מה שכל
היה בזה כן הוא דרך העולם.

48:14 He enlightened his hands: That is to say that He gave the power of intellect to his hands, as if he did what he did by reason and wisdom. For Manasseh was the eldest, and he [Jacob] saw in a prophetic vision that Manasseh's was to be the lesser blessing. For if he put his right hand on the head of Manasseh, then what reason [intellect] was involved in this? Such is the way of the world.

Here, Kimhi provides us with yet another means of God's providence, namely, the use of the powers of the intellect. While man's intellectual powers are usually developed by himself and he is in control of them, nevertheless, in extraordinary situations God may intervene and cause man to use these powers in an unusual manner.

כזא ויהי כי זקן יצחק: ולזה כתב
הספור הזה להודיע כי האל מייסר מקצת
הצדיקים בעולם הזה כפי מה שרואה בהכמתו....

27:1 And behold when Isaac grew old:
[reference to his loss of sight] And for
this the story is written to make known
that God afflicts some of the righteous
in this world, according to what is fitting
in His wisdom.

כדסב ויצחק בא: עתה סיפר כי פגע בהם
יצחק בדרך במקרה טרם בואם העירה כמו
שהמעשה כולו היה בדרך מקרה ברצון האל
להודיע כי מטיב האל לטובים

24:62 And Isaac came: Now [the story] tells
that Isaac met them on the road by chance,
before their coming into the city, just as
all of this action took place by way of
chance, according to the will of God. And
this is to make known that God does good
to the good.

Kimhi, like his predecessors, is faced with explaining the dilemma of why the righteous suffer. He affirms his faith positively that God causes the good to prosper and he displays equally strong faith that there is a reason for the suffering of the righteous. In the latter case he follows Maimonides and suggests that man cannot know God's reasons, since His knowledge is different from ours. Beginning, however, with the premise that God is absolutely just, it becomes unthinkable for Kimhi that God would ever be guilty of an injustice.

י:יא יצא אשור... וכל הספור הזה להודיע
כי הארץ ומלואה לשם יחברך ולא בכח יגבר איש
ונטל מלכות הארץ מזה ונחנה לזה כאשר ישר
בעיניו כמו שאמר ונחתי לאשר ישר בעיני
והכל לפי מעשיהם כי הוא אל אמונה ואין עול....

10:11 Ashur went out: This entire story comes to inform [us] that the land and its fullness belongs to God. Not by strength will a man become mighty. He takes the kingship of the land from one and gives it to another as it is right in His eyes, as it is said, "And I will give to him who is right in my eyes," and everything is according to their deeds, for He is a God of faith and not iniquity.

י יב נינוה ... היא העיר הגדולה... וכל הספור הזה כמו שכתבנו כי אף על פי שכבש אשור ארצות ובנה עירות גדולות ומלכו עליהם מלך אשור בזמן רב לקחום מידם הנקראים מלכי בבל מרודך בלאדן בן בלאדן ונבוכדנצר ובניו ואחרי כן לקחום מידם המלוכה מלכי פרס וכן ממלך למלך כן הם כל הארצות כל הימים להודיע כי ליהוה המלוכה והארץ.

10:12 Nineveh...the great city:.... And this entire story is as we have written, because even though Ashur conquered the lands and built great cities and ruled over them as King of Ashur, after a long time those called the Kings of Babylon took them from him, Merodach Baladan ben Baladan, and Nebuchadnezzar and his sons, afterwards the Kings of Persia took the kingship of from him, and so on from king to king. Thus it was with all the lands, for all time to inform us that the kingship of the earth belongs to God.

י יס ויהי גבול הכנעני... והיה הספור הזה להודיע כי רצון האל היה שיסכנו משפחות הכנעני שם עד בא קצם כי לישראל בחרה האל אלא שישבוה בני כנען לצורך ישראל שלא יצטרכו ישראל בבואם לישוב הארץ לסעת כרמים ולבנות בתים אלא ימצאו אותה ישראל מיושבת מלאה כל טוב כמו שאמר בהכפתחו להם ובתים מלאים כל טוב אשר לא מלאה ובורות חצובים אשר לא חצבה כרמים וזתים אשר לא נטעת.

10:19 And the border of the Canaanites was:And this story is to make known that it was the will of God that the Canaanite families dwell there until the end of their

time came, because God had chosen [the land] for Israel, except that the Canaanites should settle it for the needs of Israel, so that the Israelites would not have to settle the land when they came, nor plant vineyards, nor build houses, but rather that the Israelites would find [the land] settled and full of goodness as it was said in His promise to them: "Houses full of all good things which you did not fill, wells dug which you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant."

לֹכֵם אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי שְׁעִיר הַחֲרִי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ: שְׁהִיו
 יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִתְחִלָּה קֹדֶם שְׁבֹאוֹ בְּנֵי עֶשָׂו וְתֹנְלוּ-
 דוֹתֵיו וְהָיָה הַסִּפּוּר הַזֶּה לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי לִיהוָה
 הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ נֹטְלָה מִזֶּה וּנְתֻנָה לַזֶּה....

36:20 These are the sons of Seir, the Horite, inhabitants of the land: They were the inhabitants of the land from the beginning, before the sons of Esau and their descendents came. And this entire episode was to make known that the land and its fullness belongs to God, He takes it from this one and gives it to that one....

Kimhi's main thrust in these passages is that God's providence extends also to the land of Israel. He is intent on showing that Israel's right to the land rests not only on conquest, but on God's will. As the absolute owner of the world, God has a right to assign the land to whomever He pleases. Because he willed Israel to dwell in the land He has promised her His special providential care. There is a very strong implication in Kimhi's comments that providence for the Jewish people is stronger in the land of Israel than elsewhere.

Chapter V

Ethics and The Dignity of Man

Jewish philosophers insist that ethics is rooted both in revelation and in reason. Saadia even maintains that reason is a more reliable guide for ethics than is revelation. On ethical matters Saadia negates even miracles should they be in conflict with the dictates of reason. By implication we may deduce for this that the ethical commandments which are equated with reason are held to be superior to the ritual precepts which are based primarily on revelation. Since, however, revelation is to be tested by reason, it becomes evident that the ethical precepts constitute the main thrust of revelation. The purpose of the ethical life is man's satisfaction of his needs and the development of his powers to the highest degree.

While the traditional biblical view is that ethics have their origin in God and are imparted to the Jew through the Torah, the rationalists maintain that the differentiation between good and evil can be comprehended by reason. This ethical sense is ascribed to an inner impulse and consciousness which is concerned with the good itself and has nothing to do with reward or punishment. This autonomy of moral consciousness is especially championed by the Karaite thinkers.

In the realm of ethics both Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism converge in their pragmatic effect and take

on a religious character not far different from the Bible's position. The Neoplatonic idea calls upon man to climb the emanationist ladder back up to his higher, purer state by freeing himself of moral depravity that keeps him chained down. Aristotelianism calls for a similar rejection of sensuality and moral corruption, but on the basis of reason. These rational approaches to ethics mesh with the traditional Jewish position which holds that man's happiness in the future world depends on his living the ethical life. However, it should nevertheless be pointed out that according to Aristotelianism, the moral life serves only as a means to achieving the intellectual end, for immortality is based on the level of knowledge reached.

For Maimonides, ethical perfection is linked to social utility and seems to diminish with man's estrangement from society. However, he gives emphasis to the Aristotelian view by maintaining that man needs others in order to assert his true essence and struggle against his passions. Ethics help a man to free himself from his senses.

Kimhi's position on ethics partakes of both Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. He considers ethical and moral behavior as man's greatest defense against descending to the lower animal levels.

סזו: ותענה שרי: עשתה עמה יותר מדי
ועבדה בה בפרך אפשר שהיתה מכה אותה ומקללה
אותה ולא היתה יכולה לסבול וברחה מפניה ולא
נהגה שרה בזה למידת המוסר ולא למידת חסידות
לא מוסר כי אף על פי שאברהם מחל לה על כבודו
ואמר לה
עשי לה הטוב בעיניך: היה ראוי לה למשוך את
ידה לכבודו ולא לענותה ולא מידת חסידות ובפש
טובה כי אין ראוי לאדם לעשות כל יכולתו במה
שחתת ידו ואמר החכם מה גאווה המאילה כעת יכולת
ומה שעשתה שרי לא היה טוב בעיני האל כמו
שאמר המלאך אל הגר כי שמע יהוה אל עניך
והשיב לה ברכה תחת עניה ואברהם לא מנע משרי
מלענותה אף על פי שהיה רע בעיניו משום שלום
בית ולכן הסיפור שנכתב בחזרה להקנות מדות
טובות לאדם ולהרחיק הרעות.

16:6 And Sarai afflicted: She did too much with her [abused her] and she made her serve with rigor. It is possible that she [Sarai] struck her [Hagar] and cursed her and she [Hagar] was no longer able to tolerate it and she fled. And Sarai did not behave in this matter in an ethical fashion, nor according to a pious standard: It was not ethical because even though Abraham yielded his prerogative to her, and said to her, Do with her what is good in your eyes: it was incumbent upon her to withdraw out of respect for him, and not to afflict her [Hagar]. This was not a measure of piety, nor a sign of a good soul, because it is not fitting for a man to do all that he can [abuse] with something [or someone] which is under his control. The sage said: "How pleasant is forgiveness when one wields power. What Sarai did was not good in the eyes of the Lord, as the angel said to Hagar, "For the Lord heard your affliction," and He answered her with a blessing in place of her affliction. And Abraham did not prevent Sarai from afflicting her, even though it was evil in his eyes, because of domestic peace. And so the story was written in the Torah to establish good attributes for man and to put the evil attributes at a distance.

The traditional commentaries often find themselves engaging in tortuous reasoning in order to justify behavior on the part of biblical worthies, which from our viewpoint might be considered unethical. The Patriarchs and Matriarchs especially are often excused. Seferno¹ is able to justify Sarah in this case. Nahmanides, who is known for his systematic approach to the biblical text, does, however, charge Sarah with guilt.² Kimhi manifests a clear sense of right and wrong and does not hesitate to apply it even to Sarah. Having expressed his condemnation of Sarah, he nevertheless finds a didactic value in the episode: it serves as a means for inculcating proper human attributes, even if this must be done by negative example.

יָסְלוּ וַתַּהַרְיֶינָּה מֵאִתּוֹתָּהּ בִּיאָה הָרָר לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי
 לֹא יִסְפֹּר לְשֹׁכֵב עִמּוֹ כִּי לֹא נִתְכַּוְּנוּ אֵלָּא לְהַשְׂאִיר
 זֶרַע .

19:36 And they [Lot's daughters] conceived:
 They conceived from that single act of
 intercourse to inform [us] that they did
 not continue to lie with him [Lot] because
 their intention was only to perpetuate
 [Lot's] seed.

The biblical intent of this aetiological tale is obviously to cast an unfavorable aspersion on Israel's traditional enemies -Moab and Ammon, as children of incest. The Bible itself hints only faintly at its own condemnation by indicating that Lot had to be gotten drunk and that the result of the union with his daughters was Moab and Ammon. The traditional

commentators are divided in their view of Lot's daughters.³ Unlike Nahmanides, who sought to clear Lot's daughters by indicating that under the Noahide dispensation Lot was permitted to sleep with them,⁴ Kimhi's approach is more direct. He is candid in recognizing the incestuous union as a sin, but at the same time seeks to mitigate it in view of the extraordinary circumstances. They did indeed sin, but not more than they had to. For Kimhi, the higher end (to perpetuate the line) justifies the means (incest).

כה:כס ויזד: ... והיה הספור הזה להודיע
מעלה יעקב ופחיתות עשו וקלות דעתו כי היה
גוררן ומעלה יעקב שלא היה אוהב הענוג העולם
שבשל לעצמו עדשים שאין חבשיל פחות ממנו ומה
שמנע ממנו שלא נתן לו אלא במכירת בכורתו
וכל שכן שהיה אחיו גם זה ממעלתו ומחכמתו
שלא ליתן ממה שטרח בו ושהכין לעצמו לאיש
ריק ופוחז ואינו חפץ בדרך חיים ומרוב
גורמתו לא שמר עו שיבשל הוא מצידיו ויאכל
ותאכ אל חבשיל העדשים שמצא מחוקן ובזה
ובכיוצא בזה אומר נותן לעשיר אך למחסור

25:29 And he [Jacob] cooked [pottage]:
.... This story was to make known the
high character of Jacob and the fickleness of Esau and his foolishness and
that he was a glutton. The character of
Jacob consisted in his not caring for
the pleasures of the world, because he
cooked for himself beans, and there is
no dish more common than that. That he
withheld it [the food] from him [Esau]
and did not give it to him, except for
the sale of his birthright and all the
more so because he was his brother, this
also is part of his high character and
wisdom, not to give what one has bothered
over and prepared for oneself to a
shallow, wanton man, who does not desire
the path of life and who, because of his
great gluttony could not hold back until

he cooked [what he had caught] from his hunting, but rather lusted after the bean pottage which he found prepared. Because of this and things like it it is said: "One may give to the rich, yet will want come."

Kimhi may be speaking out of the context of his own time which equates the man of moderation and of simple appetite with the ethical person. The birthright was much too precious to have been entrusted to a gluttonous and reckless Esau. Again, in view of the stakes involved, Jacob's behavior is not only justified but imperative. Kimhi's ethics seem to be based on the practical consideration of choosing the lesser evil or the higher good.

כס: יח אעבדך שבע שנים ברחל: ויש
 לשאול אחר שכונת הצדיקים לאשה לזרע למה
 היו מחזירים אחר אשה יפה כיון שאין כוונתם
 לתאור ויעקב אבינו בחר ברחל לפי שהיתה יפה
 מאד ועבד בה שבע שנים והתקדם בלבן אחר שנתן
 לו לאה תמורתה לפי שלא היתה יפה כמו רחל
 ויש לומר כי כוונתם לטובה לפי שהאשה יפה
 מעוררת התאור וכדי להרבות בנים היתה כוונתם
 לעורר תאותם ועוד כדי שיהיו הבנים והבנות
 יפה מראה ויהיו דומים להם ועוד כי הצורה
 הנאה משמחת לב האדם כל שכן הצורה שתהיה
 לפניו תמיד שתהיה שמחתו בה תמיד וצריך
 שהאדם יהיה שמח בעולמו ובחלקו שנתן לו
 האל כי האלהים מזמין לצדיק אשה יפה כמו
 שעשה לאבות ולטאר הצדיקים שיהיו שמחים
 בחלקם ומולידים בנים כמותם.

29:18 I will serve you seven years for Rachel:.... One must ask since if the intention of the righteous for a woman was for the purpose of offspring, why did they search for a beautiful woman, since their intention was not sexual desire? Jacob, our father, chose Rachel because she was very pretty, and he

worked for her for seven years. He complained to Laban after he gave him Leah instead, because she was not as pretty as Rachel. It must be said that their intention was for the good because the beautiful woman arouses desire, and in order to produce many children it was their intention to stir their desire, and moreover, in order that the sons and daughters be attractive like themselves. Further, because the pleasant form rejoices the heart, especially the form that is always before it, for the joy of the heart in it [beauty] is eternal. It is necessary that man be content in his world with his portion which the Lord gave him. For God orders for the righteous a beautiful wife, as He did for the patriarchs and the rest of the righteous men, so that they will be happy with their portions and give birth to children like themselves.

The sexual ethic voiced here by Kimhi may again be reflective of his time and background. Sex, for the sake of sex was frowned upon. Although both the Bible and the Talmud speak of the wife's conjugal rights with the implication that it is necessary to satisfy normal sexual needs, Kimhi, however, views sex as an activity in which the righteous indulge merely in order to propagate the race.

לא:לו ויחר ליעקב: לפי שלא האמין בו ומש
אח כליו ואף על פי שהוא אמר לו הכר לך היה
לו ללבן למנוע עצמו מזה מדרך המוסר.

31:36 And Jacob was angry: Because he [Laban] did not believe him and searched his things, even though he [Jacob] had said to him, "Determine for yourself!" Laban should have held himself back from [doing] this, out of a moral sense.

For Kimhi, the *דרך מוסר* is possessed by every human being.

It is a moral orientation which derives from the Active Intellect;

it stems from man's innate wisdom.

לסוף ויהי אחר הדברים האלה:ונכתב
הספור הזה להודיע סבת הדברים ואם יקרה
לאדם שום-מקרה יבטח באל ונכתב גם כן להודיע
צדקתו של יוסף וסילמד אדם ממנו לכבוש את
יצרו ולשמור אמונה למי שבטח יהיה מי שיהיה
ולא ישקר בו.

39:7 And it came to pass after these things: And this story [of Joseph's rise to power as a result of all the chance incidents] is to make known the reason for the things. If anything untoward should happen to man, he should trust in God. It was also written to make known Joseph's righteousness and that man should learn from it to conquer his instincts and to keep faith with the one who trusts, whoever he may be, and will not deny Him.

The subduing of one's instincts in Kimhi's thought has to do with developing the "higher soul." By indulging in sensuality man becomes debased and sinks to the level of the animals. Man has the freedom and obligation to make the proper choices. By so doing man becomes eligible for God's providence. Ethical behavior is therefore understood by Kimhi as the way in which man rises to a higher level of existence and manifests the Active Intellect. Such ethical behavior affects not only the level of one's existence, but also brings one more concrete rewards. Kimhi here is of course not being original, but reflects the traditional reward and punishment attitude.

מז: יאבמיטב הארץ: שהיה רעמסס והיא קרובה
לגושן כאשר צוה פרעה כמו שאמר במיטב הארץ
כי בלא רשותו לא היה נותן להם אף על פי
שהיה לו רשות לתת לאחרים שהרי שמהו פרעה
אדון לכל מצרים לאחיו לא היה נותן בלא רשות
פרעה מדרך מוסר

47:11 In the best of the land: That was Raamses, which is close to Goshen, as Pharoah had commanded. As it was said, "in the best of the land." For without his [Pharoah's] permission he [Joseph] could not have given [it] to them, even though he had permission to give to others. Although Pharoah had placed him as master over all Egypt, he would not give [it] to his brothers without the permission of Pharoah, from an ethical standpoint.

One is impressed with Kimhi's sense of right and wrong. The welfare of society depends upon proper and well ordered human relationships. Kimhi's point here is that Joseph's ethical sensitivities were so finely honed that he would not grant a favor to his own brothers, though to do so was well within the scope of the authority granted him by Pharoah.

יחג: אל נא תעבר מעל עבדך: גע ענין
בקשה ותחנה כמו בבקשה ממך לא תעבור לחסר
דרכיך מעלי אחה וחברייך עד שתסעורו אצלי
ונכתב כל הספור הזה כדי שילמדו אדם להחנה
עם הבריות בצדקה ובחסד וגמילות חסד הוא
להכניס אורחים לביתו לכבודם ולעשות להם כל
צרכיהם כרחיצת הרגלים ובמשתה ובמטה אם
ילינו בביתו.

18:3 Please [na] do not turn away from your servant: The use of "please" [na] means request and entreat, as "I ask of you," not to pass on and continue your journey away from me, you and your friends, until you will have refreshed yourselves with me. This entire story was written so that man should learn how to behave with people, with justice and kindness, without expectation of reward, in entertaining guests in his home, honoring them and meeting all their needs, with washing the feet, with a meal, and with a bed if they are lodging the night in his house.

יח:ד יקח נא מעט מים: אמר מעט למעט נדיבותו
נדיבותו בפיו מדרך המוסר.

18:4 Let a little water be brought: He said a little in order to minimize in his speech what he had volunteered. He did this out of an ethical consideration.

יח:ה ואקח פת לחם: מכאן שהצדיקים
אומרים מעט ועושים הרבה וכן ראוי לעשות
לפיכך נכתב הספור הזה כדי שילמד אדם ממנו
דרך ארץ כי הנה אברהם אמר פת לחם שפירושו
מתיכת לחם ולא אמר לחם כמו שאמר מעט מים
כמו שפירשנו.

18:5 And I will take a bit of bread: it is from here that we learn that the righteous say little and do much, and so it is fitting to do. Therefore the story was written in order that man learn from it the proper way - for Abraham said a morsel of bread, whose explanation is a piece of bread, and he did not say a loaf of bread, just as he said a little water, as we have explained.

יח:טז ואברהם הולך עמם לשלחם: ללוחם כי
כן דרך אדם ללוח אורח הבא אליו כשיפרד
ממנו לפיכך נכתב שילמד אדם ממנו דרך ארץ....

18:16 And Abraham went with them to send them off: To accompnay them, because this is the proper way, to accompany a guest when he departs. Therefore it is written, so that man will learn from it the proper way....

יט:ג ויעש להם משתה: לפי שהיה לילה לא
היה לו פנאי לזבוח ולתקן מאכלים אלא עשה
להם משתה ואפה להם מצות שלא ימתינו עד
שתחמץ הבצק ומה שיכול לתקן במהרה תקן וזהו
מדרך ארץ להכין לאורח הבא מה שיכול לתקן
במהרה כי הוא עייף וצריך לאכול ולשתות
לפיכך נכתב הסיפור הזה.

19:3 And he made them a meal: Because it was at night, there was no spare time to kill an animal and to prepare various dishes. He made for them a meal and baked matzot for them so that they need not wait for the dough to rise. What he was able to prepare in a hurry, he made. This is the polite way to prepare for a guest who comes, whatever it is possible to do in a hurry, because he is tired and must eat and drink. Therefore this story is written.

כד:סא וחמס רבקה: אחר ששלחו אותה:ונפרדו
ממנה קמה ורכבה כי אין דרך לרכוב כל זמן
הלילה שיורכב הרוכב וילכו המלוים ברוב
זה אינו דרך ארץ ובספור למדנו הכתוב דרך
ארץ כי לא רכבה עד שנפרדו ממנה המלוים .

24:61 And Rebecca arose: After they sent her off and departed from her, she got up and rode, because it is not proper, when a group is accompanying, for the rider to ride and the others to go on foot. This is not the polite way. In this story Scripture teaches us the polite way because she did not ride until those accompanying her had departed from her.

The exercise of justice and kindness achieves a dual purpose in Kimhi's thought: (a) it permits the person involved to rise to a higher level of existence since these moral qualities are prerequisites for achieving the *נפש העליונה* ; and (b), it helps to create a peaceful society. His concern for proper conduct extends beyond the pyramidal structure of social strata in a society and has to do with lateral relationships among peers as well.

מט:ה כל חמס: הרבותיהם חיו כל חמס כי
שלא ברין הרבו כל אנשי שכס אם שכס חסא מה
חסאו כולם ושמו אחי ואח בימי בסכנה גדולה
לולי רחמי האל שהיה חתמו על הגוים .

49:5 Weapons of violence: Their swords were weapons of violence, because unlawfully they killed all the people of Shechem. If Shechem [the individual] sinned, how did everyone sin? They [Simeon and Levy] placed me and my house in great danger, were it not for the mercy of God whose terror was upon the nations.

The violence of Simeon and Levy is generally condemned on all sides. The condemnation, however, is based on various levels of wrongdoing. In the Bible, Jacob reproves his sons for their act and complains that they have now put him in great danger. Ibn Ezra states, "...because of the violence they (Simeon and Levy) committed; that, after they made a covenant with the men of Shechem, they slew them through deceit." Kimhi reveals here a finer ethical sensitivity in pointing to a more basic wrong, namely, collective punishment.

ל:טז ויבא יעקב:ומה שיצאה לאה לקראתו
מדרך המוסר עשתה זאת לפי שיעקב לא ידע בדבר
והיה הולך כדרכו לבית רחל ולא היה מדרך
המוסר שתוציאנו לאה מבית אחותה אחר שנכנס שם

30:16 And Jacob came:And how was it that Leah went out to meet him, she did this out of an ethical consideration. Jacob did not know of the matter and was going, as was his way, to Rachel's tent and it would not have been ethical of Leah if she had taken him out of the tent of her sister after he had entered there....

Kimhi's ethical sensitivity is broad and all-encompassing, covering the gamut of human behavior. It is also deep, and subtle, showing psychological insight. Had Jacob been permitted to enter Rachel's tent first, any number of

embarrassing situations could have arisen. There could have been open strife; Jacob might have been forced to make a choice in the presence of two women; Rachel would have felt deep hurt. There is, however, also the subtle hint that by meeting Jacob alone, Leah is able, through her feminine ways, to entice Jacob and yet preserve her dignity. In Rachel's tent her jealousy and sexual desire would have been brought out into the open all too blatantly, Kimhi's comment shows that he was conscious of the delicacy of the situation.

אֵיכָּהֶן וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם: בְּשָׂרָא בְּרֹאִי
מִטָּה אָמַר תִּדְשָׁא הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמִּים תּוֹצִיא הָאָרֶץ
וְכִשְׁבָּא לְבָרֹא אֶת הָאָדָם שֶׁהוּא הַמּוֹרֵכֵב בְּאַחֲרֹת
אָמַר נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם וְלַמַּעַלְתָּ הָאָדָם וְלִכְבוֹדוֹ בְּרֹאִי
בְּאַחֲרֹנָה לַהֲדוּיָע שְׂכָל נִבְרָאִי מִטָּה נִבְרָאוּ בַּעֲבוּרֵי
וְשִׁמְהוֹ אָדוֹן עַל כּוֹלָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמֵם אָדָם
וְאָדָם הוּא לְקוֹחַ מִהָאָדָמָה וְאֵם כֵּן לִמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ
אָדָם הָרִי בִּם הַחַיִּים הָאֲחֵרִים הֵם מִהָאָדָמָה אֲלֵא רִצָּה
לְהַבְדִּילוֹ בְּשִׁמְמוֹ מִשָּׂאֵר בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים כִּמּוֹ שֶׁהוּא
מִבְּדֵל מֵהֶם בְּרוּךְ וּבְגוֹף כִּי הַחַיִּים הָאֲחֵרִים
יִדּוּעִים כִּי הֵם מֵאָדָמָה רוּחָם וְגוֹפָם וְאֵין צוּר
לִיחַס לָאָדָמָה אֲכַל אָדָם שְׂרוּתוֹ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם קָרָא
אוֹתוֹ אָדָם לְהַבְדִּילוֹ מִחַיִּים הָעֲלִיּוֹנִים שְׁאֵין לָהֶם
חֵלֶק כָּלֵל מֵאָדָמָה וְאֵינוּ צְרוּךְ לוֹמַר אוֹתָם שְׁאֵינָם
גּוֹפּוֹת שֶׁהֵם כּוֹלֵם רוּחָנִיִּים אֲלֵא אִפִּילוֹ אוֹתָם
שֶׁהֵם בְּעֵלֵי גּוֹף אֵין גּוֹפָם מֵאָדָמָה כָּלֵל וְאֵין
וְסוּדָם מֵאַרְבַּע יְסוּדוֹת שֶׁהֵם אֲדָמִיִּים כִּי הֵם יְסוּד
תְּמִיּוּת כִּמּוֹ שֶׁחֲקְרוּ בְּעֵלֵי הַמַּחְקֵר וְכִשְׁכִּירָא הַקְּבִ"ה
אֶת הָאָדָם מִהָעֲלִיּוֹנוֹת וְהַתַּחֲתוֹנוֹת קָרָאוּ אָדָם
כְּלוּמַר אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂרוּתוֹ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם אָדָם הוּא
גּוֹפוֹ מִן הָאָדָמָה וּמוֹשְׁכּוֹ בְּאָדָמָה וְשֵׁם חַיּוֹתוֹ
וְתַרְבוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָטָה לְצוֹר עֲלִיוֹן אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ אֲלֵא
אֶחָד מִנֵּי אֱלֹהִים .
כְּדִמּוֹחָנוֹ: כְּלוּמַר לִמָּה נַעֲשֶׂה בְּצַלְמִינוּ כְּדִי שִׁיְהִיָּה
דּוּמָה לָנוּ שִׁישְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּשִׁכְלִיּוֹת שִׁישְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּשִׁכְלִיּוֹת
לְפִי הַכֹּחַ שִׁיְהִיָּה לוֹ בַּעֲוֹדָנוּ גּוֹף וְהוּא בְּאָדָמָה
אֵם יִרְצָה יוֹכַל לְהַדְמוֹת קֶצֶת אֲלֵינוּ כִּי בִידּוֹ
תִּהְיֶה הַבְּהִירָה .

1:26 And God said, Let us make man:
 Concerning the rest of the lower creations
 He said, "Let the earth put forth grass,"
 "Let the waters swarm," "Let the earth
 give forth," and when He came to create
 man, who is composed of other elements,
 He said, "Let us make man," and for the
 exaltation of man and in his honor He
 created him last, to make known that all
 the lower creations were created for his
 sake. He placed man as master over all
 of them....And He called their name Adam,
 and Adam was taken from the ground. [adamah]
 Such being the case why was his name called
 Adam? Are not the other living things from
 the ground also? Rather, He wanted to
 distinguish him by means of his name from
 the rest of the living creatures, just as
 he was distinguished from them in spirit
 and in body. For the other living things
 are known to be from the ground, both in
 their spirits and their bodies, and there
 is no need to ascribe them to the ground.
 However, man, whose spirit is from Heaven,
 He called Adam, to distinguish him from the
 upper forms of life which have no part at
 all from the earth. There is no need to
 say that they are incorporeal, because they
 are totally spiritual. Even those who do
 have corporeal form, their bodies are not
 of the four elements which are earthly.
 They are of a fifth element as the natural
 philosophers demonstrated. And when God
 created man from the upper and lower elements,
 He called him Adam, that is to say, even
 though his spirit is from the heavens, he
 is Adam: his body is from the earth and
 his dwelling place is on the earth, and
 there are his existence and his culture.
 Only one in a thousand among men will
 incline toward the higher level that is in him...

In our image: That is to say, why make him
 in our image?, in order that he be like us
 in that he uses the intellect....That he
 will make use of his intellect according
 to the potentiality which is still in his
 body, though he is of the earth. If he
 wants to, he will be able slightly to become
 like us because the choice will be his.

Kimhi is intent on demonstrating the uniqueness of man among all of God's other creatures. Man's dignity is to be found in that uniqueness. For Kimhi, however, man is not simply a higher form of animal. The difference is not solely in degree, but in essence. Thus in 2:18 Kimhi remarks:

כנגדו: ומה שהבדילו משאר היצורים החיים
כי כולם נבראו זכר ונקבה ואדם נברא לבדו
היה זה לטובת האדם ולכבודו כמו שהוא מובדל
משאר החיים בחמרו וצורתו....

For him:....He separated him [Adam] from the rest of the living creatures, for they were all created male and female, but Adam was created by himself. This was for man's benefit and honor, as he is separated from the rest of the living things in form and in basic substance....

Man's very name, Adam, is to indicate the distinction. Unlike the animals, only man combines within himself both the lower and upper elements.

Kimhi's comment on **בצלמנו כדמותנו** strongly implies that man's ideal purpose is to live in the world of pure intellect. This, however, is possible only for the angels. Man's earthly component, also represented by Eve, is a kind of concession to make it possible for him to live in the material world. This total "otherness" of man is also indicated for Kimhi by the very sequence of creation. Man is the crowning glory of creation.

אינו וירדו בדגת הים: להודיע כי כל נבראי
מטה לא נבראו אלא בעבור האדם ושיהיה הוא
בשכלו מלך ומושל עליהם שאם לא כן לא היה
בעולם השפל מי שיכיר מי בראו.

1:26 And they will rule over the fish of the sea: To make known that all the lower creations were created only for man and that he, by means of his intellect, will be king and ruler over them. For if it were not so there would be no one in the lower world who knew who created him.

ה'ב ויקרא את שמם אדם ביום הבראם: ביום הבראם קראם אדם כמו שאמר נעשה אדם בצלמנו כי לכך בראם שיהיו אדם ולא בהמה ועוף והאשה נקראה אדם כי על שניהם אמר נעשה אדם כמו שאמר וירדו ובשם הבדילם משאר החיים אשר באדמה כי נשמת האדם היא עליונה אלא שבו חלק מאדמה יען כי הבורא נברא מאדמה לפיכך אם ימשך אחר טבע האדמה הרי הוא כאילו אין בו חלק עליוני.

5:2 And He called their names Adam on the day they were created: On the day that they were created He called them Adam as it is said, "Let us make man in our image;" for this purpose He created them, that they would be men and not beast nor bird; and the woman was called man because He said concerning both of them, "Let us make man," as it says: "Let them rule." He distinguished them in name from the rest of the living beings on earth. Man has a higher [level] soul, but there is a part in it which is of the earth, because the body is created from the earth, therefore, if man allows himself to be drawn in the direction of his earthly nature, he will be as if he were entirely of the earth, as if there is not a higher element in him.

Kimhi is careful to indicate that man's rule over the lower creatures is based not merely on a divine edict, but derives from the superior quality of man, namely, his intellect. Man's authority and dignity are therefore innate by virtue of his intellect. However, man has to constantly work at

meriting this superiority by exercising choices which will develop his intellectual powers. When man descends to the sensual level, he forfeits this privileged position and becomes equal to the lower creatures. Man's earthly component therefore serves as a perennial warning to him that he can fall from his exalted position.

ב:ז וייצר יהוה אלהים את האדם עפר מן האדמה:
זכר העפר אף על פי שארבע היסודות היו
מעורבות בו לפי שהוא עיקר היצירה בנבראי
היבשה ובנבראי הימים הם העיקר אף על פי שהם
משאר היסודות גם כן ולפיכך היותם במים
וכעוף האויר הוא העיקר יסודו לפיכך הוא
עף כאויר
מן הארץ: כלומר מן המשובח שבה כי גוף האדם
הוא חואר גקי משאר בעלי חיים וצורתו היא
השלמות בצורות לפיכך הוא הולך בקומה זקופה
וכתב החכם יוסף בן צדיק כי זה לפי שהחומר
שלו זך ודק בין שאר הגופים כמו שאנו רואים
את שמן הנר בעודו זך השלהבת ממנו תעלה בקבו
ישר לזכות השמן לא כן אם השמן הוא עכור
השלהבת עולה ממנו מעוותת ולא בקו ישר.

2:7 And God fashioned man out of the dust of the earth: The dust is mentioned here even though the four elements were intermingled in him, because it [the dust] is the major element in the making of land creatures. For water creatures, water is the primal element, even though they are also made from the other elements. Therefore their life is in the wate. Concerning birds, the air is the major element therefore they fly in the air...

From the earth: That is to say, from the best in it, because the body of man is a figure more pure than the rest of living things and his form is the most perfect of all forms, therefore he walks with an erect posture. The sage, Joseph ben Tzadik, wrote that this is because his substance is purer and more refined than

the rest of the bodies, just as we see the oil of a light which is still pure, its flame rises in a straight line reflecting the [quality] of the oil; is it not so that if the oil is not pure the flame rises up misshapen and not in a straight line?

So intent is Kimhi on indicating the superiority of man, that while he concedes, by necessity, that man was created from the earth, he nevertheless goes out of his way to indicate that the basic substance that man does share with the animals is yet somewhat different and better where man is concerned.

בַּיּוֹם וַיֵּצֵר:.... וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּצֵר
 אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּצֵר אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּצֵר אֱלֹהִים
 כֹּלָם כֹּמוֹ שֶׁהָיָה רֹאֶה אוֹתָם כַּעֲבֹד לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁל
 וַיִּשְׁקָרָא לָהֶם שְׁמוֹת לִפְנֵי טָבָא הַנֶּחָדָן בָּהֶם כִּפִּי
 חֲכָמָתוֹ שֶׁנֶּחָדָן הָאֵל בָּר יוֹתֵר עַל כֹּלָם.

2:19 And He created: And since He created man and said to him that he would rule over them [the animals] He brought them before man to say that he would rule over all of them as he saw them, as a slave before a master, and that he should call them names according to the nature given to them by means of his wisdom, which God gave him more than to any other being.

Man's superiority and dignity is to be indicated in more than a purely theoretical sense. It manifests itself in the sense that man practices imitatio dei. Kimhi alludes to this many times in making reference to man's development of his intellect and moral qualities, all of which he saw as reflective of God. Here, however, Kimhi gives us a more concrete example by showing that man is given the dignified role of being a partner with God in the process of creation.

The animals are purposely left unnamed by God so that man may complete this task.

ס:ו בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם: כי הוא נכבד
מכל הנבראים השפלים עד שהאל בראו בצלמו
בשכל נתן לו לפיכל יש לשאר הנבראים שיראו
ממנו וגם איש את אחיו לא ישחית גופו וצלמו
כי אם י הרגהו הנה השחית מעשה האל הנכבד
בשפלים הוא עשה אותו בצלמו והוא השחיתו
הנה עשה זה כנגד האל לבטל את מעשיו ואף
בפחותים מן האדם לא היה רשות לאדם
להשחיתם עד שזוה האל לנה וגם בצומת שהוא
פחות מן החי היה צריך מצות האל להחזירם לאדם
ולחזה כמו שאמר הנה נתתי לכם את כל עשב
וכן צוה האל לשפוך דם האדם לחטאו כמו שזוה
בחורח משה וזה בראויים לענוש מיתה לפי הטאם
כל חוטא כראוי לו לפי שהוא השחית צלמו תהלה
בעברו על מצות האל והנה אין צלם אלהים ושכל
לעובר כי יגזור שישמור העבד מצות אדוניו
גם שכלו ימנע אותו החטא כל שכן כשהוא מצוה
האדון .

9:6 For in the image of God He made him:
For he is honored above all the lower
creations because God made him in His
image with the intellect which He gave him.
Therefore it is incumbent upon the rest
of the creations to respect him and also
man [should respect] his brother and not
destroy his form or his image, for if he
kills him, he is destroying the work of
God, the most honored among the lower
beings. God has made man in His image and
if man destroys another man, this is done
against God to nullify His works. Even
the most insignificant of men, man did
not have permission to destroy even before
God commanded Noah. Concerning plant life,
which is a lesser form than animal life,
the commandment of God was necessary to
allow Adam and Eve to eat them, as it is
said; "Behold, I give to you all matter
of grass," and so did God command to spill
man's blood for his sin, as He commanded
in the Torah of Moses. And this for those
deserving of capital punishment according
to their sins; every sinner must receive

the punishment he deserves because he destroyed His image first in his transgression of God's commandments. Behold, there is no image of God and intellect in the transgressor, because the intellect decrees that the servant observe the command of his master, also, his reason will hold him back from sin, all the more so when it is a command of his Master.

Kimhi's comment here has very interesting implications that go far beyond imbuing man with a special worth and dignity. It insinuates moral and legal considerations as well, which underly the Judaic view of law. An offense against man becomes simultaneously an offense also against God. This becomes especially evident in moral and criminal cases. The taking of a life unlawfully must result in death for the killer. No compensation is allowed because life belongs to God, and there can be no human substitute. Likewise in the case of a woman who commits adultery, even if the husband should wish to forgive her, he may not do so, for in profaning herself she has also profaned God's image. Final forgiveness rests with God and not with the husband. What may therefore appear as undue severity in Judaic law actually reflects a higher view of man's basic worth and dignity.

Notes for Chapter V

- ¹ Seferno, Genesis 16:6 כדי שתכיר שהיא משועבדת ולא חבזה עוד את גברת.

In order that she understand that she [Hagar] is enslaved and should not again insult her mistress.

- ² Ramban, Genesis 16:6 חטאה אמנו בענוי הזה וגם אברם בהניחו לעשות כן.

Our matriarch committed a sin through this oppression and also Abram in allowing her to do this.

- ³ Ibn Ezra, Genesis 19:31 יתכן שהיתה לו אשה אחרת ומתה בתחלה והבנות השבו כי אש וגפרית היה בכל הארץ כמבול המים.

It is possible that he had another wife and she had died earlier and the daughters thought that the fire and brimstone was all over the world as in the case of the flood of waters.

Ramban, Genesis 19:31 כי אמרו ... ולא לחנם הצילו יהוה והנה היו צנועות ולא רצו לאמר לאביהם שישא אותן כי בן נח מותר בבתו.

For they said...not in vain did God save us - and they were modest and did not want to request from their father that he marry them, for a Noahite may marry his daughter.

- ⁴ Rashi, Genesis 19:33 אבל בכירה שפתחה בזנות פרטמה המכובד כמפורש.

But the older one who commenced with the act of whoring the verse makes public her act by stating explicitly [that she slept with her father].

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of Kimhi's commentary on Genesis has shown that he approaches the biblical text with a scientific spirit. Wherever possible, Kimhi seeks to interpret Scripture in accord with reason. He reveals a strong prejudice against the miraculous and only grudgingly concedes the possibility of miracles when all other rational explanations fail him. Thus he seeks to explain away animal speech and other phenomena which are offensive to reason and go counter to the laws of nature. He is more tolerant of those miraculous events which are normative to nature and depend on special timing such as the deep sleep of Adam and the plaguing of Abimelech. Kimhi also rejects all allusions to anthropomorphism. In order to avoid the direct contact of God and man, he introduces "intermediaries", who at times may take on the form of angels. Yet, despite his general scientific and philosophic approach, Kimhi is forced at times to be dogmatic, as when he suggests that God's word was capable of bringing forth creation. At other times he is inconsistent with his own view of the separation of the spiritual from the material, as when he has God placing a physical sign on Cain. These exceptions do not constitute a strain for Kimhi, for following Maimonides he was able to rationalize that such miracles were written into nature at the time of creation.

Kimhi further follows Maimonides in equating morality with intellect. This led him to assert that man's moral behavior is based not only on written laws but on an inner rational sense.

Kimhi's position with regard to understanding the laws of Scripture is essentially similar to that of Saadia and Maimonides. He operates with the basic assumption that all laws have valid reasons behind them; in some cases the reasons are obvious to us, in others they are not. This, however, does not keep him from speculating about the underlying rationale even when he is not certain.

With regard to prophecy, Kimhi's position is by no means original, but does tend to be unique insofar as he does not duplicate exactly the views of any one of his predecessors, but forms a conflate of all of them. Thus, Kimhi adapts in part Maimonides' view that equates prophecy with intellectual attainment, but tends more in the direction of Halevi's position that also takes into consideration personal piety and moral traits. While Kimhi agrees with Halevi and Maimonides that prophecy is limited to the Hebrew people, he nevertheless extends it also to gentiles when it concerns the Jewish people. In the final analysis, Kimhi adopts neither Maimonides' nor Halevi's positions but accords more with the views of Saadia who holds that prophecy is initiated primarily by God. While admitting prophecy's ultimate divine origin, Kimhi yet discerned various gradations of prophecy as it filtered through dreams

and visions. In accordance with his general theological position which emphasizes the distance between man and God, Kimhi interposes the ruah hakodesh and the ruah hanevuah as instruments of prophecy. Man becomes more receptive to prophecy when he diminishes his sensuality.

Providence, according to Kimhi, is extended only to the Jewish people, but does not automatically include the individual Jew, who might lack merit. On the other hand, a gentile may be eligible for it under exceptional circumstances when the Jewish people is involved. This is also true for animals, who ordinarily receive providential care only as species. In Kimhi's view even the very land of Israel merits a special providence. The quality of providence received by an individual varies proportionately with his intellectual and moral qualities. Thus Kimhi's treatment of providence ties in directly with the concept of reward and punishment, which in turn implies that providence is a coefficient of God's justice and absolute might. For Kimhi, God's providence can manifest itself in any number of ways, including acts of omission as well as commission, direct intervention as well as the use of intermediaries, and when need be, also acts of trickery. Kimhi reveals an absolute faith in God's justice and providence even when this involves him in the moral dilemma of why the just suffer. Here he follows Maimonides in asserting that there must be a just cause which escapes our limited knowledge.

The special providential care that man enjoys is related to man's superiority over the other creatures, as is set forth in the first chapters of Genesis. For Kimhi, the distinction between man and animal is based not on degree, but on essence. Man is to exist in the state of intellect and to give emphasis to his higher humanity by negating those parts of himself that tend toward animalistic sensuality. The ultimate dignity and uniqueness ascribed to man apart from the rest of the animal kingdom has to do with the fact that only man is capable of making moral choices and acting in imitatio Dei.

In questions of ethics Kimhi's approach is direct and uncompromising. He possesses a clear sense of right and wrong and states his position forthrightly even if he must condemn the actions of people to whom the Bible is sympathetic. For Kimhi the ethical instinct is not something that man derives from his outside environment, but represents an innate, intuitive quality. The derech musar, ethical behavior, is to be valued beyond its social consequences; it represents a means whereby man develops a "higher soul" and therefore fulfills himself as a higher being.

Kimhi's commentary, because of its popular and easy style, must have familiarized his readers with philosophic and theological questions which had been considered the private domain of scholars. It embodies Kimhi's creed;

it is didactic in a practical way, teaching the reader to live in accordance with the precepts of Torah. Thus, Kimhi's objectives in writing the commentary were realized.

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