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"It Is No Empty Thing": Nahmanides and the Search for Omnisignificance*

Traditional Jewish biblical exegesis grappled from early on with the difficulties inherent in parsing a divine text expressed in human idiom, a text "fraught with background."[1] The tensions involved in determining the exact demarcation between these two realms—the divine and human—has fueled the elaboration of new categories of meaning and new strategies for making a difficult text meaningful.

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

> the basic assumption underlying all of rabbinic exegesis that the slightest details of the biblical text have a meaning that is both comprehensible and significant. Nothing in the Bible . . . ought to be explained as the product of chance, or, for that matter, as an emphatic or rhetorical form, or anything similar, nor ought its reasons to be assigned to the realm of Divine unknowables. Every detail is put there to teach something new and important, and it is capable of being discovered by careful analysis.[2]

If we equate Kugel's "something new and important" with aggadic or halakhic truths, his definition is a restatement of the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 32:47: "For it is not an empty thing for you, it is your very life, and if [it appears] devoid [of moral or halakhic meaning], it is you [who have not worked out its moral or legal signifi-

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cancel."[3] Kugel's "meaning that is both comprehensible and significant" thus in rabbinic terms has a sharply limited and highly focused range of admissible interpretation; omnisignificance is restricted to interpretations which give the text a moral or legal dimension.

Resh Lakish's comment in *Hullin* 60b demonstrates this focusing. "There are verses (*mikra'ot*) which are worthy of being burnt, but they are [after all] essential components of Torah (*hen hen gufei Torah*)." Resh Lakish then attempts to tease moral significance from the geographical and historical data recorded in Deut 2:23 and Num 21:26, which are explained as demonstrating how God arranged matters so that Israel could conquer Philistine and Moabite land while still maintaining the oath which Abraham swore to Abimelekh (Gen 21:23) and the prohibition of "vexing Moab" at Deut 2:9.

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

It also presents a challenge. Having claimed such profundity for *all* of Scripture, the rabbinic program may be expected to deliver on its promise. However, as we shall see, for reasons having to do with the problematics of the concept itself, and certain historical developments, that promise was never fulfilled.

It may be worth pausing a moment to examine the term "omnisignificance." What advantage do we gain by its use over the more traditional "midrash"? It has often been remarked that the term "midrash" is ambiguous, serving to denote a collection of rabbinic texts, a genre of literature and certain homiletical methods.[4] It would seem high time that this terminological confusion be resolved. However, by focusing on ends rather than means, on the hierarchy of preference rather than on the exegetical techniques employed, "omnisignificance" introduces yet another distinction without resolving the ambiguity of the other uses of "midrash."

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

There is another aspect to this problem. Omnisignificance assumes a uniform narrative or expositional density, where the biblical text is uniformly informative on some level. However, at least as concerns *peshat* and the preserved halakhic *derashot* available to us, this is not altogether clear. For example, while the expression *ish ish*,[6] or even *ish* alone,[7] is sometimes interpreted as including women,[8] at other times this is unnecessary, since the verse itself includes them within its purview—*ish o ishah*.[9] Why these variations? For that matter, why variations such as *nefesh* or *adam*? These questions are never raised in a systematic way.

Thus, the *Bavli*'s restatement of the omnisignificant ideal—*kol heikha de-ika lemidrash darshinan*—"wherever we can draw distinctions [between similar or identical biblical texts] we do,"[10] or more expansively, "wherever we can make legally or spiritually meaningful interpretations, we do"—expresses both the ideal and its impossibility of realization, for the implication is that if we cannot—we do not.[11] It is noteworthy that this statement, which is anonymous, was in all probability made more than three centuries after R. Akiva's most audacious attempt to attain the ideal.[12] The well-known talmudic passage (*Menahot* 29b) which describes the scene in Heaven as Moses watched the Holy One, blessed be He, completing the Torah by inscribing "crowns" on the letters, poignantly expresses the dilemma. On inquiring as to the purpose of these crowns, he is informed that many generations hence, R. Akiva would derive "piles and piles" of halakhot from each crown. We may ask, in the spirit of that story, where *are* those piles and piles of halakhot expounded from the crowns of the letters? The very *locus classicus* of omnisignificance points up either its loss, or its lack.

It should also be noted that, at least with reference to the medieval—as opposed to the talmudic—use of the term *"peshat"*, omnisignificance need not be uniquely posited of midrash; *peshat*-oriented approaches may also obey the omnisignificant imperative. One consequence of this is that approaching the history of Jewish biblical exegesis from an "omnisignificant" perspective changes our view of the goals, purposes and achievements of Jewish biblical commentary.

If the antonym of midrash is "the plain sense meaning"—a difficult enough term to define[13]—what is the antonym of omnisignificance? Non-significance? Arbitrariness? Meaninglessness?[14] Clearly, if my qualification of Kugel's definition be accepted, an omnisignificant interpretation must be contrasted with one which lacks halakhic or theological value. Thus, approaching rabbinic expositions of Scripture from an omnisignificant point of view provides a means of

assessing the success of its program "from within." Certainly, this point of view is valuable in setting the terms of future research.

The omnisignificant imperative proceeds directly from the view of Torah as divine revelation and serves to justify midrashic approaches to Torah; nevertheless, as noted, use of this principle was not universally applied to all biblical texts nor was the meaning restricted to narrow halakhic or moral categories. Indeed, *peshat* interpretations are not excluded, so long as they have halakhic or edificatory value.

In classic rabbinic texts, apparent redundancies and duplications are interpreted casuistically, so as to draw distinctions between apparently similar, identical or contradictory phrases, verses or passages.[15] While the *Bavli* states this principle only in regard to legal texts (as in *Bekhorot* 6b), it clearly applies, though with the application of different midrashic methods, to non-legal passages as well. This method of dealing with redundancies has been expanded to include all sorts of midrashic interpretation, and has become typical of the traditional approach to most of the problems outlined above. As Tosafot noted long ago, only when midrashic methods fail do we fall back on *peshat* approaches.[16]

Indeed, the history of "normative" Jewish biblical exegesis may be seen from the perspective of the rise of omnisignificance in the tannaitic era, and its transmutation, through both an increasing use of certain methods and a dropping of others, during the succeeding centuries.

For example, some rules originally intended to limit midrashic interpretation were forced into omnisignificant service. The rule that "every passage (*parashah*) which is said and repeated is repeated *only* for the innovation (*ḥiddush*) it contains," became instead, in the *Bavli*, another omnisignificant midrashic exegetical principle.[17] Thus, originally, when in tannaitic use,[18] the rule served the purposes of what we may term "*peshat*." By its use in reference to whole passages, its thrust was to limit midrashic interpretation of each feature of each repetitive *parashah*. It focused attention on the differences between the two rather than their similarities, and thus narrowed the scope of midrashic interpretation.[19] It was only the former that could serve the program of rabbinic midrash. In the hands of the *Bavli*, this was turned inside-out; with the term "*parashah*" referring even to a few words repeated within a *verse*, the limitation on chapter-explication became a license for providing any repetition within a verse—a word, phrase or clause—with midrashic import.[20]

However, even in the heyday of midrashic creation there were objections to the all-embracing character of the omnisignificant program. Thus, R. Yosi ha-Galili protests R. Akiva's extension of Lev

6:23, which specifies "all sin offerings," to all sacrifices of higher sanctity (*kodeshei kodashim*). "Akiva, though you extend [the phrase] *kol hatat* all day long, there is nothing there but sin offerings!"[21] However, R. Yosi ha-Galili is himself not a "strict constructionist," and elsewhere R. Ishmael can be seen as protesting R. Yosi's extension of a midrashically derived rule (*lamed*) already derived from another such exposition (*lamed*).[22] And, of course, there was the time-honored principle that "the Torah speaks in human idiom," which theoretically serves as a "cap" to midrashic exposition. However, the latter is applied only narrowly in talmudic times,[23] and its tannaitic origin has been disputed.[24]

Furthermore, beginning early in the amoraic period, use of the superfluous *vav*, which represents one omnisignificant extreme, seems to have ended. From R. Yohanan's remarks to Resh Lakish regarding such a use on the part of R. Eleazar b. Pedath, "Did you see ben Pedath expounding as Moses from the mouth of the Most High?", we may understand that he disapproved of such midrashic exegesis in his own time. Resh Lakish responds by pointing out that R. Eleazar's *derushah* is not original with him, but is merely a citation from *Sifra* (*Yevamot* 72b). And indeed, an examination of R. Yohanan's legal *derushot* as preserved in the *Bavli* does not reveal even one superfluous *vav* being used for such purposes. The same holds true for his disciple-associates R. Eleazar and Resh Lakish. Apparently for R. Yohanan and his close associates, at least as they are represented in the *Bavli*, only Tannaim could expound biblical texts in that way.[25]

The superfluous *vav* is representative of the entire midrashic enterprise; with the loss of this "hook" on which to hang midrashic interpretation came the loss of similar particles—*o*, *heh* and the like. Indeed, the form "*ein li ela X, Y minalan*," which appears some 170 times in the *Bavli*, *always appears in baraitot*, is often based on the exposition of such particles—and is never attributed to an Amora. In contrast, "*im eino 'inyan*" expositions, which always apply to a superfluous word and not a letter or particle, continued to be used in amoraic and post-amoraic times, though the technique hardly survived the transition to the geonic period.[26] On the other hand, one exegetical means of dealing with duplicate halakhic passages in a "jurisprudential" way, where each listing of a particular prohibition represents one "count" (*la'avor 'alav bi-shenei lavin*), continued through the amoraic period, but apparently ended with R. Ashi. Of the five instances in which such suggestions are rejected, R. Ashi and his son Mar b. R. Ashi, are responsible for three cases, and the remaining two are anonymous and are probably to be dated after R.

Ashi's time.[27] We may thus distinguish three major periods of rabbinic legal midrash: the tannaitic, the amoraic and post-amoraic. Such periodization has been shown, with reference to other midrashic techniques, in the work of Michael Chernick.[28]

Suffice it to say here that, as has long been observed, the Amoraim were much more restrained, on the whole, than the Tannaim, and their successors were still more restrained in their use of these techniques. Indeed, the Rishonim recognized that the system had all but closed down; as R. Aaron ha-Levi put it in the thirteenth century: "We do not have the right to expound verses which the Rabbis have not [already] expounded."[29]

The Karaite challenge forced would-be defenders of the faith to turn their attention to *peshat*. However, since rabbinic (or rabbanite, in this context) Halakhah could hardly be defended on that ground alone, R. Saadiah Gaon, perhaps the most influential of the anti-Karaite polemicists, devised a new strategy, one which further marginalized midrashic exegesis.

By asserting that all the halakhot which seem to have been derived by *derash* were actually transmitted orally and only provided with *asmakhtot* in the text, despite clear talmudic evidence to the contrary, R. Saadiah Gaon and others attempted to blunt the force of the Karaite denigration of such methods.

As R. Saadiah writes in the introduction to his *Tafsir*, "In all, we find seven essential elements which require us [to resort] to Tradition in regard [to the proper understanding] of *mizvot* whose reason is unknown (*shim'iyot*)." He then proceeds to enumerate the various parameters with regard to the performance of the *mizvot* which can be known only through Tradition—matters such as the proper manufacture of ritual objects, the manner of observance, pertinent measures of whatever sort, including time, *mizvot* whose biblical source is obscure, or whose nature, as described in Scripture, is obscure, etc.[30]

Most revealing is his attack on Karaite methods of biblical exegesis, in particular their use of analogy.[31] Since many midrashic *middot* may be categorized as forms of analogy (*bekesh*, *gezerah shawah*, *binyan av* or *mah mazinu*) or work by analogy (*kelal u-ferat* and its near relations, *ribbuy* and *mi'ut*, etc.), we may understand his strategic retreat from this battleground and his insistence on Tradition alone. Depriving halakhic midrash of real authority prepared the ground for his counterattack on Karaite legal exegesis.[32]

This view continued to exercise influence so long as Karaism remained a threat, and its traces are to be found in the works of later Geonim, R. Samuel ha-Nagid, R. Yehudah ha-Levi, and Ibn Ezra, as Jay Harris points out.[33]

As the Karaite challenge receded, or in places in which it was not of concern, this view of the *pro forma* nature of rabbinic midrash did not take hold. As might be expected, this holds true for those most concerned with explicating the intricacies of the talmudic text as such, rather than studying it as a nascent law-code. Rashi, the Tosafists, and those who followed in their path could scarcely ignore the sheer amount of space devoted to the topic within the talmuds and halakhic midrashim. However, all that this effort could achieve was to keep alive a certain interest in retrieving the methods used. Reviving them was out of the question, since, as noted above, the process of limiting them had set in long before, already in the time of the early Amoraim.[34]

With the rise of "*peshat*-oriented" medieval biblical exegesis, first as a response to the Karaite challenge in the Middle East, and later in France and Spain, as a natural outgrowth of an emphasis on *peshat*,[35] the challenge of producing a complete, connected commentary could no longer be ignored, and a number of different strategies evolved to account for features of the biblical text which could not comfortably be fitted into the rabbinic scheme.

In order to produce coherent commentaries on a variegated and gapped text, the early medieval commentators were forced to consider the limits and relative importance of a host of theological and exegetical principles, both those inherited from earlier times and those prompted by their new engagement with the biblical text. Classic omnisignificance took new forms, and, at times, all but substituted exegetical verity, now known as *peshat*, for the search for legal and moral teachings of a text "fraught with background."

The decreasing interest in the study of classic legal midrashic methods was reversed with the increasing interest paid to the intricacies of talmudic dialectic and the composition of commentaries on it, chiefly those of Rashi and the Tosafists. Naturally enough, those whose concern centered around the talmudic text itself felt the need to understand classic legal midrashic methods. They were not alone in their concern, however; even the German Pietists, the Hasidei Ashkenaz, who opposed the introduction of Tosafist dialectic in Talmud study, "stressed the importance of Bible study as a critical link in the halakhic process, as it had been viewed in the pre-Crusade period."[36]

However, concern alone does not produce a progam, and the lack of the means to carry it out would clearly hamper efforts to put it into practice. Despite their interest, this is no less the case with regard to the Tosafists. Thus, in the course of time, such interests were channeled into the production of super-commentaries on Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch, and the focus of such commentaries turned

from the biblical text to that of Rashi's commentary. Moreover, due to
the essential irrelevance of legal midrash to contemporary halakhic
concerns, the forum for discussion of these methods shifted from tal-
mudic commentary to those super-commentaries referred to above,
hundreds of which were composed between the fifteenth and nine-
teenth centuries. But the concern for meaningfulness, and the at-
tempt to apply the omnisignificant imperative to as much of the Pen-
tateuch as possible, predates the fifteenth century. It has merely been
transmuted.

Nevertheless, this resurgent interest in legal midrash, focused pri-
marily on Rashi's commentary as it was, carried with it an implicit ad-
mission of failure to account for every feature encountered in Torah.
Post-talmudic exegetes and halakhists could no longer be able to
employ midrashic methods, and there was no possibility of extending
such methods to (Pentateuchal) texts which had not been dealt with
previously. So much for the theory. In practice, "there is no study hall
without its innovation," and such extensions were suggested as by-
products of the exegetical process.

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As noted above, even during the tannaitic era, the rabbinic doctrine
of *lo davar rek* did not apply in equal measure to both legal and
non-legal contexts. We find little attempt to apply certain of the *mid-
dot*, such as the principle of *ribbuy*, to the latter, or, conversely, some
of the more wide-ranging *middot*, to the former. The distinction be-
tween legal and non-legal portions of the Torah, and the application
of these modes of interpretation, seems to have been recognized
early on.

However, once the classic midrashic methodologies were either
abandoned, as most of them were, or reinterpreted, as in the case of
"the Torah speaks in human terms" or "the Torah is not in chronolog-
ical order," the distinction between the two types of text became less
urgent, and, most often, aggadic (narrative) and halakhic (legal, and
more broadly, expositional[37]) texts tended to be treated the same.
What applied to one applied to the other.

From an omnisignificant perspective, *peshat* and *derash* are merely
alternate means of reaching a common goal. Thus, as Richard Steiner
has pointed out,[38] pashtanic exegetes may be categorized by the
weight they give omnisignificance in their consideration of competing
interpretations.

However, once the Torah was viewed from an accommodationist
perspective, that is, viewed as a text which takes human limitations

into account ("the Torah speaks in human terms),[39] new areas of om-
nisignificance opened up, since accommodationist techniques (e.g.,
resumptive repetition to help the reader maintain the flow of the
text) became significant.[40] Thus, Tosafot notes that when the Rabbis
cannot interpret a text midrashically, they fall back on *peshat.* When
we lack the interpretive power to provide proper midrashic meaning
to the text, we must perforce fall back on the humanly attainable
plain meaning. Rules of presumed tannaitic vintage,[41] such as "the
Torah speaks in human terms," which, in both tannaitic and amoraic
usage was restricted to only two or three expressions,[42] assumed a
new, much more general significance.

Tosafot's attempt to understand these rules, inherited from the tal-
mudic era, in a broader perspective, is also worthy of note. While
each of these rules, as rabbinically ordained so to speak, remains
valid, its application is circumscribed and delimited, finding its place
within the larger system of rabbinic exegesis.

Despite the growing power of omnisignificance, however, a ves-
tige of the older attitude, which saw revelation as self-validating,
without recourse to any moral or legal meanings, remained. The very
fact that Scripture records a date, a geographical or genealogical
datum, *ipso facto,* provides it with significance.[43]

To take an example which will stand at the center of our concern,
consider the formulation of the observation that there is no sequen-
tial order to the Torah (*ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*). In *Mekil-
ta,*[44] the rule serves to mark the placement within the body of a bibli-
cal book (Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, etc.) of verses which ought to
have opened the book (Exod 15:9, Lev 9:1, Is 6:1)—without any fur-
ther significance given to that placement. The "rule" serves merely as
a marker of an out-of-sequence verse, but provides no explanation of
why the verse is placed as it is.

In the *Bavli,* the observation of *ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*
appears only once, in regard to the placement of Num 1:1 (which
records a date in the "second month") and Num 9:1 (which records
one in the "first"); the latter passage is thus chronological earlier and
so is out of sequence.[45] However, the observation that this proves
that sequential order does not always reflect historical order, trans-
mitted by R. Menassah b. Tahlifa in the name of Rav, is not explained
in an omnisignificant manner. Three generations later, R. Papa limits
the rule's applicability to cases in which the asequentiality involves
two separate passages (*trei 'inyanei*), but not one.[46] His proof is from
the halakhic rule of *kelal u-ferat u-khlal,* which depends on sequen-
tiality for its very existence. Two aspects of this analysis should be
noted in the current context. It is of interest that while Rav in first

generation, following tannaitic tradition,[47] applied the rule to a *narrative* context, three generations later R. Papa, in turn, invalidated it for use, at least in part, in *expository* (halakhic) contexts. Second, neither of them provided an omnisignificant interpretation of this departure from sequentiality.

In its later history, the principle was indeed applied exclusively to narrative contexts, even though, strictly speaking, R. Papa's statement does not invalidate it for use in all halakhic contexts. Moreover, while early rabbinic evidence restricts use of the principle to the placement of individual verses within a passage, Rashi employs it to note the achronological placement of whole passages within a narrative context.

As noted, the *Mekilta* applies this rule to verses while Rav applies it to the relation of different passages; more typical in classic rabbinic texts is the application to sequences of items or subjects, as in the anonymous comment recorded in *Genesis Rabbah*, where the order of presentation of Jacob's wives, concubines and sons to Esau at Gen 33:2 is coordinated with his concern for them, *aḥaron aḥaron ḥaviv*, a remark which Rashi incorporates into his commentary.[48]

Sequentiality of this type was also employed to halakhic ends, as for example *Sifra's* analysis of Lev 5:8.

> "He shall offer that which is for the sin-offering first." What does this verse mean to say? If to teach that it comes before the burnt-offerings, surely it was already said: "And he shall prepare the second for a burnt-offering"?[49] Rather, this provides a general rule (*binyan av*) for all sin-offerings, that they take precedence over all burnt-offerings which accompany them, whether [the case concerns] a bird sin-offering [which precedes] a bird burnt-offering, or even [that] a bird sin-offering [precedes] an animal burnt-offering.[50]

This *binyan av* applies to most lists of ritual materials which include sin and burnt offerings, such as those at Lev 9:2, 3, 14:4, 6, 16:3, 5.

Sifra notes the exception at Lev 12:8, where the burnt offering is listed first.

> "One for a burnt-offering and one for a sin-offering." Everywhere a sin-offering is exchanged,[51] the sin-offering precedes the burnt-offering; here [regarding a parturient mother], where the burnt-offering has been exchanged,[52] the burnt-offering precedes the sin-offering.
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> Whatever [sacrifice] comes for a sin, the sin-offering precedes the burnt-offering; here, where [the sacrifices] do not come for a sin, the burnt-offering precedes the sin-offering. Wherever two [birds] come in place of a sin-offering, the sin-offering precedes the burnt-offering;

here, when two come in place of a sin-offering, the burnt-offering pre-
cedes the sin-offering.[53]

However, as the fourth-generation Amora, Rava, notes,[54] this still
does not solve our problem since, in the case of a parturient woman,
a bird sin-offering is prescribed in any case. Why then is the burnt-
offering listed first? For *mikra*, says Rava: the verse placed [the burnt-
offering] first only for [the purposes of] reading [the Torah scroll]. It
would seem from this that Scripture is self-validating, since there is
no other apparent reason for requiring that the word "burnt-offering"
precede "sin-offering" here.

From the texts at hand it seems that *Sifra* and the *Bavli* were still
content to allow Scripture to be self-validating, when no other possi-
bility presented itself—*kol heikha de-ika lemidrash darshinan*. Only
much later were attempts made to force this comment into conformi-
ty with the imperious omnisignificant demand. To a certain extent,
this remained true even in medieval times. As we shall see, even
Nahmanides, whose close attention to matters of theological signifi-
cance led him to propound questions which his predecessors hardly
touched on, did not allow his keen sensitivity to proportion and
sequentiality to function as means in and of themselves, but only to
the extent of asserting the priority of chronological sequence over
other forms of significance. Generally speaking, for him too the prob-
lem of sequence was fully resolved in accordance with the omnisig-
nificant imperative, namely, with an interpretation which gave the
matter of sequence a moral or halakhic meaning. Still, on occasion,
he too saw Scripture as self-validating.[55] In the case at hand, neither
he nor Rashi provides an interpretation of the reversal of terms from
the expected at Lev 12:8, beyond Rava's enigmatic solution.[56]

The history of Jewish biblical interpretation since the fourteenth cen-
tury can be seen as reflecting, on the whole, an increasing sensitivity
to maximalist claims of omnisignificance, in one way or another. By
the sixteenth century, the more universal concept of "omnisignifi-
cance" may be said to have come into its own, and Rashi's commen-
tators begin to inquire as to the moral or halakhic reason for his
invocation of the rule. Abarbanel too searches for meaning in struc-
ture and sequence, though he stands in essential respects apart from
that tradition of biblical exegesis whose point of departure was
increasingly Rashi's commentary rather than the biblical text itself, a
tradition which Nahmanides fostered. It is as though Rashi's commen-
tary served as an exegetical code which refocused attention in the di-
rection of those matters with which it chose to deal.[57]

On a maximalist reading of the principle, omnisignificance should govern every feature of Scripture; no arbitrariness is permitted. Moreover, the meaning imparted or imputed must be consonant with the classification of Scripture as divine revelation; as noted, this restricts the range of interpretation to halakhic or moral teachings. Ideally, we must account for every characteristic, stylistic or "literary" as it might be.

Ironically but perhaps inevitably, greater sensitivity to the omnisignificant demand was accompanied with an inability to account for many of the finer points of Scripture which, in earlier times, had been interpreted midrashically, since the system of rabbinic midrash had been increasingly limited in application since amoraic times. Thus, the renewed claim for omnisignificance only underscored the impossibility of formulating an adequate response to that challenge.

The maximalist demand for omnisignificance extended to two aspects of the doctrine, and engendered two types of difficulty. One involved the problem of wresting ethical or halakhic meaning from genres which seem to be interested in neither (genealogy, geography, etc.); second is the challenge of imparting such significance to *every* feature of the Written Torah, even features which a "pashtanic" view of Scripture would characterize as structural, aesthetic or merely linguistic. But even a more moderate stance, one, say, which looks for moral meaning in the stories or historical information found in Scripture (as the *to'aliyot* of Ralbag), faces difficulties, since, as noted, large parts of the uninterpreted Torah seem basically irrelevant to the concerns of the omnisignificant imperative. Though the rabbinic dictum places the onus on the interpreter—if it is "empty" of meaning, the fault is yours—in the course of time, after continual close study does not yield the requisite results, interest in these texts will begin to wane, and the Bible will cease to engage the best intellectual energies of those who devote themselves to the explication of Jewish texts.

Consequently, a certain latitude in carrying out the omnisignificant program had to be allowed. Concern with the details of Israelite history or genealogy might be interpreted as an expression of God's love and concern for His people[38] or an expression of the importance—in His view—of the matter described. This doctrine found ample precedent and justification in the earlier *midreshei aggadah*. For example, we find in *Genesis Rabbah*:

> The conversations of the servants of the patriarchal houses are more beloved to the Holy One, blessed be He, than the Torah learning of the[ir] descendants, for the narrative of Eliezer's search for a wife for Isaac takes up three or four columns [of text] while [the important halakhic principle that] the blood of a [dead] creeping thing causes impurity is derived by means of an extra letter.[39]

This statement of R. Aḥa/i, an Amora of indeterminate date, may be interpreted as a cry of dismay at this violation of the omnisignificant imperative; later on he makes the same statement about the mention of Eliezer's bathing his feet, which merits more space in the Scripture than any halakhah which is derived from (or linked to) one seemingly superfluous letter.[60] In its current context, this is interpreted as evidence of the moral gulf between ourselves and the Patriarchs, a poignant reminder of the "devolution of the species."[61] It is immediately preceded by the famous dictum, cited in the *Bavli* in the name of R. Yoḥanan, here attributed to R. Abba b. Yamina in Aramaic, "If early generations were angels, we are humans; if they were human, we are donkeys, and not even like the donkey of R. Pinḥas b. Yair."

Whatever its original context and meaning, R. Aḥa/i's dictum serves to express an astounding and painful violation of the omnisignificant ideal which ordinarily assigns higher value to halakhah than to narrative. It should be noted that it also implicitly provides a yardstick to measure such deviations, as Nahmanides later recognized: since the Torah's contents are expressions of God's perspective and values, those matters which He chooses to emphasize, either by repetition or by expansive concentration, are by that very fact significant. We shall have occasion to point to cases whose moral value is even less accessible than those already mentioned, as examples of this tendency.[62]

In the following study, we will examine Nahmanides' attempt to apply the omnisignificant imperative to the question of narrative and expositional sequentiality within the biblical text. However, while Nahmanides was hardly averse to programmatic discussions of methodological matters, he does not openly discuss the importance of this factor as compared with competing values; it was not until centuries later that omnisignificance began to be raised explicitly in this connection. Its place in the hierarchy of principles must be inferred by means of an analysis of specific exegetical moves. As will rapidly become evident, despite this, the question of omnisignificance is—omnipresent.

The field chosen for this investigation is the problem of sequentiality, an issue which was of primary concern to Nahmanides, and to which he returned time and again. Equally important, since it was the area in which he argued forcefully against the exegetical tradition he inherited, he felt impelled to address the question directly, and programmatic statements regarding it abound in his commentary on the Pentateuch.

In short, if Scripture is an omnisignificant text, then meaning must also inhere in the order in which it chooses to arrange its constituent elements.

II

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

The *locus classicus* for derivation of the rule is to be found, inevitably, in the Babylonian Talmud, and no justification for the asequentiality is presented. The Talmud's only proof is drawn from an instance which is beyond dispute, the relation of Num 1:1-19 and succeeding *parshiyot* to 9:1-8.[63] The date of the first is "the first of the second month of the second year" (1:1) of the Exodus era, while the second is dated sometime in "the first month" (9:1) of the same era.[64]

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

Nahmanides (and following him, Abarbanel) reject the hitherto traditional understanding of the talmudic/midrashic view that the Torah often violates strict chronological order, while Rashi and Ibn Ezra accept this rule of *ein mukdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah*, extending its application beyond its historic bounds (see below). Moreover, implicit in the consensus-view is the assumption that Rashi and Ibn Ezra represent a plain-sense-view of Scripture.[65] Like most matters of consensus, there is considerable truth to this simplified view of Nahmanides' position. Still, such a view overstates matters and thus overlooks the complexities which such statements mask, remaining satisfied with less than a full account which a more complete analysis of the data allows.

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

Nahmanides argues that the Torah clearly shows its concern with dating and chronology, since it does "inform" us of its departure from sequential order, as in the case of Num 1:1 and 9:1. In essence, he

reinterprets the Talmud's proof. Rather than applying to the general principle of asequentiality, *ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah*, the Talmud's proof applies not to the principle itself, but to a proviso thereof: that the narrative and exposition do not depart from chronological order *unless* the reader is explicitly informed of this, either by means of dates, as in Num 1:1, or by means of chronological data of some other type, such as genealogical data regarding births and deaths, etc. His parade example of the latter is Gen 11:32 where Terah's death is "prematurely" recorded, as can easily be demonstrated in light of the chronological data regarding Abram's birth. If Terah was 70 at Abram's birth (11:26), Abraham was 135 at his death, which therefore should have been recorded in Gen 22. In his response to Ibn Ezra's claim that this reflects the Torah's achronological order, Nahmanides suggests that the Torah will complete a generational narrative—or, we may add—an exposition, before continuing on to the next generation's history, even at the expense of some chronological inconnicities.

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

> In my opinion, the whole Torah is in order, for in all places in which it postpones [narrating] the earlier [event] it explains [the matter], as, for example, "God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai" in this book,[66] [or], for example, "On the day Moses completed setting up the Tent"[67] in the second book, and similar cases. That is why it states here "after the death," to tell us that this occurred immediately after their death.[68]

Thus, those cases in which the narrative signals its violation of the rule of sequentiality serve as a point of departure for Nahmanides. From these cases he applies his insight to the rest of the Pentateuch, albeit with varying degrees of success. By focusing on these cases, Nahmanides raises the question of when and why these departures take place, a matter to which Rashi does not always attend.[69]

It is important to note that, in taking the position he does, Nahmanides goes counter to his own exegetical tradition on this issue; not only do Rashi and Ibn Ezra assert the contrary, but the thrust of the Talmud's short discussion, especially in light of R. Papa's caveat,[70] seems to support them as well. In the light of all this, his rejection of the rule assumes greater importance.[71]

The dispute between him and Abarbanel,[72] on the one side, and Rashi and Ibn Ezra[73] on the other, centers about the question of dat-

ing those passages or events whose relation can be determined only
by inference. How strained do we allow our reading to become in at-
tempting to interpret the order of narrative as reflecting the historical
order?

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

Moreover, Nahmanides' sensitivity to matters of precedence and
sequence impelled him to the view that expository prose obeys the
same rule of sequentiality as does narrative. Again, and in contrast to
Rashi, he insisted that sequentiality *within* a section must be main-
tained, and an exegete must account for departures from it.[24]
Examples of this tendency involve descriptions of rituals which
acquire a narrative character, such as Lev 16 on the high priest's
Temple service on Yom Kippur, or the procedure due on the appear-
ance of a house fungus in Lev 14, both of which will be examined
below. But, his attention to matters of sequence is far more pervasive
than that. Far more than Rashi, Nahmanides traces the order of topics
within a passage, or the sequence of passages within a greater
whole. His most characteristic phrases (but not the only ones) in this
endeavor are *(ve)-hazar ve-amar/ u-feresh/ u-ve'er/ ve-hizkir/ ve-ziwah*
and the like, and they appear more than a hundred times in his com-
mentary. In some instances he is most concerned with sequence pure
and simple, but most involve some sort of repetition; it is significant,
however, that his account of these repetitions nearly always involve
some sort of sequence, narrative or expositional.

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

> The first exposition (*mishpat*) begins with [the topic] of the Hebrew
> slave, since it involves the matter of freeing the slave in the seventh
> year, a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, mentioned in the first
> Commandment. . . . And when he completes the exposition (*mishpat*)
> of this *mizvah* regarding Hebrew slaves, he begins the exposition
> (*mishpat*) of "you shall not murder," since it[s prohibition] is the most
> severe, and [continues] with honor of parents, and stealing, and returns
> to the exposition (*hazar le-mishpat*) of one who strikes [another] non-
> fatally, and after that to the murder of a slave, which is more heinous
> than killing embryos [as a result of a mistaken blow which leads to
> miscarriage], and after that to the [injury] of the limbs of Israelites and
> slaves, and after that to damages to livestock by death—and all the
> passages are in order and [reflect] proper intent (*kawwanah*).[25]

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

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

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

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

He thus employs no fewer than fourteen of these hierarchies: birth order when siblings are listed, either in genealogical contexts or otherwise;[76] order of importance, whether of person, ritual object or other;[77] order of preference or love;[78] order of greater population when clans are listed[79] or otherwise.[80] Likewise, prohibitions and sins will be listed in order of (decreasing) severity;[81] elements in order of their place in the chain of causation;[82] number of people affected;[83] or fearsomeness as perceived by a biblical character.[84] Rules which obtain for the indefinite future (*le-dorot*) precede those which are of temporary validity.[85] Precedence may also indicate initiative,[86] high motivation,[87] or frequency.[88] Finally, as noted above, and as a fifteenth category, temporal or narrative sequence may be indicated.[89]

In short, sequence almost[90] always has a substantive significance for Nahmanides;[91] it is hardly ever haphazard or mechanical; such is the omnisignificant imperative.[92] While concern for these matters surfaces in midrashic texts, to some extent,[93] they are far more prominent in Nahmanides' commentary.

Nahmanides' attention to matters of sequence, order and continuity extends to the syntactic matters as well, as we might expect, since

this concern was part of his exegetical tradition. In reacting to Rashi's midrashic interpretation of the two occurrences of *ve-hayu* in Exod 4:9, Nahmanides writes:

> There is no need for his midrashic comment, for the masters of language [study] have already found that it is the custom of many verses to repeat (*likhpol*) words for need (*le-nahaz*) and for strengthening (*le-hizzuk*) or because of the lengthy space (*mizu'a arokh*) which comes between them.[91]

This last instance clearly involves a syntactic "resumptive repetition." Nahmanides offers other examples of the phenomenon, citing Lev 27:3, Deut 18:6, Exod 1:15-16, and Gen 46:2, to which we may add Gen 6:9, Num 5:9 and 6:20.[95]

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

Moreover, he is at one with his exegetical tradition (including *Sifra, Sifrei,* Ibn Ezra and Radak) in recognizing inverted clauses (*mikra mesoras*) as a legitimate Hebrew syntactic phenomenon. He points out few instances himself as well as implicitly accepting Rashi's proposals,[96] though he offers alternate interpretations of the clause about half the time.[97]

In sum, Nahmanides is less insistent on sequentiality in syntactic contexts, even when midrashic sources argue otherwise. In this, he follows the "pashtanic" tradition, but even here it must be noted that he attempts to explain, as far as possible, some of these departures from the expected order.

Even on the "macro"-level, so to speak, Nahmanides himself recognizes exceptions to his rule of signaling; at times the Torah does not indicate a section's chronological placement, either explicitly, by means of dates or other chronological data, or implicitly, where, for narrative purposes, the imparting of necessary information is de-

layed.[98] In these cases, such as the question of when Jethro visited Moses, Nahmanides turns to other indications of true sequence.[99] In his introduction to Deuteronomy, Nahmanides notes that certain *miz-vot* are recorded first in that book though they must have been revealed some 38 years earlier, either at Sinai or during the first eleven months of the Tabernacle's existence, from the first of Nisan of the second year of the Exodus era (Exod 40:34, Num 9:1) to the twenti eth of Iyyar of the following year (Num 9:11).[100] This observation, in turn, furthers his understanding of the role of Deuteronomy within the complex of books[101] which make up the Pentateuch. As we shall see, his view of the Torah as a record of revelation has far-reaching consequences for an understanding of other of its features as gap-filled narrative.[102]

This assumption of the Torah as a faithful account of the revelation vouchsafed to Moses is evidenced by Nahmanides' objection to Rashi's assertion that Lev 8:2-3 is out of sequence. "Why," asks Nahmanides, "should we overturn [i.e., put out of order] the words of our God?"[103] This implies that narrative truth and sequentiality are intimately linked, at least in divinely originated narrative. God's prophetic Word, which is absolutely truthful, must not be considered "out of order" unless God Himself informs us of that fact. In Nahmanides' opinion, there seems to be an *a priori* assumption that God's Word should be presented in order of its revelation.[104]

Why then does the Torah depart from chronological order? Nahmanides maintains that it does so only for good and sufficient reason ("*le-zorekh 'inyan u-le-ta'am nakhon*"[105]). Most often he attributes the lack of chronological sequence to the needs of exposition, the necessity of rounding out a particular topic before proceeding to another. For example, in explaining the classic case of achronological arrangement, Num 1:1 versus 9:1, he suggests that Num 1-8 completes the narration of the dedication of the Tabernacle begun at the end of Exodus, and so it is presented out of its chronological order in order to maintain a continuity of topic.[106] The death of Terah is recorded in Gen 11:32, in order to clear the way for the history of Abraham.[107] Note once again the primacy of straightforward exposition; the exceptions serve to prove the rule, since it is the need for such straightforward exposition which overcomes the general requirement of narrative sequentiality.

Furthermore, in the case at hand, that of the initial chapters of Numbers, as in most cases, however, both approaches respond to the omnisignificant demand; whether or not *parshiyot* are interpreted as being in chronological order, once an explanation for their placement is provided, that positioning becomes meaningful.

The difference between the approaches of Rashi and Nahmanides is as follows. According to Nahmanides, chronological placement is the norm, and thus corresponds to the narrative covenant[108] which requires such an arrangement; it does not require any other explanation. It might be thought, as became the norm in later generations, that Rashi's view, which provides the Torah with two options, must account for the Torah's choice of either presenting events in chronological order or departing from such order. Implicitly, however, Rashi is one with Nahmanides in assuming that sequentiality is normal, since it is only departures from it which require comment. On occasion, especially with midrashic warrant, he will account for such departures.[109] It is thus significant that he does not always do so.[110] In reality, however, Rashi seldom justifies the departure from proper sequence, unless there is talmudic or midrashic warrant. Nahmanides, on the other hand, either interprets the passage as to be in proper sequential order, or explains the divergence.

In the case of Num 9:1, Rashi opts for his oft-repeated contention that the Torah evidences great concern for Israel's reputation, and so the fact that Passover was observed only once in the wilderness is not placed at the head of the Book of Numbers.[111] Thus, the significance of this instance of asequentiality is to teach us once again of God's great love for His people. This lesson overcomes the need for chronological order; presumably, the teaching of this lesson of God's love and concern for Israel is the very function of the dates given![112]

It is instructive to contrast this view of asequentiality with the classic rabbinic one, where, as noted above, the rule serves only to mark some verses as belonging at the beginning of their book or passage. No attempt is made to account for their placement. Only sporadically are attempts made to extend this principle to asequential gapping within a book or narrative, as Ibn Ezra and Rashi do. A consistent effort to force this rule into conformity with the imperious omnisignificant demand for moral or legal meaningfulness emerges only later.

Maintaining Unity of Time, Place and Theme

Different mixes of "pashtanic" and midrashic techniques were adopted by the commentators to deal with the challenge of expositing the text of the Torah in an omnisignificantly meaningful way. It is at times difficult to determine whether a principle is indeed one or the other, and the ultimate categorization of such exegetical principles may depend upon the exegete's judgement of the genre or mixture of genres in which the text appears. Moreover, the use of these prin-

ciples becomes a function of their place in the exegete's hierarchy of available hermeneutical techniques.

The tangled history of the application of the principle of *ein muk-dam u-me'uḥar* amply illustrates this point. In the course of our analysis, we will suggest a number of hierarchal considerations and literary/structural assumptions which both serve to buttress or accompany the use of this rule of sequentiality by Nahmanides. Because of the interpenetration of these assumptions and priorities, it is impossible to examine each one in isolation from the others. However, to the extent possible, full discussion of the rule of sequentiality will be deferred till section IV, and more particularly, VIII. Here I intend merely introduce the topic, and examine an interesting, but to my knowledge hitherto unnoticed, consequence of its application. I refer to Nahmanides' insistence (and following him, Abarbanel's) on the maintenance of unity of time, place, and theme. However, since the point is made more clearly in Abarbanel's exposition, I will begin with it, and then proceed to Nahmanides' view of the matter.

As noted above, Num 1:1 and 9:1 constitute the classic proof for asequentiality; the date of 1:1 is later than that of 9:1. Nahmanides accounts for this departure from chronological order by reference to an expositional need, and stresses the function of the first nine chapters of Numbers as rounding out the Torah's account of the Tent of Meeting and related matters. The program of the first part of the Book of Numbers is of less weight. Abarbanel, on the other hand, stresses the importance of the latter in determining the Torah's arrangement of sections. Since Abarbanel quotes Nahmanides' comments on this matter word for word, I will reproduce and translate only the passage in the former's commentary.

And from here our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said that there is no chronological order in the Torah, and Nahmanides gave a reason for this delay [in presenting chapter 9, dated in the first month, earlier], for when this fourth book [= Numbers] comes to mention the *mitzvot* which Israel was commanded in the desert of Sinai at that time (*le-sha'atam*), He wished to complete the matter of the Tent of Meeting and its setting up throughout the time of the wilderness [period].[113] First He mentioned the *degalim* and the place of the Tent and the position of its servants and the arrangement of the watches for transporting [it]. He [then] mentioned the donations of the princes [of the tribes] who brought the wagons which carry the burden [of the Tent of Meeting] all the time they were in the wilderness, and he completed [the description] of their donations at the dedication of the altar from the first of Nisan, and after that He returned to the warning [of the Israelites] not to neglect the *mitzvah* of Pesaḥ,[114] as [Nahmanides] wrote in his commentary.

But his words are not correct in my view. Rather, the truth of the mat-
ter is that the Torah wished to tell in the earlier books [of the Penta-
teuch, namely Exodus and Leviticus] whatever happened while they
were at Mount Sinai,[15] and in the fourth book He came to tell what
happened after that, in the second year from the second month on-
ward. Therefore, he mentions first the census which occurred in the
second month of the second year, and after that the matter of the
Levites and their selection in place of the firstborn, which also
occurred in the second month after the census, and [then] the matter of
the *degalim* and the Levite watches and their burdens, for all this was
arranged in that second month. After that came the dedication of the
altar by the princes [of the tribes], which also occurred after the cen-
sus, as I have explained in its place. He continues after that with the
prophetic stature of our master Moses, the wisdom of Aaron, his
unique position and that of his descendants [= the high priests], the
purity of the Levites and their inauguration and their specific roles. He
mentions after all this another matter which occurred in that second
month of the second year—that is, that the Israelites offered the
paschal sacrifice in its proper time, which was the month of Nisan, and
that there were men who were ritually impure due to contact with the
dead, and that He, may He be blessed, commanded that they observe
a second Passover in the second month. Behold, therefore, this
account was recorded here to inform [us] that in that second month
He, may He be blessed, commanded that the Second Passover be ob-
served for those reasons, and there is therefore no chronological disor-
der [in this passage].

Abarbanel here insists that the Aristotelian unities of time and
place be maintained. The Book of Numbers is concerned with events
in the wilderness, as far as concerns place, and incidents which
occurred from the second month of the second year onward, as far
as chronology is concerned. The opening date of the book therefore
serves a thematic purpose. However, in order to deal adequately with
the matter of the Second Passover, chapter 9 must advert back to
matters which occurred in the first month. Only then does the narra-
tive continue, at 10:11, with matters of the twentieth of the second
month. This interpretation hardly explains the dating of 9:1 adequate-
ly, since all that would be required is a mention of the First Passover
as a background of the Second.

Abarbanel's essential disagreement with Nahmanides seems to be
one of emphasis rather than substance, for all Abarbanel's somewhat
prolix comments seem to be encapsulated in three words which
Nahmanides employs, and which Abarbanel quotes: "this fourth book
[= Numbers] comes to mention the *mizvot* which Israel was com-
manded *in the desert of Sinai at that time* (*le-sha'atam*)." Abarbanel's
contribution is to spell out what those words mean in terms of the
book's overall theme.

Thus, according to Nahmanides, the narrative covenant requires that a Pentateuchal book maintain the unities of time, place and theme, if at all possible. I add that caveat because it is clear from his remarks in his introduction to Exodus that theme is more important than place. The Book of Exodus begins with the entrance into Egyptian exile of the patriarchal families, and concludes with the end of the most intense part of the exilic era, with the "return" of the Divine Presence to the Israelites with the inauguration of the Tabernacle, even though the scene is no longer Egypt.[116]

Rashi on the other hand, as noted above, explained the chronological order of the opening nine chapters of Numbers as a consequence of *hibbah*. Because of His love for Israel, the divine Narrator wishes to obscure the sad fact that Israel kept only one Passover in the wilderness. That Passover is therefore moved from its proper place, chronologically speaking, at the head of the book, to its current position at 9:1-8. In this he perhaps follows the Midrash.[117]

Thus, both Nahmanides and Rashi, despite their differences on matters of detail and on the application of the principle of sequentiality, acknowledge the omnisignificant imperative; they differ in the weight they give to the various factors which embody omnisignificant meaning. For Nahmanides, God's love for Israel is expressed more in matters of proportion than sequence; for Rashi, proportion and sequence both bespeak the theme of *hibbah*. In neither case is sequentiality alone the only principle at stake.

III

Resumptive Repetition

When it suits him, however, Abarbanel rigorously stresses the seamless continuity of the books of the Pentateuch rather than their disjunction. He takes this line in his strictures on Nahmanides' introduction to the Book of Exodus.

Nahmanides points out that Exod 1:1-7 is merely a resumptive repetition of Gen 46:28-50:26,[118] serving to join the two books together in the same way that Cyrus' decree, quoted at the beginning of the Book of Ezra, serves to link that book with Chronicles, which precedes it in time.[119] This positioning also serves the thematic purposes of the book, since it enables its Author to begin with the theme of exile and end (in Exodus 40) with the partial mitigation of this exile with the erection of the Tabernacle. In his introduction to Exodus, Nahmanides writes:

And the Book of Exodus is devoted (*nityaped*) to the matter of the first exile which was explicitly decreed,[120] and the redemption therefrom. He therefore resumed (*hazar ve-hithil*) with the names of those who went down to Egypt and their number, even though [this matter] was already recorded.[121] [This is because] their descent [into Egypt] was the beginning of the exile. . . . The exile was not ended until their return to their place and to the [spiritual] degree of their ancestors; when they went out of Egypt they were still considered exiles even though they had been released from servitude since they were [still] "in a land not their own,"[122] confused in the desert.[123] [It was only] when they came to Mount Sinai and erected the Tabernacle, and the Holy One, blessed be He, caused His Presence to dwell among them—then they returned to the [spiritual] degree of their ancestors. . . .[124]

Thus, the need for a thematic statement was filled by the resumptive repetition with which the book begins. Exodus' identity is determined by a certain unity of theme, one which can, with some prodding, be seen to underlie the entire book. Nahmanides interprets the end of the book in terms of the beginning, thus providing a frame for the whole.

In contrast, Abarbanel, rather than examining the scheme of the Book of Exodus in terms of the theme set forth by Nahmanides, approaches the repetition from quite a different angle. Among his other objections to Nahmanides' interpretation of the first verses of Exodus, Abarbanel points out (in his long first query to Exodus 1) that it is hardly necessary to link Genesis and Exodus in the same way as it might have been to link Chronicles and Ezra. Since the former books are both parts of the Pentateuch, their linkage would seem to be axiomatic. He thus seems to hold the view that while each book maintains a topical identity, each remains so much part of the greater unity of the Pentateuch as to make any linking device, such as resumptive repetition, unnecessary. However, if this is so, there is even less need for such devices *within* a book; indeed, in his discussion of Exod 6:29-30, which, according to Rashi, constitutes a resumptive repetition of 6:10-12, continuing the narrative interrupted by the genealogy in between, Abarbanel proposes instead that this is an expansionary and explanatory repetition.[125] Likewise, he interprets the resumptive repetition of Gen 39:1 as emphasizing God's providence in having Joseph sold into servitude in Egypt, the seat of high civilization, rather than into abject slavery elsewhere.

In his rejection of resumptive repetition as a possibility, Abarbanel's commentary is a harbinger of things to come. In a similar vein, he minimizes, as much as possible, the existence of parallelism (*kefel 'inyan be-milim shonot*), reserving it for instances in which a more omnisignificant explanation was not available, much in the way

that Tosafot observes that the Talmud prefers casuistical solutions to those which acknowledge the human qualities of Scripture's discourse, as we noted above (n. 16 and text).

On the other hand, Rashi's reluctance to recognize Exod 1:1-7 as a resumptive repetition is puzzling, since he sees Exod 6:29-30 and Gen 39:1 as such resumptions. However, some explanation for the repetition seems indicated, and he suggests that the repeated listing of the tribes at the beginning of Exodus is an expression of God's love (*ḥibbah*) for their eponymous patriarchs, both in life and death. This is in line with his explanation of the asequential placement of Num 1-8 (*ad* 9:1), where he follows the *Sifrei* in explaining its anomalous location as a result of God's reluctance to disgrace the Israelites by revealing the fact that they observed only one Passover during their sojourn in the Wilderness.

It may be that in his hierarchy of principles, *ḥibbah* and resumptive repetitions are counterposed. When the passages are not positive, as in Moses' refusal to follow God's instructions in Exodus 6, or the descent of Joseph to Egypt as a slave in Genesis 37, he will recognize the resumptive nature of the repetition, since the repetition cannot be an expression of *ḥibbah*. When the event has a positive connotation, however, he will opt for the *ḥibbah* explanation. Alternately, he may not recognize "linkage" as a legitimate exegetical move.

In contrast, Abarbanel's proposal to view 6:10-12 and 29-30 as complementary, mirrors his more general tendencies; he categorizes the repetition as an explanatory rather than a resumptive repetition. However, though he does not seem to recognize the existence of resumptive repetitions in the Pentateuch, he does advert to one in his commentary on the Book of Jeremiah, where, in his comments on 33:1, he recognizes that the word *shenit* serves as a marker, though not really a resumptive repetition. See also his remarks (at 34:8 and 35:1) on the asequential order of Jeremiah's prophecies, either because they became scattered and the Men of Great Synagogue had gathered them, not necessarily in chronological order, or because they were recorded as Jeremiah recalled them.

In any case, judging from Nahmanides' analysis of the Chronicles-Ezra link, it would seem that his recognition of a resumptive repetition in the case of Genesis-Exodus involves not only the linkage of two books, but also the existence of a chronological gap between them. He writes:

> [As the resumptive repetition at Exod 1:1 links it with Genesis], in the same way [we find the same phenomenon] regarding the Book of

Chronicles and the Book of Ezra. When [Ezra] completed [the Books of] Chronicles [with the verse], "And in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, to complete the Word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah, God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," etc., "So says Cyrus, King of Persia," etc.,[126] he resumed (*heḥezir*) those two verses in their [exact] language at the beginning of the Book of Ezra[127] to connect the narrative[s] (*leḥabber ha-sippur*). Since[128] they were two books, he completed the first with what occurred before the building of the Temple, and the second book with what occurred after the building. So too in [the case of] these two books, Genesis and Exodus.[129]

Thus, he notes the narrative gap between what occurred before the rebuilding of the Temple, which is the burden of the end of Chronicles, and the events which followed the rebuilding, which are the concern of the book of Ezra. As argued above,[130] the fuller version of the decree in Ezra would seem to argue for it as the original text from which the last two verses of Chronicles were drawn.[131] And, of course, Exod 1:1 reverts back to the time before the events of Gen 47-50 in order to begin the narrative of exile, enslavement and redemption.

A third instance, which he describes in similar terms but, again, one which modern scholars would not, comes, as we might expect, at the beginning of Numbers.

Since [the divine Author] interrupted [the detailing of] those *mizvot* revealed at the Tent of Meeting] with the *mizvot* of the sabbatical year and jubilee, of which he stated that they were [given] at Mount Sinai, He repeated here [the statement that] this *dibbur* was [given] at the Tent of Meeting, as He mentioned at the beginning of the Book of Leviticus, and so will all of [the *mizvot*] from here onward be [given] at the Tent of Meeting.[132]

Here too we find a chronological gap. The Book of Numbers focuses on the revelations granted in the desert after the festivities attending the dedication of the Tabernacle and the celebration of Passover. Or, to put it in a different perspective, it bridges the gap between the two great revelatory events of the post-Sinai era, those of the initial weeks of the era of the Tabernacle, and that represented by the Book of Deuteronomy, which was given while the Israelites were encamped on the Plains of Moab. This latter period actually begins when the Israelites reach that encampment as recorded at Num 22:1.[133] The separation of Numbers from Leviticus, on the one hand, and Deuteronomy, on the other, can be viewed as an integral part of the scheme of revelation which Nahmanides adopts from talmudic sources and develops in his own way.

Nahmanides likewise recognized at least two other instances of the phenomenon, both involving introductory verses. Once again, exposition and narrative manifest similar phenomena, though, of course, the shift is in logic rather than in time. Lev 23:4 resumes the list of festivals begun with 23:1, which was interrupted by the short paragraph regarding the Sabbath,[134] and Deut 4:44-45 echoes the introductory 1:1, which resumption is required because of the long hortatory section in between.[135] It should be noted, however, that Nahmanides' parameters in defining the phenomenon, once again, treat exposition and narrative alike. Shemaryahu Talmon, in his important article on the phenomenon, discusses only narrative examples of resumptive repetition; these instances are not cited.

In the case of Exod 6:29-30, which, according to Rashi, serves merely to resume the narrative interrupted by the genealogy of 6:13-28, Nahmanides adopts a casuistic stance, using the minute differences in phraseology and order to distinguish the two passages. He asserts that the accounts of the dialogue between God and Moses refer to different conversations, each one reflecting a different stage in the ongoing dialogue between them.[136]

Nahmanides' position requires clarification, since he does, in principle, accept the existence of the technique of resumptive repetition as linking larger narrative units ("books"). It seems to me that there are two considerations which impelled Nahmanides to reject Rashi's suggested resumptive repetition, each one congruent with concerns Nahmanides expresses elsewhere.

First, as Nahmanides himself notes, are the differences in structure between the two which promoted the availability of the casuistic option. The thrust of the latter two verses is different. In the first, Moses claims that Pharaoh is hardly likely to listen to him since the Israelites have not done so, and moreover, he has a speech impediment. In the second, he only refers to the latter. Add to this an omnisignificantly-trained sensitivity to repetition of all kinds and a disinclination to attribute them to literary causes, unless absolutely necessary. Thus, in contrast to the other two cases, Nahmanides had material for casuistical differentiation, and ample reason to exercise his casuistical talents on it.

A second factor is the very existence of two separate passages; Nahmanides seems reluctant to identify such passages as referring to the same incident unless such identification is beyond doubt. For example, in his comments on Exod 32:11, Nahmanides takes issue with Ibn Ezra's identification of Moses' prayer for the errant Israelites at Exod 32:11-13, before his descent from the mountain, with that at 32:31-32, after that descent, and, finally, with the parallel in Deut 9:26-

29, which is quoted after the descent. Ibn Ezra claims (*ad* Exod 32:11) that Moses prayed only once, after his descent and his extirpation of the Calf, and that "*ein mukdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah.*" "If it is all one prayer, which he offered in the forty days after this return to the mountain, why," objects Nahmanides, "should it be divided [into two sections], mentioning part of it here, and the other part of it after the descent? Rather, they are two [separate] prayers"—and he goes on to detail the differences between them.[137] On the other hand, Gen 46 and Exod 1 clearly refer to the same descent to Egypt, Chronicles and Ezra to the same decree of Cyrus, Num 1 to the same Tent of Meeting.

Thus, his rejection of Rashi's classification of Exod 6:29-30 as a resumptive repetition of 6:1-12 is based on these two factors: the differences between them, and the very fact of their division into two separate passages argue, according to Nahmanides, against their identification.

Finally, we should note one instance in which Nahmanides implicitly accepts Rashi's recognition of Gen 39:1 as a resumptive repetition of 37:36, one which serves to carry forward the Joseph story which was interrupted by the Judah and Tamar interlude of Gen 38. Nahmanides makes no comment, which, as noted above, usually indicates his agreement with Rashi.[138] In this case, as opposed to that of Exod 6, Nahmanides' harmonization of Gen 37:36, which refers to Joseph's sale by the Midianites, with Gen 39:1, which refers to the Ishmaelites, obviates the need for casuistry, and the two verses may be identified as referring to the same incident.

Still, when all is said and done, it is clear that, aside from his general statement *ad* Exod 4:9, Nahmanides did not see fit to note each occurence of resumptive repetition in its place, even when his predecessors—chiefly Ibn Ezra—had. Thus, Ibn Ezra notes the resumption of Lev 16:11 by repetition of 16:6; Nahmanides does not. Futhermore, his discussion at the beginning of his commentary to Exodus is the closest he comes to a programmatic statement and acknowledgement of the phenomenon, but one which hardly goes on to define his position *vis-a-vis* resumptive repetition in the way he laid down his thoughts regarding asquentiality at Lev 16:1.

Nonetheless, he does not trouble to note others, such as Num 13:17a as a resumption of 3a, 12:31 of 12:25b, 33:5a of 33:3a.[139]

One more factor may have had some influence. The frequency with which Nahmanides refers to Rashi has been noted. In this respect, he stands close to the growing tendency to make Rashi's commentary the centerpiece of biblical exegesis. While attention to Rashi would not displace direct involvement with the biblical text for some centuries, it is clear that, to some extent at least, Rashi's program

shaped that of Nahmanides. Note that Nahmanides' general formulation at Exod 4:9 was sparked by Rashi's midrashic "excess." While we can hardly hope to quantify such influence, it was clearly beginning to be felt.

Before ending this discussion, it is necessary to consider Shemaryahu Talmon's assertion, in his article on resumptive repetition,[140] that though the medieval Jewish commentators[141] recognized this device and "defined it in terms which are surprisingly similar to, nay, identical with, the ones to which [modern biblicists such as] Wiener and Kuhl had recourse," they were not systematic in their approach.

> Those traditional exegetes did so [recognize the existence of the device] *en passant*, in their sometimes harmonistic attempts to explain an obvious discontinuity in narratives which they discussed. But they did not systematize their *ad hoc* exegetical insights, and thus could not formulate an underlying principle.[142]

Nahmanides did not compose a grammar which would serve in part the purposes of a poetics of biblical narrative, as did Radak and Ibn Janah; he was presumably satisfied with what was available. But he displays a consistent interest in questions involving sequence, in several of its aspects, as well a sensitivity to structural problems, a number of which we shall examine below. If Nahmanides' discussions are not exhaustive or systematic, this should not be seen to imply a haphazard disregard for consistency. I think that the discussion to this point has already indicated a deeply felt, and consistently applied, sensibility and sensitivity to matters of sequence. In the coming sections, a similar sensibility will be seen at work in matters of chronology, proportion and structure.

IV

Sequentiality

The matter of resumptive repetition is inextricably connected with the wider question of sequentiality in general. Nahmanides' general statement of his position was quoted above; in the spirit of resumptive repetition we will repeat it here.

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

In order to sustain his view, Nahmanides must account for three
aspects of this achronological sequence: he must explain the reason
for the departure; he must account for it in terms of his reading of
the whole Torah; and, finally, he must explain why the Torah seems
to treat time differently in different sections. The first two questions
he addresses; the last he does not.[143]

Nahmanides' explanation for the lapse from chronological order
has already been noted; the Torah wishes to conclude its description
of the Tabernacle and the camp in the Wilderness before going on to
other matters, just as Terah's death is recorded out of sequence in
Gen 11:32 in order to continue with the story of Abraham.[144] He does
not deal in Numbers with the second requirement noted above. But,
as already mentioned, Nahmanides presents the following argument
for rejecting Rashi's view that *ein mukdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah*: "In
my opinion, the whole Torah is in order, for in all places in which it
postpones [narrating] the earlier [event] it explains [the matter], as, for
example, 'God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai' in this book. . . ."[145]

Note that while Nahmanides seems to refer to three verses as
proof of his contention, in reality they all refer to the same event. All
concern the thorny chronological and sequential problems surround-
ing the narrative of the setting up of the Tabernacle. These include
the relationship of the dates at Exod 40:2, Num 7:1, and the reference
to Mount Sinai in Leviticus 25, which comes within the long complex
of material dated from Adar 23 (see below), when the Tabernacle
was first set up, through Rosh Hodesh Nisan, when the Divine
Presence descended after the last setting up on the eighth day of
Tabernacle dedication (*millu'im*), and on to Rosh Hodesh of the sec-
ond month, the achronological sections of Num 1-9.

All three verses thus constitute one proof, and thus serve as a
proof text, a *binyan av*, to establish the presumption that "in all
places in which [the Torah] postpones [narrating] the earlier [event], it
explains [the matter]" explicitly, and so we may assume that it is in
sequential order unless otherwise specified. Note that while
Nahmanides provides more than a dozen categories to account for
the sequence of discrete terms, his favorite solution to out-of-order
narrative or exposition is the need to complete one matter before
continuing on to another.

It is noteworthy, however, that in this case his general statement
must be understood as providing a contrast to the case at hand,
rather than an exemplum. Here Nahmanides wishes to stress that the
section following the "date" of Lev 16:1 is actually out-of-place, and
that it should be properly be placed between Lev 10:20 and Lev 11:1.
This placement is thus an exception to his general rule of sequentiali-

ty, and it is worthwhile to examine why this is so, especially since here Ibn Ezra,[146] and perhaps Rashi, take the sections as being arranged sequentially. Why then does Nahmanides seemingly depart from his accustomed position, precisely when Rashi and Ibn Ezra concede the point?

Nahmanides signals his intent with his introductory comment: "In all places in which it postpones [narrating] the earlier [event] it explains [the matter]"—that is, it provides incontrovertible evidence of its departure from chronological order, as in the case, discussed above, of Num 1:1 and 9:1. In this case, the reference to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu serve the same purpose; 16:1 clearly points to the revelation which follows as dating to immediately after that tragic incident, which is described in Lev 10.[147] This then is one of the exceptions which proves the rule; by providing a "date," the Torah signals its departure from the expected order. In a sense, therefore, the intervening sections have been placed between chapters 10 and 16 for the usual expositional purposes.

The problematic cases are those in which both the needs of expositional prose and omnisignificance are not clearly served. And although these cases remain to an extent problematic, they shed light on the parameters of Nahmanides' exegetical stance.

The most extensive, and intensely argued case of chronological sequence is that surrounding the inaugural week of the sacrificial service described in Exod 29, 40, Lev 1, and Num 1-9. While the huge block of Pentateuchal exposition bracketed by Exod 40 and Num 9 are all dated within the week of 1-7 Nisan of the second year from the Exodus, the exact dating of particular segments remains unclear, and thus became matters of contention between Rashi and Nahmanides.

Here are the dates registered within these texts, together with other markers of significance.

Passage	Date/Setting	Content
Exod 29:1	undetermined	instructions for the inaugural sacrifices
Exod 39:2	undetermined	instructions for setting up the Tabernacle on 1/1
Exod 39:17	1/X[148]/2	description of the setting up
Exod 40:2	1/1	command to set up
Lev 1:1	Tent	descriptions of the sacrificial rites
Lev 8:1	standard,[149] undetermined	8:2-3 instructions for inaugural sacrifices
		8:4-36 description of inaugural sacrifices
Lev 9:1	eighth day	climax of inaugural and death of Aaron's sons
Lev 16:1	after death of Aaron's sons	Yom Kippur rite
Lev 25:1	at Mount Sinai	sabbatical and jubilee years

Passage	Date/Setting	Content
Lev 26:34	reference to Mount Sinai	at close of Book of Leviticus
Num 1:1	2/1/2	organization of census and camp
Num 7:1	day of completing Tabernacle setup, and following	inaugural gifts of tribes
Num 9:1	1/X^{150}/2	Pesaḥ Sheni
Num 9:15	day of setup	activities of the Cloud surrounding the Tabernacle

Nahmanides faced four cruces in dealing with the chronology of this material. The first involves the exact relation of Exod 40:2, 40:17 and Lev 9:1; the second involved the exact date of Lev 8:2; the third, which will not be dealt with in this section, involves the relation of Lev 25:1 to the rest of Leviticus and the events of the second half of Exodus; and the fourth, which was discussed above, involves the order of Num 1:1 and 9:1.

In truth, only the last two of these seem determined by the biblical text. The first texts seem to proceed in reasonably chronological order, the second actually involves only two verses, which may be regarded as introductory to the section as a whole.

However, the introduction of a midrashically added week to the proceedings, a tradition which Nahmanides felt unable to disregard as he had that regarding the chronology of the Flood,[21] led to a complicated reconstruction of those sections dealing with the setting up of the Tabernacle and the inauguration of the sacrificial order and priesthood.

The reason for this insertion of an extra week is as follows. *Sifra* points to an apparent contradiction between Exodus 40 and Num 9:15, on the one hand, and Lev 9:1 on the other. According to the former, the Divine Presence descended on the Tabernacle on 1 Nisan, when the Tabernacle was set up; according to the latter, this occurred on the "eighth day," presumably the eighth day of the Tabernacle dedication (*milluˀim*), which presumably began on 1 Nisan; accordingly, Lev 9:1 seems to date the descent of the Divine Presence to 8 Nisan, a week later. The rabbinic solution is to interpose a week between the instructions of Exod 29, 40:1-16 and the final day of the inaugural rites, the eighth day of Lev 9:1, thus identifying the events of Exod 40:17-38, and especially the descent of the Divine Presence mentioned in 40:38, with Lev 9:1 and Num 9:15. Thus, since the date of Exod 39:2 is, strictly speaking, undetermined, since the only date given is the date for setting up the Tabernacle, this section can and is set back a week, to 23 Adar. The intervening week was, according to

rabbinic tradition, devoted to erecting and dismantling the Tabernacle so as to give the Levites sufficient practice in accomplishing these tasks.

However, once this week is made part of the narrative structure of these portions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, some of the undated sections within them become the subject of debate. This is particularly true of Lev 8:2-3, which, according to Nahmanides, is to be dated to 1 Nisan, and is thus in place, while according to Rashi it was given on 23 Adar, along with the relevant sections of Exodus.

Nahmanides suggests that its placement here reflects the need to urge diligence on (*lezarez*) Aaron immediately before the initiation of the rites he was to perform. However, this proposal, as innocuous as it sounds, conflicts with two principles he espouses elsewhere. In his introduction to Deuteronomy, Nahmanides explains the lack of sacrificial laws in that book by noting that priests require no urging in the fulfillment of their duties. Beyond that is the question of why these verses have been separated from their natural place along with Exod 40:2-16 or Exod 29, which is where they would have been placed had the needs of clear exposition been paramount. Indeed, Nahmanides himself notes the anomaly of separating a coherent section into two parts.[152]

As to the first problem, the rule that "priests are diligent" cannot apply before their induction into the priesthood.[153] As to the matter of separating the instructions regarding the inauguration of the Tabernacle and the sacrificial service into two sections, this is hardly the case here, where, as Nahmanides himself notes, 8:2 is merely a repetition of various parts of Exod 29, and is meant as "encouragement at the time of fulfillment" (*zeruz bi-sh'at ma'aseh*).

The next verse, 8:3, which has no parallel in Exod 29, thus becomes subject to the objection Nahmanides raised against Rashi's dating. If 8:3 really belongs in Exod 29, why is it not there? The answer Nahmanides gives, that the gathering of the congregation at the entrance of the Tabernacle was intended to give due publicity to Aaron's induction into the priesthood, cannot serve, for that function was served by the rites described in chapter 29. The question then recurs: why not place it there? If 8:3 is a supplementary expansion to 8:2, why then may the instructions regarding Aaron's inauguration be spread over two and more passages, since the principle of sequentiality, to which Nahmanides holds with such tenacity, may on occasion be overcome for the needs of a coherent exposition?[154]

To understand why, we must turn to another principle enunciated by Nahmanides in another discussion of the importance of the Tabernacle.

V

Proportion

Nahmanides' sensitivity to structural concerns carries over to another realm; that of proportion.[155] For example, in his comments on Exod 37:8, he enumerates the five-fold appearance of descriptions of the Tabernacle in Exod 25-30 and 35-40 and ascribes them to the Tabernacle's importance to God (*derekh ḥibbah ve-derekh ma'alah*), explicitly comparing it to Eliezer's re-telling of his journey to Padan Aram in Genesis 24. He quotes the midrashic statement quoted above:

> The conversation of the servants of the patriarchal households are more pleasing to God than the Torah of their descendants, for the section [detailing] Eliezer's journey takes] three or four columns [of text] while [the important rule] that the blood of a [dead] creeping thing causes ritual impurity is derived from one letter.[156]

By contrast, in both cases Abarbanel opts for a technical, expansionary-explanatory rather than a global solution; the repetition of the account of the Tabernacle's construction, which follows the wording, but not the order, of God's instructions to Moses, is intended to prove that it was constructed according to specification but not in the order given. Abarbanel's preferred solution for repetition is the time-honored talmudic *zerikhuta*, a type of harmonization.

At times this develops into a consistent exegetical account of the similarities and differences between duplicate passages, as in Eliezer's account of his journey to Laban and Bethuel. Abarbanel suggests that its minute variations are intended to demonstrate Eliezer's wisdom to "the nations and the nobles" (*ba-'amim ve-ba-sarim*—non-Jewish readers?), the finer points of Eliezer's mastery of the arts of negotiation, and presumably to teach us all something of these arts.[157]

Abarbanel, statesman to the core, clearly reveals much of himself in this "diplomatist" interpretation of this conversation; here and elsewhere, however, he never asks himself why these matters should consume dozens of verses in an omnisignificant Torah in which every letter is weighed. Why divide Moses's conversation with God into two two-verse packets, even though one may supplement the other?[158] Though Rashi provides a "literary" solution to this problem, Abarbanel ignores it entirely. In his preference for casuistical interpretations, if at all possible, he clearly fulfills the omnisignificant mandate—*kol heikha de-ika lemidrash. . . .*

Thus, Abarbanel's search for casuistic distinctions in accounting for narrative repetitions runs afoul of the usual failing of such attempts; he loses sight of the relative moral and religious weight of the lessons he draws from these duplications. Should the Torah devote sixteen verses to a reprise of Eliezer's experience at the well in order to teach us how to negotiate, or to praise his prowess in such matters, or is this, as Nahmanides would have it, an expression of the Narrator's concern with this subject?[159]

Nahmanides' keen sense of proportion shows itself in these matters, and he will inquire as to why Scripture devotes more or less attention than he deems proper to one or another matter. In the cases just discussed, his solution, which relates importance to repetition, provides a more global answer, though one not less omnisignificantly oriented. As noted above, for Nahmanides, the number of repetitions a topic receives testifies to that topic's importance. But this solution too is not without its problems. Why not make this importance felt in a more efficient manner?[160]

This, of course, goes to the heart of the narrative enterprise, the question of why the Torah chooses the genre of narrative to serve as the frame and provide much of the content of God's revelation. Any concern with historical data, whether narrative, genealogical or other types of list, is generally viewed by the commentators, following midrashic precedent, as an expression of God's love and concern (*hibbah*) for every aspect of Israel's spiritual and material well-being.

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

This short section then is part of the five-fold series of repetitions, in general and in particular, which Nahmanides mentions in his comments on Exod 37:8. There his enumeration includes: 1. the detailed instructions of *Parashat Terumah*; 2. the general summation of Exod 31:6-11; 3. "at the time of construction (*bi-she'at ma'aseh*) he mentioned them in general terms,"[161] to Exod 35:10; 4. a detailed exposition "which is missing in the Torah, but certainly Moses had to tell the skilled craftsmen who carried out the work" what needed to be done in detail at the time the work commenced; and 5. the general summation of the work done in Exod 35:5.[162] *Mutatis mutandem*, the detailed exposition missing in the Torah may find its analogue in Lev 8:2-3, not for the construction of the Tabernacle, but for its dedication. In any case, this short section is part of the larger complex which serves to emphasize the importance of this project to God's

plan of restoring the spiritual fortunes of the Israelites,[163] which is akin to the duplications of the story of Eleazar's getting a wife for Isaac, a mission which would determine the destiny of the Israelite nation to be, which Nahmanides also mentions in this connection.[164]

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

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

> The correct understanding of this passage is that the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to give honor to those who fear Him. . . . Behold, the princes all brought this offering upon which they had agreed, on one day, and it is impossible but that one must precede his fellow. . . .[165] But [God] wished to mention them by name and [present] their offerings in detail, mentioning each one's day separately, and not to mention and honor the first—"this is the offering of Nahshon son of Aminadav"—and then state: "and thus the princes, each one on his day, brought [his offering]," for this would infringe on the honor of the others (*kizzur bi-khevod ha-aherim*).[166]

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

The role of proportion or repetition in indicating intensity appears in his comments on legal passages as well. In most cases, repetition serves as an alternate means, alongside priority in sequence, of indicating relative importance. A heinous sin will be mentioned before a less heinous one, as noted above;[167] likewise, a heinous sin will be mentioned more often. Thus, the prohibition, once again, of idolatry in Exod 23:24 prompts this comment: "The Torah repeatedly warns [against idolatry], and even though these verses are redundant (*me-yuttarin*), there is no [need] to be concerned with this,[168] because of the severity [of the sin of idolatry]."

Proportion, or repetitiveness, serves other functions which the classic rabbinic system did not necessarily acknowledge. In his comments to Lev 26:8, Nahmanides explains the parallelistic structure of 26:7-8 (ABA'A''B)[169] as occasioned by the need "to give them [= the

Israelites] courage and valor to pursue five hundred." The need to encourage and condole provided a rationale for juxtapositions which were otherwise difficult to explain, as in his remarks regarding the placement of the section on drink-offerings in Num 15. Since drink-offerings, like the additional festal sacrifices of Num 28-29, were to be brought only in the land of Israel, the giving of this section after the debacle of the spies episode served "to console them and to reassure them (*lehavtiham*), since they were discouraged, saying: 'Who knows what will be after forty years?'. . . . And therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, saw fit to console them, for by instructing them regarding the *mizvot* which depend on [residence] in the land He reassured them that it was revealed before Him that they would come and take possession of it."[170]

As noted above, Nahmanides' sense of proportion led him to inquire into either the length to which Scripture dilated on various points, or even into why the passage was included in the Pentateuch altogether. At times, the disproportionate amount of attention a particular matter garners in Scripture leads Nahmanides to prefer a typological interpretation for the narrative. Thus, his well known discussion in his commentary to Gen 27:20 regarding the disputes between Isaac and the Philistines anent the wells Isaac had dug, opens with the inquiry: "Scripture dwells at length in regard to the matter of the wells, though there is no [moral] utility nor great honor to Isaac in the plain sense of this narrative . . . but there is in this thing a hidden matter, for it comes to inform [us] of future matters." Thus, the very narrative of such apparent inconsequentials imparts a deeper meaning to the story.[171]

Conversely, his sense of proportion plays a central role in his disagreement with Rashi over the identity of the "king in Israel" mentioned in Gen 36:31 in connection with the "kings of Edom who reigned before a king reigned for the children of Israel." Rashi identifies the king as Saul, and thus categorizes the passage as a prophetic "future history," while Nahmanides identifies this unnamed king with Moses, and thus sees it as history plain and simple. His reason is that "why should prophecy mention these?" In other words, though it is important to list these kings as evidence of the fulfillment of Isaac's blessing to Esau, such an intention is not sufficient reason for providing a prophetic history. Nahmanides's sense of proportion thus provides us with a sort of "Law of Conservation of Prophetic Energy."[172]

In the same vein, Nahmanides will inquire into the reason for the repeating of information already given, as in his comment to Num 10:14, where the list of the tribal princes, already provided in chapter 2, arouses his interest. His quasi-casuistic explanation, that this repeti-

tion informs us that they actually led the tribes on their march
through the wilderness, and that the same princes remained in office
throughout this period, seems to have been unsatisfactory to him,
since he prefaces it with a "perhaps."[173]

VI

Sequence as Self-Validating

One instance, whose brevity is in inverse proportion to its impor-
tance in understanding the relation of sequentiality and omnisignifi-
cance in Nahmanides' exegetical hierarchy, is the description of
Jacob's crossing of the Jabbok in Gen 32:23-24. Unfortunately, the
standard editions of Nahmanides' commentary, both that of M.Z.
Eisenstadt and of C. Chavel, misinterpret the thrust of Nahmanides'
remarks.

The biblical text reads:

> (23) He rose during that night, took his two wives and his two hand-
> maidens, and his eleven children, and crossed over the Jabbok ford.
> (24) He took them, and brought them over the stream, and brought
> over that which was his.

Nahmanides comments:

> There is no sequential order to this verse insofar as "saving" is con-
> cerned; rather it states that he gathered his wives and his handmaidens
> and his children to the bank of the stream,[174] [then] he himself crossed
> over the Jabbok ford alone to determine whether the water was [too]
> high [for passage] (v. 23). [Then] he returned and took all of them to-
> gether with him and brought them over the stream (v. 24), and after
> that he brought over that which was his, his camp and possessions.

Both verses record Jacob's crossing of the Jabbok ford together
with his family, and it is this duplication which prompts Nahmanides'
remark, not the difference in the order of wives and children in 32:23
and 33:2. However, he seems satisfied with setting these verses in
narrative order. In this case, the question of proportion which he rais-
es in other contexts, as in Exod 37:8, Lev 8:2, and Num 27:9, is
absent here. Why is this incident important enough to warrant two
verses to describe in minute detail the order of the Jacob's fording of
the Jabbok? Nahmanides does not say.

Not that he was without possibilities. For example, he could easily
have derived a moral lesson from the care which Jacob lavished on

insuring the safety of his loved ones, leaving nothing to chance.[175] Apparently, however, determining narrative sequentiality may serve as an end in itself, without reference to broader questions of omnisignificance. In this case, Nahmanides' reticence reflects the older view of Scripture as self-validating.[176] This view finds its expression in Rashi's note to Lev 12:8, to which Nahmanides offers no objection.

As noted above, Lev 12:8 gives the sacrifices incumbent on a parturient mother as "two turtledoves or two doves, one for a burnt-offering and one for a sin-offering." This is in contrast to the usual order of sacrifices in such listings, where the sin-offering is mentioned first.[177] In particular, Lev 5:8 serves Rashi, as it did for *Sifra* and the *Bavli*,[178] as a *binyan av* for all matters of precedence between these two offerings. He states:

"He shall bring that which is for a sin-offering first," a sin-offering precedes a burnt-offering. To what may this be compared? To a defense attorney who entered [the courtroom] to plead for his client; the defense attorney pleads, and the gift [to the judge] comes after.

So the general rule, Lev 12:8 is an exception, and Rashi, following *Zevahim* 90a, remarks on it.

"One as a burnt-offering and one as a sin-offering." The verse placed [the burnt-offering] first only for [the purposes of] reading [the Torah scroll] (*mikra*),[179] but as to [the order of] offering [the sacrifices], the sin-offering precedes the burnt-offering; so have we learned in *Zevahim*, in the chapter "Kol ha-Tadir [89b-90a]."

Tosafot, *ad loc.*, already raise the question of the point of this,[180] since all of the Torah is intended for that purpose. Neither here nor regarding 5:8 does Nahmanides address the question of precedence, presumably agreeing with Rashi on this matter.[181] Could this be a reflex of the feeling that a biblical text is self-justifying? Or is this merely another way of implying that "wherever we can expound midrashically we do"—but when we cannot, we simply desist?[182]

Or, perhaps, did Nahmanides discern a "secret of the Torah" regarding which he decided to remain silent? Did he understand *mikra* as referring to the names of God which constituted the text of the Torah, as he asserts in the introduction to his commentary?[183]

One other unaccounted for departure from sequentiality requires comment. Nahmanides rejects the identification of Exod 20:15-18, which seem to describe the reaction of the Israelites to the revelation at Sinai, with Deut 5:20-22, and dates these verses asequentially to before the giving of the Ten Commandments. In contrast, he explains

the omission of Deut 5:22 from the Exodus account on the grounds that Scripture "wished to explain the *miẓvot* and *mishpatim* in order (*be-seder*)." But if so, the departure from sequential order, which requires that Exod 20:15-18 be placed before the Ten Commandments, is all the more inexplicable, since if it had been placed in its proper sequential order, the narrative could have ended with the Ten Commandments, and Scripture could have proceeded to its explanation of *miẓvot* immediately thereafter. Here, then, Nahmanides not only interprets this passage against his own general principle, but does so when his own exegetical tradition argued for sequential order. Could it be that, having partially conceded the asequential nature of the Jethro narrative in his comments to Exod 18:12, at least hypothetically, he despaired of providing a thorough-going sequentially-oriented reading for the narrative? Or is the fact that he does not really hit his stride, methodologically speaking, until after this point, significant? After all, his programmatic statements on this issue are mostly confined to his commentaries on Leviticus and Numbers. I shall have more to say on this below.

Sequentiality as *Peshat*

In several instances, Nahmanides rejects Rashi's re-arrangement of a passage because such a reconstruction departs from the requirements of a *peshat* interpretation. The most striking of these involve the chronology of the Flood, the order of elements in the description of the process of purifying a house of scale disease, and the purificatory ritual of Yom Kippur.

The latter two passages contain detailed descriptions of rituals of some duration which assume a narrative character, and, in both, Rashi feels compelled to remove a verse from the flow of the narrative in order to preserve what he considers to be the proper sequence.

Each of these bear strongly on the question of sequentiality, though in different ways. As we shall see, however, in traditional terms, but atypically, each involves the authority of midrashic exegesis to restructure a long passage rather than the more usual midrashic context bounded by a verse or verset.

First, let us examine the matter of the dates contained within the self-contained Flood narrative. Rashi forces each date into the framework demanded by the midrashic statement that the Flood lasted a year.[184] To do so, he interprets "the seventh month" of Gen 8:4 as "the seventh month from Kislev, in which the rain ceased."[185] As a consequence, he must add the 150 days during which the floodwa-

ters receded to the forty days of the Flood proper rather than taking the entire 150 day period as *including* the forty days during which the rains fell.

This is problematic, since the date of the beginning of the forty days is the seventeenth day of the second month (2/17), and the end of the 150-day period is thus the seventeenth day of the seventh month (7/17). Nahmanides, assuming months of thirty days each, calculates the 150 days as beginning 2/17, with the start of the Flood, and ending 7/17.[186] Moreover, he notes that in order to sustain his interpretation, Rashi must continually change the dating system in use, taking the date given in 7:11 as referring to start of the Flood, that of 8:4 to the end of the rain, and that of 8:5 (the very next verse!) once again to the start of the Flood.[187]

Nahmanides himself interprets all dates as referring to the same era (= Noah's life, as is evident from 7:11[188]), a procedure more in keeping with the plain meaning of the text.[189]

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

Once again, as in the case of the chronology of the Tabernacle erection and dedication, Rashi's invocation (implicit though it be) of *ein mukdam* is compelled by midrashic considerations. However, while that of the Tabernacle ultimately stems from a true exegetical problem, here the midrashic assumption which Rashi brings to his restructuring of the dating system of the Flood is essentially extraneous to the passage at hand. In any event, Nahmanides rejects both the assumption (as applied to the Flood, at any rate) and the restructuring.

Rashi's interpretation of Lev 14:33-57 goes beyond his restructuring of the Flood's dates; it constitutes a case in which Rashi allows midrashic considerations to govern the very order of verses. As we shall see, here he bases himself almost exclusively on the *Sifra*.

In regard to scale disease (or fungus) affecting houses, Lev 14 seems to allow for at least two ways in which such a fungus may cause ritual impurity: by spreading (v. 44) or by recurring after the affected stones have been removed and replaced (v. 43). Ostensibly, Rashi is concerned with the relative importance of these two factors which govern the same case. In actuality, that is not the issue at all, as *Be'er Yizhak* recognized.[190]

Sifra's concern is to systematize the various elements which affect scale disease into a cohesive whole. Thus, each possibility must be

given its due, and provided with an outcome. Either the eruption spreads, remains unchanged, diminishes, or recurs after the affected stones have been removed and replaced—during one, two or even three weeks of quarantine. Each of these possibilities is raised within this passage, with the exception of the third ("diminishing") which is imported from an earlier passage on scale disease as it affects garments.[39]

Rashi's essential concern is not with systematization, however; rather, he adapts part of the *Sifra*'s analysis in order to restructure the passage so as to deal with a case in which the eruption did not spread either during the first or second weeks of quarantine. By a series of *gezerot shavot* and a *mi'ut*, *Sifra* provides an answer to this question: if the fungus recurs, the house must be dismantled; if it does not, it must be purified. This solution, however, comes at the expense of removing 14:44 from its place before 45, since in its current location it implies that if the eruption spreads after the first week, the house must be dismantled. *Sifra* has extended (by means of *gezerot shavot*) a one week process to one as long as three weeks before the house must be dismantled. The verse must therefore be displaced, to follow v. 47.

First Rashi poses the question of the relative strength of "spreading" and "recurrence."

> 44. "The priest shall come and see, and behold, the eruption has spread in the house." Perhaps [an eruption] which returns is not unclean unless it spreads?

Following *Sifra*, Rashi determines the irrelevance of "spreading" by means of a *gezerah shavah* involving the phrase *zara'at mam'eret*, which appears here and in 13:51 regarding the discoloration affecting garments. Rashi thus can now employ 14:44 for his real purpose, that of ferreting out the proper course of action for an eruption which remains unchanged.

If so, why does the verse say, "and behold, it spread"?

> This is not the place of this verse, but "and he shall dismantle the house" (v. 45) should have been written after "and if the eruption return" (v. 43). "And the priest shall come and see" (v. 44), therefore comes to teach only regarding an eruption which remains unchanged in his sight during the first week [of quarantine], and he comes at the end of the second week and finds that it spread.

> For previously the Torah did not explain anything regarding [a case] in which [the eruption] remained [unchanged] in his sight during the first week—and it teaches you here in regard to this spreading, that it

speaks only regarding [an eruption] which remained unchanged during the first and spread during the second.

What should he do with it?

Perhaps he dismantles it, as [laid down by the verse] adjacent to it: "and he shall dismantle the house" (v. 45)? The verse says: "and the priest shall return" (v. 39), "and the priest shall come" (v. 44).

We learn "coming" from "returning," just as [in] "returning" he removes [the affected stones] and scrapes and plasters and gives it another week, so [in regard to] "coming" he removes [the affected stones] and scrapes and plasters and gives it another week—if it returns he dismantles; if it does not return, [the house] is [ritually] pure.

The question of what to do with an eruption which remains unchanged for *two* weeks then arises. Continuing his reprise of *Sifra's* analysis, and building on the foregoing, Rashi determines, again by means of *gezerah shavah* involving vss. 44 ("he shall come") and 48 ("and if he shall come"), that the same procedure—removal of the affected stones, scraping, plastering and another week's confinement—is followed in the case of a fungus which remains unchanged after two weeks. "In conclusion, dismantling [is carried out] only with an eruption which returns after removal [of the affected stones], scraping and replastering, and the [eruption] which returns does not require 'spreading'."

Having reached the desired conclusion, he now proceeds to restructure the passage in accordance with it.

The order of verses is as such: "And if it returns" (v. 43), "and he dismantles" (v. 45), "Whoever will come inside the house" (v. 46), "Whoever will eat inside the house" (v. 47), "The priest shall come and see, and behold, it has spread" (v. 44), and the verse speaks of [an eruption] which remains [unchanged] during the first [week], that he give it a second week of confinement, and at the end of the second week of its confinement, [the priest] comes and sees that it spread. What shall he do to it?

He removes [the affected stones], scrapes, replasters and gives it a week. [I]f it returns, he dismantles [the house]; [if] it does not return, it requires [purification with] birds, for [cases of] eruptions [do not last] longer than three weeks.[192]

To clarify Rashi's conclusion, let us examine the description of the priest's actions as he comes to examine a house in which scale disease (*zara'at* or *nig'ei batim*) has broken out. The progression may be diagramed as follows:

verse 37 priest comes for his examination of the house

38 he quarantines the house

39 he returns on the seventh day, and finds the fungus has spread

40-42 the affected stones are removed, the house is scraped, news stones put in place, and the house replastered

43 the priest returns and finds the fungus has returned after the treatment described in 40-42

44 "If the priest comes and sees that the fungus has spread in the house, it is a chronic scale disease. . . ."

45 the house is dismantled

46-7 status of those who enter or remain in the house

48 "If the priest should come and see that the fungus has not spread in the house after it has been (re-)plastered. . . ."—the house is declared pure.

An inspection of this break-down will reveal a consistent line of development up to and including v. 45, which deals with a fungus which continues to spread during a week, and some indeterminate amount of time between the operation of vss. 40-42 and the priest's return in v. 44; with v. 48 the exposition doubles back to v. 39, and takes up an alternate line of development, dealing with the other possible outcome of the priest's examination of v. 45; while vss. 39-47 deal with the consequences of the fungus' continued spread, v. 48 takes up the question of what to do if it does *not* spread.[193]

This analysis is not new. It follows Nahmanides' observations,[194] according to a *peshat* understanding of the section, except that we have reduced Nahmanides' two-week scheme to something more than a week, since 14:43 does not specify a time for the recurrence of the fungus, and we may assume that it returns late on the seventh day, giving us a total of seven days for the fungus.[195]

Thus, according to Nahmanides, the section deals with only one of the many possibilities raised by the structures of the earlier sections which deal with other types of scale disease; the other possibilities are explored by the Oral Torah.[196] Most important for our purposes, since Nahmanides does not insist that our passage deal with each possibility within the parameters of *peshat*, the sequence of verses may remain as set forth in the passage itself. Here, as in the Flood narrative, Nahmanides carefully differentiates between requirements of *peshat* and the governing assumptions of *derash*, the latter being the province of the Oral Torah.[197] In this case, either the plain sense meaning or the midrashic elaboration will serve the omnisignificant program.

i

Rashi thus takes his cue from *Sifra* in searching Scripture for solutions to problems for which the Torah does not provide clear answers, certainly a response to the omnisignificant imperative, which includes the injunction of "turn it over and over, for all is in it."[198] Nahmanides, in contrast, here as elsewhere, maintains the line between the two Torahs, between *peshat* and *derash*. However, even Rashi will go only where the Midrash leads; for there are features in this passage which might well merit omnisignificant treatment, but have not in actuality been employed for that purpose. As we might expect, neither Rashi nor Nahmanides—nor their successors, we might add—has done so.

One such matter involves the halakhic significance of the term *parah*, used in Lev 14:43 along with the verb *shuv*. If *shuv* refers to the recurrence of the eruption, what does *parah* mean? If it refers to the spreading of the fungus along with recurrence, why not use *pasah*, as in the rest of the passage?

Rashi, who ordinarily takes his cue from *Sifra*, does not deal with it, though *Sifra* does deal with it, as we shall see. However, Nahmanides, aware of the problem, deals with it by equating *parah* with *shuv*, since a "recurrence" of the eruption surely involves some increase in size—from nothing to the minimum (halakhic) measure of a *gris*. But of this, more below.

The use of this verb, which seems extraneous but is potentially charged with halakhic significance, would seem to call out for midrashic treatment. We might distinguish between recurrence with spreading and recurrence without such infestation. Instead, *Sifra* provides a purely "local" *derash* for the word, one without structural implications. According to *Sifra*, *u-farah* does provide a *ribbuy*, not in regard to size, but appearance; that is, whether the recurrence is of the same appearance as the earlier eruption or of a different appearance is inconsequential.[199] Nahmanides incorporates this midrash in support of his contention that *parah* and *pasah* refer to totally different phenomena, the former relevant only to recurrence and not spreading. If so, the recurrence may be of a different appearance and even on different stones. Nahmanides, *ad loc.*, devises his own midrashic exposition based on the expression, "if the eruption recurs and flowers in the house" (14:43)—in the *house*, but not necessarily on the same stones, since the verse does not specify that the flowering be "on the stones." However, later in his discussion his weakens the distinction between the two, suggesting that, after all, as noted above, even recurrence involves a measure of increasing size.[200] Again, though Nahmanides is willing to limit the application of halakhic *derashot* in determining *peshat*, especially when it concerns

the structure of a passage, he is not willing to enter entirely unchartered halakhic territory. This reluctance limits the range of many otherwise innovative exegetical attempts, since only so much progress is permitted in advancing the omnisignificant program.

Finally, let us examine the passage describing the Yom Kippur service in Lev 16, where Rashi, following the Talmud, displaces 16:23 from its position.

> Our Rabbis said that this is not the [proper] place of this verse, and they gave a reason for their words, in Tractate *Yoma* [32a]. They said: All the entirety of this section is written in order, except for this entrance, which is after the offering of his burnt-offering and the burnt-offering of the people (v. 24), the burning of the entrails of the bullock and he-goat (v. 27), which were done in [the high priest's] golden garments, [after which] he immerses and sanctifies, takes them off and puts on [his] white garments. "And enters the Tent of Meeting"—in order to take out the spoon and incense-pan with which he had offered incense within [the Holy of Holies]. "And removes the linen garments," after he took them out, and dons golden garments for [offering] the perpetual [daily burnt-offering] of the afternoon.

Rashi withholds the Rabbis' reason for restructuring this passage, though he mentions that "they gave a reason for their words." The reason is that a Sinaitic halakhah requires five changes of vestments during the service of Yom Kippur, while no more than three may be discerned in the passage itself, even when midrashically interpreted. By restructuring, such an interpretation becomes possible.

> And this is the order of the [Temple] Services: The morning perpetual [daily burnt-offering] in golden garments; the Service of the inner bullock and he-goat,[261] and the incense of the fire-pan in white garments; his ram and the people's ram and part of the additional sacrifices[262] in golden garments; the taking out of the spoon and fire-pan in white garments, and the rest of the additional sacrifices,[263] the perpetual [daily] offering of the afternoon, and the incense offered in the Sanctuary proper upon the inner altar in golden garments.

> The order of the verses according to the Services [performed] is as such:

> "[The man] shall send the goat into the desert" (v. 22), "he shall wash his body in water . . . and go out and do his burnt-offering. . . ." (v. 24), "the fat of the sin-offering. . . ." (v. 25), and [then] the whole section until "and afterwards he shall come into the encampment" (v. 28), and after that: "Aaron will [then] come [into the Tent of Meeting]" (v. 23)

Nahmanides rejects this interpretation as being unnecessary; this section is indeed in proper order, if we understand properly the

order intended. The narrative first describes the entire special Yom Kippur Service performed by the high priest in his "white garments," and only *then* takes up the more usual daily Service as performed in his golden garments, the vestments he dons on days other than Yom Kippur. Since the former is the main subject of this section, it is mentioned first.

Once again, it is important to note that the same reasoning can apply to purely expository contexts. Thus, in his discussion of the structure of the Ten Commandments, Nahmanides points out that with the Fifth, "He has completed [the exposition] of all those to which we are obligated in terms of the Creator Himself and His honor, and now [the passage] turns (*ve-ḥazar lezauvot*) to command us regarding matters touching on [God's] creations. . . ."[204] And further on, in his comments on the next verse, he notes that concern now shifts to detailing the consequences of the latter five commandments, the case law of the Book of the Covenant.

To sum up our long and somewhat involved discussion to this point: while the search for omnisignificance characterizes the earliest strata of rabbinic literature, the program which this ideal mandated was hardly carried out in any thoroughgoing way, not only in terms of *coverage*—chapters, sections, verses—but also in terms of *phenomena*. In his work on parallelism, James Kugel has already called attention to the lack of formal awareness[205] in the classic rabbinic era to this pervasive biblical technique.[206] In this study we have seen the relatively minor role played by sequentiality in this period. It is only with the growth of comprehensive biblical commentaries that the need for examining the chronological relations between adjoining and related passages was felt. Along with this came the necessity of accounting for all types of sequential ordering in the Pentateuch, whether of clauses, verses, topics and passages. Since not all would comfortably fit within the usual omnisignificant requirements — halakhic or aggadic meaning—a variety of doctrines were adopted, usually from midrashic sources, and adapted to this requirement: *ḥibbah*, accommodationism in its various aspects ("the Torah speaks in human terms," resumptive repetition, the need for syntactic coherence, maintaining the unity of place and time), intensity and importance, the latter two close to classic omnisignificant legal and moral categories.

Nahmanides' commentary on the Pentateuch represents a high point of this development of the omnisignificant program. Reversing the principle of *ein mukdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah* as represented in the *Bavli* and in Rashi's commentary,[207] he forged a system in which

sequentiality served the purposes of omnisignificance by taking its place within a hierarchy of principles. These principles included expressions of the love of God for Israel (*ḥibbah*), the importance of particular doctrines or events as evidenced by the number of appearances they make or their order of appearance within a sequence,[208] the use of resumptive repetition to structure the thematic concerns of specific books, on the one hand, and to coordinate those books with adjoining ones on the other. Within those purposes, he seems further to have developed a series of criteria governing the use of that principle, which limit it to specific situations: to join adjacent books of the Bible, to join non-adjacent sections when the resumption was shorter than the original,[209] and in syntactic use within a sentence. Furthermore, on occasion he employed it as an exegetical tool, as in Exod 4:9, where he rejected Rashi's midrashic exposition, and Num 7:1, where he rejected Ibn Ezra's use of Lev 8:15 as a parallel. Thus was sequentiality harnessed to the omnisignificant engine. It should be noted, however, that, more often than not, repetitiveness was the spark that started the engine turning.

Moreover, sequentiality also served to coordinate and limit, as well as give expression, to the omnisignificant ideal. Even given Nahmanides' close attention to these questions, not all sequences are significant, and some are clearly not, as the exceptional Lev 12:8 or those resumptive repetitions which he does not note.[210] In a sense, Nahmanides' work outlined a program for future exegesis, no less than did that of the Sages of the classical period. And, like their work in their way, his analysis represents the high tide of concern with these issues. By defining the problem and laying out the field, Nahmanides determined the course of future study of these problems—but only in relation to his debate with Rashi on these matters.

For with the turn of the omnisignificant program from the biblical text to that of Rashi, it was only Nahmanides' animadversions on Rashi's musings on sequentiality which took root and which were discussed, to whatever extent. Few of the classical, influential later commentators advanced Nahmanides' program on this issue.

On the other hand, in their super-commentaries on Rashi, later exegetes did in some measure advance the omnisignificant program in this direction. For while Rashi was most often satisfied with merely noting the asequentiality of one or another passage without providing a moral or halakhic reason for it, his commentators took up the omnisignificant challenge and attempted to fill in this desideratum.[211] Nevertheless, as we shall see, the essential challenge of extending the omnisignificant ideal to verses and passages which hitherto had escaped omnisignificant exegesis was not faced, in large part because

the techniques needed to do so were universally acknowledged as no longer available with the end of classic rabbinic *derash*. However, to the extent possible within the parameters of Rashi's commentary to the Pentateuch, and the Talmud's discussion of such matters, later authorities did deal with them.[212]

VII

Our discussion of sequence in Nahmanides' commentary would not be complete without attending to Nahmanides' observations on the place of time within the Pentateuchal narrative itself. It is to that we now turn our attention.

The Historical Dimension

As Erich Auerbach noted, the seriousness of the biblical narrator inheres in the presumed historicity and supreme theological importance of the story to him.[213] Transferring this insight to our study of traditional exegesis, it goes without saying that these narratives must reflect history to a significant degree.[214] To the extent that they do, they must reflect an understanding of human affairs as a sequence of divinely influenced events. The nexus between Providence and story, narratology and theology, is thus assured.[215]

As Shemaryahu Talmon has pointed out, one of the functions of resumptive repetitions is to mark simultaneity, as in the resumption of the Joseph story after the Judah and Tamar interlude, which itself covers several years during which Judah's sons marry, die, and Tamar returns to her paternal home to await Shelah's maturation. The omniscient Narrator's handling of time has an important theological dimension, as Meir Sternberg pointed out in a somewhat different context.

> Given the biblical narrator's access to privileged knowledge—the distant past, private scenes, the thoughts of the dramatis personae, from God down—he must speak from an omniscient position. . . . Does this epistemological novelty [as contrasted with ancient Near Eastern religions—Y.E.] in the sphere of world order extend to the epistemology and operation of point of view in the narrative? Does the monotheistic article of faith give a new bearing to the inherited rule of omniscience? Is it, for example, that the narrator assumes omniscience because he could not otherwise do justice to an infallible God. . . . ? Since the Omniscient inspires his prophets, moreover, does the narrator implicitly appeal to the gift of prophecy, so as to speak with redoubled authority as divine historian?[216]

Can a proper understanding of Providence be weighed against the rule that the blood of a *sherez* produces ritual impurity? Are the "piles and piles" of halakhot derived from each "crown" of the Torah's letters[217] commensurate with an appreciation of God's role in history, on the national and personal level?

The omnisignificant imperative requires the interpretation of every variation as meaningful, presumably including variations of narrative density, where one incident is given a larger-scale treatment than another. Why is Eliezer's quest for a wife for Isaac given more space than the binding of Isaac? While Naḥmanides' linkage of proportionality to *ḥibbah* and *ma'alah* may solve some of these problems in a general way, the details remain to be worked out—but never were.

By choosing narrative as His mode of exposition, the divine Author subjected His lessons to its constraints. Of course, any expositional strategy will carry with it the limitations of the human reader. The need for recourse to the device of resumptive repetition is only one of the drawbacks which result from the human linear perception of time. The mortal reader requires cues to follow the plot line.

But that is not all. The consequences of God's decision to adapt His revelation to the exigencies of a human book are far-reaching. As Robert Alter puts it,

> No writer, not even the most intently religious one, can ever quite escape the momentum of the medium in which he works . . . , inventively using such elements as rhythm, repetition, musicality, imagery, character, scene, act, and symbol. . . . If virtually every utterance of biblical narrative points toward the imperative concerns of covenantal faith, it is also demonstrably evident that virtually every utterance of biblical narrative reveals the presence of writers who relished the words and materials of storytelling with which they worked, who delighted, because after all they were writers, in pleasing cadences and surprising deflections of syntax, in complex echoing effects among words. . . .[218]

Clearly, matters such as the use of resumptive repetition to indicate simultaneity, or even in its more common use, may illustrate Alter's point in our context. Moreover, though our primary concern here is the place of chronology within the Pentateuchal narrative, Alter's point is more generally illustrated by reference to another consequence of the divine choice of recording revelation as a book. I refer to a remark recorded by Tosafot, and seconded (or originated?—see below) by Rabbenu Tam. Most halakhic verses in the Pentateuch are in prose form; one of the exceptions is the collection of laws of the Jubilee and sabbatical year of Leviticus 25, much of which is couched in loose poetic form, that is, the parallelism which

typifies biblical poetry. Of these, one verse is tightly constructed in synonymous parallelism (*kefel 'inyan be-milim shonot*)[219], and legal distinctions between the two stichs of the verse can fairly easily be proposed.

One exception to this is 25:37 which is composed in good chiasmic style, with the first word of the first stich parallel to the last of the second, and the last of the first with the first of the last. "Your silver you shall not give for interest (*neshekh*)/for increase (*marbit*) you shall not give your foodstuffs." We might conceivably distinguish between *neshekh* and *marbit*, or perhaps silver and foodstuffs. However, the anonymous (redactional?) introduction to the first *sugya* of *Bava Mezia* 60b will have none of it, and goes to considerable lengths to prove that *neshekh* (the "bite" taken from the borrower) and *marbit* (the "increase" which the lendor gets) cannot be separated; when there is *neshekh* there is *marbit*, and when there is *marbit* there is *neshekh*.

This discussion serves to introduce a statement of Rava's which explains the redundancy of the conventional parallelistic structure of biblical poetry as being halakhically motivated. According to Rava, one who collects interest transgresses two prohibitions (*la'avor 'alav bi-shenei lavin*).[220] Thus, in standard fashion, a matter of biblical style is given halakhic significance. Of interest here, however, is the comment of Tosafot.[221] Rava's halakhic interpretation accounts for the redundancy of parallelism, but why does the Torah use two synonyms for usury (*neshekh* and *marbit*) where one would suffice; why not *neshekh-neshekh* or *marbit-marbit*? The answer proposed is purely aesthetic: because the variation in wording is *na'eh yoter*— more aesthetically pleasing.[222] The same point is made by Rabbenu Tam in regard to the use of *keret/kiryah* in Prov 11:10-11; the biblical writer will not repeat the same word in successive verses if at all possible.[223] Even halakhic texts may allow scope for the writer's aesthetic sense—even, apparently, according to Tosafot, and, just possibly, according to Rabbenu Tam.[224]

If aesthetics is considered a particularly human sensibility,[225] we may categorize this concern as a subspecies of divine accommodation, somewhat different from Maimonides' use of the dictum that "the Torah speaks in human terms."[226] It is noteworthy, however, that Nahmanides opts for a halakhic/casuistical interpretation, and distinguishes the two terms. As James Kugel pointed out in regard to classic rabbinic culture, the omnisignificant need overcame any nascent recognition of parallelism in biblical verse.[227]

To return to the matter of the theological implications of narrative style, however. If Sternberg's intriguing suggestion is true, and narra-

torial omniscience carries a strong theological meaning, what of sequentiality?

VIII

Behind the debate over *ein mukdam u-me'uḥar ba-Torah* lie questions of the nature of revelation and the proper means of its interpretation. However, a view which may reflect the *peshat* of one *parashah* may not reflect that of the Torah taken as a whole. Lev 25:1 serves as a fundamental proof-text, a *binyan av*,[228] for the Sinaitic origin for all the *mizvot* in the Torah. Nahmanides' lengthy discussion of Lev 25:1 and Rashi's citation from *Sifra*,[229] which entail reconstructing a fair bit of Pentateuchal chronology, as well as scattered comments elsewhere, enable us to ferret out Nahmanides' understanding of the Torah's explicit asequential rendering of events.

"The Theory of General Sequentiality"

As noted above, however, Nahmanides does not provide an explanation of why the Torah seems to treat time differently in different sections. Note that the first explicit date given in the Torah (aside from those relating to the Flood, which did not usher in a new era as regards dating[230]) is perhaps that of Exod 19:1, when the Israelites reach Sinai on the third month, perhaps Rosh Hodesh Sivan.[231] Up to this point, the dating of events, to the extent such dating is done, was by age and lifespan; no era is established until the Exodus.

With their arrival at Sinai the Israelites leave the *Urzeit*, their prehistory, and begin to date events by the pivotal event of the Exodus, the first significant occurrence of the Israelite national experience.[232] Jethro's coming, the date of which is a matter of contention between Rashi and Nahmanides, is given without a date, perhaps because he too is connected with the time before the Exodus and Sinai.[233] This is no different in essence from the five-fold division of the Primeval History in Genesis into shorter periods by the introduction "these are the generations of. . . ."[234]

Could this be the reason that Nahmanides' great methodological discussions of sequential order are not to be found in his commentary on Genesis, but begin rather with the second half of Exodus? Could this lack reflect an implicit recognition of the different way in which historical time is handled in the pre-Sinai era?[235]

However, Nahmanides only sporadically addresses this question directly. Perhaps the troublesome question of why particular literary

or stylistic devices are employed at one point and not another were felt to be either insoluble or impious.[236] Nevertheless, I have already called attention to Nahmanides' concern for the different densities of Pentateuchal narrative, and well as those of Scriptural exposition.[237]

So the mainstream Rishonim. Later commentaries as a rule manifest little interest in matters of style and structure unless they can be related to the more ordinary matters of omnisignificance, halakhic or aggadic.[238]

On occasion, however, the two concerns fuse, and such matters are taken up. For example, the Maharal of Prague, in his super-commentary on Rashi, suggests a reason for the division of the halakhah regarding the impurity of a carcass in Lev 11 into two parts, one dealing with ritually forbidden animals in vss. 26-27 and the other dealing with ritually permitted animals in vss. 39-40. This division, he suggests, reflects the different rules which apply to these carcasses when they are ritually slaughtered; the carcasses of otherwise permitted animals are rid of their *nevelah*-impurity, while those of animals otherwise forbidden to be eaten do not.[239]

This tendency also has rabbinic precedent, one which Rashi cites. Lev 13:18-23 deals with a skin eruption which begins with a boil (*shekhin*), while 18:24-28 deals with one which begins with a burn (*mikhvah*). Rashi *ad* 13:24, and following *Hullin* 8a, notes that the two have identical symptoms. Why then are they separated into two sections? "To tell you that they cannot be combined one with the other. [If] an inflammation [the size of] half a half-bean develops, and [then] half a half-bean of burnt spot, they may not be judged as a [whole] half-bean."

In the light of all the foregoing, it should occasion no surprise to find that Nahmanides converted this interpretation of the division into separate sections into a rule for determining whether two separate sections exist, when the Masorah does not provide for such separation. And indeed, such a case has already been discussed above in section III.

In his comments on Exod 32:11, Nahmanides takes issue with Ibn Ezra's identification of Moses' prayer for the errant Israelites at Exod 32:11-13, before his descent from the mountain, with that at 32:31-32, after that descent, and, finally, with the parallel in Deut 9:26-29, which is quoted after the descent. Ibn Ezra claims (*ad* Exod 32:11) that Moses prayed only once, after his descent and his extirpation of the Calf, and that "*ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah.*" But, Nahmanides writes, "If it is all one prayer, which he offered in the forty days after this return to the mountain, why should it be divided, mentioning part of it here, and the other part of it after the descent,

Rather, they are two [separate] prayers"—and he goes on to detail the differences between them.

The question does actually occur overtly in Nahmanides' commentary, but in a somewhat different guise. For example, he notes *ad* Exod 39:3 that Scripture provides a unique description of the technical details of manufacturing one part of the Tabernacle's appurtenances in 39:3—the gold threads for the *ephod*. He suggests that this is because of the novelty of the technique in their eyes, "for doing this had not been heard of to this day."

The observation that Scripture accommodates the viewpoint of those who received it first occurs elsewhere as well. This, in turn, gives fuller meaning to a doctrine shared by both Rashi and Nahmanides, though, as we have demonstrated, they apply it in different ways: the matter of *ḥibbah*, God's love for Israel. As noted above, biblical history, whether narrative, genealogical or other types of listing, may be viewed as an expression of God's love and concern (*ḥibbah*) for every aspect of Israel's spiritual and material well-being.[249] As Nahmanides himself noted, this love and concern has as its center the generation(s) which received the Torah, and it is for this reason that the Torah includes halakhot whose details refer primarily to those generations—and exclude material which does not.

If *ḥibbah* leads to a disproportionate emphasis on the matters favored, disfavor should result in less emphasis than smooth narration might require; indeed, this is precisely what Nahmanides suggests. For example, in his commentary to Gen 12:2, he notes that the reason for Abram's departure from Ur is not given by Scripture:

> Behold, this passage does not explain the entire matter, for what reason [was there] for the Holy One, blessed be He, to tell him [=Abram]: "Leave your land and I will bestow favors on you that are unprecedented" without prefacing [this] with [a statement] that Abraham was one who served God, or a completely righteous person, or that he should tell him the reason for his leaving the land, that in his travelling to another land "you will draw near to God." [Indeed,] it is Scripture's custom (*minhag ha-katuv*) to say: "Go before Me, obey Me, and I will treat you favorably," as with David and Solomon. [Here follow other examples.]
>
> But the reason [for his leaving] was that the people of Ur Kasdim did him much harm because of his faith in the Holy One, blessed be He . . . but the Torah did not wish to expatiate at length on the opinions of idolators and to explain the issu[els which] stood between him and the Kasdites in [matters of] Faith, as it [likewise] condensed the matter of the generation of Enosh and their opinion regarding the idolatry which they innovated.

On another occasion Nahmanides inquires into the reason for the Torah's failure to include one particular aspect of the laws of inheritance: the right of a father to inherit the estate of a son who predeceases him. After proposing several solutions to this problem, and apparently rejecting them, he suggests, with all due hesitance, that it may be that "perhaps this did not occur (*lo hayah*) [in the generation] which entered the Land, with which [this section] deals (*she-bahem yedabber*)—that a father should inherit a son."[241]

Here too the condition of the wilderness generation determined the contents of Scripture. The manufacture of gold thread was included because it occasioned wonder on the part of those who witnessed it; the inapplicability of the rule that a father inherits a predeceased son led to its exclusion from Scripture.

R. Yehudah Cooperman long ago noted the fundamental importance of this latter insight.[242] From our perspective, it furthers the omnisignificant program by providing a rationale for the inclusion of such time-bound components within an eternally valid Torah, and incidentally provides the basis for the historico-halakhic interpretations to be discussed below.[243]

It also serves to solve, at least partially, the problem which Nahmanides himself raises in other contexts, i.e., the varying densities of narrative or expository text in different passages. Not only is the number of times a matter which receives Scriptural attention related to its importance, but so is the amount of detail it is given.

IX

Nahmanides' concern for sequence affected other aspects of his commentary as well, and encouraged an historical view of certain aspects of the Pentateuch's composition. In turn, this view seems to have influenced at least one important exegete of the early twentieth century.

The Torah at times, according to both Nahmanides and Rashi, takes the trouble to inform us of its own structure, perhaps as it relates to proper exegesis, or perhaps to inform us of the nature of particular historical periods. As Thomas Dozeman writes:

> Instead of establishing a clear temporal sequence to the Sinai narrative, the repetitive movement of Moses creates . . . the narrative context for the promulgation of distinct legal codes, which are now all anchored in the one revelation on Mount Sinai. . . . [It] forces the reader "to project not so much forward ('what happens next') as backward or sideways". . . . The reader repeatedly loses a sense of the past, present, and future of narrated time. But this loss of narrated time serves a canonical pur-

pose, for the result is that the reader's time becomes the significant moment for interpreting the promulgation of Torah "on this day."[244]

At least one recent traditional approach, whose antecedents go back to medieval and talmudic times, gives the lie to this antinomy between narrated time and literary structure. Indeed, Dozeman himself notes that Moses's comings and going provide a context for the various legal sections which interrupt the narrative flow.

The emphasis on history is not entirely new in traditional exegesis, but it has always been secondary to more omnisignificantly oriented methodologies. In part because of this, this approach not been classified as historical, and, at times, even masquerades as "halakhic." I refer to the evolutionary hypothesis developed by R. Meir Simhah of Dvinsk (1843-1926) in his *Meshekh Ḥokhmah*, and championed most recently by Rabbi Yehudah Cooperman.[245] While the latter traces it back to the school of the Gaon of Vilna, this approach has precedents in talmudic sources, sources which Nahmanides developed in his commentary.

> R. Ishmael says: The general rules [of the Torah] were given[246] at Sinai, and the details were given [in revelations at] the Tent of Meeting, but R. Akiva says: The general rules and details [both] were given at Sinai, repeated at the Tent of Meeting, and a [given a] third time on the plains of Moab.[247]

In particular, Nahmanides' discussion of the first two of these periods, according to R. Akiva's scheme, is pertinent.

> In my view, the passage [regarding the Jubilee year in Lev 25:1-55] is written in proper order here, for the meaning of "at Mount Sinai" is [at the time that Moses] went up to receive the second tablets. The explanation of matter is that, at the beginning of the first forty day [period when Moses went up to receive] the first tablets, [he] wrote all the words of God and all the statutes in the Book of the Covenant as recorded there [Exod 21-23], and [then] he sprinkled the covenantal blood on the people [Exod 24:8]. When [the Israelites] sinned with the golden calf and the tablets were broken, it was as though that covenant had been rescinded by the Holy One, blessed be He, and when [He] was reconciled with Moses [when the latter inscribed] the second tablets, He instructed him regarding a second covenant, as [Scripture] states, "Behold, I am making a covenant" [Exod 34:10]. He reinstated (*beḥezir*) there the weighty commandments which were stated in the Sidra of *Ve-eleh Mishpatim* in the first covenant, and said: "Inscribe these Words for yourself, for by these Words will I make a covenant with you and with Israel" [Exod 34:27]. . . .
>
> Now, in the first Book of the Covenant, the [*mizvah* of the] sabbatical year is mentioned in its generality, as I mentioned, as is stated, "As for

the sabbatical year, you shall forgive debts and leave [the land] uncultivated" [Exod 23:11], while now all its rules and specifications and punishments were recorded in this second covenant. [Likewise,] Moses was instructed regarding the Tabernacle at the time of the first covenant during the first forty days, and when the Holy One, blessed be He, was reconciled with him, and commanded [Moses] to make a second covenant with [Israel], Moses descended [from the mountain] and instructed them regarding all that God had commanded him at Mount Sinai, [including] the construction of the Tabernacle.

. . . And when he completed [the construction and dedication of the Tabernacle], he said to them that "God commanded me at Mount Sinai to explain the sabbatical and jubilee years to you and to make a new covenant with you on every *mizvah* with a treaty and an oath. [Therefore,] he did not need to bring sacrifices and sprinkle half the blood on the altar and half on the people as he did at first[248] but they accepted the first covenant with these treaties and oaths. . . .

And, likewise, the covenant of the plains of Moab was [made] in this way when they accepted the Torah with those treaties and curses. That is the covenant [spoken of in the following verse], "These are the words of the covenant which God commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, aside from the covenant which He made with them at Horeb" [Deut 28:69].[249]

Nahmanides' comments thus provide a basis for a quasi-evolutionary view of Halakhah, with a pre-Sinaitic era followed by period which began with the Sinai covenant and ended tragically with the incident of the Golden Calf. This in turn was followed by a new covenant associated with the Tabernacle, and finally, a new era associated with the plains of Moab and the new generation about to enter the land of Canaan. Each was marked by legislative activity, every phase of which has its place within the legal materials scattered through the narrative of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness.

This viewpoint shows up in small-scale sequences as well. Nahmanides notes that the list of festivals in Lev 23 differs from that in Num 28-29 in that the *musafim*, the additional sacrifices, are given—with one exception—only in the latter. His explanation is that since these offerings became obligatory only with the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan, they were most relevant to that generation. The list which deals with them was thus placed in Numbers, after the census following the Midianite war, a census which numbered that generation. The earlier calendar, in Lev 23, naturally omitted offerings which were of no practical consequence at the time. We have already encountered a similar line of reasoning in the last section, in regard to Num 37.

In R. Meir Simḥah's view, some of the repetitive halakhic material in the Torah may reflect the particular conditions prevalent at the time of the giving of these *parshiyot*, as does the explicitly time-bound (*le-sha'ah*) material of halakhic nature which the Torah contains. Seen in this way, the Pentateuch presents, at least in part, a history of Israelite religion during the Wilderness Period. The stage of pre-*Mattan Torah* gave way to a short "honeymoon" period, which, in turn, was ended by the watershed event of the Golden Calf.

The high spiritual level attained at Sinai was lost with the latter episode, and this loss of stature is reflected in the minutiae of halakhic draftsmanship. One example is the difference in wording between Exod 23:4 and Deut 22:4; in the former, the Israelites are warned that "when you encounter an enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him," while the latter speaks of "your fellow's ass or ox fallen on the road." *Meshekh Ḥokhmah* relates the change of "enemy" to "fellow" to the fall of Israel at the incident of the Golden Calf. Before the worship of the Golden Calf, one's fellow Israelite might have been considered an enemy if he or she transgressed one of the *mizvot* given at Sinai; in Deuteronomy such a person could no longer be considered an enemy, since fallen Israel may no longer stand in such moral judgement on others.[250] Thus, variations in laws in the Written Torah reflect different eras even within the relatively short period of the desert wanderings; the law codes of the Book of Covenant in Exodus and Deuteronomy may be assigned to different spiritual/historical periods.[251]

Nahmanides' emphasis on sequence and proportion led him to a quasi-evolutionary understanding of Jewish history. From our point of view, however, its importance inheres in this: by providing for a context which permits the categorization of further halakhic elements as primarily (or almost solely) directed to the generation of the wilderness (that is, *le-sha'ah*), an historical approach gives meaning to features of the biblical text which were hitherto unexplainable. While certain laws were always deemed of temporary applicability, as for example the requirement that any heiress of the generation entering the land of Canaan marry within her tribe,[252] this insight had not been extended beyond the minimum which the Talmud had already specified.[253] Thus, the story of Israel's covenant with God must perforce include one of the basic components of that relationship, the halakhic.

In essence, R. Meir Simḥah extends the casuistical option to another arena, the historical. Rather than applying only to different cases, duplicate passages now apply to different *times*, which naturally involve different circumstances and different people.

Ironically, then, when the omnisignificant program slowly began to be renewed with the work of Neziv (the acronym of R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin, 1817-1893) and R. Meir Simhah of Dvinsk in his commentary of the Pentateuch, *Meshekh Hokhmah*, as I hope to demonstrate on another occasion, historical perspective reasserted itself but, ironically, without the sensibility that gave rise to it. For Nahmanides' sense of sequence and proportion is fundamentally at odds with the midrashic techniques which historically have been associated with the omnisignificant effort. It is testimony to Nahmanides' broadness of mind and greatness of spirit that he could contribute to both sides of that enterprise. Of course, his greatness extended even further, to the realm of the Oral Torah, where the same sensibility manifests itself. But of that, more elsewhere.[254]

In all this Nahmanides was far ahead of his time, and while his work on the Pentateuch served to legitimate kabbalistic approaches,[255] his struggle to determine the place of narrative and expositional sequence, structure and proportion within the rubric of *peshat*,[256] which were much more accessible, hardly resonated down the generations of traditional biblical exegesis. Thus, while his influence on the Tradition was formidable, it was not, in certain vital respects, formative.

Another irony concerns the very legitimization of kabbalistic approaches, for Nahmanides' lack of systematic attention to these matters in his commentary[257] discouraged the use of this approach to solve the chronic problem of omnisignificance. That purpose was served by his "pashtanic" readings. Thus, where he was creative, his influence remained limited; where his work was influential, it did not aid in the realization of the omnisignificant ideal.

As to the reawakening of interest in such matters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the resulting works, as stimulating as they are, cannot be said to have advanced the omnisignificant program in any striking way. The reason is simple. Having been forced to develop a halakhic system without benefit of creative *derashot* of biblical texts for nigh-on a millennium and a half, halakhic Judaism has learned to do without, and the power of precedent and tradition is such that that avenue remains blocked but for exceptional instances. If the past is any guide, this situation will continue in the forseeable future, unless and until the ideal enunciated by R. Zaddok Hakohen of Lublin (1823-1900), the sharply historiographic cast to whose thought I have discussed elsewhere,[258] will obtain, when in messianic times

. . . As it is said, "One man will no longer teach another . . . for all of them will know Me."[259] And so too in the Talmud: "Were it not for the

[fact] that Israel sinned, only the five Pentateuchal books would have been given to them, [and the book of Joshua]."[260] Each one would apprehend all of the Oral Torah from the Written Torah—so too in the future: every one of Israel will apprehend [the Oral Torah] and will [no longer] need to learn from others.[261]

NOTES

1. This phrase comes from Erich Auerbach's pioneering essay, now a generation old, on biblical narrative, which takes the binding of Isaac as a paradigm. See *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1968), 12. Though Auerbach did not use the phrase exactly as I do, his analysis recognizes a certain theologizing tendency as well (see pp. 14-15).

   Actually, Nahmanides long ago noted Scripture's tendency to withhold information; see his remarks on Exod 10:2, 11:1, 12:21, 16:1, 17:1, Lev 9:3, Num 16:5, 16:11, 20:21, 32:33, and see Gen 46:15 and Exod 16:2. This is not quite the same phenomenon that Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Radak term *mikra kazar* or *leshon kazar*, which is primarily syntactic or linguistic in nature, mostly involving ellipses of one sort or another. Nahmanides notes the absence of information important for narrative to a much greater extent than do his predecessors, for whom see E.Z. Melammed, *Mefarshei ha-Mikra: Darkeihem ve-Shitoteihem* (Jerusalem, 1975), 427-28 (Rashi), 561-68 (Ibn Ezra), 839-44 (Radak), and compare 961-65 (Nahmanides), esp. 963-64, nos. 16-18. Nahmanides' sensitivity to matters of expositional proportion (see section V) would seem to go hand in hand with his attention to narrative density.

   At any rate, in contemporary (less felicitous) literary parlance, the Bible is a "severely gapped text."

   A particularly attractive theory of Midrash, recently proposed by Daniel Boyarin (*Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* [Bloomington, Indiana, 1990], 11-19), suggests that Midrash be understood as an attempt to come to terms with the problems engendered by the text—a thoroughly traditional point of view, but one expressed in terms which increase our sensitivity to the range of problems inherent in the biblical text and the options available for their solution. See, for example, the following, from Boyarin's introduction to a chapter on how the Midrash deals with problems which modern biblicists attribute to the confluence of disparate sources ("Textual Heterogeneity in the Torah and the Dialectic of the Mekilta: The Midrash vs. Source Criticism as Reading Strategies," 39):

   > The Bible, *because* of its textual heterogeneity, allows for the multiple self-glossing readings of midrash. The heterogeneity—the multivocality of the

biblical text itself, its hiatuses and gaps, creatively but not open-endedly filled in by the midrash—allows it to generate its meanings—its *original* meanings—in ever new social and cultural situations.

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

3. *Yerushalmi Ketuvot* 8.11 (32c), based on Deut 32:47.

4. See most recently the remarks of Marc Hirshman, *Ha-Mikra u-Midrash: Bein Hazal le-Avot ha-Kenessiyah* (Tel Aviv, 1992), 21-22.

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

6. See Lev 15:2, 17:3, 8, 10, 13, 18:6, 20:2, 9, 22:4, 18, 24:15, Num 1:4, 4:19, 49, 5:12, 9:10, and the respective *Sifra* and *Sifrei* passages.

7. As in Lev 19-20.

8. See *Zevaḥim* 108b, where the word *betokham* in Lev 17:8 is interpreted as including women and slaves, as in Sifra *Aḥarei* 10:1, ed. Weiss, 84a on 17:10.

9. As in Lev 13:29, 38.

10. *Bekhorot* 6b; see also *Pesaḥim* 24a-b. As Kugel puts it in regard to the lack of rabbinic recognition of the stylistic nature of biblical poetry. "If a distinction was not to be drawn there was nothing to say" (*op. cit.*, 104). I discussed this in more detail in my "The Exegesis of Redundant Passages in Rabbinic Literature: The Unfolding of an Exegetical Principle," a paper delivered at the Association for Jewish Studies Twenty-second Annual Conference, Boston, December 17, 1990.

11. This is indeed precisely the point made in *Bekhorot* 6b.

12. This anonymous statement may be seen as an allusion to R. Ashi's fuller statement in *Pesaḥim* 24a-b, or that of Mar b. R. Ashi in *Kiddushin* 4b; see n. 10. I suspect that Rashi so understands it, and that accounts for his assessment of the eating of pig's meat in *Ḥullin* 109a, s.v. *hada me-hani*.

13. Note the trenchant remarks of Daniel Boyarin in his review essay, "On the Status of the Tannaitic Midrashim," in *JAOS* 112.3 (1992): 455-65, esp. 456-57. This is not the place to enter into the somewhat less vexing problem of a proper definition of *peshat*; see my forthcoming "Progressive *Derash* and Retrogressive *Peshat*: Non-halakhic Considerations in Talmud Torah." I quote the following from the beginning of sect. III of that paper.

> To arrive at the plain meaning of the texts, both traditional learning and academic study require an accurate knowledge of their provenance in every sense of the word: their historical provenance, in all its senses— political, cultural, religious, socioeconomic, including matters of realia; their linguistic, geographic provenance; it requires concern for structural and literary elements, for form-critical and source-critical matters; it requires first and foremost establishing a text, and thus brings text-critical matters into its purview.

It is sometimes forgotten how evanescent a phenomenon in Jewish intellectual history the concern for *peshat* was. The following judgement, made by Salo Baron a generation ago, still holds

> The first northern commentator to pursue the rational line with considerable consistency was Samuel bar Meir (Rashbam). . . . However, there was enough ambiguity in this general approach for Samuel's successors, including his younger brother, Jacob Tam, and the latter's pupil Joseph Bekhor Shor, to moderate it greatly. Later generations of Franco-German

scholars increasingly reverted to that intimate blend of literal and homiletical interpretations which had lent Rashi's commentaries their unparalleled charm. While the latter retained their freshness and popularity throughout the ages, those by Samuel were all but forgotten after their author's death, and they were resuscitated only by the antiquarians of the nineteenth century. It is small wonder, then, that half a century later David Kimhi, searching in Narbonne for materials in preparation of his commentary on Exodus, found there only exegetical works, "the names of whose authors I did not know for they mostly followed the hermeneutic method."

See Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., VI (New York, 1958), 294-96.

14. As noted in R. Steiner's paper cited in n. 2. In particular, note his closing comments, significantly entitled "The Omnisignificant Principle in *Peshat* Exegesis," 446. Much of the following may be seen as illustrative of his observation that "an attenuated version of the omnisignificance principle was a factor in medieval *peshat* exegesis, but its importance varied from exegete to exegete. . . . It may turn out that attitude towards the omnisignificant principle is a variable which can serve to establish a new classification of medieval *pashtanim*—a classification potentially more revealing than the current geographical one."

One drawback to such a classification, however, is the variability of the importance of omnisignificance *within* the work of a particular exegete from issue to issue and from crux to crux. Moreover, what are we to do with exegetes who are "partial" *pashtanim*? How do we measure their *peshat* and non-*peshat* tendencies?

15. Unless, as noted above (nn. 10, 12), they are interpreted "juridically" as pointing to multiple prohibitions for the same act. At any rate, the casuistic tendency applies to both biblical and rabbinic texts; for the latter see I.H. Weiss, *Dor Dor ve-Doreshav* III (Berlin, 1911), 9-14, and my "Prospective *Derash* and Retrospective *Peshat*," section I.

16 See Tosafot *Sotah* 3a, s.v. *lo*.

17. See, for example, its use in *Sotah* 3a-b, which both limited the meaning of "*parashah*" to the repetition of a word or clause within a verse, and was eventually employed when no verbal repetition was involved. Beyond that, the rule was taken to mean the opposite of its original intent: that every such repetition, verbal or conceptual, implied a *hiddush*.

18. See *Sifrei Numbers*, *Naso* 2, ed. Horovitz, 4-5, where this is cited in a somewhat different form ("*kol parashah she-ne'emrah be-makom ehad ve-hazar u-shena'ah be-makom aher, lo shena'ah ela 'al she-hizzer bah davar ehad*"). See D. Z. Hoffmann, et. al., *Mesillot le-Torat ha-Tanna'im*, trans. A. S. Rabinowitz (Tel Aviv, 5688; repr. Jerusalem, 5730), 7-9.

19. See D. Z. Hoffmann, "Le-Midreshei ha-Tanna'im," in *Mesillot le-Torat ha-Tanna'im*, 7-8.

20. See the examples provided in *Sotah* 3a-b.

21 See *Sifra* 8:1 (ed. Weiss, 33a).

22. See *Sifrei Numbers*, *Korah* 118, ed. Horovitz, 140-41.

23. That is, it is employed only to reject a midrashic exposition of two phrases, either *ish ish*, or an absolute infinitive + finite verb (e.g., *ha'anek ta'anik*); see *Bava Mezia* 31a-b for examples of the genre, and note the two rejections (by R. Eleazar b. Azariah and R. Shimon regarding *ha'anek ta'anik* and *ha'avet ta'avitenu*, respectively) marked with this maxim on 31b. Without entering into the vexed question of the consistency with which this principle was adhered to by one or another Tanna (see Tosafot, *ad loc.*, s.v. *dibberah*), we may note the consistency with which this principle is applied to these *derashot*. The one exception occurs in an tractate known for its unusual terminology, *Nedarim*, where it is applied to the combination *lindor neder* (3a). The same situation obtains in the *midreshet halakhah*; see *Sifre Numbers*, *Shelah* 6, ed. Horovitz, 121, where it

is applied to *bikaret tikaret.* However, the *Bavli* itself seems fully aware of this usage, since the expression employed for rejecting other types of *derashot* is the Aramaic "*orḥeih di-kera le'ishta'uyei bakhi,*" as in *Temurah* 6b-7a, 28a. Rashi too is careful to differentiate between these two; see his comment on *Pesaḥim* 23a s.v. *ve-idakh* (first occurence).

24. See Jay Harris' forthcoming work on this subject, tentatively titled *How Do We Know This?*, to be published by SUNY Press, chapter 2

25. This does not exclude other types of *derashot,* of course, but we must be cautious in categorizing those *derashot* attributed to him. For example, in *Megillah* 2a (= *Yevamot* 13b) R. Yoḥanan derives the various alternative days for the Megillah reading from the word *bi-zemaneihem* in Esth 9:31, this exposition is not based on the extra letters (as assumed by David W. Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* [New York, 1991], 25), but on the *plural,* as we find elsewhere; see *Menaḥot* 62b (*shalmeihem*), which in this respect is no different than the (tannaitic) *Kiddushin* 29a (*tira'u*); see also Tosafot, *Pesaḥim* 23a, s.v. *kezitkhem.* If it be argued that plurals are expressed by added letters, see *Yevamot* 74a, where the plural *terumotai* in Num 18:8 (spelled defectively?) is taken as a *ribbuy* (extension) even though the difference between singular and plural involves no added letter, merely a change of vowel.

26. See the commentary of R. Eliyahu Mizraḥi on Num 30:2. R. Mizraḥi explicitly attributes the right to employ this technique to the "*ḥakhmei ha-Mishnah.*" On the other hand, he contrasts its permissibility to them with its impermissibility to the Geonim; presumably his formulation was not meant to be exact, or he assumed that the Amoraim were merely citing tannaitic traditions. However, the *setama di-gemara* also employs the technique.

   I dealt with one aspect of this process in my paper, "The Creation of Halakhic Categories: Exegesis as Applied Listenwissenschaft," delivered at the Twenty-third Annual Conference for the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 17, 1991.

27. See *Ḥagigah* 10b, *Bava Batra* 112a, and *Ḥullin* 37a, where anonymous suggestions to this affect are not accepted, and two instances (*Kiddushin* 4b and *Ḥullin* 37b) where Mar b. R. Ashi rejects such anonymously proffered suggestions. Contrast those instances in which the suggestion is made by a Tanna or Amora, as in *Pesaḥim* 41a-b, *Yoma* 22b, *Sotah* 38b, *Kiddushin* 78a, *Bava Mezia* 60b, 111a, 113a, 115a, *Makkot* 16b, *Menaḥot* 99b, where they are accepted, and only Ravina's suggestion in *Pesaḥim* 24a is rejected by R. Ashi. I dealt with this midrashic technique in "The Exegesis of Redundant Passages in Rabbinic Literature" (see above, p. 10).

28. See his *Le-Ḥeker ha-Middot "Kelal u-Ferat u-Khelal" ve-"Ribbuy u-Mi'ut" be-Midrashim u-ve-Talmudim*" (Lod. 5744). and his forthcoming *Le-Ḥeker Middat Gezerah Shavah be-Midrashim u-ve-Talmudim,*" and see my "Towards a Tentative Periodization of Rabbinic Legal Exegesis," Association for Jewish Studies Twenty-fourth Annual Conference, Boston, December 15, 1992 and "Le-Toledot Musag ha-'Ribbuy' ba-Talmud ha-Bavli," Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies, June, 1993.

29. See *Ḥiddushei ha-Ra'ah, Ketubot* 60a, s.v. *katav ha-Rav R. Moshe,* and see, conveniently, Yitzhak D. Gilat, "Midrash ha-Ketuvim bi-Tekufat ha-Batar Talmudit," in Y. D. Gilat and A. Stern, eds., *Mikhtam le-David: Sefer Zikhron ha-Rav David Oks z'l* (Ramat Gan, 5738), 210-31, esp. 213-14.

30. See Moshe Zucker, *Perushei Rav Sa'adiah Gaon li-Vereishit* (New York, 1984), 181-84; the sentence quoted is from 181. See the general discussion in Jay Harris' forthcoming *How Do We Know This?*

31. Ibid., 188-90.

32. It is ironic that R. Saadiah felt compelled to jettison vital elements of the very tradition he was defending—and that truncated version of tradition became yet another tradition. This process has recurred many times in Jewish history.

33. Contained, as I write, in chapter 4 of his forthcoming book.

34. See above, p. 5.

35. A number of theories have been proposed for the rise of sequential biblical commentary as a genre. See Michael A. Signer, "The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Exegetical and Polemical Literature," in Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives* (Notre Dame, 1986), 210-33, esp. 213 and n. 9, and the literature cited therein; *idem*, "Exégèse et enseignment: les commentaires de Joseph ben Simeon Kara," *Archives Juives* 18:4 (1982): 60-63, where he connects this rise in "narrative emphasis" with the needs of pedagogy. Lately, see his "*Peshat, Sensus Litteralis*, and Sequential Narrative: Jewish Exegesis and the School of St. Victor in the Twelfth Century," in Barry Walfish, ed., *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* I (Haifa, 1993), 203-15.

   Yitzhak F. Baer saw the rise of interest in *peshat* in France as a reaction to Christian allegorical methods. See his "Rashi ve-ha-Mezi'ut shel Zemano," in *Sefer Rashi*, ed. Y.L. Maimon (Jerusalem, 1957), 489-502. However, whatever its origin or origins, it must be recognized that the interest in *peshat* led naturally to the need to see larger and larger parts of Scripture in context, and thus to sequential biblical commentary. As Signer notes ("The Land of Israel," 213): "the biblical text and its narrative were inseparably connected by the thread of the exegetical comment, so that the reader was forced to see the biblical text as a continuous narrative. . . ."

36. Ephraim Kanarfogel, "On the Role of Bible Study in Medieval Ashkenaz," in Barry Walfish, ed., *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, 151-66; the quote is from 158. In this respect, I suspect that these pietists were typical of the response of many over the centuries. However, promoting a place for Bible study within one's curriculum is hardly the same as manifesting a concern for omnisignificance and its problems; and even evincing a concern for the halakhic aspects of Bible study does not yet approach a full omnisignificant program. The latter does not appear until the challenges of the nineteenth century, a matter I hope to discuss on another occasion.

   As to Rashi's role in all this, quite apart from the extensive use of the *midreshet halakhah* manifested in his commentary and his discussions within the commentary to the *Bavli*, which served to draw attention to this neglected literature, Sara Japhet has recently suggested that the compilatory form employed in his commentary to the Pentateuch inspired the compilations so characteristic of later French commentaries. If her hypothesis is correct, the compilatory form also contributed to a greater awareness of the possibilities and limitations of an omnisignificant commentary to the Pentateuch. See Sara Japhet, "Peirush R. Yosef Kara le-Iyyov: Li-Dermitam u-le-Tefuzatam shel Peirushim Kompilatoriyyim bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim," in Moshe Bar-Asher, *et al.*, *'Iyyunei Mikra u-Farshanut, III: Sefer Zikkaron le-Moshe Goshen-Gottstein* (Ramat Gan, 1993), 195-216, esp. 213-16. Midrashic compilations such as *Lekah Tov* also contributed.

37. The range of the terms "halakhic" and "expositional" is somewhat different, since the latter includes genealogies, historical notes, etc., which are not halakhic. However, since the two realms, whatever their boundaries, are treated the same insofar as the exegetical methods to be examined below are concerned, the equation of the two sets, which is for convenience sake in any case, should not matter.

38. See n. 14.

39. On accommodationism, see now David Berrin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* (Albany, 1993), esp. 127-72.

40. This was not altogether unknown in earlier times, when, for example, *Sifra* accounts for the division of the Torah into paragraphs in essentially accommodationist terms. "What [purpose then] did the breaks serve? To give Moshe a breathing space to reflect between each passage and between each matter. How much more so for an ordinary person who learns from an[other] ordinary person!"

(*Sifra Hovah*, 1:9). But this minor element became more widely used in medieval exegesis.

41. See Jay Harris' discussion of this point in his forthcoming book (above, n. 24).

42. See n. 23.

43. This is not to say that even in early times attempts were made to wrest more meaningful interpretations from frequently recalcitrant texts; see Resh Lakish's comment in *Hullin* 60b, quoted above, p. 2.

44. *Mekilta Shirta* 7, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 139; see also *Sifrei Numbers, Beshallah* 7, ed. Horovitz, 139. The other instances listed there are Ezek 2:1 (or alternatively, 17:2), Jer 2:2, Hos 10:1, Koh 1:12, all marked as the actual beginnings of their respective books. *Sifrei Numbers, Beha'alotekha* 64, ed. Horovitz, 60, notes the chronological priority of Num 9:1 and associated *parashah* over 1:1. See *Pesahim* 6b, and our discussion below, section II.

45. See *Pesahim* 6b.

46. Whether the term " '*inyanei*" may be interpreted as identical with Masoretic paragraphs (*parshiyot*) is unclear; Tosafot elsewhere points out that asequentiality within a parashah is possible, as witness their comments re Genesis 15 at *Berakhot* 7b, s.v. *lo*.

47. I dealt with this in my "Le-Toledot ha-Musag 'Ribbuy' ba-Talmud ha-Bavli", above, n. 28.

48. See *Genesis Rabbah* 78:7; ed. Theodor-Albeck, 925.

49. Lev 5:10. "Already" here means that, though the point is made two verses further on, it need not appear twice, since Scripture will not make the same point twice.

50. As in the case of a parturient woman; see Leviticus 12 and below. section VI. This tannaitic teaching appears in *Sifra Hovah* 18:5-6 and *Zevahim* 90a.

51. That is, exchanged for a more expensive sin offering, as where the poor are permitted to bring two birds (a sin- and burnt-offering) in place of an animal offering (Lev 5:1f).

52. That is, a parturient mother is liable for an animal burnt offering; in poverty she may bring two birds.

53. *Sifra Tazri'a* 4:3, ed. Weiss, 59c and see *Zevahim* 90a. See section VI below for Rashi's use of these *mishnayot*, and see n. 183 for the explanation suggested by R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin ("Neziv," 1819-1893), in his commentary *Ha'amek Davar* (repr. Jerusalem, n.d.).

54. In *Zevahim* 90a.

55. Albeit with talmudic warrant, as where Rava propounds a solution to the conundrum presented by Lev 12:8

56. Note also Rashi's comment on Lev 22:28, based on *Hullin* 82a, which denies halakhic significance to the order of terms which places the slaughter of the dam before the calf or lamb; slaughtering of the mother and her offspring in any order is forbidden, a point which Rashi makes in his second comment on the verse and over which Nahmanides passes in silence. It would seem that if the talmudic source is clearly authoritative, and in consonance with *peshat*, Nahmanides will accept it though it violates the order of terms in the verse. More study of this aspect of Nahmanides' view of the interaction of Halakhah and *peshat* is necessary before we may fully understand the conflicting principles at work here.

57. See S. Z. Havlin, " 'Al ha-Hatimah ha-Sifrutit ki-Yesod ha-Halukah le-Tekufot be-Halakhah," *Mehkarim ba-Sifrut ha-Talmudit* (Jerusalem, 1983), 148-92.

58. The midrashic theme of the Torah's concern and love for Israel pervades Rashi's commentary. Aside from Num 9:1, see for example his comments on Gen 1:1. s.v. *bereshit*, Exod 1:1, s.v. *ve-eleh shemot*, Num 33:1, s.v. *eleh* (end).

59. *Genesis Rabbah* 60:8; ed. Theodor-Albeck, 650.

60. *Idem.*, ed. Theodor-Albeck, 651.

61. See Norman Lamm's discussion of this doctrine in his *Torah Umadda* (Northvale, 1990), 86-100.

62. On all of this in Nahmanides' thought, see below, sections II-VI.

63. *Pesahim* 6b; *Sifrei, Beha'alotekha* pis. 64, ed. Horovitz, 60-61. Two *derashot* are combined; one gives a reason for Scripture's provision of a date altogether, and the other derives the principle of *ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah* from here. Both are of interest. The latter parallels the *Bavli's* proof; the first states that "the verse speaks to the disfavor (*bi-genutan*) of Israel, since they had eleven months in which they camped before Mount Sinai"—and had not made an attempt to enter the land of Canaan (so Rabbenu Hillel, *ad loc.*). This version is itself difficult, as Horovitz notes, since 9:1 is dated to the first month, and not the second; he suggested that this *derashah* belongs at 1:1. Moreover, Rashi may have had an altogether different version of this statement. See Chavel's edition, *ad loc.*, and see below.

    Following this is a disquisition on the various dating systems employed by the Jewish people, attributed to Rabbi Judah the Prince), who prefers to derive the principle of *ein mukdam* from a somewhat less secure source, Exod 16:35, which notes that the Israelites ate the manna until they reached "a settled land"—even though they had not yet eaten any. This use of the principle is reminiscent of Nahmanides' observation that the Torah prefers to complete a narrative unit even when it is out of sequence.

64. *Hodesh* here may refer to Rosh Hodesh, the first of the month; see the commentary of R. Joseph Bekhor Shor, *ad loc.*

65. On Nahmanides' view of the matter, see *Encyclopedia Biblica* VIII (Jerusalem, 1982), cols. 686-87; E. Z. Melammed, *Mefarshei ha-Mikra*, 434-35, 539-42, 939-40. To Melammed's list of instances in which Rashi claims *"ein mukdam u-me'uhar ba-Torah"* add Gen 6:3, Exod 4:20, and 19:11; to his list of Ibn Ezra's, add Lev 8:13, Num 16:1 and 16-16.

    As Yaakov Licht observed, Nahmanides saw his work as a supplement to that of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, and so, in a real sense, they constituted his immediate exegetical tradition. See Licht's "Le-Darko shel ha-Ramban," *Te'udah* 3, *Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmud, bi-Leshon Hazal u-ve-Farshanut ha-Mikra* (Tel Aviv, 1983), 227-33, esp. 228-30. In particular, see his comments on p. 229: "One of the goals of the multi-layered program of Nahmanides' commentary on the Torah is [to serve as] a corrective and supplement to the exegesis which existed at the time of his writing. Precisely this: a corrective and supplement, but not a summation and survey, and therefore [his] examination is limited to the two exegetes *par excellence,* Rashi and Ibn Ezra, who serve as representative of the entire panoply." Licht substantiates this view of Nahmanides' endeavor, which is indeed intuitively obvious to anyone who is familiar with it or even peruses his poetic introduction to it, by the statistical table on p. 228: overall, Nahmanides adverts to Rashi in 37.7% of his comments, and to Ibn Ezra in 12.3% of them. Contrast this to just 7.3% for " *'al derekh ha-emet*", sporadic references to Maimonides, and one lone reference to Radak (Gen 35:16), though he is included anonymously as one of the *ba'alei ha-lashon* in various places.

    Nahmanides responds to most of Rashi's proposals; the exceptions are Exod 4:20, the inverted clauses of which defy a sequential interpretation, and Gen 6:3, regarding God's decree of the Flood, which must be dated, on the interpretation of the "hundred and twenty years" accepted by all three exegetes, twenty years before Japhet's birth, and which is thus an example of Nahmanides' signalling observation. See the text below regarding his programmatic statement at Lev 16:1. It is significant, however, that Nahmanides does not respond here, which, by the way, constitutes the first mention of the principle either by Rashi or Ibn Ezra.

    The achronological placement of Isaac's death in Gen 35:28 is merely another example of Nahmanides' rule that one generation's narrative is ended before the next begins, without overlap, even at the expense of an achronological death-notice, as he notes both here and at 11:32. On the dating of the instructions to build the Tabernacle, which Rashi declares out of place (in his comments on

31:8), see Nahmanides' introduction to Exod 25 and his long reconstruction of the checkered history of the covenant in Lev 25:1 [see section IX below]; Rashi's observations at Lev 8:2 and Num 9:1 will be dealt with below. Finally, Nahmanides deals with Rashi's observation that Exod 19:11 is out of sequence when the (parallel) narrative of Exod 24 is dealt with in his remarks on the latter, which he, together with Ibn Ezra, sees as not a parallel to the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exod 19-20 but as a subsequent development, which is recorded in proper sequence.

As to Ibn Ezra, Nahmanides finds place in his commentary to respond, either explicitly or implicitly, to nearly every one of his suggestions through Num 16:16, with the exception of Exod 11:10 (see further). Thus, the last three instances listed by Melammed (Num 19:1, Deut 31:1, and Deut 32:15) are seemingly ignored. However, there is nothing in Ibn Ezra's claims in these instances which either compel a response or which have not been dealt with already. Nevertheless, it is significant that Nahmanides' remarks on these matters are much less plentiful in his commentary on Deut.

Among the passages for which Ibn Ezra claims asequentiality are: Gen 6:3 (regarding God's decree of the Flood, see above, and regarding Terah's death, see below); 11:29 (the command to leave Haran, Nahmanides' essential point is that the original journey from Ur Kasdim was at Terah's initiative, as witness 11:31); 18:22 (the arrival of the angels at Sodom precedes God's remarks to Abraham in 18:20; Nahmanides assumes a long conversation extending past their arrival); 38:1 (the date of Joseph's sale into slavery; this illustrates Nahmanides' rule that achronological order is admissible when signalled); Exod 11:1 (where 11:4-8 is the natural continuation of 11:1a; Nahmanides understands 11:1 as a contraction of the latter passage, which is only revealed to the reader when Moses unveils it before Pharaoh; this pattern is found elsewhere as well, q.v. *ad* 16:4, near end, and see nn. 158 below and 1 above); 11:9 (Ibn Ezra sees this as a repetition of 10:7; Nahmanides sees this as a progressive revelation of Pharaoh's stubbornness—compare his strategy at 6:29-30 and Num 16:6); 11:10 (the interpolation of ritual prescriptions at 12:1-20; according to Nahmanides in his comments to 12:43, this section was revealed on 1 Nisan, and is thus in place); 12:43 (Ibn Ezra suggests that the ritual prescriptions at 12:43-49 were attracted here by association with 12:42; Nahmanides suggests that it would more properly have been placed before the description of the Plague of the Firstborn at 12:29-36, and its appearance was delayed until here because of the association of 21-29 to 1-20), both ritual prescriptions which might be dated to 1 Nisan, followed by the exodus at 30-42, which followed immediately; thus the ritual section here now completes the matter); 12:50 (repetition of 12:28, but both reflect the alacrity with which Israelites fulfilled the divine command; see Nahmanides' comments *ad* v. 28); 16:32 (the command to preserve the manna at the Tabernacle clearly fits either here or in one of the Tabernacle passages; it is placed here to emphasize the miraculous nature of the manna; there is nothing here with which Nahmanides would find reason to disagree); 17:14 (the prescription for recording the strictures against Amalek clearly prefigures Deut 25:17-19, but need not have been written in the fortieth year, as Nahmanides notes); 18:1 (the coming of Jethro, whether before or after the revelation at Sinai, is a *cause célèbre* of Jewish Bible commentary; here too Nahmanides' arguments for sequentiality owe perhaps more to his general approach than the internal evidence, as his agreement with Tosafot indicates; see n. 68 below); 32:11 (Moses' prayer[s]; see discussion below, s.v., "Resumptive Repetition"); 32:29 (the elevation of the Levites; see n. 136), 32:35 (the date of the plague may not have been during the first year, since the number of victims is not recorded, and the censuses at 38:26 and Num 1:46 yield equal numbers; Nahmanides' harmonistic response is not compelling), 33:7 (Moses' tent is the future Tabernacle and the verse is therefore out of place; Nahmanides interprets the whole narrative sequentially, and disassociates the

two); Lev 25:1 (this Sinaitic section is out of place; see section IX below, where Nahmanides' response is discussed in detail); 26:25 (see section IX); 26:46 (this summing up mentions the category of *mishpatim*, referring to various passages earlier in the Pentateuch; hardly a matter of *ein mukdam*); Num 3:1 and Deut 10:7-8 (the elevation of the Levites refers to an earlier period in the wake of the Golden Calf incident; Nahmanides distinguishes between the elevation of Aaron to the priesthood and that of the Levites here, given Aaron's role in the incident, as contrasted with his tribe).

66. The reference is to Lev 25:1, which comes after a long succession of sections which must be dated later, to the period in which revelations were given at the Tent of Meeting.

67. Num 7:1.

68. See his commentary to Lev 16:1, and our discussion below in section VI. The last sentence means that the following section is displaced, and that its place is really between Lev 10:20 and Lev 11:1. He too seems to have seen this as a programmatic statement, and refers to it in his animadversions against Ibn Ezra at Num 16:1, as the similar wording would indicate. Chavel's n. 18, which points to Exod 18:1, Lev 8:2, and finally, to Exod 24:1 as the reference, misses the mark.

Thus, Nahmanides requires definite chronological evidence for asequentiality; contrast Tosafot, *'Avodah Zarah* 24b, s.v. *Yttro*, where the suggestion is made that Exod 18:1-12 occurred before *Mattan Torah*, and the rest afterwards, but these two sections were combined in order to present one comprehensive Jethro narrative. Nahmanides' comment to similar effect *ad* 18:12 ("it is also possible to explain that the Torah arranged [*ba-katuv sidder*] the whole matter of Jethro") as well as his following comment on 18:13, would indicate a similar position. The chronological signal here is the "next day" of v. 13, which must have occurred after Yom Kippur, since "there was no day available (*panuy*) for judgment from the day they came to Sinai until after Yom Kippur of this first year."

Nahmanides' statement has a modern ring. See Jeffrey R. Smitten and Ann Daghistany, *Spatial Form in the Narrative* (Ithaca, 1981), 14-15:

We read narratives one word after another, and in this sense all narratives are chronological sequences. But the . . . arrangement of events within this linear flow of words often departs in varying degrees from strict chronological order. Also, portions of a narrative may be connected without regard to chronology through such devices as image patterns, leitmotifs, analogy, and contrast. "Spatial form" is simply the general label of all these different narrative techniques.

As we shall see, this is exactly what Nahmanides proposes.

69. Needless to say, the super-commentaries' attempt to make good on Rashi's omission is of importance for the proper understanding of the exegetical problems involved, but not always for understanding Rashi's view of the matter.

70. See above. Of course, he could reconcile R. Papa's analysis with his own position by assuming that R. Papa wished only to protect the rule of *kelal u-ferat u-khlal*, and ignore the more general statement that *ein mukdam* refers only to two separate passages. In practice, however, Nahmanides maintains his position of sequentiality both in regard to verses within a passages as well as the relationship between two separate passages. See below, 9-10.

71. But not, I think, one which had mystical antecedents for him, as argued by Dr. Isaac Gottlieb at the Eleventh World Conference on Jewish Studies in June, 1993. Enough indications of his sensitivity to issues of order and proportion in other contexts exist, as I shall shortly demonstrate, to account for his view on purely "pashtanic" or "quasi-pashtanic" grounds.

See now Gottlieb's study on a related topic, namely, Nahmanides' view of the introductory verses of legal passages, "Sod ve-Signon be-Ferush Ramban le-Torah," *Mahana'im* 3-4 (5753): 162-69. Gottlieb argues that Nahmanides' concern

for locating the attribution of a *mitzvah* to God in the introduction to a *parashah* stems from the need to provide a divine source for each *mitzvah*. However, Nahmanides' concern for the particular form and content of these introductions owes at least as much and probably more to his interest in consistency of pattern and style as to the need for a clear divine attribution. His concern for consistent formulations goes far beyond matters of introductory attributions to God, and extends to much more prosaic and mundane matters; see his comments to Gen 27:29, Exod 19:12 and 20:5. He also manifests a concern for consistency in matters of person and number, as in the switch from second to third, singular to plural, etc . See his comments to Gen 27:29, 29:27, 46:7, Exod 3:6, Lev 2:11, 7:25, 25:15, 26:16, and Deut 6:4. and note particularly Gen 27:29, where he attends both to the change in pattern and number.

Moreover, Gottlieb notes in regard to Exod 12:1 that Nahmanides "is not prepared to see the introduction [to the passage] in [12:]3, since it is later in the *parashah* and not at its beginning." Clearly, Nahmanides' concern with sequentiality played an important role in this regard as well.

In short, all the questions to which Gottlieb rightly points as matters of concern to Nahmanides are genuine exegetical questions fueled by a concern for omnisignificance, rather than his mystical view of the Torah. However, it is clear that neither his mystical views nor his concern with omnisignificance may account for *all* his exegetical moves. Purely "pashtanic" considerations play a role as well, as we shall note in regard to syntactic asequentialities, such as syntactic repetition, or when (as in Lev 7:25), Nahmanides decides that the variation (of second person singular and plural) is not significant.

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

The debate over sequentiality extended to non-Pentateuchal books as well; see the commentaries of Abarbanel and R. Eliezer of Beaugency on Is 6.

73. For Ibn Ezra on this issue, see Avraham Lipshitz, *Pirkei 'Iyyun be-Mishnat R. Avraham Ibn Ezra* (Jerusalem, 1982), 77-78, and esp. on. 25-30.

74. See, for example, Nahmanides' trenchant comments regarding (at least by implication) Rashi's understanding of the *Sifra*'s midrashic handling of Lev 14:43-44 In his commentary on 14:45, in which he asserts, *inter alia,* that "it is impossible to cut them with a knife, to move them backward and forward (*lehakdim u-le'aher*) in a matter which is not at all their meaning (*mashma'am*)."

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

This concern for the sequence of topics within a legal passage should be distinguished from the classical rabbinic hermeneutic principle of *semikhut,* where the mere juxtaposition of two topics is considered of legal significance. By definition, *semikhut* involves only juxtaposition, while Nahmanides' concern is sequence; moreover, juxtaposition involves only two passages. Furthermore, Nahmanides does not ordinarily draw novel legal conclusions from either juxtaposition or sequence, though that is not always the case. See for example his commentary on Exod 20:3, where he interprets the *baraita* which Rashi cites as representing an individual opinion in large measure because of the sequence of prohibitions regarding idolatry.

76. See his commentary on Num 32:2.

77. See Gen 6:10, 36:12, 46:18-19, Exod 25:1 (the order of the Tabernacle vessels, with the most important first), Lev 23:40 (the citron mentioned first of the "Four Species"), 26:4 (rain is the most crucial of all blessings), Num 1:32 (the tribe of Ephraim before that of Menasseh; see Gen 48:17-20). But compare his discussion of the placement of Japhet as last of the brothers in Gen 6:10: he was the firstborn, but second to Shem in rank, and his status as first-born was insufficient to

overcome his inferiority to Shem. The result was that Shem was listed first, Ham, the youngest, second, and Japhet brought up the rear. Such is the power of sequentiality!

78. Deut 28:11.

79. Gen 46:18-19 or Num 1:32.

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

81. Exod 20:3 and Deut 23:5, respectively.

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

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

84. Gen 39:8-9, where Potiphar's wife shows greater fear of her husband than of God.

85. Num 8:4.

86. Num 14:24.

87. Gen 17:26.

88. Lev 15:54, where he surveys the sequence of sections in Lev 13-14, and explains their order in terms of frequency of occurrence.

89. Exod 25:1, Lev 8:30. Of course, birth order (see n. 76) and initiative (see Num 14:24) may be considered under this rubric, as may causation (see n. 82).

90. The exceptions being Lev 12:8 and 22:28, the former as noted above.

91. It is noteworthy that no medieval commentator seems ever to have suggested that sequence might be attributed merely to mechanical or literary causes, as the *Wortfolgprinzip*, where the order of elements is determined by their length in syllables. See S. Y. Friedman, "Kol ha-Kazar Kodem," *Leshonenu* 35 (5731): 117-29, 192-06, and the literature there cited in nn. 2f.

92. But see n. 56.

93. See the discussion of Lev 12:8 in section VI below.

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

95. See his comments, *ad loc*. One of the super-commentaries on Rashi seems to have noticed a similar phenomenon; see *Sefer Zikaron* on Lev 22:6.

96. Both phrases—*mikra mesoras* and *sares et ha-mikra ve-darshehu* are to be found in the *midreshei halakhah*. For the former, see *Mekilta Beshallah, Vayissa* 4, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 167; *Sifra* 29, ed. Weiss, 45b, *Sifrei, Naso*, pis. 39, ed. Horovitz, 43; *Bavli, Sotah* 38a; and for the latter, see *Sifrei, Naso*, pis. 68, ed. Horovitz, 63; *Sifrei, Beha'alotekha*, pis. 113, ed. Horovitz, pis. 123; *Sifrei, Pinhas*, ed. Horovitz, 177.
   Most important is his discussion of the phenomenon in his comments on Gen 15:13, where he lists Gen 39:17, 41:57, Exod 12:15, Is 2:20, Ps 66:17, Hos 8:2, and Mal 3:17 as examples. In addition, he himself suggests the following in the course of his commentary: Gen 8:5, 14:15, 15:13, Lev 25-20, Num 19:2. In Gen 14:15 he rejects Rashi's interpretation and suggests instead that there is an inverted clause. Pertinent also is implicit acceptance of Rashi's suggestions of reversing the order of clauses (*sares et ha-mikra, sursehu re-darshehu*) at Exod 2:2, Num 19:7 and Deut 4:38; however, see next note.
   As noted above (see n. 65), Yaakov Licht calculated that Nahmanides adverts to Rashi's comments in 37.7% of his comments overall. Somewhat earlier he had given an estimate of a third; see *Encyclopedia Biblica* VIII (1982), col 683. Given the extreme respect and care with which Nahmanides treats Rashi's commentary, the natural assumption is that he agrees with him unless otherwise noted.

Note, finally, that this phenomenon was accepted without disagreement by Nahmanides' exegetical tradition; see E.Z. Melammed, *Mefarshei ha-Mikra*, 573-75 on Ibn Ezra's "*mikra mesoras*" (though he will occasionally use the term "*hafukh*" or "*mukdam*") and 835-38 on Kimhi's "*mikra hafukh*" or "*mukdam me'uhar*." This is of course less significant than might be thought since Nahmanides had no compunction in rejecting the consensus *vis-a-vis mukdam u-me'uhar*.

97. See Gen 2:19, Exod 2:5, Lev 1:15, 22:2, Num 14:21, and 27:1.

It is perhaps revealing, however, that he will more often than not label his own suggestions with the neutral (*re*)-*she'uro* (see his comments on Gen 4:22, 14:15, 13:9, 27:28, 37:2, 40:5 [in his comments to 37:2], Lev 7:36, 21:1, 7:38, 11:36, Num 4:16, 174-5) than to call them *mikra mesoras* outright. The term *she'uro* is not exclusively employed for inverted clauses; with it he occasionally refers to other syntactic inconnicities (see Exod 21:20-21, 21:31), or even etymological considerations, as in Exod 12:43; in his comments to Exod 6:2 he employs the term in explaining Ibn Ezra's suggested "double-duty" preposition there.

Nevertheless, in the light of his programmatic statement at Gen 14:13, this must be laid to stylistic preference rather than to his inclinations; to what extent style mirrors deeply held beliefs remains moot.

98. As in Exod 2:2, where Aaron and Miriam's birth are omitted, and see Nahmanides' attempt to account for this in 2:1.

99. See his long discussion *ad* Exod 18:1, but see nn. 65 and 68 above.

100. See his introduction to Deuteronomy, and see *Mizrahi* on Lev 25:1, see below.

101. See below, s.v. "Resumptive Repetition," for a discussion of the function of the division of the Pentateuch into "books."

102. See section IX.

103. From his commentary on Lev 8:1.

104. This point was already recognized by R. Mizrahi in his extended comments to Lev 25:1, q.v., but exception to it are noted as well.

105. See his comments to Num 16:1, where he explains that the placement of the passage devoted to Korah's rebellion provides insight into the timing and motivation of the attempted coup; see n. 136.

106. Nahmanides to Num 9:1.

107. Nahmanides, *ad loc.* He makes a similar comment in his remarks on Gen 35:28 and Lev 16:23.

We may note in passing that the word frequently used in Genesis to denote "history" is *toledot*, literally, "progeny," or, metaphorically, the events which issue forth in the course of time. This serves to connect sequentiality and narrative.

108. That is, the writer's covenant with the reader as the criteria governing the genre being used. See David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco, 1987), 2.

109. As in the case of Gen 39:1, Exod 1:1-7, 6:29-50, and Num 9:1. The first and third are resumptive repetitions, and for the second and fourth he has midrashic warrant. See *Exodus Rabbah* and *Tanhuma* Buber, *ad loc.*, for the former, and *Sifrei Numbers, Beha'alotekha* 64, ed. Horowitz, 60, for the latter. In Gen 6:3, 35:27, Exod 19:11, 31:8, and Lev 8:2 he does not explain the departure.

One of the ironies of intellectual history is that Rashi's super-commentators, ever vigilant in his defense, in essence adopt Nahmanides' stance in this matter, and often attempt to discover the reason for asequentiality in biblical narrative.

110. See for example Gen 6:3, 35:29, and Lev 8:2, and compare Nahmanides on the latter two.

111. Rashi's use of *Sifrei* in this matter, and the relation of that midrash to others on the same topic, are a matter of discussion among later commentators. See the remarks of *Gur Aryeh*, for example. Of greater concern here, however, is the efficacy of such treatment of a shameful fact, which, in the end, does appear in the

Torah in any case. We shall have the opportunity to examine other instances of Rashi's use of the theme of God's love for Israel as an exegetical tool.

112. See below, section III, for another example (Exod 1:1-7) in which Rashi prefers a *ḥibbah* centered explanation to one which merely acknowledges the achronological order by positing a resumptive repetition.

113. Referring to the report of the movement of the camp and Tent in chapter 9.

114. Until this point, Abarbanel quotes Nahmanides' comments on Num 9:1 word for word.

115. It is important to realize that Abarbanel often takes the opening phrase of a biblical book, usually the incipit, as revealing its theme; see his disquisitions in his introductions to First Prophets, for example. Thus, here he implies that the title of the Book of Numbers, *Bemidbar* in Hebrew, relates to the theme of the book, which is to give an account of the Israelites' experiences *in the Sinai desert*, as opposed to the account what transpired *at Mount Sinai*, either on the mountain (e.g., Lev 25) or in the Tent of Meeting (Lev 1-24) which occupies most of Leviticus and the latter part of Exodus. See Abarbanel's comments on Num 7:1.

116. For a more detailed analysis of this case, see section III below.

117. See *Sifrei Numbers*, *Baha'alotekha*, pis. 67, ed. Horovitz, 62, and n. 63 above; Rashi seems to present a meld of pis. 64 and 67. Chavel in his edition of Rashi's commentary (*ad* Num 9:1) notes that Tosafot, *Yevamot* 72a, s.v. *nitshum* cite *Sifrei* as the source of this midrashic comment.

118. As Rashi describes the phenomenon in his remarks on Exod 6:30: "This is [a repetition of] the statement made above. . . . Scripture repeats it here since it interrupted the narrative. This is the method [of a narrator], just as a person who says, 'Let us return to the first subject.' " See Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Presentation of Synchroneity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative," in Joseph Heinemann and Shmuel Werses, ed., *Studies in Hebrew Narrative Art* (= Scripta Hierosolymitana 27) (Jerusalem, 1978), 9-26, and the literature cited there, esp. on 12-13. See also H. Van Dyke Parunak, "Oral Typesetting: Some Uses of Biblical Structure," *Biblica* 62 (1981): 153-68.

Resumptive repetitions have been observed in many ancient texts, beginning with the inscriptions of Gudea, king of Lagash (ca. 2125 BCE). See Adam Falkenstein and Wolfram von Soden, *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zurich, 1953), 144-45 (translation of Cylinder I, col. XI, see ll. 1 and 19, but cf. translation of S. N. Kramer, "The Temple in Sumerian Literature," in Michael V. Fox, ed., *Temple in Society* [Winona Lake, 1988], 3). See also rabbinic texts such as *Tosefta Megillah* 1:5, and S. Y. Friedman, "Le-Hithavvut Shinnuyei ha-Girsa'ot ba-Talmud ha-Bavli," *Sidra* 7 (1991): 67-102; see 82, n. 26 and *Yerushalmi* (see *Yerushalmi Nedarim* 5:7 [39b], ed. Vilna 5:6 [19b])

Dr. Richard White has called my attention to a resumptive repetition in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chaps. 11 and 13, where in the first, the creation of man is described as occuring in a "pure place," while chap. 13 has: "After man was created in a pure place." Michael Friedländer, in his edition, explains this repetition as due to a conflate text ("collection of three variant accounts of the same legend"); see *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna* (London, 1916; repr. New York, 1981), 78, n. 6. This is in line with the modern understanding of the device; see Talmon's discussion of its modern incarnation.

119. He also seems to understand the mention of the Tent of Meeting in Num 1:1 as a resumptive repetition. Since the bulk of Leviticus was revealed there, with the exception of chapters 25-26, Num 1:1 resumes the narrative of revelation in the Tent.

Since He interrupted (*hifsik*) with the *mizvot* of the sabbatical year and Jubilee which He stated were [given] at Mount Sinai, he repeated here (*ḥazar ve-amar kan*) that this revelation (*dibbur*) was [given] in the Tent of Meeting, as in all the revelations which He mentioned from the beginning of the Book of Leviticus.

Likewise, Nahmanides seems to view Deut 4;44-45 as a resumptive repetition of Deut 1:1; see his remarks on 1:1 and the discussion below.

120. At the time of the Covenant Between the Pieces; see Gen 15, and in particular, see Nahmanides' understanding of the reasons for this exile in his comments on Gen 15:13-16.

121. Gen 46:8-27.

122. As set forth in the initial decree of Gen 15:13.

123. Modeled on Exod 14:3.

124. The last statement does not exactly reflect Nahmanides' views on the matter; the Tabernacle was erected on 1 Nisan, but the Divine Presence did not descend until a week later, even though the first seven chapters of Leviticus were revealed at that time. See Nahmanides' comments on Exod 40:2 and 40:17.

125. He does the same in his commentary on Jeremiah; see his comments on Jer 37:4

Nahmanides also recognized the existence of explanatory repetitions, though here it involves a contradiction as well. In his comment *ad* Exod 12:51, he notes that that verse—"It was on that selfsame day that God took out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt in their hosts"—comes to correct the impression left by 12:42, which describes the night as a "night of watching to take them out of the land of Egypt." Permission to leave was granted at night, but the exodus itself took place during the day.

Here we have a resumptive repetition (*hazar u-feresh*) of a different sort. Each of these verses serves as a summary of the preceding section. In the first, verses 37-39 describe the Exodus, and 40-42 summarize the Egyptian sojourn and exodus; 43-49 prescribe the ritual of the paschal sacrifice, and verse 50 climaxes this section with the assertion that the Israelites fulfilled all the requirements. Constituting a section of its own, verse 51 serves as another summary, resuming and ending the narrative after the intervening ritual digression.

126. II Chron 36:22-23.

127. The use of the word *hehezir* here does not refer to a repetition of the decree from Chronicles, since it is clear from the context that the more complete version of the decree is to be found in Ezra, and is therefore presumably original there. The point is that, having deciding to join the two narratives by repeating part of the decree at the end of Chronicles, the author of Ezra or its editor did not eliminate the first two verses from the beginning of his book. Proof for this reading is to be found in the continuation, where Nahmanides stresses that the editor "completed the first book"—that is, Chronicles—"with what occurred before the rebuilding of the Temple" and "[completed] the second book," i.e., Ezra, "with events from the building onward." That is, a degree of editing and coordination was necessary for both.

128. Heb. *ola*; see Chavel's note, *ad loc.*

129. From his commentary on Exod 1:1.

130. See n. 127.

131. The use of this device at this point has become a bone of contention between those who attribute the authorship of Chronicles and Ezra to the same person, usually Ezra, a view which can be traced back to the Talmud (*Bava Batra* 15a) but which originated in modern times with Zunz, and the ever-increasing number of scholars who follow Sarah Yefet in arguing for separate authors. See her "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968): 330-71. I hope to take up this issue elsewhere.

132. From his comments on Num 1:1.

133. Following *Hagigah* 6a and *Zevahim* 115b, Nahmanides divides the era of Moses' prophecy into three parts: that of the Sinai period, that of the era of revelations in the Tabernacle, and that of the covenant at the Plains of Moab. See his detailed analysis *ad* Lev 25:1, presented and discussed below in section IX. Though the Israelites reach the Plains of Moab only at Num 22:1, the Bilaam and Pinhas narratives, and associated activities (the census, the war against Midian, etc.), the Gad

and Reuben narratives and the list of camping stops take up the bulk of re-
mainder. However, chapters 28-30, 33:50-34:15, and chapter 35 constitute a con-
siderable amount of halakhic material that might perhaps better have been
included in Deuteronomy.

134. See his commentary on 23:2.

135. So he observes in the course of his comments on Deut 1:1.

136. We may note, *inter alia*, that at least one of the differences in order may cut the
other way, and support Rashi's understanding of the relation of the two passages.
The chiasmic reversal between the two, where 6:30b has "Behold, I am of imped-
ed speech; how then should Pharaoh heed me?" while 6:12 had "how then
should Pharaoh heed me, a man of impeded speech!," may constitute a Seidl-
Weiss chiasmic pattern, which, as Moshe Greenberg has shown in his commen-
tary on Ezekiel, might indicate a flashback.

On the latter, see M. Seidl, "Makhilot bein Sefer Yishayah le-Sefer Tehillim,"
Sinai 38 (5716): 149-72, 229-40, 272-80, 333-54; R. Weiss, " 'Al ha-Ki'asmus ba-
Mikra," in *Mehkarei Mikra; Behinot Nusah ve-Lashon*, 259-75. One of the ironies
of this whole discussion is that Abarbanel (followed by the Malbim) is the one
commentator who noticed the reversal of elements in the description of the
Chariot in Ezek 1 and 9-11. While Abarbanel proffers and prefers a metaphysical
explanation of this reversal, Greenberg parses it as a Seidl-Weiss chiasmic repeti-
tion intended to show the identity of the two descriptions. See Moshe Greenberg,
Ezekiel 1-20 (Garden City, 1983), 198-99.

The Korah narrative is another instance in which Nahmanides follows a simi-
lar interpretive strategy, and to some extent his interpretation owes more to his
general stand than to internal evidence.

In his comments on Num 16:16, he rejects Ibn Ezra's observation that Moses'
proposal to Korah at 16:16-18 is a reprise of 16:5-7, intended to stress that the the
action recorded at 16:19, which parallels Moses' proposal at 16:8, was acted on.
Thus, as Weiser notes in his edition of Ibn Ezra (Jerusalem, 1976), 160-61, this
repetition is explanatory or supplemental. We may add to Weiser's observation
the additional point that this repetition cannot be classified as resumptive since
there was no interruption.

Nahmanides employs the same interpretive strategy he uses at Exod 6:29-30,
and sees the two conversations as reflecting two stages in the negotiations
between Moses and Korah.

In addition, he rejects, in the course of his comments on 16:2, Ibn Ezra's
placement of the narrative as a whole as having occurred in the Sinai desert; it is
therefore to be considered out of place. While Ibn Ezra claims that the incident
occurred in the Sinai desert shortly after the elevation of the tribe of Levi in the
wake of the Golden Calf apostasy, Nahmanides places it in the Paran desert, and
therefore in its proper place.

137. From his comments on Exod 32:11.

138. See n. 96.

139. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and
Commentary* (Anchor Bible: New York, 1991), 1024, and see, where relevant, his
remarks on these passages in his *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia,
1990). Add, to these, Num 22:35b and 21a, cited by Milgrom in the former but
not in the latter, and Gen 45:16 and 45:2, noted by Talmon (21-21). In none of
these instances does either Ibn Ezra or Nahmanides remark on the repetition.
Though the resumptive nature of these repetitions may have escaped
Nahmanides, their repetitiveness surely would not, given the sensitivities a talmu-
dic education fosters. His rejection of Ibn Ezra's proposed resumptive repetition
at Lev 8:13 is no different from his usual approach; here his proposal of a pro-
gressive description obviates the need for Ibn Ezra's asequential resumption.

140. See S. Talmon (above, n. 118), 14

141. He refers here to Rashi, Nahmanides, Abarbanel, Bekhor Shor and "possibly
others."

142. Ibid., 14. Talmon suggests that the distinction between "resumptive repetition as a structural and not as a stylistic device, i.e., with an arranger's or editor's rather than with an author's technique" cannot have been in the mind of a "pre-modern exegete like Nachmanides." This is because "he hardly would differentiate between these two types of writers who had had a hand in the creation and the preservation of biblical literature." However, the means for differentiating between these two functions were readily at hand, as Rashi remarks in his comments to Ezek 1:1, "the Holy Spirit interrupted the matter" in order to provide the chronological data—in verses 2-3—neglected by the prophet. Granted that this is likely not to be the case with regard to the Pentateuch, nevertheless the concept would not be entirely foreign to a medieval exegete.

    Aside from that, the force of Talmon's comment escapes me since a resumptive repetition may be either editorial or authorial. Why deny the medievals the insight they did have simply because they considered it only authorial?

143. See section VI below. In this he is no different from other Jewish commentators who seldom directly address these matters in their wider context, unless spurred to it by outside pressures. One exception to this tendency is Ralbag, with the results we shall see below.

144. As he comments on 11:32: "This is the custom of every [biblical] text (*ba-katuv*) regarding all generations, to recount the father's life, his begetting his son, his death, and [only] after that it begins the matter of the son['s life]. So do [biblical] texts conduct themselves (*nahagu*)." He refers to this principle in his comments on Gen 35:28 as well.

145. From his commentary to Lev 16:1; see section II above.

146. According to Ibn Ezra, "after the death of the two sons of Aaron" refers directly to the preceding 15:31, "and you shall warn the children of Israel from their uncleanness, that they not die in their uncleanness, when they make My sanctuary, which is in their midst, unclean." The topical summary of the following two verses hardly count within a narrative context.

147. Note Nahmanides' emphasis on this point: immediately after the deaths (i.e., the next day, since an *onein* cannot receive divine revelation in a state of acute sorrow), God hastened to warn Aaron against entering the Tabernacle in a state of uncleanness, a state with which the intervening sections deal.

148. If *ḥodesh* refers to Rosh Hodesh, as it should in light of the foregoing, $X = 1$.

149. That is, the standard introduction to Levitical material: "God spoke to Moses as follows."

150. If *ḥodesh* is equivalent to Rosh Hodesh, $X = 1$.

151. See section VIII below.

152. In his comments on 8:2, and see his comments to Exod 32:11 noted above, section III, s.v. "Resumptive Repetition."

153. The apparent contradiction from Lev 6:1 (see Rashi) may be solved in the same way, but note that Nahmanides interprets *zav* somewhat differently from Rashi.

154. See his remarks on Gen 11:32, 35:28, Lev 8:2, 16:1, 16:23, Num 7:1, 9:1.

    However, much as 8:3 is problematic for Nahmanides, so is 8:2 problematic for Rashi. If both Lev 8:1-3 and Exod 29 are to be dated to 23 Adar, what purpose did 8:2 serve, since every part of it is paralleled in Exod 29?

155. Yaakov Licht briefly refers to Nahmanides' "sense of proportion"; see "Le-Darko shel ha-Ramban" (above, n. 65), 233.

146. *Genesis Rabbah* 60:8; see Rashi *ad* Gen 24:42, s.v. *va-avo ha-yom*.

157. See his comments to Gen 24:28; this is his interpretation of R. Aḥa'i's comment in *Genesis Rabbah*.

158. See Nahmanides' comments to Exod 32:11, where he raises that objection to Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the relationship of that verse to 32:31.

159. Ralbag, far ahead of his time, but equally outside the mainstream of traditional exegesis, attributes this repetitiveness of the Tabernacle descriptions to the mode of narrative (*minhag*) characteristic of the time at which the Torah was given (see his comments to Exod 35-37). We now know that this was indeed so in an-

cient Near Eastern literature, particularly that from Ugarit. Ralbag's relativizing response was totally rejected by Abarbanel with the full weight of exegetical tradition behind him. See Abarbanel's dismissive response in his comments near the end of his commentary to Gen 37, ed. Jerusalem, 355a.

Even today, with the ancient Near Eastern parallels available, this solution is not as attractive as it might seem at first blush, at least not without subsidiary hypotheses. Biblical narratives are not always repetitive (see Nahmanides' observations in his remarks on Exod 11:1 and also 16:4, near end) as the Ugaritic ones invariably are (see for example, M.D. Cassuto, *Sifrut Mikra'it ve-Sifrut Kena'anit* [Jerusalem, 1972], 31-34), so there must be other than stylistic reasons at work. Nahmanides does not suggest a reason for this inconsistency, but see also his comments on 11:9, and see n. 1 above.

In the end, the limitation of repetitiveness in narrative may be accounted for by the use of Nahmanides' rule of proportion. Repetition or fullness of exposition or narrative must be a sign of a matter's importance—and the inverse may hold as well. However, if this is so, and his comments on Exod 10:2 would seem to bear this out, how can the Exodus narrative not be considered of prime importance? Here, once again, we approach the limits of our investigation, for Nahmanides had apparently not worked out all the consequences of his suggestion.

160. R. Mizrahi is always sensitive to this issue, but does not go beyond positions already staked out by his predecessors. See, for example, his remarks on Exod 1:1, where he contends that the list of the tribal patriarchs in Exod 1:1-6, already recorded in Gen 46, though an expression of divine love, would not have been repeated but for the fact that God wished to count them again "in their deaths" as in life, as the stars, to which they are compared, are counted on their rising and setting. He remains bound to traditional formulations even when they manifestly add nothing to the initial solution.

161. *Ibid.*

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

163. See Nahmanides' introduction to Exodus, discussed above in section III.

164. In his extended comment to Exod 37:8

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

166. From his comments on Num 7:2.

167. See n. 83 and text.

168. In consonance with the governing omnisignificant assumption that nothing is extraneous.

169. "You will pursue your enemies/they will fall before your sword,

Five of you will pursue a hundred/a hundred of you will defeat ten thousand/they will fall before your sword."

170. See his comments on Num 15:2.

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

172. See Gen 12:2 ("the Torah did not wish to enlarge on the opinions of idolators"), 14:6 (on the proleptic naming of Amalek), and see n. 1 above on the closely

related matter of his recognition of Scripture's tendency to shorten some narrative segments at the expense of others.

173. See below regarding Nahmanides' comments on Num 37:8. An exploration of Nahmanides' use of the word *"ulai," "efshar,"* and *"yittakhen"* in denoting various levels of surety is a desideratum.

174. Note Nahmanides' typical blending of the two verses in his paraphrase; the word "stream" appears in v. 24, while Jacob's wives, handmaidens and children are mentioned in v. 23. For a similar blending of verses in order to set forth clearly the sequential order of the section, see his comments to Lev 14:43. This is one proof that his concern here is the exact relation of vss. 23 and 24, and not that of 32:23 and 33:2, involving the order of wives, concubines and children.

175. Though no midrash seems to make a point of this, this would hardly have deterred Nahmanides.

176. The talmudic precedent for such a tension may be found in the exchange, *"mat de-bava bava?"* with the response, *"le-mitsbar kera'ei"* (see *Yoma* 5b), or the query, "What difference does this make? It is messianic law!" with the response *"derosh ve-kabbel sakhar!"* (see *Sanhedrin* 51b). The preferred answer is to derive a teaching which applies at other times as well; see *Yoma* 57a, *Nazir* 23a, *Makkot* 5b, *Horiyot* 10b, *Zevahim* 100b, *Niddah* 6a.

177. See Lev 5:8, 9:2, 3, 14:4, 6, 16:3, 5, and see section I, where the early classical literature on this passage was reviewed.

178. *Sifra Hovah* 18:3, ed. Weiss, 24c and *Zevahim* 90a.

179. Following Rava's comment on *Zevahim* 90a = *'Arakhin* 21a; see Rashi, *ad loc.*

180. *"Mah hiddush hu zeh?"* and, in the text of *Shittah Mekubbezet*, they add, *"de-zil karei bei rav hu!"* And, indeed, the expression occurs only in these two places, both in the name of Rava.

181. See n. 96.

182. See above, p. 3.

183. It was not until the nineteenth century that R. Naphtali Zevi Yehudah Berlin ("Neziv") suggested that the reversal of the usual order is triggered not by the opposition of sin/burnt-offering, but by mention of the particular birds employed. Because turtledoves are *always* listed before pigeons (see Lev 1:14, 5:7, 11, 14:22, 30, 15:14, 29, Num 6:10, 14:30), Neziv concludes that they are considered the more prestigious (shades of sequentiality!). Indeed, according to his interpretation, pigeons are preferred for a sin-offering for just that reason—because such an offering does not merit the more prestigious bird. It is the species of bird which is determinant, and not the sacrifice.

Thus, the reversal of the usual order of turtledove-before-pigeon in 12:6 is explained by the preference for pigeons for sin-offerings, while the reversal of the usual sin-offering/burnt-offering sequence in 12:8 is a consequence of the usual preference of turtle-doves over pigeons. The reversal of species in 12:6 is due to the separate mention of sin-offerings apart from burnt-offerings; in 12:8, though the order of sacrifices is reversed, this merely reflects the usual preference of species.

In a sense, in his elegant *tour de force*, Neziv substitutes a sequence without the drawback of an inexplicable exception- turtledoves and pigeons, where the preference for the latter may be explained—for one, namely, sin-offerings and burnt-offerings, for which an otherwise inexplicable exception exists at Lev 12:8.

184. A solar year; see Rashi to 8.14 s.v. *be-shivi'ah* The source of this opinion is *Mishnah 'Eduyot* 2:10 and *Genesis Rabbah* 28:9.

185. S.v. *ba-hodesh ha-shevi'i.*

186. See his lengthy comments on 8:4, s.v. *va-tanah ha-teivah.*

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

188. And not Anno Mundi, as Chavel remarks in his notes to 8:4, unless, of course, Noah was born on Rosh Hashanah. Since the calendar consisted of twelve

months of thirty days each and could therefore hardly have been a lunar calendar, or even a lunisolar one similar to the one inaugurated just before the Exodus, identifying this calendar with any of the historical Anno Mundi calendars perpetrates the very anachronism Nahmanides is at pains to disavow.

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

190. *Be'er Yizhak 'al ha-Torah*, by R. Yizhak Horowitz, first published in Lvov in 1872/3.

191. Lev 13:56, where the eruption "fades."

192. See *Sifra* 7:7-8, ed. Weiss, 73c. After three weeks—actually, 19 days, since each week begins and ends on the same day—either the affected stones have been removed and the eruption does not return, or the house has been dismantled. The case is thus closed

193. This analysis ignores the *Sifra*'s reading of these verses, which accounts for all the possibilities raised by earlier sections, and converts the section's week-plus perhaps-another-day sequence to a three week affair in order to accommodate all the permutations involved. These include the status of the house when the fungus remains unchanged, which, on analogy to 13:6, is not necessarily a sign of purity, or the fading but not disappearance of the fungus, which, on analogy to 13:6, is not necessarily a sign of purity, etc. For the possibilities involved, see *Mishnah Nega'im* 13:1, and the chart prepared for the Hebrew commentary of R. D. Z. Hoffmann, 286, and reproduced in English in Jacob Milgrom's *Leviticus 1-16*, 878.

194. Which, be it noted, have been accepted by Jacob Milgrom in his Anchor *Leviticus, ad v.* 43, 878. It is interesting to note that Milgrom cites Nahmanides some hundred times in this work, and often in his commentary on the *JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia, 1990).

195. This assumption is made by *Be'er Yizhak* on Rashi, 53b, in his analysis of the *peshat.*

196. Generally, these cases are dealt with by employing the technique of *gezerah shavah.*

197. It should be noted that here too, as in Num 27:8, Nahmanides distinguishes between basic cases dealt with in the Written Torah and the elaborations, which are meant for future generations, in the Oral one. See below, section VIII, and see Yehuda Cooperman, *Li-Peshuto shel Mikra* (Jerusalem, 1974), 65.

198. *Avot* 5:22.

199. *Sifra*'s flexibility in these matters has already been demonstrated in its construction of a *gezerah shavah* from *shiv'ah* and *bi'ah*; see *Sifra* 7:3, ed. Weiss, 73d, and note the *Bavli*'s comment in *Yoma* 2b- where the appropriate word exists, we use it; if not, we use a similar one! The *Bavli*'s sensitivity to this problem is evident in the sugya at *Pesahim* 43b as well

200. He points out the Targum translates both verbs with *osef.*

201. That is, whose blood was sprinkled *within* the *heichal* (vss. 6-22); that is why they are called "inner" sacrifices.

202. The seven lambs specified in Num 29:8; see *Yoma* 70a.

203. The bull and ram of Num 29:8, 11.

204. From his commentary on Exod 20:12.

205. That there was an informal awareness and use of its techniques can easily be demonstrated by examining the liturgy, which is full of semi-parallelistic, poetically-heightened prose.

206. See Kugel (above, n. 2), 97-109.

207. For some reason, he did not make use of the principle in its purely aggadic garb, as in *Mekilta*, perhaps because, as noted above, such use did not really have structural, halakhic, ethical or theological implications.

208. This latter is clearly precedented within classical rabbinic literature.
209. Thus excluding Rashi's suggestion at Exod 6.
210. Though the resumptive nature of these repetitions may have escaped him, their repetitiveness surely would not, given the sensitivities a talmudic education fosters, as noted above.
211. See, for example, the discussion centered around Rashi's terse notation at Lev 8:2 in *Or ha-Hayyim* and *Gur Aryeh, ad loc.*
212. As witness the long and involved discussions of the whys and wherefores of particular midrashic halakhic expositions in the commentaries of the later authorities on both these works.
213. *Mimesis* (see n.1), 14-15.
214. The very existence of the debates over sequentiality which we have examined indicates that the literal historicity of the biblical narrative is not always to be taken for granted, even in traditional commentaries.
215. See Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven and London, 1974), 1-16; John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia, 1984), 158-67; James Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia, 1980), 1-17 ("Story and History in Biblical Theology").
216. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, 1985), 12; see also his discussion in chapter 3 ("Ideology of Narration and Narration of Ideology"), esp. 87-89 and, particularly pertinent to our discussion, 92-99.
217. To employ the terminology of the story of Moses and R. Akiva in *Menahot* 29b.
218. Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (New York, 1992), 34.
219. This phrase recurs often among the Sephardic *pashtanim*, Ibn Ezra and Radak, and, when no moralistic comment lies at hand (*kol heikha de-ika lemidrash. . . .*), by Abarbanel, but not with such regularity that we do not find even Radak making distinctions rather than achieving synonymity by *force majeure*.
220. The whole issue of "multiple *ta'mei*" requires examination. For the time being, my unpublished "The Exegesis of Redundant Passages in Rabbinic Literature: The Unfolding of an Exegetical Principle" (above, n. 10), must suffice; see also n. 12.
221. *Ad loc.*, s.v. *lamah billekan.*
222. This principle is cited again in Tosafot, *Bawa Mezia* 111a, s.v. *lamah billekan.* Ephraim E. Urbach, *Ba'alei Tosafot* (Jerusalem, 1980), 646-48, notes that though these are basically Tosafot Touque, based on Tosafot Sens, the redactor added material of his own as well. Since the Rosh too drew on Tosafot Sens (see E. Urbach, *ibid.*, 590, 594, n. 30 and text), that may have been his source, but since these comments are oddities, and not typical of R. Shimshon of Sens or the Ri for that matter, that is not overly likely. Urbach notes that Tosafot ha-Rosh to *Bawa Mezia* are "longer and more detailed than our Tosafot, and many comments are cited there in the name of the Rivan, the Rashbam, Rabbenu Tam, Riva and the Ri which are not in our Tosafot" (595). Among the compiler's other sources are his teacher, the Maharam, as well as the commentaries of Rabad and Remah. Other comments of this type may have been filtered out in the course of time. Maharsha and Maharam do not discuss this Tosafot, Maharam Shiff suggests an emendation, to which the Reshash objects on the basis of Tosafot, *Bawa Kamma* 65a, s.v. *likhton.* However, aside from the question of authorship of the relevant Tosafist comments, Reshash counterposes two different types of repetitions, those which occur in parallelism and those which occur in certain expressions, whose specialized use for *derashot* is clear.

Tosafot's suggestion was ignored by the Aharonim. Indeed, as perspicacious a commentator as R. Aryeh Leib Zinz, in his *Ma'ayanei he Hokhmah* (Warsaw, 5634), 95b, after noting Tosafot's question, totally ignores the proffered solution (and the *sugya's* assertion that *nesbekh* and *marbit* cannot be separated) and proposes one that is casuistically omnisignificant. While his solution is not with-

out philological merit, his utter disregard for Tosafot's solution is striking; he does not trouble to refute it.

On the other hand, whether under the influence of this strand of Tosafist thinking, or, more likely, for "pashtanic" reasons independent of Rabbenu Tam, R. Eliezer of Beaugency, in his commentary to Isaiah, locates the prophets' use of poetry in the same realm as Tosafot does: the need to dress the prophets' message of reproof in attractive garb to enhance its rhetorical power, and the desirability of putting it in a form which could more easily be remembered. See his comments to Is 5:1 (see John W. Nutt, *Commentaries on the Later Prophets by R. Eleazar of Beaugency, I. Isaiah* [London, 1879], 11). For other medieval discussions of such matters, see Adele Berlin, *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington, 1991), though no Ashkenazic sources are noted therein.

It is significant that Nahmanides distinguishes between the terms, in line with his generally conservative approach to halakhic texts. However, his recognition of the utility of synonymous parallelism for philological purposes is not in question. See his remarks *ad* Gen 14:18, 27:37 and Exod 15:6.

223. *Sefer Teshuvot Dunash ben Labrat 'im Hakhra'ot R. Ya'akov Tam,* ed. Z. Filipowski (London, 1855), 13-14. He makes similar remarks on 44-45, 54, 91-92. See also Richard C. Steiner, "Meaninglessness, Meaningfulness, and Super-Meaningfulness in Scripture" (above, n. 2), 443, n. 59. Unfortunately, none of these examples occurs in an halakhic context or in Pentateuchal texts.

224. It is not altogether clear whether Rabbenu Tam would have endorsed this suggestion in regard to Lev 25:37; aesthetic variation in Proverbs is one thing, in Leviticus quite another. Note that all the examples adduced by Steiner (above, n. 2), 443, n. 59, occur in Prophets and Hagiographa, and the recently-published fragments of Rabbenu Tam's commentary on Job, if indeed they are actually his, do not change the picture. See Benjamin Richler, "Rabbeinu Tam's 'Lost' Commentary on Job," Barry Walfish, ed., *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* (Haifa, 1993), 191-202. However, in the light of Richler's thesis, the anonymous commentaries on Job cited in his n. 2 will have to be examined for any light they may shed on this question.

225. See Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed,* I:2, on the difference in human preoccupations caused by the Fall; rather than concerning themselves with truth and falsehood, the human couple were drawn to superficial, conventional attitudes

> Through the intellect one distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and that was found in [Adam] in its perfection and integrity. Fine and bad, on the other hand, belong to the things generally accepted as known, not to those cognized by the intellect [that is, conventional opinions, as opposed to matters of truth or falsehood—Y.E.] . . . Accordingly when man was in his most perfect and excellent state, in accordance with his inborn disposition and possessed of his intellectual cognitions. . . . he had no faculty that was in engaged in any way in the consideration of generally accepted things, and he did not apprehend them. . . . [When he] disobeyed the commandment that was imposed upon him on account of his intellect and, becoming endowed with the faculty of apprehending generally accepted things, he became absorbed in judging things to be bad or fine.
> See *The Guide of the Perplexed,* trans. S. Pines (Chicago, 1969), I, 24-25.

226. For divine accommodationism, see n. 39 above, and, in particular, the discussion in Bennin, 130-31.

227. See above, n. 10.

228. See the long and enlightening discussion of these matters in *Mizrahi* on this verse.

229. *Behar,* par. 1:1.

230. Apparently, in the perspective of Israelite history, everything which occurred before the Exodus was literally pre-history.

231. Exod 12:1, "This month shall be to you," was not necessarily revealed on Rosh

Hodesh Nisan, and no explicit date is given. As to *ba-hodesh* in Exod 19:1, see n. 150 re Num 9:1

232. Note that even were one to attribute these dates, in the way of some modern scholars, to the "Priestly" writer, one would also attribute the pre-Exodus chronological data to the same source, *ve-hadera kushya le-dukhtah*—the original question recurs.

An interesting attempt to explain the structure of Exod 19 has recently been made by Thomas B. Dozeman in his essay "Spatial Form in Exod 19:1-8a and in the Larger Sinai Narrative," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 87-101. Dozeman suggests that some of the repetitions in this narrative can be explained as "spatial forms devices" (see n. 68 above for a definition of this term).

Following his analysis in detail would take us too far afield; the following excerpt from his conclusions illustrate the usefulness of the idea:

> Instead of establishing a clear temporal sequence to the Sinai narrative, the repetitive movement of Moses creates . . . the narrative context for the promulgation of distinct legal codes, which are now all anchored in the one revelation on Mount Sinai. . . . [It] forces the reader "to project not so much forward ('what happens next') as backward or sideways". . . . The reader repeatedly loses a sense of the past, present, and future of narrated time. But this loss of narrated time serves a canonical purpose, for the result is that the reader's time becomes the significant moment for interpreting the promulgation of Torah "on this day" (Dozeman, 97).

As we shall see, Nahmanides' analysis has points in common with this suggestion.

233. Note that the two are connected in Exod 3:12.

234. See Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, 1973), 301-05. Nahmanides notes this division in his comments to Gen 6:9

235. Note that Rashi's observations regarding the asequential order of clauses in Gen 6:3 and 18:3 arouse no response on the part of Nahmanides. In the case of Rashi's long discussion of the chronology of Jacob's flight to Aram *ad* Gen 35:29 and Nahmanides' response, this falls neatly into the methodological comments he makes anent Lev 16:1, though he does not lay the groundwork here, but rather provides an alternate explanation for the lack of sequential order, in line with the rule adduced elsewhere, that each generation's narrative is permitted to proceed without interruption, despite the chronological overlap. See above, 15. Again, he does not respond to Rashi's remark at Exod 4:20, presumably because he could scarcely disagree; but one wonders why he does not remark on the Torah's lack of concern for small matters of sequence, as he remarks on its lack of concern for matters of number in second person verbal forms (in his commentary on Gen 18:3, s.v. *al*).

236. See *Tosefta, Hagigah* 2:7, *Bavli, Hagigah* 11b, on the prohibition of inquiries regarding the pre-history of the universe, may provide an analogy.

237. See above, n. 159.

238. Neziv, in his comments on Num 9:1, relates the repetition of the phrase "the second" year to the midrashic source Rashi cites, and does not at all deal with the sequential question. He also ignores the structural aspect of all the passages discussed above.

239. See *Zevahim* 69b, and *Gur Aryeh ad* 11:26, s.v. *kan* on Rashi, s.v. *mafreset*, ed. E. Hartman, vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1992), 243, n. 18. Maharal also explains certain differences in formulation of the prohibition in these verses.

240. See above, p. 20 (s.v. "Maintaining Unity").

241. See his comments on Num 27:9

242. In *Li-Peshuto shel Mikra*, 65

243. This applies as well to those of the Vilno Gaon, which in some cases, can be traced even further back. See Y. Cooperman, *Li-Peshuto shel Mikra*, 64; Neziv on Lev 16:23; and *Leviticus Rabbah* 21:7, ed. Margulies, 484.

Neziv also provides such interpretations. See, for example, his comments to Lev 16:23 (and see *Yoma* 32a), his *Kidmat ha-'Emek*, his introduction to his commentary on the *She'eltot*, *Ha'amek She'alah* (Vilna, 5621; repr. Jerusalem, 5727), and recently reprinted with notes in *Derashot ha-Neziv* (Jerusalem, 5753), 1-72, which provides a quasi-historical scheme as well, but, it seems to me, this does not bulk as large in his *Ha'amek Davar* as in R. Meir Simhah's *Meshekh Hokhmah*. However, this may be because Neziv's commentary is less halakho-centric than R. Meir Simhah's, and thus contains more non-halakhic elements. The matter requires more examination, but the appearance of historical considerations in the work of such eminent halakhists as Neziv and R. Meir Simhah, as well as those of R. Zaddok ha-Kohen (see my "R. Zadok HaKohen on the History of Halakha," *Tradition* 21 [1985], 1-26) and R. Moshe Samuel Glasner (see my "From the Pages of Tradition: Rabbi Moses Samuel Glasner: The Oral Torah," *Tradition* 25 [1990], 63-69), not to mention R. D. Z. Hoffman—all in the latter part of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth—can hardly be coincidental.

244. Dozeman, 97; see n. 232 above.

245. See his *Li-Peshuto shel Mikra*, 63-66, and his *Pirkei Mavo le-Perush "Meshekh Hokhmah" la-Torah* (Jerusalem, 5736), subsequently incorporated into the second edition of the commentary (Jerusalem, 1983 [?]), 7-75.

246. Literally, "said," and so throughout.

247. That is, in the book of Deuteronomy; *Hagigah* 6b, *Zevahim* 115b.

248. As described in 24:8.

249. From Nahmanides' commentary to Lev 25:1, ed. Chavel, 165.

250. See *Meshekh Hokhmah* to Deut 22:4, ed. Y. Cooperman, vol. 5, 156, and see Y. Cooperman, *Li Peshuto shel Mikra*, 66.

251. This history of Pentateuchal law echoes R. Zaddok's own historiography; see my "R. Zadok HaKohen on the History of Halakha," above (n. 243), in particular the change from halakhah as constituted in the desert and that which was in force with the entrance into the Promised Land. However, R. Zadok does not, in his surviving writings, provide a continuous commentary to the Pentateuch from the perspective of his radical historiographic point of view.

252. See Num 36, and vss. 8-9 in particular, and the rabbinic discussion at *Bava Batra* 120a.

253. It should be noted, however, that Maimonides had already noted (in the third root of the introduction to *Sefer ha-Mizvot*) the existence of this type of halakhic material in the Torah by excluding it from his count of 613 eternally applicable *mizvot*.

254. For the nonce, see his comments on in *Hiddushei Ramban 'al Yevamot*, 87b-88a, ed. Herschler, cols. 311-12, and in *Hiddushei ha-Ramban 'al Masekhet Hullin*, ed. Reichman, 29-30 (to 10b); contrast the remarks of Rashba, ed. Dickman, 480.

255. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "By Way of Truth: Aspects of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic," *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 103-78, esp. 103-07.

256. See the comments of Bernard Septimus in his "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, 1983), 17-22.

257. See Moshe Idel, "We have No Kabbalistic Tradition on This," in Isadore Twersky, *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides*, 51-73. Though Wolfson argues forcibly for Nahmanides as a (kabbalistically) creative reinterpreter of older aggadic material ("By Way of Truth," 153-78), this particular aspect of his work was limited to those *aggadot* which could be made to respond to such treatment. His work of legal *derashot* is much more conservative, and hardly served to extend the omnisignificant corpus.

258. "Reb Zadok HaKohen of Lublin on Prophecy in the Halakhic Process," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 1 (1985): 1-16; "R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin on the

History of Halakha," (above, n. 243); and "The History of Gentile Wisdom According to R. Zadok Hakohen of Lublin," *Journal of Philosophy and Jewish Thought* 3 (in press).

259. Jer 31:33.
260. *Nedarim* 22b.
261. *Peri Zaddik* V (Lublin, 5633; repr. Israel, 1972), 60a.