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## PESHAT AND DERASH: A NEW INTUITIVE AND ANALYTIC APPROACH

### *Introduction*

In examining talmudic biblical literary analysis, known as *derash*, we posit that not only is *derash* conceptually necessary and logically correct, but that it is also simple and obvious, naturally flowing from the meaning of the text. Generally, the first impression one receives when reading a biblical verse is the *peshat*, or *simple* meaning. On the other hand, *chazal's* interpretations appear contradictory or different. These interpretations are called *derash*.

The apparent contradiction and resulting tension between the *derash* and *peshat* has engendered various schools of thought. Some posit that *derash* are merely mnemotechnical devices, devoid of any interpretive value and serve merely as memory pegs on which various oral laws and ethical motifs may be hung.

There is a powerful school of thought, however, that holds that *peshat* and *derash* are equal. Members of this school include great personages such as Rashi, Ramban, and such major modern biblical commentators as *Ketav Vehakabalah*, the *Malbim*, *Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch*, and the *Torah Temimah*. This school explains that *derash* are based on fundamental grammatical rules. These rules, however, are not always well known and often a person may believe the text is saying one thing when, in fact, it is not—according to the *derash*.

*Derash* is the *intuitive spontaneous* reaction of the biblical native speaker to the statement of its verses. True *derash* is an *effortless immediate reaction to the statement of a verse*. What follows is a series

of carefully selected examples illustrating key principles and fallacies. We contend that a reader's unfamiliarity with a biblical *derash* is due to the reader's lack of a "biblical ear." A Frenchman, for example, without effort can grasp the connotations of a French statement, while an American who has been taught French may not be able to. Inability to comprehend the midrash may be caused by our not constantly speaking biblical Hebrew.

We will circumvent this fundamental problem by the careful construction of analogous statements in common English speech. These culturally comparable examples will enable the reader to overcome any possible lack of empathy with biblical culture and allow him to hear the example in the same way a native speaker would have heard it.

We emphasize that our goal is *intellectual*, not *historical*. We do point out, however, that the opponents of *derash* often exaggerate their claims. For example, Ibn Ezra, who is alleged to be anti-midrash, frequently defends:

the midrashim of our ancient righteous sages, which are founded on truth and cast in molded science, for all their words are like gold and silver which have been refined sevenfold, (Introduction to commentary on *Eychah*).

Ibn Ezra explicitly states that the interpretation of *chazal* is to be chosen over other interpretations because they are true.<sup>1</sup> Even difficult midrashim are praised for their "shrewdness" and "beauty" (Ibn Ezra; Genesis 35:22). His disagreements with *chazal* are often said tongue and cheek and cannot be taken seriously.<sup>2</sup>

## I

Many midrashic problems arise from improper non-Jewish biblical translations. Proper translation allows the midrash to flow lucidly. Thus, if the word *ach* is translated in English as *usually* (instead of *only*) then:

*Bible*: . . . *usually* observe my Sabbaths. . . (Exodus 31:13).

*Midrash*: "Usually observe?" When don't you? When there is danger to life.

*Bible*: . . . (*ach*) *usually* you will have atonement on *Yom Kippur* . . . (Leviticus 23:27; slightly rephrased for clarity).

*Midrash*: *Usually?* . . . When don't we? When we haven't asked our neighbor's forgiveness for social sins (Rashi).

*Bible*: . . . you will *usually* (*ach*) be happy (Deuteronomy 16:15) (on holidays).  
*Midrash*: *Usually?*—this excludes the first night of the holiday, when it is not obligatory to be happy (Talmud).

The translation, *ach* = *only*, however, makes the midrashim ungrammatical (e.g. . . . *only*, observe my Sabbaths . . .). As explained, the midrashic principle, “Usually (*ach*) always denotes exception,” is no longer *ad hoc* but, instead, the simple meaning of the word that all school children know.<sup>3</sup>

### *Tone Versus Logic*

Many midrashic explanations incorrectly seek a mathematical rigor when stylistic principles of tone should be evoked. Tone and style can be as objective as logic. If, for example, your teenage daughter comes home from a date complaining, “All he wanted was fun,” then it would not be homiletic to interpret fun, sexually. Fun does not mean sex, but it does connote it. One’s ignorance of how much fun and what type of fun he wanted does not decrease one’s objective surety that he wanted sexual misbehavior.

The Bible states that “Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian woman, *playing* with Isaac (Genesis 21:9).” Rashi states that playing denotes homosexual behavior. Sarah’s concern with her son’s gay playmate is similar to the father’s concern for his daughter’s *fun*-seeking date. True, Rashi gives other possibilities [e.g., he wanted to play war games (cf. 2 Samuel 2:14)], but our ignorance of what type of *play* Ishmael wanted does not diminish our objective surety that he had foul play in mind.

Play may not mean “gayness” in the Bible, but it does connote it. Play, in this verse, is in the intensive tense. The Konkordance discloses that the word *play* in the intensive tense in the Bible always connotes a playful teasing of a sexual or foul nature. Like the father-daughter situation, the point is not the logic of the grammar but the connotations of the situation.

Similarly, Sarah does not call him by his name, Ishmael, but by his genealogy (“son of a . . .”). The skillful use of genealogical and racial epithets to hint at sexual behavior deviant to societal norms is a common technique in many languages.

If we had a biblical ear we, like Rashi, could hear the verse stating this: “Sarah saw that ‘son of an Egyptian’ *gayfully foreplay*-ing with Isaac.” Hence, she wanted Ishmael expelled from her house.

Thus do the mundane obscurities of talmudic *derash* blossom into the spontaneous simplicities of everyday speech.<sup>4</sup>

## II

### *Form Versus Meaning*

Many midrashim have a defensible *meaning*, but the *form* in which this meaning is expressed appears homiletic. For example, although Jacob lived by Laban, his father-in-law, for 20 years, married local women, and had 12 children, he tells his brother, “I still *lodge* by my father-in-law” (cf. Genesis 32:4)

Without using a verbal microscope, we all feel spontaneously irritated by the usage of the word “lodge” by a person so well established. Our prior knowledge of ideological differences between Jacob and Laban, however, leads us to interpret this usage as indicating that Jacob was still a lodger at Laban’s house—treated like a stranger because of his ideological differences.

Conceptually, this is defensible because of the two words used to describe living: reside (*yaashav*) and lodge (*goor*), each of which has distinct connotations.<sup>5</sup> Rashi, however, does not mention this. He expresses the *derash* by a play of letters (the numerical value of *garti* is the number of biblical commandments). It thus incorrectly seems as if the play of letters is the reason for the *derash*.

We list five levels of midrashic acceptance, all of which are our goals.

1. The midrashic idea is considered *true* (e.g., Jacob was religious in Laban’s house).
2. Not only is the idea true, but it fits the verse nicely [(e.g., Jacob’s religiosity is consistent with his message to Esau (Genesis 32:4 Rashi)].
3. It not only fits the verse nicely, but is logically related by grammar (e.g., *Yaashav* = *live*; *garti* = *lodge*; the different connotations defend the *darash*).
4. Not only is it logical, but intuitive—a native speaker would, on hearing the verse, feel compelled to respond spontaneously with the *derash* (e.g., usage of *lodge* with a well-established person creates a feeling of lingual “irritation,” suggesting that the

lodger does not really “feel at home” because of the differences of outlook).

5. The *form* in which the *derash* is expressed is normal and comprehensible if the listener has that *culture’s ear*.

To clarify the importance of the *culture’s ear*, we consider the well-known English *derash*, “The *principal* is your *pal*, while *principle* is an idea.” We consider three parameters: the two spellings, meanings, and usages of “principal” and “principle.”

In philosophical terminology, usage is the *cause* of meaning, but spelling is the means of *recognizing* meaning. Although causation and recognition are *metaphysically distinct*, they can nevertheless be *linguistically equivalent*. If we are told the sentence: “A, hence B,” then “A” can equally well be the *cause* of “B,” or the means of *recognizing* “B.” This *identical* lingual expression of *causation* and *recognition* is what creates confusion in the understanding of *derash*.

Suppose you are told, “Principal is spelled ending in *pal*; hence, it means a person who is your pal.” (This is the form “A, hence B.”) If you have an English ear, you know that the real cause of meaning is usage, not spelling; hence you interpret the preceding statement as indicating the means of recognition (i.e., “*principal* ends in *pal*” is the means of recognizing or *remembering* the meaning of “principal”). If, however, you do not have an English ear, the form of the statement “A, hence B” might mislead you into thinking that the *spelling* (of principal) was the *cause* of its *meaning*. You would then dismiss the *derash* as *homiletic* since, obviously, not all words have meanings corresponding to their last three letters (e.g., obviously and *slyly* have opposite, not same, meanings). Similarly, the lack of a biblical ear can lead to the misunderstanding of otherwise obvious midrashim.

The reader may still object: “Granted, if I had a biblical ear, that I could easily understand *derash*, but couldn’t *chazal* have been more sympathetic to people without biblical ears? Why couldn’t they simply state the real reason in a midrash? Isn’t this a deficiency in midrashic *expression*?”

The answer is no! Lack of rules in a midrash is not a deficiency of expression but an intrinsic property of midrashic content—rules are too complicated to be stated. To illustrate, consider the English plural: “plural has an *s*” is incorrect (fast is not the plural of fa t). “plural ends in *s*” is also incorrect (glass is not plural).

We could try, “An *s* at the end of a word denotes plural if without the *s* the word is singular.” But this, in effect, states, “Whenever you can interpret an *s* as plural, do so.” This is reminis-

cent of the talmudic dictum, “*heykhah de’ikah lemidrash darshinan*”—whenever we can make a *derash* we do so. This rule, which appears as the height of arbitrary homily, is seen to be true for the grammatical rule of plurals!

Even so, the preceding rule is still false (*Is* ends in *s*, is single (I) without the *s*, and is not plural). In conclusion, even the simplest grammatical rules are too complex for terse analytic statement. The only solution is to use close approximations and rely on the speaker’s ear. This is true in all languages.<sup>6</sup>

### *Details Versus Archetypes*

To exemplify further the defense of midrashic form, we consider the verse, “*Wow, you’re beautiful, my dear, wow, you’re beautiful.*” (Songs 4:1). The *Midrash Rabbah*, commenting on the repetition, states:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Wow!, you’re beautiful with<br><i>deeds of obligation</i>            | 1. Wow!, you’re beautiful with<br><i>deeds of kindness</i>           |
| 2. Wow!, you’re beautiful with<br><i>positive precepts (Do . . .)</i> . | 2. Wow!, you’re beautiful with<br><i>negative precepts (Don’t)</i> . |
| 3. Wow!, . . . in duties of the<br><i>house</i>                         | 3. Wow!, . . . in duties of the<br><i>field</i>                      |
| 4. . . . in not wearing <i>shatnez</i> .                                | 4. . . . in wearing <i>shatnez</i> (in<br>the priestly garments).    |
| 5. . . . in <i>abstaining</i> from <i>orlah</i><br>fruit                | 5. . . . in <i>eating</i> “fourth-year”<br>fruit                     |
| 6. . . . in circumcision  | 6. . . . in <i>peri’ah</i>   |
| 7. . . . in reciting <i>Shemoneh</i><br><i>Esray</i> .                  | 7. . . . in reciting the <i>Shema</i>                                |
| 8. . . . with the <i>Mezuzah</i> (on<br>the <i>house</i> ).             | 8. . . . with <i>tefillin</i> (on the<br>body).                      |
| 9. . . . with the <i>sukkah</i> .                                       | 9. . . . with the <i>lulav</i> and <i>etrog</i>                      |
| 10. . . . with repentance (from<br><i>bad</i> deeds).                   | 10. . . . with performance (of<br><i>good</i> deeds).                |
| Wow!, you’re beautiful in<br>this world                                 | Wow!, you’re beautiful in<br>the world to come.                      |

A lover who says to a woman, “Wow, you’re beautiful,” twice is obviously more intensely impressed than a man who says it only once. The *derash* is not on the *numerical superfluity* but on the tone

of emotional intensity.

If all the midrash had said was “Israel’s loyalty to God is more intense than other nation’s loyalty to their gods,” we would not quibble. The problem is with the midrashic form. Why is Jewish intensity identified with this specific list of examples?

The correct approach, however, views these details as paradigmatic archetypes of more general classes. For example, a Reform motto states: “Be a Jew in your house, and a human being outside.” Such a loyalty is “one sided” and not intense. We must be loyal to God all over (in the “house” and in the “field” at work), thus giving a multifaceted, more intense beauty and loyalty.

Thus details of the midrash are understood in two stages: first, as implying a general abstract principle [e.g., be Jewish both privately (home) and publicly (at work)], and second, as giving a particular but representative example (laws of the field, laws of the house). The midrash is then seen as profound and deep, expressing fundamental religio-philosophic norms in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. If, however, the midrash is understood in only one stage (laws of the field, laws of the house) without the general abstract principle, the midrash seems ad hoc, forced, and arbitrary because it then seems that the midrash was exhausting the meaning of the verse in some randomly chosen detail.

This terse teaching, by vivid example, instead of being abstract philosophy, is the mark of poetry. Difficulties in the sonnets of Shakespeare or the poems of Yeats, for example, are attributed to their literary style, nuances, or the special grammar of their time. Incomprehensibility is a deficiency of the reader and not of the poetry.

This is exemplary of the *emunat-hakhamim*—faith in our sages—that we should have. It is not to *chazal*’s honor to interpret every *derash* with the concepts “mnemotechnical device” or “historical environment.”

### III

#### *General Versus Details*

Often, the force of a midrashic derivation is in its general idea, not its details. For example, suppose while in Sarah’s house you hear Abraham, her husband, saying, “Get me milk *also*.”

You would immediately notice the word *also*. You would assume

that Sarah was getting herself milk and Abraham wanted milk *also*? Or you could assume that Abraham wanted cake and then asked for milk *also*? Our ignorance of the details of superfluity—whether in the subject (Abraham and Sarah) or object (milk and cake)—does not conflict with our surety of the general idea of superfluity.

We must distinguish between grammar and the speaker's grammar or usage. People commonly violate grammatical rules in everyday speech, and this is not significant. But certain parts of grammar, like the usage of *also*, are not violated without cause. We will call this speaker's grammar, or usage.

We could also have further controversy on details based on our knowledge of the situation. Maybe milk was prohibited to Sarah because she had high cholesterol. Even so, maybe she used skim milk, which is permissible to the high-cholesterol person.

The preceding example is typical of talmudic *derash*: We start with a general homiletic rule: "*Also* denotes superfluity" and proceed to try to guess the details based on other facts. There is surety on "generals" and ambiguity on "details."<sup>8</sup> We will call this approach the principle of *stages*.<sup>9</sup>

Misunderstandings of stages frequently arise because we do not distinguish between the speaker's (primary) intention and the sentence's information. When Abraham says "Get me milk also," his intention is to get milk. He did not intend to inform anybody that Sarah wanted milk also. But the sentence unequivocally informs us that Sarah did want milk also (or that Abraham wanted cake).

The term *peshat* (simple meaning) is sometimes identified with the speaker's primary intention. But a midrash's claim that a verse informs us of something different from its primary intention is not inconsistent with the claim that the midrash is natural and objectively true. Furthermore, the naturalness and objectivity of the midrash's general principle is not inconsistent with the ambiguity and controversy over its details.<sup>10</sup>

### *Methods of Proof*

We have emphasized that midrashic objectivity can arise from tone instead of logic and that lingual feeling, not grammar, is important. Granted, that usage is the primary causative factor, but we still must have an objective method of proving what that usage is.

If we are examining a general class of phenomena, there are two basic methods of proof.



1. The manifestation of the class in the instance under consideration is statistically deviant.
2. There are two equally probable manifestations in this general class, each with a simple conceptual correlate.

As an example of statistical deviance, observe that of the 52 occurrences of King David in Scripture, in only one is the royal title *king* deleted (“And the days of David came near to Death . . . I Kings 2:1). Rabbi Levi explains this statistical deviance: “. . . there is no dominion in the day of death . . .” (Ecclesiastes 8:8; Midrash Rabbah).

Most people would agree that the midrash’s concept—death mocks equally at all—is true and fits the verse nicely. However, to appreciate that a native speaker feels compelled to respond spontaneously with the midrashic comment requires a culturally analogous example. Such an example would occur if, say, President Carter, was called “Jimmy” at an important public meeting.

This statement is not ungrammatical, and its meaning is clear without additional commentary. But the English ear feels irritated by a first-name public appellation of a leader—it violates English usage and denotes insult. Rav Levi heard the absence of king in the biblical verse the same way we hear reference to President Carter as “Jimmy”. As noted earlier, a defense of this spontaneity of response is one of our goals.

An example of simple conceptual correlates can be seen in the two equally frequent biblical phrases for speaking to oneself: “said *in* his heart,” and “said *to* his heart.” “*To* his heart” occurs with righteous people (I Samuel 27:1; Genesis 6:6; I Samuel 1:13), while “*In* his heart” occurs with the wicked (Esther 6:6; I Kings 12:26; also see Genesis 27:41; Genesis Rabbah which mentions the whole principle).

Some people erroneously identify the midrashic derivation with the semantics of the prepositions: the righteous confront their desires—hence they speak to their heart; the wicked are engulfed by their desires—hence, they speak in their heart. Such derivations can be perceived mnemonically, like the *principal-pal derash*. The ultimate cause of the righteous = to—wicked = in distinction is biblical usage. The proof of this comes by examining most (not necessarily *all*) cases. We then assume that biblical people spoke this way and that they spontaneously noted the connotations of these words.

In conclusion, we do not reduce biblical *derash* to usages or statistics, but to an experiential logic, a logic that can be backed by

examples and yet is supported by a gut feeling, or intuition, of peculiarity.

#### IV

Some subtle midrashic points follow.

##### *Cause Versus Effect*

The clarification of scriptural anomalies can equally take place by the derivation of new facts or by the utilization of old facts. For example, “. . . and God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) is mentioned on all seven days of creation except Monday (Genesis 1:6-8). A classic reason explains this because Hell was created on Monday.

It is indeed homiletic to interpret this to mean that Hell’s creation on Monday is derived from the missing, “. . . and God saw that it was good,” in Monday’s creation. Isaiah (30:33; Rashi), explicitly states that Hell was created on Monday. Given the two facts—(1) Hell was created on Monday and (2) “God saw it was good” is not mentioned in Monday’s creation—it seems logical to connect them.

Thus the midrash utilized *known* facts to explain an anomaly without informing us of something new. The purpose of *derash* is clarification of anomalies, not creation of facts.

##### *Partial Versus Complete Solutions*

Many people approach midrash in a black and white manner. It is important to respect and regard partial solutions optimistically as motivation for further study instead of pessimistically as proof of the hopelessness of research. Thus, in the preceding example, we do not completely know why Rashi holds: *etmol* = yesterday; *etmool* = Monday.

It could be a fact of the dictionary. It could also be some unknown grammatical rule. Just as the English “Lord-lord” difference is recognized by a minute feature (*L* versus *l*), so could the Hebrew *etmol-etmool* difference be recognized by a minute feature

(*o* versus *oo*). The *derash*, of course, is not caused by this minute feature but rather by the grammatical rule that the feature indicates (e.g., capitals denote proper names).

### *New Grammar*

We conclude with an example defending the one midrashic principle on which the anti-midrashists rejoice: new grammar. For, argue the anti-midrashists, if midrash is the spontaneous reaction to a verse's statement, then you can not have new principles of spontaneity. Actually, however, skillful cultural analogies will prove our point.

Explaining the sentence "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses . . .," (Numbers 12:1), Rashi states, "She spoke first, hence she is mentioned first." But it is false that the first mentioned in a compound subject is more important (see Exodus 5:1 v. 6:26; Numbers 27:1 v. 36:11; or Genesis 1:1 v. 2:4), and it is not anomalous for a woman (Miriam) to precede a man (Aaron) in a verse (Exodus. 9:29; Jud. 5:1).

The new principle is that a compound subject and a singular predicate indicate primary activity in the first mentioned subject.<sup>11</sup> An English analogy would be, "They speaks—Aaron and Miriam—against Moses."

Note the immediacy with which we are irritated, the obviousness of our being grammatically disturbed, and the compelling force with which we seek a resolution to "They speaks." This emphasizes the importance of the English ear in *derash*. It is unfortunate, by contrast, that people who lack a biblical ear can hear Numbers 12:1 once a year and not notice the comparable irritability it has with "they speaks."

"They speaks" emphasizes the problem of the *derash*, not its solution. For the solution, the sentence, "And Miriam spoke—Aaron also—against Moses," connotes that, in instigating the action, Miriam was primary and Aaron secondary. In Hebrew, a single-plural anomaly is used instead of parenthetical phrases (Aaron also).

The biblical ear grasps this *derash* instantly and effortlessly, with ease and simplicity—it is just an ordinary comment. The ignorant can appreciate it only after great work—the examination of many comparable sentences. Even so, the long studies would compel our *logic*, not our verbal *intuition*.

Throughout this essay, we have emphasized the problem of the

biblical ear. We now mention its solution—constant biblical experience, the type of study *chazal* used. Every culture arranges massive exposure to doctrines for its constituents. At the very least, at the Friday night table, we must get excited by the nuances of God's latest portion, the way we get excited by Begin's or Carter's latest speech. Children should spend hours watching the Bible-vision instead of the television. Such study must be based not on understanding of content, but on appreciation of wit.

V

To the superficial reader, our results may seem to be a list of randomly chosen examples. In actuality they were picked to represent all major midrashic interpretive categories. A person who familiarizes himself with and consistently applies the following summary, based on our examples, can approach most midrashim with a fair degree of understanding.

We have identified midrashic *rules*, given the types of midrashic *proofs*, discussed midrashic *form*, and listed fallacies of *explanation*.

In midrashic rules, we have identified new principles of grammar [e.g., the singular-plural—subject-predicate anomaly (Numbers 12:1)], and new translations of words (e.g., *ach* = usually).

All midrashic proof emanates from usage. Proof of usage is either by a blatant anomaly (King David versus David—Ecclesiastes 8:8; *Midrash Rabbah*) or by simple conceptual correlates (e.g., to = righteous—in = wicked; Genesis 27:41; *Genesis Rabbah*). Usage can be experienced or appreciated by cultural English analogies.

Midrashic form can be total, deficient,<sup>12</sup> supportive,<sup>13</sup> or irrelevant.<sup>14</sup> We have emphasized that even irrelevant reasons are not a deficiency in midrashic form, but in the "*listener's ear*." ("*Principal* ends in *pal*, hence, it refers to a person," is an English midrash with an irrelevant reason, which is understood perfectly by the English ear.)

We have listed six types of common midrashic fallacies:

*Normal versus abnormal.* Midrash does not start with abnormality or "the problem."<sup>15</sup>

*Stages: General versus details.* The goal of midrash is not necessarily proof of all details; the midrash, assuming its general goal clear, may omit mention of it and discuss the possible controversies on details.<sup>16</sup>

*Tone versus Logic.* Midrashic objectivity is not identical with mathematical logic; tone can be very objective.<sup>17</sup>

*Archetypes versus Examples.* A midrash's claim that a verse's meaning is identical with some phenomenon does not mean that the verse's meaning is identical with that phenomenon; instead, it identifies the verse's meaning with the general archetype of which that phenomenon is representative; ignorance of this fallacy has caused the greatest confusion.<sup>18</sup>

*Effect versus Cause.* A midrash can be the effect of a known fact instead of its cause [e.g., creation of Hell on Monday (Genesis 1:6-8; Isaiah 30:33)].

*Partial versus Total Explanation.* Midrashic comprehension does not require the full development of all of grammar.<sup>19</sup>

### Conclusion

The only way we can insure respect for *chazal* is by portraying them as they were—men of vast encyclopedic knowledge, keen analytic insight, subtle ethical awareness, and moving moral motivation. The superiority of talmudic interpretation must be shown over the flimsy and whimsical caprices of modern interpretation.<sup>20</sup> Otherwise, even if modern interpreters do not lead the layman astray, his respect for midrashic rabbinics will be minimal.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, midrashic controversy on biblical interpretation does not arise from the ephemeral historical tides that, but for a fleeting moment, show her ominous waters, only to subside in the mighty sea of time. The majestic and sublime rules of biblical grammar stand rooted in the fertile soil of *chazal's* mind, firm against the petty whirlwinds of historical coincidence and philosophical opinion. The nuances of usage are the omnipresent leaf-veins in the biblical forest of words, nurturing the twigs of brown bark with the verdure of the tree of life. It is in her that ideas bud and philosophies flower and, from these delicate grammatical strands, the true tapestries of wisdom are woven.

### NOTES

1. The Ibn Ezra, in his introduction to the Torah, speaks about our sages in the fifth of his five categories of interpretation.

If we find two interpretations to verses and one interpretation is like that of our sages who were all righteous, then we will rely on their truth without doubt and with strong

