

comes after the law concerning animals → Lev. 11:46 and then Lev. 12:2, the opening verse of this version of the discourse. The transitions in the final portion of *Lev. Rab.* 14:1 are abbreviated and less elegant stylistically than those of *Gen. Rab.* 8:1, but the purpose is the same: namely to weave a way from the theme of mediation back to the original biblical verse.

If these closing interpretations are regarded as an *inclusio* with the opening scriptural quotation, a balance emerges in the structure of the poem, the world-spanner motif being its centre-piece:

Structure

- opening verse
 - earlier later: this world/world to come
 - worthiness/unworthiness
 - two-sided: male/female
- WORLD SPANNER
 - first/last
 - two-sided: spirit/body
 - first/last: Adam/Messiah
 - worthiness/unworthiness
- return to opening verse

While the pair, male/female, has a physical orientation, and the pair, spirit/body, a more metaphysical one, each links up beautifully with the midrash preceding and following it. Relations with Eve, woman, are potentially impaired because of her role in the unworthy choices made by the first man. The healing image of the androgyne which evokes the essential wholeness of mankind is followed by an image emphasizing the wholeness of the cosmos of which mankind is an integral part. The symbolization of the physical wholeness of the cosmos in the person of the world-spanner precedes another statement concerning the wholeness of each human being; he is composed of spirit and body. The dichotomy, spirit/body, logically leads back in turn to the issue of man's worthiness and unworthiness, for ultimately the ethical choices made by people result from their being composed of celestial and earthly components.

In this way, *Gen. Rab.* 8:1 explores profound questions concerning the nature of the man created in God's image. The first man's nature, in turn, reflects upon the nature of all his descendants. The image conveyed is one of pre-eminent order, unity and balance. Tensions implicit in man's nature, in his relationship with other human beings and with the world, have not been erased. These contradictions are shown to be a part of the creation itself, with their place in the order of the universe as created by God, but they are mediated by, and celebrated in, the paradox which is man.

PARDES: Methodological reflections on the theory of the Four Senses*

A. VAN DER HEIDE
UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN

At first sight, Jewish exegetical literature of the Middle Ages seems to offer a well laid-out field of study. The commentaries are conveniently arranged in the order of the biblical text and seem to guarantee fairly easy access to all chapters of Jewish Bible interpretation.

On studying these exegetical texts, however, it soon becomes apparent that as often as not the basic issues are not discussed there, but have already been decided elsewhere. Theological questions, whether philosophic, kabbalistic, or any other kind, are usually found to dominate the minds of the interpreters. This is hardly surprising, but the student of Jewish exegesis may ask himself whether it is the interpretation of the Bible that dominates theology, or whether it is theology that governs the results of exegesis. Maimonides' *Guide* had its origin in philosophical questions, but is chiefly engaged in hermeneutics and dominated the Bible commentaries for centuries. Kabbalistic thought was daring and revolutionary, but expressed itself preferably in the familiar exegetical forms of the *perush* or the *derasha*. The same holds true – approximately – for Ashkenazi and eighteenth century Hasidism.

Theology or exegesis? Or both? The scholar is confronted here with yet another manifestation of the hermeneutic circle.

The problem can also be posed in a different way. In Judaism, as a religion based upon revealed truth, exegesis is a matter of such central concern that almost every issue is somehow connected with the interpretation of scriptural passages. This might lead one to conclude that exegesis, being so overwhelmingly present, is a field too complicated for a general description. To try to determine the characteristics of Jewish exegesis would in fact be to portray Judaism itself. There is a fair measure of truth in these contentions. Study of the Jewish religion is to a large extent identical with a study of its exegetical texts. But the reverse seems not to be true. The study of Jewish exegesis is usually carried out as a speciality and the field is divided into several further specialist topics. The editing of texts is a

*This article is an expanded version of a lecture read at the First Congress of the European Association of Jewish Studies in Oxford in July 1982 and owes some of its rhetorical flavour to this. For a more detailed account of some of the issues treated here, the reader is invited to consult my "PARDES. Over de theorie van de viervoudige schriftzin in de middeleeuws joodse exegese", *Amsterdamse Cahiers* 3 (1982) 117-165, 170-171; "EEN VAN ZIJN RIBBEN. Vorm en functie van de middeleeuws joodse bijbelexegese", *Amsterdamse Cahiers* 4 (1983) 97-131, 138.

favourite pursuit and the bulk of research is devoted to literary-historical aspects of individual exegetes or schools. Methodological studies tend to concentrate on special topics and certain great personalities. Attempts to enter the hermeneutic circle revolving between theology and exegesis are rare and seldom use the opportunities offered by the study of exegetical methods.

It is not my purpose here to criticise current research in Jewish biblical exegesis, nor to point to lacunae, nor to review recent results. My aim is to review a very popular characterisation of Jewish exegesis—the “Pardes” scheme—and to demonstrate its limitations. On the other hand, this very critique will offer an opportunity to suggest a broader perspective for the study of Jewish exegesis and for its relation to the study of Jewish religion in general.

At least one comprehensive definition of Jewish exegesis has become widely current. Traditional Jewish exegesis is fond of describing itself as engaged in a fourfold task: to discover the meaning of Scripture on four levels, by means of four exegetical methods. These methods are usually called *peshaṭ*, *remez*, *derash* and *sod*, and they are aptly summarised in the acronym PaRDeS.

Modern scholarship does not entirely accept this claim but modifies it: it is often asserted that, even if Scripture itself cannot be held to possess the four levels of meaning, Jewish exegesis as such is properly characterised by the four methods. *Peshaṭ* obviously stands for the literal exegesis, *derash* for traditional haggadic interpretation, *remez* is usually taken to denote the allegorical interpretations introduced by the philosophers, and *sod* is the way of the Kabbala.

An examination of the origin of the theory of the four senses in Jewish biblical exegesis shows that, at best, this characterisation is rather problematic. The function of the Pardes scheme was limited. Being rooted in a very specific stage of the development of Judaism, it is quite unsuitable to consider it as characterising Jewish exegesis as a whole. This becomes especially clear when one tries to define the actual meaning of the terms *peshaṭ*, *remez*, *derash* and *sod*.

Let us first summarise the facts.

The origin of the acronym Pardes can be established with some precision. Following the initial research carried out by W. Bacher,¹ Gershom Scholem convincingly traced the invention of the highly evocative pun to Moses de Leon, the author of the Zohar,² a work which itself holds traces of a

¹ W. Bacher, ‘L'exégèse biblique dans le Zohar’, REJ 22 (1891) 33-46, 219-229, esp. 37f. Cf. also P. Sandler, ‘Li-v'ayat Pardes we-ha-shiṭa ha-merubba'at’, Sefer E. Auerbach (Jerusalem 1955) 222-235.

² G. Scholem, ‘Der Sinn der Tora in der jüdischen Mystik’, Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik (Zürich 1960) 49-116, esp. 76-82. Cf. also Y. Tishby in F. Lachover Y. Tishby, Mishnat ha-Zohar (Jerusalem³ 1971-75) II, 369-371.

fourfold division of the meaning of the Tora, albeit in an embryonic form. It is for example alluded to in the famous parable of the girl shut up in a palace who in four successive stages succeeds in revealing her secrets to her lover wandering about outside.³ But the term “Pardes” belongs to a later stage. In all probability it was introduced by Moses de Leon in a book called *Sefer ha-Pardes*, which he mentions in at least two places. The book itself is not extant. The idea found its way to the later parts of the Zoharic corpus, the *Ra'ya Mehemna* and the *Tiqqune Zohar*, and from there it spread to other works.⁴

Because of the disappearance of *Sefer ha-Pardes*, it is not possible to examine how the theory of a fourfold exegesis was handled by its author. Moses de Leon must have finished his share of the Zoharic writings before 1286. The book alluding to *Sefer ha-Pardes* was written in 1290. We may thus conclude that “pardes” dates to the years in between.

Later authors, right up to modern times, have appropriated the acronym with enthusiasm, so much so that “pardes” has become a household word in Jewish exegetical terminology. But knowledge of its precise date of origin brings us face to face with the fact that its actual significance is very limited. Although a splendid flash of insight, linking the highly evocative notion of Pardes, the epitome of hidden wisdom⁵, with the four well-established exegetical terms, *peshaṭ*, *remez*, *derash* and *sod*, the term in no way describes medieval Jewish exegesis as such. The Pardes scheme mentions certain important features of Jewish exegesis. It calls to mind the vast midrashic corpus which was still very prominent in medieval Bible interpretation; its mention of *peshaṭ* evokes the names of Rashi and Ibn Ezra; and the terms *remez* and *sod* point to the theory of a deeper sense of the Scriptures—either philosophical or kabbalistic—which became of such central concern in medieval religious thought. But the theory is not a summary description of exegetical methods and was never meant to be. For its author, it was the programmatic expression of his conviction that the deepest meanings of Scripture are revealed in the teachings of the Kabbala, teachings superseding all previous efforts. For the historian of religion, it is little more than an indication of the place of the author in the

³ Zohar II, 99a/b; quoted in translation by e.g. Scholem, ‘Der Sinn der Tora...’, 77-79.

⁴ For the details, greatly encumbered by the intricacies of Aramaic terminology, see Scholem, *ad loc.*, 76-82 and the sources quoted there. *Sefer ha-Pardes* is mentioned at the end of *Sefer ha-nefesh ha-hakama* (Basel 1608), cf. Scholem, *ad loc.*, 82, and in a “responsum” dealing with the interpretation of the stories of the Patriarchs published by Y. Tishby, ‘Shu't le-R. Moshe de Leon be-inyene qabbala’, *Kobez al Jad* 5 (15) (1950) 11-38, esp. 31 (reprinted in *Hiqre qabbala u-shetuhoteha*, I, 1982, 36-63).

⁵ The estoric notion of Pardes derives of course from the well-known story of the four who entered the Pardes (I. Hag. II, 3-4 and parr.) and became very prominent in *hekhalot* literature. Maimonides appropriated the term, along with *Ma'ase Bereshit* and *Ma'ase Merkava*, for philosophical inquiry and speculation (cf. *Mishne Tora*, *Hilkhot Yesode ha-Tora* IV, 13). This is another reason for its great popularity.

development of Jewish tradition. It pins him down to a moment when kabbalistic exegesis still needed legitimation.

The limited significance of the Pardes scheme will be reconsidered later, but mention should first be made of other traces of the theory of the four senses in the literature of the latter part of the thirteenth century.

Apart from the embryonic manifestations of the Pardes scheme in the Zohar mentioned above, it makes another appearance there. In a fragment devoted to the description of the Tora as a book full of hidden meaning, it is represented as being clothed in outer *garments* (the narratives) concealing a *body* composed of the precepts, termed here *gufe Tora*. But the Tora contains also other deeper meanings which are the *soul* of this body and accessible only to the truly wise. In future times, however, these sages will be able to penetrate to the very *soul of the soul* of the Tora.⁶ Clearly, four levels of meaning are intended here, but the connection with traditional exegetical terminology, as in the Pardes scheme, and in others still to be mentioned, is absent.

The four senses also occur outside the Zohar, but some reservation has to be made as to the actual significance of these instances. In the Introduction to an early version of his *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, Isaac ibn Latif (d. 1280) enumerates "four ways in which the interpreters of the Tora are accustomed to walk".⁷ He summarises the dangers inherent in linguistic, literal, allegorical and mystical interpretation, but admits that each method has its value. In Ibn Latif's terminology, *diqduq ha-millot* denotes an explanation based on the open and closed sections of the text of the Tora, *plene* and *defective* spelling, and *ketiv* and *qere*; *peshaṭ* (or *pishshuṭ*) *haketuvim* is the literal meaning of the text, a dangerous one where anthropomorphic expressions are used; *mashal* is the allegorical meaning of some of the prophetic visions; and *derash* should probably be taken to signify a mystical interpretation.⁸ It should be noted that Ibn Latif seems here to have had in mind not so much four levels of meaning in Scripture, as four different exegetical methods. One is reminded of Abraham ibn Ezra's Introductions to his Pentateuch commentaries. Ibn Ezra mentions five

⁶ Zohar III, 152a. The terminology is *levusha*, *gufa*, *nishmeta*, *nishmeta de-nishmeta*. One is reminded here of Origen's threefold division of the meaning of the Scriptures, which is also based upon anthropological categories (cf. note 25), and of Ibn Aqin's opinion that his threefold interpretation of Canticles corresponds to man's natural, animal and rational soul; ed. Halkin, pp. 18/19 and 496/7 (cf. note 22 below).

⁷ Ed. S. D. Luzzatto, in *Virgo Filia Jehudae* (Prague 1840), V-XI; cf. S. O. Heller-Wilensky, "Isaac ibn Latif, Philosopher or Kabbalist?", in A. Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (1967) 185-223, spec. 219. This Introduction was written as early as 1230. The author's position between Ibn Ezra's rationalism and kabbalistic esotericism concerning exegetical method corresponds to this early date. In the later version of *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim*, which as far as I know is not yet printed, the four exegetical methods seem to be absent.

⁸ The description of this fourth way is very short and ambiguous: "we-hu nakhon la-asher yade'u sodo . . . we-ra'u et kevodo".

methods of exegesis and unhesitatingly rejects three of them. He grants a limited importance to the ways of the Midrash, and strongly emphasises the exclusive validity of the literal exposition.⁹ Ibn Latif, however, seems to admit a restricted validity for each of the methods to which he refers. As can be seen from the later sections of the Introduction just quoted, his actual hermeneutics are based on the common theory that Scripture possesses two layers of meaning: the literal and the deeper sense (a theory to which, in fact, Ibn Ezra also felt compelled to subscribe). But by admitting four methods, he opens the way to a belief that they somehow correspond to four senses. It is not altogether clear whether Ibn Latif wanted already to allude to a theory of four senses, but his distinction between the various exegetical approaches—linguistic, literal, allegorical, and mystical—offers an interesting instance of hermeneutical reflection that fits in very well with our subject.

Couched in yet another terminology, a very similar division appears in a fragmentary collection of strictures on Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* ascribed to Joseph ibn Gikatilla.¹⁰ The author, bent upon proving the superiority of Kabbala, is annoyed that the translator of the *Guide* in a quotation from the Midrash uses the word *bor*, pit, instead of *be'er*, well-spring.¹¹ In expatiating upon the differences between a pit and a well, he compares the Tora to an ever-flowing source of meaning. This is why the word *be'ur* is so appropriate. "For the Tora is expounded in three ways, or

⁹ Cf. W. Bacher, "Abraham Ibn Ezra's Einleitung zu seinem Pentateuch-Commentar als Beitrag zur Geschichte der Biblexegese beleuchtet", *Sitzungsberichte der . . . Akademie der Wissenschaften (Wien)* 81 (1875) 361-444 (separately printed Vienna 1876) and my "PARDES . . .", p. 124-126, 130-132; Bacher took no notice of Ibn Ezra's Second Commentary (the so-called *Shiṭa aheret*), which is slightly more tolerant towards the Midrash. It is no coincidence that our version of *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* used to be ascribed to Abraham ibn Ezra, although Luzzatto already deemed this highly improbable; cf. *Virgo Filiae Jehudae*, XII.

¹⁰ Printed in *She'elot le-he-hakham kh'r Sha'ul ha-Kohen: sha'al me'et he-hakham . . . Yishaq Abrabanel* (Venice, Giov. di Gara, 1574), fols. 19a-31b: "Ze ma she-nimṣa mi-sefer nehmad be'ur 'al sefer More Nevukhim . . . we-kha-medumme she-hu qeṣat mi-sefer ha-hassagot she-hibber . . . Yosef ibn Gikatilla . . .". Parts of this little anti-philosophical work are translated and discussed by G. Vajda in "Un chapitre de l'histoire du conflit entre la kabbale et la philosophie" in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 23 (1956) 45-144, Appendice A: La théorie conventionnelle du langage critiquée par un kabbaliste (pp. 127-130), and "Deux chapitres du 'Guide des Égarés' repensés par un kabbaliste" in *Mélanges offerts à Étienne Gilson* (Toronto/Paris 1959) 652-659; Vajda denies Gikatilla's authorship, see p. 656, n. 24. E. Gottlieb, "Berurim le-khitve R. Yosef Gikatilla", *Tarbiz* 39 (1969-70) 62-89, took up the issue again (pp. 68-69, 72-78) and reached the conclusion that the work can very well be ascribed to Gikatilla. If so, it should be assigned to the period between his *Ginnat Egoz* (1274) and *Sha'are Ora* (before 1293). For our purpose it is sufficient to note that there is no doubt that the work belongs to the latter part of the 13th century. See also Scholem, *ad loc.* (note 2), 83-84.

¹¹ Fol. 20d. The quotation is from Canticles Rabba I, 8: "R. Hanina said: (Before Solomon came the words of the Tora were) like a deep pit . . ."; thus it appears in Yehuda al-Harizi's translation, ed. A. L. Schlossberg (Vienna 1912), p. 15, but the text of the Midrash (and Ibn Tibbon) reads spring, *be'er*.

even more: *perush*, *be'ur*, *pesher*, *derash*".¹² The author sets out to explain his terms in this order, but naturally devotes most of his attention to *be'ur*. *Be'ur* is the way of "transmitting the deeper mysteries which flow from the spring of divine wisdom".¹³ It is the way in which the Tora was expounded by Moses himself in the fields of Moab. In the days of mourning after his death it was forgotten. Solomon restored some of this hidden wisdom by means of *dimyonim* and *meshalim* (perhaps an allusion to the deeper meaning in the philosophical sense), but not by the ways of *be'ur*.

The work itself provides hints concerning the character of *be'ur*. We may probably identify it with the author's anti-intellectualistic hermeneutics, based on the phonetic similarity of words and the extensive use of *gematria* which is so characteristic of the early period of Joseph ibn Gikatilla. As in our case *be'er* is associated with *be'ur*, so in another context the word *kisse*, throne, is elucidated by its alleged connection with *kissuy*, hiding, concealment. Thus the fact is stressed that God's most exalted manifestation is his utter transcendence.¹⁴

The three other methods receive much less attention. *Perush* – perhaps in reference to the basic meaning of the root *prš* – is the identification of words and the detection of differences between them.¹⁵ This kind of linguistic approach is very well suited to complement the author's esoteric exegesis, but, he warns us, *perush* should by no means be identified with *be'ur*.¹⁶ *Pesher* (fol. 21b) is like *mayim posherim*, lukewarm water. It gives some understanding of the text, but not its whole meaning (*kawwana*). It is possible to understand this definition as hinting at philosophical exegesis and its allegorical explanations. This would certainly associate well with the author's opinions on the philosophical approach.

The explication of *derash* is equally ambiguous. It is taken to denote literal haggada without a deeper sense (*haggada bi-fesha'im lo bi-fenimiyut*), enough to satisfy the needs of simple people. Does not the term itself say so: *day resh*, enough (for) poverty? A person ignorant of the mysteries of the Tora will be satisfied with *me'at peshat*.

There is no question of a well-balanced theory of four senses here: the author's main distinction is the one between the literal (*peshat*) and the deeper sense (*sod*), or the outer (*hison*) and the inner meaning (*penimi*).¹⁷ *Perush* seems to denote grammatical interpretation (but differs from Ibn Latif's *diqduq ha-millot*). *Pesher* may describe a level of meaning, an

¹² Fol. 21a: "Ki ha-Tora nidreshet bi-shlosha panim o yoter . . .". *Panim* may also be translated as "senses".

¹³ Ibid.: "Masoret ha-sodot ha-penimiyim she-nove'im mi-meqor ha-hokhma ha-elohit".

¹⁴ Fol. 29d; cf. Vajda, *Mélanges E. Gilson*, p. 653-655.

¹⁵ Fol. 21a: "Le-kavdil milla mi-milla she-doma lah be-ta'am yadua".

¹⁶ Fol. 21b: "We-ya'ale be-da'tekha she-kawwanatam ahat we-ein ha-'inyan kakh".

¹⁷ Cf. statements to this effect in fols. 20c, 21c.

intermediate stage between the literal and the mystical sense. *Derash* is just a play on words.¹⁸

The most renowned and, as far as I know, only well-documented instance of fourfold exegesis is given by Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa. In his eclectic commentary on the Pentateuch, completed in 1291, he consistently divides his attention between four kinds of exegesis. He states in the Introduction that he found these in the books of his predecessors, who interpreted the Tora according to *peshat*, *midrash*, *sekhel*, and *qabbala*.¹⁹ This does not, however, allow us to conclude that Bahya subscribed to an explicit theory of four senses of Scripture, as his contemporary Moses de Leon may have done. His clear and well-defined arrangement into four different sections need not be prompted by any theory, but can be explained as stemming from purely practical considerations. Except for the terminology, the four sections correspond fairly well to the accepted definition of the four senses as summarised in the Pardes acronym – literal, midrashic, allegorical, and kabbalistic – but it is significant that Bahya himself supplies occasionally in his commentary another kind of biblical exposition, *musar*, ethical instruction, thus exploding to some extent the scheme of the four senses.²⁰

Although, as we have seen, it is not altogether clear what exactly our writers had in mind when dividing exegetical method into four categories, notions of four different levels of meaning in the biblical text seem in any case to have been in the air in the latter part of the thirteenth century. They all have in common the conviction that the traditional methods, including the allegorical approach of the philosophers, do not exhaust the full meaning of the Tora and should be crowned by a fourth method that penetrates the inmost secrets of divine revelation.

What can have been the reason for the appearance of these traces of a theory of four biblical senses in so many different disguises at about the same moment? To this question there are two answers, which seem to be contradictory but in reality are not. The first is that the theory of the four senses results from an inner development of Jewish exegesis; from that is, the development of Jewish religion itself. Leaving aside the contention that the Pardes acronym as a pun on four established exegetical terms was

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that like Scripture, the Midrash is also credited with a literal and a deeper meaning. This is in keeping with the general tendency (present already in Maimonides and Ibn Ezra), but it is quite incompatible with the division of the Pardes scheme, which accords to *derash* a place of its own.

¹⁹ *Rabbenu Bahya: Be'ur 'al ha-Tora*, ed. Ch. D. Chavel (Jerusalem 1968), *Petiha* (esp. pp. 4-5) and Chavel's Introduction.

²⁰ See *Petiha*, p. 6. It is not our present purpose to analyse Bahya's hermeneutics, nor those of any other of the exegetes mentioned. Because Chavel's recent edition offers easy access to Bahya's Commentary, these short characteristics should suffice for our purpose. In view of the casual nature of most of the references to the four senses in the sources quoted here it is quite probable that a number of other such passages in the literature of the period have escaped our notice.

already present in Talmudic literature,²¹ we would like to point to the fact that in certain fields of Jewish exegesis in the Middle Ages a threefold theory was practised. Systems of three methods, or of three levels of meaning, may have different backgrounds and may not have gained such renown as the theory of the four senses, but they certainly played a part in originating the Pardes scheme.

The special character which the Sages of Talmud and Midrash claimed for the book of Canticles demanded special treatment by the exegetes of the Middle Ages. Even those given to literal interpretation such as Rashi and Ibn Ezra had to do justice to the traditional haggadic interpretations, and accepted the existence of a deeper allegorical meaning for this book. Ibn Ezra divided his commentary on Canticles methodologically into three categories: *milla*, *mishpat* 'al derekh peshat and *midrash*. But his younger contemporary, the exegete and philosopher Joseph ibn Aqnin, attempted to respond to traditional and contemporary demands by composing a commentary on Canticles divided into literal exegesis (mainly grammar), traditional allegorical Midrash and philosophical allegory. The philosopher thus revealed that he assumed there to be three different levels of meaning in this book.²²

A threefold system along the lines of the literal sense, traditional midrashic interpretations and the deeper philosophical sense, or a division into tradition, rational deduction and revelation must have seemed quite natural to a medieval philosopher. A related tripartite division is found in Gersonides' commentary on the Tora²³ (which is somewhat later than our period). In his Introduction, Gersonides excludes the *derash* from serious exegesis and divides the meaning of the Tora into three: *mišwot*, *ha-hokhma ha-medinit*, meaning ethics, and *hokhmat ha-nimsa'ot*, meaning the knowledge of reality which is above rational deduction (*'iyyun*). In the commentary itself, there is a division into three based partly on method, partly on meaning: *be'ur ha-millot*, *be'ur ha-sippur*, meaning the elucidation of the deeper sense, and *ha-to'elet*, meaning ethical instruction.²⁴

²¹ So e.g. E. König, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1893) 512-517 and repeated in *Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments* (1916) 20-22. In spite of W. Bacher's emphatic refutation in "Das Merkwort PRDS in der jüdischen Biblexegese", ZAW 13 (1893) 294-305, König's influence was substantial.

²² A. S. Halkin, "Ibn 'Aqnin's Commentary on the Song of Songs", *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York 1950) 389-424, esp. pp. 407ff; idem, ed., R. Yosef ben Yehuda ibn 'Aqnin, *Hitgalut ha-sodot we-hofa'at ha-me'orot. Perush Shir ha-Shirim* (Jerusalem 1964), p. XV-XVII; and cf. note 6 above.

²³ *Perush 'al ha-Tora 'al derekh be'ur* (Venice 1547), written prior to 1338.

²⁴ One is reminded here of another similar threefold division, based on Prov. 6, 23 and practised by Isaiah Horowitz in his *Shene Luhot ha-Berit: ner mišwa* (the commandments in their literal sense), *torā or* (the deeper purpose of the commandments and of the biblical stories), *derekh hayyim tokhahat musar* (the ethical sense). It is significant that Gersonides in his commentary on this verse also applies the words *ner mišwa* and *torā or* to the literal and the deeper sense, thereby referring to his Pentateuch commentary.

This is not the place to enter into the merits of divisions like the ones mentioned. It is enough to state that such methods and, perhaps, threefold theories were applied in philosophical circles. A kabbalist must obviously have felt that something was missing here. The addition of a fourth sense to legitimate kabbalistic doctrine was thus a necessity, emerging during the course of the history of Jewish religion.

The other answer to the question of the origin of the four senses in Jewish exegesis is given by those who attribute it to Christian influence. Christian exegesis certainly knew of a theory of four senses. It existed for a long time in the shadow of the more popular threefold theory derived from Origen, but emerged vigorously during the thirteenth century. The major exegetes advocated its adoption and it acquired great prominence through the writings of Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1340), who as a matter of fact hardly practised it himself at all. The theory credited the Scriptures with an *allegorical*, a *tropological* or moral, and an *anagogical* meaning which leads the believer towards heaven, in addition to the much neglected *literal* or historical meaning.²⁵ The theory was not very often put into practice, but its reputation led W. Bacher to assume that the Pardes acronym emerged in Jewish exegesis under the direct influence of the Christian theory of the four senses, a view still held, with some modifications, by Scholem.²⁶ Is this assumption justified?

In the event, the facts do not permit more than the simple statement that a theory of four senses existed indeed in Christian exegesis, just as there was one at the time of its greatest popularity in Jewish exegesis. It is also clear that a negative cannot be proved. The absence of a Christian influence can never be demonstrated. But in this case the influence is also without proof. No explicit quotations or direct borrowings from Christian sources on this

²⁵ The history of the three- and fourfold theories in Christian exegesis need not detain us here. See E. von Dobschütz, "Vom vierfachen Schriftsinn. Die Geschichte einer Theorie" in *Harnack-Ehrung* (Leipzig 1921) 1-13. H. Caplan, "The four senses of Scriptural interpretation and the mediaeval theory of preaching", *Speculum* 4 (1929) 282-290 hints several times at similarities between Christian and Jewish ways of reading of the Bible but has little substantial to add on our subject. See also for relevant details the articles by Sandler, p. 227-229 and Scholem, p. 84-86 quoted in notes 1 and 2 above. Origen's peculiar anthropological terminology—somatic, psychic, pneumatic—also left its traces in the West (corporealis, spiritualis) but was not consistently applied. The threefold division, however, has the upper hand before the 13th century. One could as well assume (and would probably do better to do so) Christian influence in relation to Gersonides' threefold division mentioned above as in connection with the Pardes scheme, but it is still preferable to speak of the common cultural milieu which favoured such distinctions. It is significant that from early patristic beginnings, Christian theories were based upon the distinction between the literal, corporeal or historical sense on the one hand, and the spiritual or mystical sense on the other, the latter being divided into either two or three subdivisions. This main distinction is as old as the New Testament (Galatians 4; 24) and rooted in hellenistic thought. In medieval Jewish exegesis the distinction between the literal and the deeper sense is also very prominent, but the Pardes scheme, with its inclusion of *derash*, does not quite fit this duality.

²⁶ W. Bacher, "L'Exégèse biblique dans le Zohar", REJ 22 (1891) 38; Scholem, *ad loc.* (note 2), 85-86.

point are extant. It is true that direct influence would in any case be concealed (especially in kabbalistically-oriented circles), but the sources offer only a superficial similarity between Jewish and Christian exegesis and a somewhat analogous development. Similarity, however, is not strong enough as evidence to compete with the demonstrable fact that inner Jewish developments at a given moment demanded a fourth sense. The possibility of Christian influence on Jewish exegesis is always an interesting topic, but in our case the discussion suffers from a lack of information and from imprecise reasoning. When proofs and explicit evidence are absent, the discussion has to rely upon internal comparison.

In this respect the far-reaching incongruence of the different systems is conspicuous. *Peshaṭ*, *derash*, *remez* and *sod*—or what these terms are said to represent—are hardly comparable to *littera*, *allegoria*, *tropologia* and *anagoge* and, in particular, the relative importance attributed to the different levels of meaning differs greatly in the two systems.²⁷ However important it is to assess the extent of Christian influence on Jewish exegesis, in this case—as in many others—it was almost certainly marginal, providing, perhaps, the form of the theory but not its contents. The answer on the question of the emergence of the theory of the four senses is in effect a dual one: the inner development of Jewish religion at a given moment needed a new approach, and the Christian theory may have furnished the idea of a fourfold system.²⁸

By disposing of the question of the origin, we have, however, by no means answered all the questions involved in the use of Pardes, which are mainly concerned with establishing the proper meaning of the terms involved.

It is very difficult to define what is meant by *peshaṭ*, *derash*, *remez* and *sod*. From the examples quoted, we have seen that even the simple methodological question of whether the terms denote exegetical method or a level of meaning in Scripture cannot always be decided.

As for the individual terms, there is for example the famous question of the difference between *peshaṭ* and *derash*, for which many exegetes seem to

²⁷ It is sufficient to mention here the great difference between the Jewish and Christian evaluation of the literal meaning. It is true that certain philosophers and kabbalists at times expressed contempt for the "outer shells", the "garments" of the Tora, while Christian exegetes such as Andrew of St. Victor and Nicholas of Lyra emphasised the importance of the literal meaning. But the basic difference is dominated by the fact the Jewish exegesis had to defend the actual observance of the commandments in their literal sense and to fend off Christian typology. Christian exegesis, on the other hand, depended upon a good deal of allegorising and typology in order to safeguard the validity of the New Testament.

²⁸ Along different lines of reasoning, P. Sandler in 1955 (see note 1) reached approximately the same conclusion. After finishing his article he learned to his confusion (p. 234, note 51) that his teacher Scholem still unhesitatingly subscribed to Bacher's thesis on a Christian influence. Scholem advanced the argument that the occurrence in Jewish writings of several apparently unrelated forms of the theory of the four senses favours the idea of foreign influence (cf. "Der Sinn der Tora . . .", 85). Leaving aside the force of this argument, I cannot see much importance in such a restricted influence.

have had their own criteria. An additional problem here is that modern scholarship used to be highly interested in the study of the Jewish exegesis of the plain sense of Scripture. This interest of course derives from the modern appreciation of literal exegesis and still has a faintly apologetic ring to it. But although present-day scholars may have precise notions of what literal exegesis should be, our sources do not permit of any clear-cut definition of *peshaṭ*. It should also not be overlooked that the mainstream of Jewish exegesis took a different course, one in which the term *peshaṭ* was often used for a kind of exegesis which in the eyes of the modern scholar can lay no claim to literalness.

The terms *remez* and *sod* confront us with yet another problem. Understood literally, they are not suited to denote categories of the same kind. *Remez*, meaning hint or allusion, is instrumental to *sod*, mystery. It is not unusual to meet references to the revelation of a *mystery* by means of an *allusion*.²⁹ Philosophers as well as kabbalists had their "mysteries", but through the influence of the Pardes scheme it became customary to define *remez* as philosophical allegory, and *sod* as kabbalistic symbolical exegesis. This distinction is in itself quite correct, at least for a limited period and for a rather special kind of source, but the choice of the terms *remez* and *sod* in this particular meaning is not supported by the sources and is in fact quite accidental. With *peshaṭ* and *derash* (instead of the more usual *midrash*), they had to make up the word-play PARDES!

In connection with the exegetical approaches which they came to denote, it is admittedly clear that for some time philosophical allegory and kabbalistic symbolism dominated certain areas of Jewish exegesis. But the evolution of Jewish religion does not allow this to be maintained as a lasting distinction. In the course of time, very few kabbalists were willing to admit the validity of philosophical exegesis, fewer still to practise it.³⁰

These methodological problems may suffice to explain the proper nature of Pardes. It is not a characterisation of Jewish exegesis. It is an instructive pun, nicely illustrative, but, because of its vagueness and terminological obscurity, unsuitable for use in scholarly context. As an acronym it is no

²⁹ Cf. e.g. Ibn Ezra on Gen. 3, 21 *Shiṭa Aheret*, ed. Weis p. 170: "agalle lekha be-remez sod ha-gan". In later exegetical literature, when the Pardes acronym had gained popularity, this promiscuous use of the terms only increased, as a glance at a commentary such as Ḥayyim ibn Aṭṭar's *Or ha-Ḥayyim* (latest ed. Jerusalem 1973) reveals. Ibn Aṭṭar (d. 1743) is one of the many exegetes ostensibly subscribing to the theory of the Pardes scheme without actually observing it; see *Haqdama*, towards the end.

³⁰ Many exegetes, incapable of admitting dissent between the great teachers of the past, repeatedly quoted philosophical views alongside kabbalistic teachings. An instructive instance of this occurs in the 17th century Yemenite "Midrash" *Ḥemdat Yamim* (latest ed. Jerusalem 1976), cf. *Haqdama*. Others attempted to 'kabbalise' philosophical exegesis with varying degrees of sophistication. For these pursuits, the Pardes acronym was always a very useful tool. Here again, the close relationship between exegetical and theological developments is manifest.

more than a brilliant programmatic idea, a slogan, and a late thirteenth century battle-cry in favour of the validity of kabbalistic exegesis.

Several issues in Jewish Bible interpretation are often described as central to its concerns. Among them is the problematic relationship between *peshat* and *derash* (which modern exegetes such as Malbim and David Zvi Hoffmann reproduced again in the conflict between science and tradition). Another ever-recurring theme is the distinction between the plain meaning and the deeper sense. The question of the literalness of the Bible became acute under the pressures of Greek thinking, and the assumption of a deeper meaning made it possible to "make sense" of the biblical commandments and of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God. One may mention also the status of interpretative haggadic embellishments of biblical passages (Maimonides' lifelong preoccupation), or the function and validity of the Hermeneutic Rules (the 13 or 32 *Middot*) in deriving Halakha from the explicit precepts of the Tora. It is obvious that all these points lead to a deeper problem: the relationship between Written and Oral Tora.

The specific notion of *Tora she-be-'al pe* may indeed be termed the central feature of Jewish Bible exegesis. There is admittedly some danger in singling out such a basic principle as the concept of Oral Law to serve as a characterisation of Jewish exegesis. The description may become meaningless by the very broadness of its definition. It is therefore important to stress, rather sweepingly, that a distinction exists between the Oral Law itself, and biblical exegesis. Oral Tora is revelation (however problematic this statement may in itself be in the eyes of modern scholarship). Written Tora is revelation. Exegesis is the endeavour to unify the two.

But the concept of Oral Law was never static. It was under constant pressure from outside and its relationship with Written Law had in consequence to be restated constantly. The historian of Jewish exegesis has to enter the hermeneutic circle revolving between exegesis and religious thought ("theology") by concentrating, not on the various interpretations of biblical passages in the first place, but by assessing the exegetical aspect of Jewish thinking in general. The clue to understanding the continuity of Jewish Bible exegesis may then be found in the perpetual struggle between the dual concept of revelation, written and oral.

It should also be stressed that the question of the continuity of Jewish exegesis is a legitimate one. What in our eyes may sometimes appear to be a kaleidoscopic jumble of age-old traditions and new innovations, was for the exegetes themselves the very manifestation of the chain of tradition and the proper expression of the eternal validity of the once-revealed Tora. It is this sense of continuity which the historical description of Jewish exegesis has to take into account. Tradition, more than anything else, was the point

of verification for the exegete.³¹ The will to demonstrate the continuity of the process of interpreting the Bible is palpably present on every page of biblical commentary.

In addition to this theme of continuity there is, on the other hand, a further aspect, already alluded to, namely that of contingency. Foreign influence, or, rather, the common cultural milieu, formed the other pole that determined the course of Jewish exegesis. This aspect has occupied us already in the description of the origin of the theory of the four senses. Several other important themes, such as the quest for *peshat* and the belief in a deeper meaning of the Scriptures, are tightly bound up with contemporary needs and with pressures from outside, even when unmistakably coloured by Jewish tradition. As in the case of the emergence of the theory of the four senses, inner development did not exclude foreign influence. Internal and external pressures determined the course, but the proportion of their respective influences varied through the ages. The extents of both have to be studied and given their rightful place.

This does not imply that every phenomenon should be assigned either to internal development or to influence from outside. Such a distinction is impossible to maintain, but in any case the issues will prove to be too complicated for such a simplistic approach. Concentrated research on the development of the idea of Oral Tora on the one hand, and investigation into the horizontal structure of the hermeneutics of the three monotheistic religions on the other, will however lend to the study of Jewish exegesis the broad perspectives which it deserves.

It has already been stressed that exegesis, as a way of deriving knowledge and authority from a single, divine source, is an all-pervading characteristic of Jewish religious thought. Therefore, the study of Jewish Bible interpretation is of prime importance for the study of Judaism itself.

³¹ In this sense, traditional Jewish exegesis had the same tendency as modern scholarly exegesis towards objectivity and verification of its results. But, whereas present-day scholarship feels obliged to check its results against empirical facts, the former goes by the statements of tradition. Both endeavour to avoid subjectivity.

Board of Governors

Sir I. BERLIN, The Rt. Hon. Lord BLAKE, T. E. CHINN, Sir Z. COWEN,
S. H. FRANKEL (Chairman), W. FRANKEL, C. GRAYSON, D. HYMAN,
A. JONES (Vice-Chairman), L. KRAMER, A. LEVIN, M. D. PAISNER, D. PATTERSON,
J. SCHREIBER, G. H. STAFFORD, H. STARR, Sir S. STERNBERG, G. VERMES,
E. WHITTAKER, E. WIESEL, D. I. YOUNG.

President

DAVID PATTERSON

Editor of the Journal of Jewish Studies

GEZA VERMES

The *Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies* is designed to foster Hebrew and Jewish studies from the biblical period to the present time. It aims at encouraging individual and collective research projects.

The *Centre* is under the academic aegis of Oxford University, but is financially independent and administered by its own Board of Governors.

The *Centre* awards Visiting Fellowships to distinguished scholars to enable them to pursue their studies in Oxford, and to conduct courses and seminars on Hebrew and Jewish topics. Junior Fellowships may be granted to promising young researchers.

The *Centre* has at its disposal a town office with teaching rooms close to the Oriental Institute of the University and the Bodleian Library; Yarnton Manor, a seventeenth century house five miles from Oxford, providing accommodation for a number of Fellows; and the Kressel Archive with its supporting library.

The *Centre* is the publisher of the *Journal of Jewish Studies*.

Enquiries regarding the *Centre* should be addressed to the Administrative Secretary, at 45 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 3LP.

Correspondence intended for the *Journal* should be sent to the Editor, The Oriental Institute, Pusey Lane, Oxford OX1 2LE.

© Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies
45 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 2LP

Printed in Great Britain
by South Western Printers Ltd.
Caerphilly, South Wales

Journal of Jewish Studies

Edited by Geza Vermes

Vol. XXXV, No. 2

Half Yearly

AUTUMN 1983

Joseph M. Baumgarten, 4Q502, Marriage or Golden Age Ritual?	125
Susan Niditch, The Cosmic Adam: Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature	137
A. van der Heide, PARDES: Methodological Reflections on the Theory of the Four Senses	147
Stefan C. Reif, Jewish Liturgical Research: Past Present and Future	161
Uriel Simon, The Contribution of R. Isaac b. Samuel Al-Kanzi to the Spanish School of Biblical Interpretation	171
Morris M. Fainerstein, The Friday Night Incident in Kotsk: History of a Legend	179
Steve J. Zipperstein, Haskalah, Cultural Change, and Nineteenth-Century Russian Jewry: A Reassessment	191

REVIEWS

E. Y. KUTSCHER, <i>A History of the Hebrew Language</i> (Edward Ullendorff)	208
MIREILLE HADAS-LEBEL, <i>Histoire de la langue hébraïque des origines à l'époque de la Mishna</i> (Edward Ullendorff)	208
D. J. KAMHI, <i>Modern Hebrew: An Introductory Course</i> (Edward Ullendorff)	213
ATHALYA BRENNER, <i>Colour Terms in the Old Testament</i> (Richard White)	215
JAMES E. PRIEST, <i>Governmental and Judicial Ethics in the Bible and Rabbinic Literature</i> (Louis Jacobs)	216
R. HAYWARD, <i>Divine Name and Presence: The Memra</i> (P. S. Alexander)	217
ALEXANDER SCHEIBER, <i>Geniza Studies</i> (Paul B. Fenton)	220
GÜNTER SCHLICHTING, <i>Ein jüdisches, Leben Jesu: Die verschollene Toledot-Jeschu-Fassung Tam u-mu'ad.</i> (W. Horbury)	211
JEREMY COHEN, <i>The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism</i> (Paul R. Hyams)	223
H. J. (J. W.) HIRSCHBERG, <i>A History of the Jews in North Africa</i> (Maya Shatzmiller)	224

Published by
THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR POSTGRADUATE HEBREW STUDIES