

RABBI YOM-TOV ASEVILLI'S *BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE*:
PHILOSOPHY, KABBALAH, HALAKHAH

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Rabbi Yom-Tov Asevilli's (Ritva, Spain 1250-1320) *Book of Remembrance* (*Sefer Ha-Zikaron*) is a defense of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed against Nahmanides' harsh criticism in his well-known commentary on the Pentateuch. The *Book of Remembrance* is puzzling, because Asevilli, a prominent halakhist of the school of Nahmanides, comes to the defense of *ha-Rav-ha-Moreh* – Maimonides' title in this book that indicate his greatness in both halakhah and philosophy – while at the same time declares throughout his treatise that he is an adherent of the kabbalah of "our great master," and emphasizes that Nahmanides criticized Maimonides because of his kabbalistic views. The first sections of this article present the puzzling aspects that this composition raises, and the methods and techniques that Asevilli utilizes to defend Maimonides' philosophy. The last sections offer a solution to the perplexity raised by the *Book of Remembrance*.

The *Book of Remembrance* is a nexus at which major trends of Jewish thought in the High Middle Ages confront one another. This article interprets main passages of this book, draws an intellectual portrait of Asevilli, and analyzes his views on the relations between philosophy and kabbalah, and between both of them and halakhah. The enigma of Asevilli's *Book of Remembrance* offers an opportunity to study the relationships between philosophy, kabbalah and halakhah in the world-view of sages from the school of Nahmanides, and through them, to portray the intellectual history of the Jews in Spain at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.