**Classic Commentators of the Book of Daniel**

**Rabbi Saadiah Goan:**

Saadia Ben Joseph Gaon (882-942 C.E.), (Hebrew:סעדיה בן יוסף גאון ) also known by his Arabic name Said al-Fayyumi, was a prominent rabbi, Jewish philosopher, and exegete of the geonic period, known for his works on Hebrew linguistics, Halakha (Jewish religious law), and Jewish philosophy. Saadia was the first to present a systematized Jewish philosophy, "Kitab al-Amanat wal-l'tikadat," 2,500 years after the inception of the Jewish faith. He was also very active in opposition to Karaism, in defense of traditional Judaism. He produced the first organized Hebrew dictionary. Saadia translated the entire Bible into Arabic, along with commentaries that made the meaning of each verse clear not only for Jewish readers but for Arabs and other non-Jews. Through his writings, Arab language and culture gained a lasting influence over the history of Judaism.

During Saadia’s lifetime, intellectual Jews in Babylonia, North Africa, and Spain were attracted to Arab culture, particularly to the richness of the Arab language and to the rediscovered Hellenistic philosophers. Saadia perceived a cultural crisis in the Jewish community, and devoted himself to presenting the Jewish faith in philosophical terms, using the Arabic language and linking all of his explanations to Jewish texts. He also produced two translations of the Bible into Arabic, along with a commentary on the Bible (of which only fragments survive), so that the Arabic-speaking Jews could have access to the original scriptures. Through his writings, Arab language and culture gained a lasting influence over the history of Judaism.

Saadia was the first great writer of post-Biblical Judaism after Philo of Judea. His works include several philosophical and theological treatises; two Arabic translations of the Bible, along with a Biblical commentary in Arabic (of which only fragments remain); a Hebrew dictionary, Agron (913); liturgical poems; a Jewish prayer book; some rabbinical works; and writings on mathematics, grammar, and science. His scientific works, many of which were innovative, were written in both Hebrew and Arabic. They remain only as citations in the works of later writers. His philosophical work, Kitab al-Amanat wal-l'tikadat was the first systematized Jewish philosophy.

Saadia's translation of the Bible into Arabic was a landmark in the history of civilization; it served for centuries as a potent factor in the impregnation of the Jewish spirit with Arabic culture. As a means of popular religious enlightenment, Saadia's translation presented the Scriptures, even to the unlearned, in a rational form which aimed at clearness and consistency. He established a new school of Biblical exegesis, characterized by rational investigation of the contents of the Bible and scientific knowledge of the language of the holy text. His system of hermeneutics was not limited to the exegesis of individual passages, but also treated each book of the Bible as a whole, and showed the connection of its various portions with one another.

His commentary on the Bible (of which only fragments survive) contained, as Saadia stated in the introduction to his translation of the Pentateuch, not only an exact interpretation of the text, but also a defense from the criticisms raised against it by heretics.

*New World Encyclopedia*

**Rashi:**

Shlomo Yitzchaki (Hebrew: רבי שלמה יצחקי‎; Latin: Salomon Isaacides; French: Salomon de Troyes, 22 February 1040 – 13 July 1105), today generally known by the acronym Rashi (Hebrew: רש״י, RAbbi SHlomo Itzhaki), was a medieval French rabbi and author of a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Tanakh. Acclaimed for his ability to present the basic meaning of the text in a concise and lucid fashion, Rashi appeals to both learned scholars and beginner students, and his works remain a centerpiece of contemporary Jewish study. His commentary on the Talmud, which covers nearly all of the Babylonian Talmud (a total of 30 out of 39 tractates, due to his death), has been included in every edition of the Talmud since its first printing by Daniel Bomberg in the 1520s. His commentary on Tanakh—especially on the Chumash ("Five Books of Moses")—serves as the basis for more than 300 "supercommentaries" which analyze Rashi's choice of language and citations, penned by some of the greatest names in rabbinic literature.

Rashi's commentary on the Tanakh—and especially his commentary on the Chumash—is the essential companion for any study of the Bible at any level. Drawing on the breadth of Midrashic, Talmudic and Aggadic literature (including literature that is no longer extant), as well as his knowledge of Hebrew grammar and halakhah, Rashi clarifies the "simple" meaning of the text so that a bright child of five could understand it. At the same time, his commentary forms the foundation for some of the most profound legal analysis and mystical discourses that came after it. Scholars debate why Rashi chose a particular Midrash to illustrate a point, or why he used certain words and phrases and not others. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi wrote that "Rashi's commentary on Torah is the 'wine of Torah'. It opens the heart and uncovers one's essential love and fear of G-d."

Scholars believe that Rashi's commentary on the Torah grew out of the lectures he gave to his students in his yeshiva, and evolved with the questions and answers they raised on it. Rashi completed this commentary only in the last years of his life. It was immediately accepted as authoritative by all Jewish communities, Ashkenazi and Sephardi alike.

Today, tens of thousands of men, women and children study "Chumash with Rashi" as they review the Torah portion to be read in synagogue on the upcoming Shabbat. According to halakha, a man may even study the Rashi on each Torah verse in fulfillment of the requirement to review the Parsha twice with Targum (which normally refers to Targum Onkelos) This practice is called in Hebrew: "Shnayim mikra ve-echad targum". Since its publication, Rashi's commentary on the Torah is standard in almost all Chumashim produced within the Orthodox Jewish community.

Rabbi Mordechai Leifer of Nadvorna said that anyone who learns the weekly Parsha together with the commentary by Rashi every week, is guaranteed to sit in the Yeshiva (school) of Rashi in the Afterlife.

*Wikipedia*

**Ibn Ezra:**

Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra, (born 1092/93, Tudela, Emirate of Saragossa—died 1167, Calahorra, Spain), poet, grammarian, traveller, Neoplatonic philosopher, and astronomer, best known as a biblical commentator whose commentaries contributed to the Golden Age of Spanish Judaism.

As a young man, he lived in Muslim Spain. Not much is known about his early life. He was on friendly terms with the eminent poet and philosopher Judah ha-Levi, and he travelled to North Africa and possibly to Egypt. Primarily known as a scholar and poet up to that point, in about 1140 Ibn Ezra began a lifelong series of wanderings throughout Europe, in the course of which he produced distinguished works of biblical exegesis and disseminated biblical lore.

His biblical commentaries include expositions of the Book of Job, the Book of Daniel, Psalms, and, most importantly, a work produced in his old age, a commentary on the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. His commentary on the Pentateuch is sometimes ranked with the classic 11th-century commentaries by Rashi on the Talmud, the rabbinic compendium of law, lore, and commentary.

Ibn Ezra also translated the Hispano-Hebrew grammarians who had written in Arabic and wrote grammatical treatises. He also had a good knowledge of astronomy and cast horoscopes, and he believed in numerological mysticism as well.

*Encyclopedia Brittanica*

**Radak**:

David Kimhi (Hebrew: דוד קמחי‎, also Kimchi or Qimḥi) (1160–1235), also known by the Hebrew acronym as the RaDaK (רד"ק) (Rabbi David Kimhi), was a medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

David Kimhi was born in Narbonne, Provence, the youngest son of Rabbi Joseph Kimhi and the brother of Rabbi Moses Kimhi, both also biblical commentators and grammarians. His father died while he was still as a child, and Kimhi was raised by his brother Moses. Later, he supported himself by teaching Talmud to the young. He was well versed in the whole range of Hebrew literature, and became the most illustrious representative of his name. Works of the Kimhi family were underwritten by the Ibn Yahya family of Lisbon, Portugal.

Kimhi saw himself primarily as a compiler and summarizer. As a noted Hebrew grammarian, his book Michlol (מכלול) and his dictionary of the Hebrew language called Sefer Hashorashim (Book of Roots) (ספר השורשים) draws heavily on the earlier works of Rabbi Judah ben David Hayyuj and Rabbi Jonah ibn Janah, as well as from the work of his father. These two books were originally written as one, although over the years they have come to be printed separately. This book, while based on his predecessors, shows a significant amount of innovation, stakes out new territory in his scholarly fields, and from a methodological point of view is superior to what came before. For example, in Michlol, Kimhi expounds on his predecessors' opinions in a clear, straightforward way with a comprehensive approach to the Hebrew structure. Sefer Hashorashim highlights his talent as a writer because of its logical organization, particularly the way he bases his definitions upon etymology and comparisons between languages. Another of Ḳimḥi's works, "'Eṭ Sofer," (עט סופר) was a sort of abridged version of Michlol and acted as a manual for Biblical scribes. This was a necessary compilation of rules for the writing of Bible-rolls, Masoretic notes, and accents, due to widespread ignorance among the scribes of the 12th century.

Kimhi also delved into philosophy and the sciences, and was very much influenced by both Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides. In later life, he took part in the controversy surrounding the works of Maimonides and staunchly defended him. He even sent letters to other Rabbis in order to gain their support. His stance on philosophy was moderate and therefore permitted its study to those whose belief in God and fear of heaven was firm.

*Wikipeida*

**Ralbag**:

(1288 - 1370 CE)

Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag) was a Provencal philosopher, physician, mathemetician, astronomer, Talmudic commentator and Torah commentator. He seems to never have accepted a rabbinic post, and little is known about his life – even the place and date of his death is unclear. Ralbag was a strict Aristotalian, and in his great philosophical work, Milchamot Hashem, he critiques Rambam on some points where he deviates from Aristotalian teaching. He was also a fervent believer in astrology, and astrological determinism pervades his philosophical work, though he did maintain the notion of human free-will. His philophical views lead to opposition to his works in some circles. His mathematical works were sophisticated, influential and ground-breaking; he is noted for his work in combinatorics and early use of the principle of mathematical induction. Some of these works were even translated into Latin at the request of Christian scholars. The Ralbag was credited for inventing the 'Jacob's staff,' an astronomical device. Finally, he is perhaps best known today for his commentary on the Tanach, which displays his wide learning and interweaves halachic matters and rulings. He wrote several Talmudic works, most of which have since been lost.

*Seferia*

**Alshich**:

Moshe Alshich Hebrew: משה אלשיך, also spelled Alshech, (1508–1593), known as the Alshich Hakadosh (the Holy), was a prominent rabbi, preacher, and biblical commentator in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

The Alshich was born in 1508 in the Ottoman Empire, and was the son of Hayyim Alshich. He later moved to Safed where he became a student of Rabbi Joseph Caro. His students included Rabbi Hayim Vital and Rabbi Yom Tov Tzahalon. He died in Safed in 1593

Only a few rabbis were granted the title "Hakadosh" throughout Jewish history. Alongside the Alshich were the Shelah HaKadosh, the Ari HaKadosh and the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, all of them distinctive personalities in their times. Various reasons have been suggested as to why the Alshich received the "Hakadosh" title.

His homiletical commentaries on the Torah and the Prophets enjoy much popularity and are still studied today, largely because of their powerful influence as practical exhortations to virtuous life.

*Wikipedia*

**Abarbanel:**

Rabbi Don Isaac ben Judah Abravanel (Abarbanel) was a Portugese rabbi, scholar, Bible commentor, philosopher, and statesman.

Abravanel was born in Lisbon, Portugal in 1437. He studied both Talmud, philosophy, and secular studies. He was one of the first Jewish scholars to be influenced by Renaissance writers. He was a major thinker and prolific Jewish scholar. He wrote a commentary on Joshua in sixteen days. His commentary to the Prophets, while prolix, provided added insights into his 15th century society because he compared the monarchies described in I Samuel to the monarchies of his day. He focused philosophically, on the importance of prophecy, disagreeing vociferously with the beliefs of RaMBaM.

Abrabanel is best-known, however, for his brilliance as a financier and as a diplomat.

His political career started in Portugal, where he served as the personal agent of King Alfonso V. As treasurer, Abravanel took the unusual position of frequently using his own monies as well as the state's. In 1471, when 250 Jews were held for ransom by Alfonso, Abravanel helped raise the required monies. He was tremendously influential among the wealthy Christians in Portugal and remained a powerful figure in the Portuguese court.

However, with the accession of John II in 1481, anti-Jewish sentiments in the church and the legislature which were suppressed during the reign of his father found a sounding board. Due to his fear that the Duke of Braganza was conspiring with Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain against him, he had the Duke executed and almost did the same to Abravanel, who was able to sneak over the border into the Spanish town of Segura de la Orden in 1483.

Hurt by this ingratitude, Abravanel resolved to dedicate the rest of his life to Jewish scholarship and writing. It was not to be. In 1484 King Ferdinand invited him to be the collector of royal revenues, even though it was illegal for a Jew to hold such a high position AND the Spanish Inquisition was in full swing. Abravanel accepted the job, not only because finance was his field of expertise, but also because he felt that such a close relationship with Ferdinand might prove useful in protecting the Jews from Torquemada. This is not to say that the position did not also serve him well. Although he was probably able to have smuggled some of his fortune out of Portugal, by 1488 his tax-farming activity must have brought him considerable gain, because from that year on we have repeated evidence of huge loans — comprising millions of maravedis — which he made to the queen and to the war treasury of the state.

Although he was a tax farmer in the leading districts of south and central Castile, this was not the extent of his influence in Spain. He served as the queen's private, business, and financial agent and fulfilled the many tasks which this entailed. Many historians cite his loan of 1,500,000 maravedis to Queen Isabella to further the Spanish war effort in Grenada as an indicator of both his fortune and his ability to mobilize it for the fulfillment of the aims of the crown.

For all of his power, though, Abravanel's position in Spain never equaled that which he had enjoyed under the Portuguese kings. In Portugal, he was a decision-maker, while his sphere of influence was severely checked in Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella limited his influence and his actions to finance, although he also was allowed to play the role of spokesman for Jews in Spain.

This became eminently clear in 1492. After having provided Ferdinand and Isabella with the monies needed to take Grenada, Abravanel was shocked to learn that they had decided to expel all Jews from Spain. He (and maybe Abraham Senior) offered a huge bribe to rescind the edict, but they failed.

In May, 1492, Abrabanel found himself under tremendous pressure to convert and retain his status in the Spanish court. He refused, managed to smuggle his young son out of the country, and headed for Naples. He was permitted to take a thousand gold ducats with him but had to renounce his claim to other money which he had given the king in advance of actually getting the revenues through tax farming. He was also able to get bills of exchange for much of his fortune, softening the financial blow of his departure.

In Naples, he planned to concentrate on writing his commentary to the Bible. However, he was again employed by the king to be the prime tax collector. He and the king had to flee from the French. Abravanel lost his library. He finally settled in Venice in 1503.

*Jewish Virtual Library*

**Metsudos:**

Rabbi David Altschuler of Prague (1687-1769), also known as Baal haMetzudot, was a Jewish Bible commentator, author of a classic commentary to Nevi'im and Ketuvim in the Hebrew Bible.

He was born in Yavoriv in western Galicia. His family had its origins in Portugal, but were forced to leave with the expulsion of Jews from Portugal. It is reported that upon reaching Prague built a synagogue using stones from the old Portuguese synagogues they had left, and therefore the family name became Altschuler ("of the old synagogue"). According to other reports, the family origin was in Provence.

In the year 5486 (1725-1726) he is recorded as serving as a rabbi or judge of Yavoriv. Apparently, after this served as rabbi of Prague, as did other members of his family.

He saw that Bible study had become weak among European Jews and even among scholars. Believing that the reason for this was the lack of a sufficiently simple and clear commentary, he wrote his commentary "Metzudat David" to fit this need. The commentary covers all of Nach (Neviim and Ketuvim), except for Ruth, Lamentations, and Esther. It is principally based on the commentary of Radak, but includes ideas from many other previous commentators. According to the Hida, these sources include Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ralbag, Moshe Alshich, Saadiah Gaon and Ramban. The commentary was published in Zhovkva in 1753, and later published a second time before his death.

David's son Yechiel Hillel Altschuler also served as rabbi of Yavoriv, and finished his father's great work, and traveled extensively in Europe in order to publish and spread it. David published the commentary as one work, but Yechiel divided it into two works: Metzudat David which explains the meaning of the verses, and Metzudat Tzion which explains individual words and phrases. The two works are collectively known as the Metzudot.

In time the Metzudot became one of the basic commentaries on Nach, printed in most editions of the Hebrew Bible with commentators.

**Malbim:**

Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Weisser (Malbim) was a rabbi, Hebrew grammarian, halachic scholar, and author of one of the most insightful and comprehensive Torah commentaries since medieval times. Known as the "ilui (prodigy) of Volhynia," he served in seven different rabbinic posts over the course of his lifetime. His staunch adherence to halacha and defense of tradition put him in direct confrontation with "enlightened" intellectuals who wished to introduce Reformist innovations in worship and other communal institutions. While serving as chief rabbi of Bucharest, he was falsely charged by his opponents and he only escaped imprisonment on the condition that he leave Romania. Persecution by reformers followed him to other rabbinic posts, including Lunchitz, where he was additionally attacked by a Chassidic faction that accused him of introducing enlightenment thought in his Torah commentary. On his way to accept a post in Krementchug, he fell sick in Kiev and died on the first day of Rosh HaShanah.