

GIANTS OF TRADITION

Asher Siev

The second subject of our series on the "Giants of Tradition" is presented by Rabbi Asher Siev, whose thesis on the Rama earned him his doctorate from Yeshiva University. Rabbi Siev is spiritual leader of Cong. Kehilath Israel in the Bronx, and is assistant professor of Bible and instructor in Hebrew grammar and literature at Yeshiva College. His book, *The Rama*, was published by Mosad Harav Kook in 1957.

THE RAMA

According to popular legend, Rabbi Mosheh Isserles lived thirty three years, during which time he composed thirty three important works, died on the thirty third day of the Omer (Lag B'Omer) in the year five thousand three hundred thirty three, and in eulogizing him thirty three outstanding praises were emphasized.

Of these only the day of his passing is historically correct. The legend points nevertheless to the fact that Rabbi Isserles captured the imagination of his people, and that many legends were woven around his life as they usually are around the lives and activities of all beloved and revered personalities.

We are indebted to Rabbi Mosheh Isserles for having standardized the German-Polish decisions and Minhagim (customs) in matters of Jewish law and stamping them with the impress of authority. Moreover, by supplementing his Mapah ("Table Cloth") to the Shulchan Arukh ("Prepared Table," the standard code of Jewish law) of Rabbi Joseph Karo, he helped unite Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry in the use of a single Code of Law, which was gradually accepted as the final authority in rendering legal decisions.

YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD

Rabbi Moses Isserles, known throughout Jewry as the Rama; profoundly influenced the spiritual life of our people in the last four

1. Derived from the initials of his Hebrew name *tr15-ic rimb*

The Rama

hundred years. Yet comparatively little is known about his private life and experiences. We know that he was born and raised in a home of material affluence, piety, and scholarship. His father, Rabbi Israel, was a prominent merchant whose business transactions took him to distant lands and caused him to come in contact with non-Jews who respected his scholarship, industriousness, and piety. Being learned in the Law, even non-Jews sought enlightenment from him in difficult biblical passages.² He was noted for generosity and benevolence, and was spoken of as Gaon and Chaver, and also as "the great Parnas." Upon the passing of his wife, Rabbi Israel built a synagogue in her memory, which later became prominent as "the Rama Synagogue." However, the wooden structure burnt down only four years after its erection and a stone building took its place, and remains standing to this day.

Rabbi Mosheh Isserles was born about the year 1530 and was the most gifted of eight children. In his early youth he seems to have studied at home, which was a meeting place for scholars and communal leaders. When he was a little older he was sent to the renowned Yeshivah of Rabbi Shalom Shakhna at Lublin. The latter, regarded as the greatest talmudic scholar of his day, exerted a profound influence upon his young and gifted pupil.

At about the age of nineteen Rabbi Moshe married Golda, daughter of his great teacher, Rabbi Shalom Shakhna.³ With the aid of his influential father and father-in-law, he was then invited to assume the important position of Rabbi of Crakow, which he served with dedication and distinction for the rest of his life. It is there that he founded a Yeshivah which became one of the most famous in Poland. A man of means, he was able to supply his pupils with their material needs, so that they could dedicate themselves to the study of Torah without worry or privation. His pupils speak often of the home of their master which was open to all. One of them gratefully acknowledges the fact that he grew up in the home of his revered teacher. Having himself studied Torah in the midst of abundance

2. Torat ha-Olah, III, Chapter 82.

3. The Rama mentions only once the fact that his revered teacher was also his father-in-law (Darkei Mosheh, Yoreh Deah 110, note 4). This strange phenomenon may be explained by the fact that his first wife died only a few years after their marriage and he was remarried shortly afterward to the sister of Rabbi Joseph Katz, his colleague at the Bet Din of Crakow.

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

and free of worry for his material needs, he strove to provide similarly for his students. Among the hundreds of pupils attracted to his Yeshivah there were many who became the leading religious authorities of Ashkenazic Jewry, and they later helped establish their revered teacher as the Posek (decisor) for their communities, which embraced a significant portion of world Jewry of the day.⁴

THE DEMOB.

In addition to assuming the duties of Rabbi of the great community of Crakow and to establishing and conducting a Yeshivah, the Rama became at the same time a member of the most important **Bet Din** (religious court) of the city, and at a tender age began the significant tasks of applying his vast theoretical knowledge of the Law to the practical, everyday litigations brought before the court. In the ghettos of that time Jews enjoyed full autonomy, which enabled them to conduct their lives in accordance with the laws of the Torah. The **Batei Din** were called upon to deal with all problems arising in the complex life of a community. The responsa literature of the period reveals the vast variety of problems brought before the religious authorities. Rabbi Isserles, among other authorities of his day, was entrusted with the responsible task of applying his vast knowledge of Torah literature to daily problems arising in his own community as well as in many distant lands. Despite his great reluctance to assume these difficult duties, it is in this sphere of applying the law to the everyday problems of life, that he distinguished himself, and after twenty two years as **Dayan** of Crakow became the greatest **Moreh Horaah** (decisor) of Ashkenazic Jewry to this day.

The success of the Rama as a **Rosh Yeshivah** and **Dayan** may be attributed to his outstanding qualities of mind and heart. In him we find profound humanity accompanied by great gifts of intellect; the

4. Suffice it to name such luminaries as: (a) Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe, philosopher, Kabbalist, author of the *Levushim* and leader in the *Vaad Arba Ha-aratzot*; (b) Rabbi David Ganz; (c) Rabbi Joshua ha-Kohen Wolk, author of the *Sema* as well as other important works; (d) Rabbi Abraham Hurwitz, father of the *Shelah*, author of a commentary on the *Eight Chapters* of Maimonides and other works; (e) The well known gaon Maharam of Tiktin; (f) Rabbi Benjamin Aharon Salnik Ashkenazi, author of *Masat Binyamin* and other works.

The Rama

harmonious blending of wide human sympathies with crystal clarity of thought. Great erudition, keen analysis, and logical application enabled him to draw upon the original sources of the Talmud, Rishonim and later authorities (Acharonim), and finally arrive at a decision which seemed inevitable in its presentation. In addition, Rabbi Isserles possessed in abiding respect for scholarship and scholars and, as a result, considered and weighed carefully also the opinions of colleagues and contemporaries before rendering a decision.

The reputation of the Rama as a Gaon and man of humility and virtue forced upon him the role of a Posek, often against his will. When he eventually decided to write down his decisions he did not intend to impose them upon others. Daily problems demanded solutions and he was courageous enough not only to offer them but also to record them as his definitive conclusions, while many of his contemporaries hesitated to do so.

In rendering decisions Rabbi Isserles displays courage and resoluteness, in face of severe criticism by some of his colleagues. In his Responsa (no. 125) he explains the reasons for having performed a wedding ceremony on Friday evening, about two hours after sunset, a decision which elicited much criticism and which occasioned a Takanah in Crakow to prohibit wedding ceremonies on Fridays. If it was necessary for a couple to get married on Friday, the ceremony was thenceforth performed outside the gates of the city. In another responsum (no. 124) he tends to be lenient in certain aspects in the matter of non-Jewish wine, and this attitude caused its deletion by the publishers of the Amsterdam edition of his Responsa.

In the midst of a heated controversy with the Maharshal (Rabbi Solomon Luria), the Rama declares: "I say we must hesitate and refrain from adding to the number of terefot in matters of which our fathers were not aware, nor were they expressed by any authoritative author." Indeed, it was he who set the lenient decision with regard to the examination of the lungs of a slaughtered animal (miukh u-mishmush) which Sephardim, following the decisions of the Bet Yoseph, have not accepted. Moreover, the principle which permits a rabbi to pronounce a lenient decision, when the normal verdict would involve considerable monetary loss (Hefsed Merubah), or in the case of the need for the honor of the Sabbath, though used by some of his contemporaries, was given legal status of great import by Rabbi Isserles. Its significance lies in its pliability, leaving

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

it to the rabbi to determine "a considerable loss" when a poor man is affected by his decision.

One could cite scores of examples of the social-mindedness and lenient attitude of the Rama in matters of Halakhah. It should not be thought, however, that this great Posek leaned completely toward a lenient interpretation of the Law. He was stern and strict when the occasion demanded it. But his humaneness and sympathetic attitude toward his fellow Jews enabled him to see both sides of an argument and to render decisions accordingly.⁵ The happy combination of great intellect, vast scholarship, and profound humanity is discernible in his halakhic decisions as well as in his innumerable daily acts of kindness.

THE MAPAH

When Rabbi Joseph Karo published his famous commentary (Bet Yoseph) on the Turim,⁶ Rabbi Isserles was in the midst of preparing an almost identical work based upon his lectures in the Yeshivah. At first, the latter was disappointed at having spent in vain many tireless days and sleepless nights. After reviewing the Bet Yoseph, he saw, however, that there was much indeed left for him to accomplish: namely, the establishment of the authority of Ashkenazic Posekim. For the author of Bet Yoseph arbitrarily selected three authorities, Alfasi, Maimonides, and Rabenu Asher, and followed their decisions or any two of them against the third. This made the Shukhan Arukh, which is a succinct presentation of the final decisions of the laws discussed at length in the Bet Yoseph, primarily a Sephardic Code, and

5. Some historians of note take pains to prove that Rabbi Isserles was wont to lean toward a strict interpretation of the Law. It is evident that these prominent scholars have not weighed all the evidence available in the works of the Rama. See also my book, *The Rama* (Mosad Harav Kook: 5717), pages 89-99.

6. Rabbi Joseph Karo, being a Kabbalist and a member of the group centered at Safed, believed that a voice from heaven was instructing him in matters of Jewish law and mystic lore, and constantly urging him to greater exertion in the service of his Creator. This voice represented the spirit of the Mishnah and he named it the Maggid (Preacher).

Rabbi Efraim" Zalman Margolias relates in his book *Maalos ha-Yochasin* (p. 18) that a popular legend had it that the Maggid urged R. Karo to hurry and publish his commentary on the Tur lest the Rabbi of Crakow, who was engaged in a similar work, precede him.

The Rama

therefore unacceptable to Jews of Germanic and Slavonic countries. The Rama made it the definitive Code of all Jewry by supplementing annotations embodying the views of the French and German Posekim and, in addition, supplying the Minhagim (religious customs) which were accepted by the Jewish communities of Germany, France, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, etc.

The Shulchan Arukh ("Prepared Table") of Rabbi Kara and the Mapah ("Tablecloth"), spread over it by Rabbi Isserles, which are digests of their respective extensive works on the Tur, were intended contrary to the accusations of some critics — as manuals of study and reference,' and not as replacements for the Talmud and Posekim. The wide-spread acceptance of the complete Shulchan Arukh was due to the merits of the work as well as to its timeliness. It speaks with authority, renders clear and final decisions, and is divided into Simanim and Se'ifim (chapters and paragraphs). Such a division proved practical and serviceable, and, coupled with the reputation of its authors, was accepted within a short time as the authoritative Code of Jewish Law by world Jewry. The generation was uniquely suited for a decisive codex and Rabbis Joseph Kara and Moshe Isserles rose to the occasion and supplied the need.

RAMBAM AND RAMA

The greatness of Rabbi Isserles consisted not only in his deep learning and vast erudition in the Law, but also in his mastery of practically all branches of wisdom and scholarship of the day. Unlike most of his contemporaries who devoted themselves almost solely to the study of Halakhah, the Rama took a deep interest in Jewish philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and history as well. Even though these subjects were studied from secondary sources, he nevertheless became well versed and proficient in them. He also studied Kabbalah and wrote several works in this field.

The scholar who exerted the most profound and lasting influence on the Rama was the Rambam (Maimonides). In fact, upon reviewing the sum total of the interests, studies, and works of Rabbi Isserles, one is led to the conclusion that he not only considered him

7. *It* is interesting to note that the author of Bet Yoseph divided his book into thirty sections in order that a student may review it each month and thus become well versed in its content.

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

self a disciple and close follower of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, but also felt that his soul was a nitzotz (spark) of the great soul of the latter. His colleague, Rabbi Solomon Luria (Maharshal), significantly says, "It is proper to be said concerning you, 'from Mosheh to Mosheh there arose none like Mosheh.'"⁸ The same appears as an epitaph on his tombstone. Moreover, in his works Rabbi Isserles seems to have subconsciously approximated those of Maimonides in the entire gamut of Judaism. Both composed Codes of Law, while the *Torat ha-Olah* of the former resembles in content as well as in physical composition the *Guide to the Perplexed* of the latter. In attempting to clarify the philosophy of Judaism, Maimonides tried to reconcile it with Greek philosophy, and Rabbi Isserles endeavored to achieve a similar reconciliation with prevailing philosophic ideas. Both strove to explain logically reasons for the mitzvot, and at the same time were dogmatists in upholding those commandments which transcend man's rational capacity. They were rationalists and mystics at one and the same time. Lack of space prevents an elaboration of the parallels in the works and ideas of the two great scholars and sages. Suffice it to state that although there are isolated instances where Rabbi Isserles disagrees with the views of Maimonides, he enthusiastically endorses and follows the overwhelming majority of them. Especially is this true in the realm of religious philosophy.

HIS RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

We have already noted that, with the exception of Halakhah, very little is known of the multi-faceted activities and spiritual creations of the Rama. His keen interest in astronomy, mathematics, science, logic, and history, which he considered indispensable to a deeper and wider understanding of the totality of Judaism, are almost unknown, even among scholars of Judaism. These views are worthy of brief consideration at this point.

Rabbi Isserles believed that true philosophy and science are part of the Torah, which, being Divine, contains the sum total of the

8. See Responsa of *the Rama*, No. 67. The epitaph is a play on the popular saying expressing the idea that from Moses the Lawgiver to Moses Maimonides there arose none like the latter. In the case of Rabbi Isserles it refers to the interval between Maimonides and the Rama.

The Rama

wisdom that is given to man to attain, and, in addition, a great deal that is beyond man's comprehension. He emphasizes, therefore, that it is most desirable to endeavor to reconcile the views of our Sages with those of general scientists and philosophers. Moreover, he does not hesitate to express respect and esteem for men of science and philosophy, and quotes scholars who called Socrates "the Godly philosopher," because he introduced in philosophy the notion of the existence of a separate Intelligence which succeeding philosophers accepted.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find Rabbi Isserles express the thought that man's purpose in life is to investigate things and understand them through conclusive proof and argumentation. Also, "the wisdom of scholars in all generations is given to them instead of mach ha-kodesh (Divine inspiration)". Even, a cursory glance in the Torat ha-Olah reveals his constant reference to many branches of science and philosophy, although he stressed that they were derived from Jewish sources rather than from their original authors.⁹

The high regard in which the Rama held the general sciences and philosophy may be judged from the fact that he was unwilling to concede their origin to non-Jewish sources. He says: "In truth all the knowledge of the philosophers and investigators came to them from Israel and all their wisdom is included in the Torah, as Maimonides proved at length that these teachings are found in the Midrashim and Agadot of our Sages, of blessed memory."

In the realm of the philosophy of religion, Rabbi Isserles undertook the significant task of showing that there is no conflict between Kabbalah and true philosophy. Both are derived from the same holy source, and only speak in different languages. "These and these (true philosophy and Kabbalah) are the words of the living God ... I say concerning both that they are good, and the righteous shall walk in them.." He endeavored to prove that Judaism rests upon the logic of philosophy as well as on the mysticism of Kabbalah.

This attempt to achieve a reconciliation between philosophy and Kabbalah is of considerable significance in view of the fact that, historically, when either of these studies gained popularity among

9. In his Responsa, No. 7, Rabbi Isserles states that he pursued his philosophical studies on Sabbaths and Festivals, when people generally took walks. The fact, however, that he devoted time in these sacred days for the study of philosophy shows clearly his high regard for the subject.

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

the Jewish masses, the study of the Talmud and traditional Judaism in general suffered thereby. When Arabic philosophy, dominated by Aristotelianism, gained strength in the intellectual world, thus causing a general weakening of traditional religion, Maimonides rose to reconcile the two. In his *Guide to the Perplexed* he established that there is no basic conflict between Aristotle and Rabbinic Tradition. Similarly, the rise of Kabbalah caused a rift between adherents of this mystic study and talmudic scholars. In Geonic times a great scholar forfeited appointment as Rosh Yeshivah to a lesser scholar because the latter was held to be an important Kabbalist.

In the sixteenth century the study of Kabbalah spread rapidly among Jewish scholars as well as among the masses of the people.¹⁰ Rabbi Solomon Luria, who was well versed in philosophy and Kabbalah, rebukes Rabbi Isserles for the study of the former only, while the Rama, in replying, stresses that there are more pitfalls in the study of the latter.

Rabbis Moses Cordovero, Chaim Vital, Isaac Luria, Joseph Karo and their colleagues and disciples, were successful in popularizing the study of Kabbalah. Rabbi Isaac DaRash, in his introduction to the *Zohar*, which by then became sanctified by the people, states that its study will enhance the redemption of Israel. The precarious economic and political status of European Jewry added impetus to the study of Kabbalah in which people found assurances for a more glorious future. As a result, the study of Halakhah suffered.

The Rama, as a product of his age, was a devotee of Kabbalah and believed in its sanctity." However, as a true disciple of Maimonides, he also esteemed the study of philosophy. Consequently, it was the influence of both that contributed to the formulation of his religious weltanschauung, and convinced him of their essential unity and that there really need be no conflict between them and Halakhah. He hoped to achieve the two-fold purpose of weakening

10. In *Torat ha-Olah III*, chapter 4, Rabbi Isserles decries bitterly the fact that many simple people who are unable to interpret properly a verse of Chumash and Rashi, have turned to the popular study of Kabbalah.

II. Rabbi Isserles wrote a commentary on the *Zohar*. In *Torat ha-Olah* he gives ample proof of wide reading in Kabbalistic literature and insight into its speculative aspects. He rejoiced when he found that his philosophical views are confirmed in the *Zohar*. See *Torat ha-Olah I*, chapter 13. In part II chapter 1 he states that the words of the *Zohar* were given on Mount Sinai.

The Rama

the opposition of some talmudic scholars to the study of philosophy, and of making peace between the traditionally rival studies, each of which when unchecked tended to wean people away from the study of the Talmud. In his view, both strengthen Judaism, and diligent study reveals their complete harmony. Such a conclusion should lead to the strengthening of one's religious beliefs and consequently also to a greater devotion to talmudic studies, for "all wisdom is included in the Mishnah and Gemarah."

After having achieved, for himself and for his followers, a complete harmony among true philosophy, Kabbalah, and rabbinic traditions, Rabbi Isserles was then in a position to formulate his own views regarding the most basic principles of Judaism. This he began at an early age, in his commentary on the Book of Esther. When he was about twenty-five years old a plague struck the Crakow community, and he was compelled to flee with his family to the nearby town of Shidlov. Having nothing with which to fulfill the commandment of "the joy of Purim" and "the sending of portions," he composed this commentary and sent it to his revered father as *mishloach manot* (a Purim gift).

In this commentary, which he hoped would be of inestimable aid to him "in my old age," the Rama states briefly and succinctly his philosophy of life and of Judaism. It contains ideas enunciated by both Kabbalists and philosophers, and shows allusions to them in biblical and rabbinic texts. In the introduction the author quotes the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in a Midrash, Haneelam denouncing people who believe that the Torah reveals its full meaning to those who study only the literal text. The Torah was given in "human garb," and only this aspect of it may be gleaned by mortal man. Its true spiritual elements are far beyond human comprehension. One may endeavor to grasp only a minute portion of its awe-inspiring mysteries.

This commentary, called *Mechir Yayin* (exchange for the wine necessary for *Simchat Purim*), contains the basis of the entire religious philosophy of Rabbi Isserles, which he later expounded and amplified in his 'elaborate work, the *Torat ha-Olah*. He speaks in both works of the constant struggle within man between his good and evil inclinations, his strivings and temptations, and the means of overcoming them, his relationship to his fellow human beings and to the universe, his purpose in life and how to achieve it, etc.

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

The essence of his religious philosophy may be stated briefly as follows: Man is the ultimate purpose of creation. The Torah, having served as the blueprint for the creation of the universe, was itself created for him. His purpose, in turn, is to serve his Creator by means of thought and deed, being a free agent capable of choosing between good and evil. The Torah aids man in both aspects. Through its study he is able to grasp the secrets of the universe, even to a greater extent than have reached scholars by means of their metaphysical speculations. A study of the universe, on the other hand, enables one to comprehend more of the secrets of the Torah, for through His creation one may endeavor to grasp a glimpse of Him. Regarding Moses it is written, "he is trusted in all My house" (Num. 12:8), which means that he understood the true nature of creation.

Since man is unable to make drastic changes in the fulfillment of his natural needs and desires, one must endeavor to elevate oneself gradually, by means of the commandments, the observance of which helps develop a healthy and spiritual attitude toward life. One must be careful to avoid the extremes of over-indulgence or complete abstinence. Then one is aided from above eventually to overcome one's evil inclination. Having attained this point in his spiritual development, man is led to comprehend his real task *in* life, which is that of trying, as far as his abilities, permit, intelligently to understand the Creation and its Master.

Observance of the commandments is significant also from a pragmatic standpoint, for it aids man in achieving a contented and creative life and enables him to arrive at true philosophical concepts, which he otherwise would be unable to attain with his limited capacities. It leads thus to perfection in this world and to a portion in the world-to-come.

All of creation is preserved because of the Torah. The *raison d'etre* of the nations of the world consists in enabling Israel to devote itself to the study of Torah and fulfillment of the divine demands upon us. In the Galut Israel lost its true wisdom and is therefore unable to serve its Creator properly, which results in ever greater persecution and enslavement. This, however, does not absolve the nations for tormenting Israel. They will be punished for it, even though Divine Wisdom ordained that Israel suffer physically in order that they might be brought thereby closer to the Torah and mitzvot.

All of creation is one organic whole, as a unified living creature.

The Rama

Man alone, with his Divine spark, may be compared to the Universe with its Creator, who is its soul. This is why man is known as "a miniature world," a microcosmos.^{1 2}

Eretz Yisrael occupies a special and unique place in the religious philosophy of Rabbi Isserles, even though he speaks of it only briefly and in few places. Its position in the world is comparable to that of Israel among the nations. Both were endowed by the Creator with unique qualities. Israel is singled out among the nations and human perfection is to be found mostly in its ranks; the Land of Israel is the choicest of all lands and greater perfection of prophecy can be secured there. Israel was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and it may be achieved only when the unique among people finds his natural unity with the choicest of lands. In his works the Rama expresses often the sincere prayer that he may have the privilege of returning unto a redeemed and rebuilt Zion.

CONCLUSION

In considering the sum total of the creative achievements of the Rama, one is led to the inevitable conclusion that he was not, nor did he strive to be, overly original in his ideas. In every phase of his work he stands out as a great collector or anthologist, gathering systematically the views of others, carefully weighing them and finally presenting his considered opinion. Thus, in Halakhah he distilled the essence of his Sheurim, at the Yeshivah, drew upon the vast reserve of decisions handed down by the Bet Din in which he had served for over two decades, and to these added the opinions of the later talmudists as well as the customs of the Ashkenazic tradition. The same method of gathering and evaluating the opinions of his predecessors before presenting his own conclusions is employed in

12. In the matter of belief in the ultimate destruction of the universe, Rabbi Isserles violently disagrees with Mainionides who endeavored to prove from Biblical passages the admissibility of belief in its eternity. He argues that although it appears to have been created in such a manner as to endure unto all eternity, the will of the Creator may bring about its destruction even as it caused its creation.

TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought

formulating his religious and philosophical principles.¹³ In this realm he takes pains to emphasize that the ideas were drawn from Jewish religio-philosophical works and never from original non-Jewish sources. After presenting and evaluating the various views, he gives reasons for siding with one or the other. At times he endeavors to achieve a compromise among the great scholars. Very rarely does he indulge in original metaphysical speculation, for the entire realm was to him secondary in importance, priority having been given to the study of Torah and its study by his pupils and people.

Judging by what has been preserved of his writings one must conclude that he was an extremely prolific author. In the short span of twenty-two years of creative religious literary activity, the Rama gave us a wealth of material which made an indelible impress upon Jewish life for all succeeding generations. His books, many of which were lost, possess the mark of timelessness¹⁴ Their material is in many ways as fresh and applicable to our generation as it was to his. Above all, Rabbi Isserles succeeded in projecting his saintly personality onto his works, which is a major reason for his acceptance by his people over and above other scholars who may have possessed greater depth and erudition. His people sensed in his life and works the realization of his own credo that Judaism is an ethical system of life, elevating man, and sanctifying his existence through the Divine Torah, which Israel was privileged to receive, study, and follow.

13. A typical example may be found in *Torat ha-Olah* H Chapter 1, in which he enumerates twelve reasons of scholars for the offering of sacrifices. At the end he gives thanks to God for helping him set down all views he could find regarding this important matter, and then states that in the succeeding chapter he is going to lay down several postulates upon which his own interpretation is based. These assumptions and views are again based on the opinions of sages and scholars.

14. For a complete account of his works, see my book, pages 39-72.