Profayt Duran's Speculative Grammar in the *Ma'aseh Efod*
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The most important philosophically informed grammar, composed by the Catalonian converso Profayt Duran (1358c-1433), in the second half of the Middle Ages is the *Ma'aseh Efod* (*ME*, 1403).   Although there has been a recent explosion of interest in its Introduction by cultural and intellectual historians and by historians of the Hebrew Book, they have no shown interest in the grammar itself, while the few Hebrew linguists who have studied the grammar skip the introduction. One aim of this paper is to argue that we cannot understand the one without the other. As one example of the importance of reading the one against the other, I shall briefly discuss Duran's conception of *segulah* which has been largely treated as an occult virtue, or amuletic or somatic power, ignoring a second notion that derives from the Maimonidean logical tradition, in which a *segulah* is a proprium, a not fully understood property that is more than an accident but less than essential. Duran develops this notion of a *segulah* in the actual grammar of the *ME* where it refers to powers or potencies of certain syntactic structures to signify certain states and things in ways that are not fully understood, but without any suggestion of magic or the supernatural. Instead Duran assimilates the notion of *segulah* to a body of science, thereby rationalizing it in ways that render it less magic-like and more physics-like. His most elaborated discussion in the grammar of a *segulah* that attaches to language concerns the *binyan hitpa'el*, the reflexive construction or morphological pattern.

In order to work out this notion of the *binyan hitpa'el* as a *segulah,* I lay out Duran's conception of a language within a speculative, i.e., explanatory or scientific, grammar that explains the linguistic data by employing metaphysical distinctions (e.g., the distinction between substances and acts, between essential and accidental properties, and between different kind of direct and indirect causal relations). The relation between grammatical significance (or consignification, as opposed to supposition) and metaphysics in the ME brings us to Duran's general classification of various word-classes and their properties, and specifically to the verb system, and finally to the proprium-like features of the *binyan hitpa'el* that render it a *segulah*.

Time permitting, I will also discuss Duran's remarkable (and strikingly modern) conception of the Written Torah as the (finite) corpus of Ancient Hebrew generated by a grammar conceived not as a theory (or set of rules that describe and explain a language) but as a power or faculty of the mind, a power shared by God and humans. This, I shall argue, is the key to treating the Written Torah as a *segulah* and to Duran's own conception of spiritual perfection focused on constant occupation with the Written Torah. The place Duran gives to the Hebrew language in the *ME is* perhaps the highest complement that has ever been paid to grammar in the history of human thought.