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לשועל

אחתי דעיתו יגתו תמתי

לזכריה

דגיל מדבקה

לזיהושע

כתפוח בעצי הישר

PREFACE

As I complete this book, I feel profoundly grateful to all who have contributed to my efforts. Among them are the faculty and administration of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, the staff of the Klau Library, and the many rabbis and scholars of all ages whose work prepared the ground for my own.

רבי ומורי החכם Professor Isaac Jerushalmi has inspired and guided me from beginning to end. His incredible energy, knowledge, imagination, sense of humor and aesthetic judgment never cease to amaze me. His generous contribution of time, energy and expertise have greatly enhanced the quality of the end-result of my labors. More important, Dr. Jerushalmi has awakened in me an unquenchable love of Semitic languages. Above all, he has served as a peerless model. Scholar, teacher, rabbi and friend,

יזכה לשנים רבות!

The beautiful appearance of the text of this work, particularly the English translation of the commentary, is due to the efforts of Janice Katz. She devoted many hours of painstaking, concentrated labor to the preparation of the manuscript. Janice's dedication, good humor and perfectionism have made working with her a rare pleasure and a privilege.

DIGEST

The central focus of this thesis has been the preparation of an annotated translation of that recension of Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Song of Songs that appears in rabbinic bibles. This recension of the work has never before been translated into English, possibly because of the erroneous assessment of M. Friedlaender of Jews' College, London, in 1877, that it does not differ materially from the manuscript recension of the commentary printed by Mathews in 1874. Comparison of the two recensions reveals many differences, both significant and insignificant.

A second task has been the preparation of a pointed, punctuated and annotated Hebrew text of the commentary, based on the 1524 *Biblia Hebraica* of Daniel Bomberg, printed in Venice. The English translation and the Hebrew text are preceded by introductions describing the methodology employed. They have been placed side by side on facing pages, and are followed by separate sets of annotations.

The third major section of the thesis is an annotated introduction to the commentary, which discusses a number of issues bearing on the work, including: the Song of Songs in exegesis; Ibn Ezra's commentary, generally, together with a detailed description and analysis of the rabbinic recension; the problem of the relative dating of the two recensions; a comparison of the two recensions; and a brief discussion

of the relation of the commentary to the Targum, the Midrash, and the commentary of Saadia Gaon. The attempt is made throughout to analyze the commentary critically, in terms of its exegetical methodology, literary style and structure, religious and theological concerns, originality and use of sources.

A number of appendices have been prepared and attached to the thesis. These are intended to assist the reader in understanding the commentary generally, and in comparing the two recensions of the commentary.

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INTRODUCTION TO IBN EZRA'S COMMENTARY
ON THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs in Exegesis

"There is no book of the Old Testament which has found greater variety of interpretation than the Song of Songs."¹ This apt observation by a well-respected, modern bible scholar is, in a way, merely a restatement of a remark set forth in the introduction to a commentary on the Song of Songs attributed to Saadia Gaon, "Know, my brothers, that you will find many disagreeing over the interpretation of the Song of Songs, and truly they disagree because the Song of Songs resembles locks whose keys are lost."² Ibn Ezra's commentary must be seen as one of a continuing series of efforts to unlock the book's long-held secrets. Rowley and Pope have demonstrated that those efforts have continued throughout the ages until the present day, and they doubtless will continue.³

Ibn Ezra's commentary came after nearly a millenium of discussion of the Song of Songs and its correct interpretation. Urbach states that, "Canticles is not mentioned by Ben-Sira, nor in the apocryphal literature, nor in the Gospels nor by Philo."⁴ This is not a universally held opinion. Pope,⁵ who agrees with Urbach concerning Ben-Sira, nevertheless refers to unnamed interpreters who have seen in Ben-Sira's references to Solomon, specifically 47:17, "Countries admired you for songs, proverbs, parables and interpretations," an allusion to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. These works are said to correspond to the

last three categories mentioned in the verse, respectively. Pope, however, concludes that 47:11 simply echoes I Kings 10:23-24.⁶

The Wisdom of Solomon 8:2 has also been claimed to "contain a clue to interpretation of the Song of Songs."⁷

Her I loved and wooed from my youth.
I sought to bring her home as my bride.
I was a lover of her beauty.

Such a "clue" would presumably suggest interpreting the Song of Songs as a dialogue between Solomon and Wisdom, an interpretation offered by several modern commentators.⁸

Urbach points out⁹ that a verse from the Song of Songs is used in reference to romantic love in M.Ta'an. 4:8,

"And the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyards, and thus they spoke, 'Young man, lift up thine eyes and see what thou wouldst choose for thyself. Set not thine eyes on beauty, but set thine eyes on family.' And thus he said, 'Go forth ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart.'"

Urbach also finds verses from the Song of Songs used in reference to historical events near the time the State fell, prior to the fall of the Temple.

"Between the destruction of the Temple and the revolt of Bar Kokhba, the entire scroll, it appears, was interpreted as an allegorical account of the history of the relationship between the Shekhinah... and the Community of Israel from the Exodus from Egypt onward."¹⁰

Moreover, Rabbi Akiba's justification of the Song of Songs' inclusion in the canon, and his stern denunciation of

the secular use of the text,¹¹ demonstrate that allegorical interpretation of the text was an early, if not a universal phenomenon. Numerous other non-literal uses of the Song of Songs are to be found in the talmud and midrashim, and "only a portion of the various types of homilies on Canticles have been preserved in the Midrashim in our possession, and even those are not always complete."¹²

Jewish allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs was taken over by the Church, and Origen's allegorical exposition of the book, written in the third century is probably the most famous.¹³ His exegesis was in part historical, portraying the Church as the bride and Christ as her lover, and partly mystical, interpreting the book as a spiritual love dialogue between the soul and the *Logos*. Origen's work was clearly dependent on Jewish exegesis.

Succeeding centuries saw the development of a wide variety of midrashic interpretations.

"In the three Midrashim on Canticles that have come down to us, allegorical interpretations of different types and character commingle in confusion. Some comments on the Scroll are of a historical-allegorical nature, others are of a mystical cast, and others, again, are eschatological."¹⁴

Scholem has demonstrated that during the period of *merkabah* mysticism, from the first century B.C.E. to the tenth century C.E., the Song of Songs served as an essential text in a number of mystical writings, including *Shiur Komah*, in which the "body" of the Creator is described "in close analogy to the description of the body of the beloved one in the fifth chapter of the 'Song of Solomon' . . ."¹⁵

The major unified work of metaphorical exegesis in the first millenium of the era is the Aramaic Targum to the Song of Songs. Its date is unknown and much disputed, but it is agreed that it is no later than the seventh century, and should certain key words and references be found to be emendations, it could be much earlier. The Targum combines translation and midrash, favoring the latter. It treats the Song of Songs as a historical allegory, beginning with the Exodus and continuing to the ingathering of exiles with the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple. Loewe¹⁶ has claimed that the two main goals of the Targum were polemical ones, namely, an anti-Christian polemic, seeking to rescue the Song of Songs from Christian allegorical treatment, and to combat Jewish mystical "esotericism" of the type discussed by Scholem.

Nothing is known of Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs between the appearance of the Targum, assuming it to date from the seventh century, and the commentary attributed to Saadia Gaon dating from the first half of the tenth century. Saadia, as indicated above,¹⁷ alludes to the wide differences of opinion concerning the correct interpretation of the Song of Songs. He states,

"There are those who say that it concerns the kingship of the Israelites, and there are those who say it concerns the days of the Messiah, and there are those who say the period of the dispersion and the Messiah, and some say that 'my beloved' refers to the Messiah and the bride is the Torah, but this is a sin and a great error and the beginning of apostasy. However, the truth is that 'my

beloved' refers to the Holy One, Blessed be He. . . and Solomon recalled in this book [the events of the period] from the exodus from Egypt until after the days of the Messiah. . . ."18

Although Saadia appears, from what has been said so far, to be in accord with the Targumic treatment, the similarity is mainly in the historical-allegorical approach to the text. There are great divergences of interpretation of specific verses and sections of the Song of Songs.

Rashi shares the allegorical view of the Song of Songs, but does not commit himself to a sequential historical interpretation. Rather, he states,

"My opinion is that Solomon foresaw, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, that Israel would be carried into sundry captivities, and undergo sundry dissolutions; that they would lament in their captivity over their former glory, and recall the former love, which God manifested for them above all other nations; that they would say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now' (Hos. ii. 9); that they would acknowledge His kindness and their own rebellion and the good things which He promised to give them in the latter days. . .

This book was written by inspiration, and represents a wife forsaken by her husband, and shut up, longing after him, recalling to her mind her love in youth to her beloved, and confessing her guilt; her beloved sympathising with her affection, and remembering the kindness of her youth, the charms of her beauty, and her good works, which has tied him to her with an everlasting love.

The design of this book is to show to Israel that God has not afflicted her willingly; that though He did send her away, He has not cast her off; that she is still His wife, and He her husband, and that He will again be united to her."19

Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Song of Songs

Given the wide range of Jewish interpretations that pre-dated him, Ibn Ezra was free to do virtually anything except deny that the book was to be understood allegorically. Graetz, quoted with approval by H. J. Mathews in the forward to his translation of the manuscript recension of the commentary in 1874, came close to charging Ibn Ezra with having done exactly that. He wrote,

"Ibn Ezra was fully conscious that the Canticles in their simple literal meaning contain a love-story, but he had not the independence and not sufficient boldness to follow up this knowledge, and, consequently, in the exposition of this book as of other books of Holy Scripture, especially the Pentateuch, he has employed all sorts of devices as a blind, so as not to be charged with heresy as being a rationalist. He explained the Canticles in a simple sense as a love-song, at the same time applying them in an allegorical sense to the synagogue. But he was only serious with the First Exposition (called by him הפעם השנית, because the First puts together the grammatical and lexicographical matter), in which he conceived the Canticles as a song of the love that existed between a young girl and a shepherd. As Ibn Ezra possessed a fine exegetical tact, his 'Second' Exposition contains much that is right, and had it been made use of by the later commentators, it might have led to the just interpretation of the Canticles. In truth it is his own fault that the sober side of his commentary was overlooked; he has played at hide and seek."²⁰

This judgment seems too harsh. First, it suggests that the Song of Songs has no legitimate meaning other than as a love poem of purely secular intent. This is a judgment from which even modern commentators and bible scholars have

held back, notwithstanding their recognition that the book has a plain secular and sensuous meaning. Pope, for example, shares the opinion of Sanders and M. Delcor that the Song of Songs is a poem of "deliberate ambiguity. . . both erotic and pious."²¹

Moreover, it assumes that Ibn Ezra was more than a mere precursor of modern biblical criticism, but had in fact seen "the truth," though he was afraid to reveal it. There is little support for this view to be found in Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Song of Songs. Clearly his primary concerns include a grammatical and philological investigation, as well as establishing the *p'shat*, but the allegorical interpretation is presented artfully and not unpersuasively. It is clearly not an interpretation in which Ibn Ezra has sought to outdo his predecessors in imagination, though it is an imaginative work with some original elements. However, it contains virtually nothing on which we could base the judgment that his allegorical treatment is insincere. Ibn Ezra does reveal a marked rationalizing tendency, even in the allegory. For instance, unlike the talmud and midrash which assert that every "Solomon" mentioned in the Song of Songs refers to God, i.e., "to Him whose is the peace," except 8:12, which refers to King Solomon himself,²² Ibn Ezra states that every "Solomon" in the Song of Songs refers to King Solomon himself except 8:12, which refers to the Messiah. One could interpret this as a subtle protest against allegorical interpretation, but this would be untenable in light of Ibn Ezra's

vigorous condemnation of unnamed "perverse and obstinate" persons who denied the prophetic character of the book.²³

Ibn Ezra does refer to "my *sod*" in his poetical introduction to the commentary. Graetz may have been referring to comments of this kind, suggesting that Ibn Ezra had a secret, that is, an understanding of the text he cannot share with the reader. Friedlander²⁴ took vigorous exception to such an understanding of Ibn Ezra's more cryptic comments, claiming that such a view is based on insufficient evidence and is contrary to Ibn Ezra's stated views. In my view, Ibn Ezra's use of the word *sod* in the introduction is poetical, for the purpose of rhyming, and is to be understood more in the sense of "intent" than "secret."

Introduction to the Commentary

Strictly speaking, the printed recension of the commentary²⁵ has more than one introduction. There is, first, a general introduction which concludes with a poetic summation. This general introduction makes a number of claims about the Song of Songs. There is a quasi-etymological treatment of the superscription, "the Song of Songs which is Solomon's" (it is his best and most beautiful song), followed by a description of the deep inner meaning of the song, the historical-allegorical interpretation. Ibn Ezra analogizes the historical-allegorical treatment to a similar understanding of the poetic song *Ha'azinu*, (Deut. 32:1ff) a

questionable analogy since the latter song explicitly refers to historical events and God's actions vis-a-vis Israel and Israel's vis-a-vis God, whereas the Song of Songs has no apparent historical meaning or connection on the surface.

Nevertheless, Ibn Ezra draws on other biblical sources to demonstrate the legitimacy of the symbolic interpretation of (apparently) secular images to portray the relationship of God and Israel. Again, however, in those cases the symbolic intention is readily apparent, whereas in the Song of Songs it is not. Ibn Ezra then takes the bull by the horns, denying that the secular, sensual imagery is anything but allegorical. He asserts the spiritual grandeur and sacredness of the book and alludes to the talmudic discussion in which the dispute over the Song of Songs is resolved in favor of the book's sacredness, its inclusion in the canon and the lack of any proper secular interpretation.²⁶

The concluding poem summarizes Ibn Ezra's exegetical intent and methodology, indicating that he will explain the book three times. First, he will explain difficult terminology, in which the Song of Songs abounds. The second time he will explain the *p'shat*, the apparent plain (secular) meaning of the song. The third time he will engage in midrashic exegesis.

This general introduction would be sufficient, in and of itself, to serve as the preface to the work. Indeed,

the short poetic summary alone serves as the general introduction to the manuscript recension, and the prose general introduction to the printed recension bears significant resemblance to a prose statement appearing at the beginning of the "Second Exposition" in the manuscript recension.

The printed recension, however, includes three additional introductory paragraphs, one for each of the three interpretations. The first of these bears the hallmarks of having itself been the general introduction to a commentary on the Song of Songs by Ibn Ezra. Though it purports to be an introduction to the first interpretation, it begins by summarizing various philosophic interpretations of the Song of Songs which Ibn Ezra disputes, as indicated above.²⁷ Thereupon it asserts the correctness of the traditional rabbinic understanding and interpretation of the book as relating to the Congregation of Israel as God's lover and God as her beloved. This is repetitive of a substantially identical remark in the general introduction. The "introduction to the first interpretation" concludes with a description of the three methods by which Ibn Ezra will interpret the song: the allegorical, the plain meaning and the explanation of difficult terminology. He adds that every reference to Solomon in the song is to King Solomon, the historical person, except for the reference at 8:12.

The tone of the "introduction to the first interpretation" is distinctly polemical. Ibn Ezra attacks unnamed philosophers who have given the song an interpretation wholly

out of keeping with its apparent meaning or its traditional interpretation. It is unclear to whom Ibn Ezra was referring in his criticism of philosophical interpretations. One possibility is Solomon Ibn Gabirol, a Jewish Neo-Platonist who saw the universe as a process or series of cosmic emanations with God on one extreme and the corporeal world, including man, on the other. It is unknown whether Gabirol wrote any biblical commentaries, as none are extant, but the possibility cannot be excluded in light of the biblical exegesis that appears in Gabirol's ethical work, *Tikkun Middot ha-Nefesh*, and the fact that Ibn Ezra was aware of him.²⁸

In the thirteenth century, Joseph Ibn Caspi interpreted the Song of Songs as representing "the union between the active intellect and the receptive material intellect."²⁹ The same view was held by Moses Ibn Tibbon, a contemporary of Caspi, and later by Immanuel b. Solomon, a rabbi and community leader in fourteenth century Rome, and by *Ralbag*, Levi B. Gershon. All of these wrote after Ibn Ezra, but they may have had predecessors whose works have been lost.

Ibn Ezra could not have been referring to Maimonides, whose *Guide of the Perplexed* (iii.51) is explicitly referred to by Caspi as the source of his theory, nor to the commentary of Ibn Aknin, which were not written until after Ibn Ezra's death. In the *Guide*, a state of being in which the soul is freed from bodily preoccupations in order to direct one's intellect to God is illustrated with S.o.S. 5:2, which Maimonides describes as among "the poetical parables that have been invented for these notions."³⁰

A second group with which Ibn Ezra takes issue is those who explain the Song of Songs "על המהכרונה". The meaning of this phrase is entirely uncertain. Ginsburg translates it as "explain it literally," which would place Ibn Ezra in opposition to unnamed secularists.³¹ He cites, at a different point, an anonymous manuscript which he ascribes to a "French Jew in at least the twelfth or thirteenth century," that interprets the Song of Songs

"'as celebrating the virtuous love contracted between a humble shepherd and a shepherdess;' and likewise regards Solomon as 'a distinct person,' whom the shepherdess adduces in illustration of her deep and sincere attachment to her beloved, affirming that if this great king were to offer her all the splendour and luxury of his court to transfer her affections, she would spurn all, and remain faithful to her humble shepherd."³²

Since Ibn Ezra is claimed to have written the recension of the commentary with which this thesis deals in France,³³ he could conceivably be taking issue with this or a similar commentary.

At least one supercommentary³⁴ has identified the term המהכרונה with a mystical interpretation of the song, and the matter must be regarded as entirely uncertain pending the discovery of manuscripts that might shed light on the subject.

Following the "introduction to the first interpretation" the printed recension has a very brief introduction to the second interpretation. It does little more than state that the apparent profane imagery is to be understood

allegorically, not as an actual historical event or relationship, and state the plot: a pre-pubescent girl sees a shepherd and they fall in love. The former statement parallels a comment on the second interpretation in the general introduction.

The third interpretation's introduction is longer than the introductions to the first and second interpretations. It begins with praise of rabbinic midrashim on the Song of Songs, in anticipation of Ibn Ezra's apologetic justification of his own midrash, the allegorical third interpretation. He states that just as he has seen the great ones and the pillars of the earth expound the Song of Songs midrashically, they having "added and diminished," he did likewise. This is a rather suggestive comment, calling to mind for us, as it surely did for Ibn Ezra, the statement found twice in Deuteronomy (4:2, 13:1) "you shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it." While these injunctions, strictly speaking, apply only to the commandments of God, we would probably not err to see in Ibn Ezra's comment implicit criticism of at least the more extreme among rabbinic midrashic interpretations.³⁵

Ibn Ezra then repeats a comment made in the introduction to the first interpretation, that every reference to "Solomon" in the third interpretation refers to King Solomon himself, adding that the only exception, 8:2, refers to the Messiah. Ibn Ezra justifies this interpretation by stating that the Messiah is called "Solomon" because he is

his "son," i.e., his descendant, which usage he supports with biblical prooftexts. These are less than fully persuasive in that the Messiah is nowhere mentioned explicitly in the Song of Songs, nor is there reference to any son of Solomon in the song. Incidentally to that discussion, Ibn Ezra asserts that Psalm 90 was actually written by Moses, as opposed to Saadia's view that David wrote it, but that the "sons of Moses," that is, the Levites, sang it.

Polemical elements again come to the fore as Ibn Ezra discusses the correct understanding of the term "the daughters of Jerusalem." As he does frequently throughout the commentary, particularly in the first interpretation, Ibn Ezra sets out the (erroneous) view of others, whom he refers to anonymously, and then the correct view, his own. In contrast to the opinions of those who interpret the term as a reference to the angels or to the nations of the world, Ibn Ezra asserts that they are the thoughts of the female speaker who is, as it were, talking to herself, and her own thoughts respond. On the allegorical level, presumably, the daughters of Jerusalem are the thoughts or the conscience of the Congregation of Israel, although Ibn Ezra does not say so explicitly here. Before concluding with a poetic prayer for divine assistance, Ibn Ezra argues that attributing prophetic pronouncements to King Solomon, as one necessarily does by a historical-allegorical treatment extending to the messianic period, is justified in light

of explicit biblical evidence that Solomon was favored with divine revelation.

In my view, we have at least two and possibly three introductions combined in this work. The first is the general introduction which is sufficient, as indicated above, to so serve. The second is the introduction to the first interpretation, itself also adequate as a general introduction and much too broad in scope, indeed not even appropriate, to serve as an introduction to the first interpretation alone. The "third" introduction, a partial one, would be composed of the introductions to the second and third interpretations. (It should be noted that the introduction to the third interpretation has a number of elements in common with the prose statement that begins the third interpretation in the manuscript recension, though there are important differences.)

In my opinion, the printed recension of Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Song of Songs was originally introduced by what is now the introduction to the first interpretation. At a later point, that introduction was reclassified as the introduction to the first interpretation. The introduction to the second interpretation, and that part of the introduction to the third interpretation which I have, in the Hebrew text, set off as the first and third paragraphs were then added, as the introductions to the second and third interpretations. At a later point, someone other than Ibn Ezra added what is now the general introduction and

the second paragraph of the introduction to the third interpretation, drawing on various introductory materials from the manuscript recension.

The First Interpretation:

Ibn Ezra's first interpretation of the Song of Songs is a most distinctive work. It faces the imposing difficulty of explicating the numerous hapaxlegomena and rare words that appear in the work and that present a hurdle to any reader. In addition, numerous syntactical and grammatical difficulties require solution.

In general, Ibn Ezra draws on five sources for clarification in the first interpretation. First and foremost, he refers to other biblical passages in which the same word or a word with the same root appears. Such references are particularly helpful when the word appears in a verse exhibiting biblical parallelism, by which its meaning may be ascertained.³⁶ Ibn Ezra cites 121 biblical prooftexts, excluding other verses from the Song of Songs, in the first interpretation alone.³⁷

A second source relied upon by Ibn Ezra is Arabic.³⁸ His justification for doing so is the great similarity between Arabic and Hebrew, as he explains in the afterword to the first interpretation.

A third source of exegetical assistance is biblical Aramaic and the targumic translations of the biblical

In addition, where "Israel" is accompanied by a plural verb or adjective, it has been translated "the Israelites" instead. The goal throughout has been to communicate the clearest possible sense of the commentary.

Among the challenges of the translation was the question of how to deal with the many *vavs*. It was a common stylistic device of rabbinic commentators to begin sentences with *vav*, under the influence of biblical usage and, in some cases, including Ibn Ezra's, Arabic. It is not generally considered correct, however, to begin English sentences with "and," the most common meaning of the prefixed *vav*. The attempt has been made to minimize the problem by translating in compound sentences or eliminating the *vav* from the translation whenever possible.

A related problem was the variety of meanings that *vav* can assume when it is a "*vav* of situation," or a "circumstantial *vav*." These include: "but," "while," "with," "because," "whereas," and the like. These occurrences have been dealt with on a case-by-case basis, with the aim of arriving at the meaning Ibn Ezra intended.

THE COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTIONS TO THE INTERPRETATIONS OF IBN EZRA

This is a praiseworthy, *wholly delightful* (5:16) book, and there is none like it among all "the thousand and five" songs of King Solomon.¹ Thus it is called *the Song of Songs of Solomon*, for this is the most sublime of all of Solomon's songs. There is a profound secret concealed within it, for it begins from the days of Abraham, our patriarch, [and continues] until the days of the Messiah, just as it is written in the song *Ha'azinu*,² *When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance* (Deut. 32:1, 8), which begins with the generation of the dispersion [of mankind] and continues until the return of Israel from the diaspora after the war of Gog and Magog.³

Do not be surprised that he compared the Congregation of Israel to a bride with God being her lover, for this is the prophets' custom. Isaiah recited, *a song of my lover about his vineyard* (Isa. 5:1), and also, *And as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride [so will your God rejoice over you]* (Isa. 62:5). Ezekiel declared, *Your breasts were fashioned and your hair was grown, but you were naked and bare* (Ezek. 16:7), and further, *and I covered your nakedness* (Ezek. 16:8), *I decked you with ornaments* (Ezek. 16:11), and [similarly throughout] the whole chapter. Hosea declared, *And I will betroth you unto me forever* (Hos. 2:21), [and] *Go, love a woman...* (Hos. 3:1). And the book of Psalms [contains], *A maskil, a love song* (Ps. 45:1), within which is written,

And you, O daughter, hear me and note well (Ps. 45:11).

Heaven forbid that the Song of Songs be considered erotic poetry! Rather, it is an allegory. Were it not for its great loftiness, it would not have been written in the allegorical manner of sacred scripture. It is undisputed that it "defiles the hands."⁴

That it be perfectly clear in all its ways,

I have explained it three times.

In the first interpretation I will reveal
every obscure word.

In the second interpretation its treatment
shall be according to its plain meaning.

In the third interpretation it will be
explained midrashically.

But the correct interpretation, in my view, is that the metaphor concerns a woman speaking to herself and responding to her own words, as if she were conversing with her thoughts, which are *the daughters of Jerusalem*.

Since Scripture testifies that God manifested Himself to Solomon twice,¹³ what is surprising in his having prophesied about a future event, for he uttered this book by means of divine inspiration? Thus you will find that Asaph¹⁴ the poet and Heman,¹⁵ who composed songs by means of divine inspiration, were called "prophets" and "visionaries." This is the correct way [of understanding the book] and one cannot deny it unless he is *perverse and obstinate* (Deut. 32:5).

So now, I will begin to explain as best I can,
And I implore God with all my might,
Who knows my intent,
To sharpen my insight,
And may He be with me.

3:6 כחמרות: Like columns, as in *cherubim and columns* וחמרות (I Kings 6:29), but some say these are like the palm tree.

אבקת: From *the clouds are the dust* אבק *of his feet* (Nah. 1:3).

רוכל: A merchant, as in *these were your merchants* רוכליך (Ezek. 27:13).

3:8 מלומדי: Trained, as in *as a calf that is not trained* למד⁵² (Jer. 31:17).

3:9 אפריון: It occurs only once in Scripture and its explanation is "a majestic building"⁵³ according to its context.

3:10 רפידתו: Its couch.

מרכבו: It is the platform (?) that conceals the beams within, because this is customary of royal palaces.

רצוף: Some say it is from a *pavement* רצפה *of green and white* (Est. 1:6), which relates to the laying out of stones in the floor, but some say it is like "burning,"⁵⁴ from *with a glowing stone* רצפה *in its hand* (Isa. 6:6), whose explanation is "a burning coal," and that's correct in my view as I will explain in its place.⁵⁵

CHAPTER 4

4:1 מבעד לצמחך: From within, like *from behind* בעד *the window* (Judg. 5:28), implying the abundant hair [on her head].

שגולשו: Because they are visible and seen or leap from [over] the eye. Some say that [it means] "bald," [because]

4:9 לנבחנו: "You have captured my heart."

ענק: Types of ornaments appended around the neck, and [the term] *and chains* וענקים *about your neck* (Prov. 1:9) is like it.

4:12 גל נעור: A small⁶² flowing stream. [The word] *upper springs* גלוח *and lower springs* (Jos. 15:19) is like it.

4:13 שלחך: Like "your branches" [*i.e.*, your limbs], related to *she sent out her branches* קציריה *to the sea* (Ps. 80:12), and so too *her branches* שלוחותיה *which spread abroad*. (Isa. 16:8).

פרדס: In Arabic it resembles a garden in which there is one variety.

כפרים: The plural, from a bunch of henna הכופר (1:14).

4:14 ואהלות: A type of spice, and like aloes כאהלים *planted by the Lord* (Num. 24:6) is like it.

CHAPTER 5

5:1 אריחי מורי: I have gathered, and *And all who pass by the way pluck her* וארוה (Ps. 80:13) is like it.

יערי: From *The honeycomb*⁶³ יערח (I Sam 14:27).

חלבי: Some say that it is the white matter that rises on the wine and that *like the wine of Helbon* (Ezek. 27:18) is similarly explained, but that is way off because *Helbon* is the name of a place, not an adjective. Thus, חלבי is [to be understood] according to its literal meaning [*i.e.*, my milk].⁶⁴

5:2 דופק: Knocking, like *מחדפקים* *knocking* (Judg. 19:22).

those places where there is danger and come with me, because I cannot [stand] being separated from you,

4:9 because *you have captured my heart* and [thus] I have no heart left.

4:12 גן נעול: You are like a *locked garden* which has a good fragrance from without, but where no one can enter."

4:15 After he compared her to a *sealed-up spring* he said, "You are like *garden springs*, because these are a *well of living waters*" (Gen. 26:19).

4:16 She replied, saying, "Until the *north* wind awakens and the *south* wind comes and the two of them blow in *my garden* and *its perfumes spread*, let *my beloved* go to his garden and let *him come back* thereafter.

CHAPTER 5

5:1 He said, "*I have come to my garden* and *I have plucked my myrrh*," meaning, "I am sated from all good [things] and I lack nothing except your countenance. Moreover, don't be afraid because [as for] *my companions*," who are the shepherds concerning whom it is written in the beginning *beside the flocks of your fellows* (1:7), "I have fed them and gotten them drunk."

5:2 She said, *I was asleep*. "Even though *I was asleep* my heart was as if *awake*." She says this is a second time, but previously she sought his whereabouts in the dream. Now he comes to her in her garden as she said to him, *Awake O north wind* (4:16).

קול דודי דופק: Now she disrobes, and the entire section is self-explanatory.

3:2 through the streets and the squares indicates what they did, that they went back and forth from gate to gate.¹⁶⁸

3:3 "Until the watchman found me." These are Moses and Aaron.¹⁶⁹

3:4 "It was but a little time [later] that I passed and separated from them." The meaning is that Moses ascended and prayed on behalf of Israel.¹⁷⁰

עד-שהבאתיו: to the ark [of the covenant].¹⁷¹

3:5 השבעתי אתכם: "Even though the Shekhinah is entering with you you cannot enter the land [of Israel] until the [appointed] end arrives."¹⁷² And they said, *Lo, we are here and we will go up [unto the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned]* (Num. 14:40), [and] it is written, *and they smote them and beat them down* (Num. 14:45).¹⁷³

3:6 מי זאת עולה מן המדבר: [This is] the Congregation of Israel that went up from the desert while her fame was spreading throughout all the nations.¹⁷⁴ This is the meaning of *in clouds of myrrh*.

3:7 The meaning of *there is Solomon's couch* is the land of Israel which is today *the couch of Solomon*. The meaning of *sixty warriors* is [the] 600,000,¹⁷⁵ who were coming to the land [of Israel] when Moses and Eleazar the priest numbered them.¹⁷⁶

3:8 מפחד בלילות: because they were skilled in battle and they killed everyone whom they feared could bring exile upon them.¹⁷⁷

it brought the exile upon Israel.²³¹

CHAPTER 7

7:1 שׁוֹב שׁוֹבֵי: This [refers] to the future *when the Lord turns the captivity of Zion* (Ps. 126:1). The meaning of *Why will you gaze at the Shulammite?* is similar to [*Yea, you shall leave in joy and be led home secure.*] *Before you, the mountains and hills shall clap aloud,*" (Isa. 55:12).

7:2 מָה-יָפוּ פְעָמַיִךְ: because Israel will come up from every place, as in [*They will come up with acceptance on My altar and I will glorify My glorious house.*] *Who are these who float like a cloud?* (Isa. 60:[7-]8).

7:3 שַׁרְרָךְ: The great Sanhedrin was [arranged] like half of a round threshing floor.²³²

בְּטַנְךְ: The small Sanhedrin.²³³

7:4 שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךְ: [The] two Torahs.

7:5 צוֹאֲרֶךְ: The King, Messiah.

עֵינֶיךָ: These are the prophets who were few at first. Now, they will be many, as in *After that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh and they shall prophesy* and so on (Joel 3:1).

אֶפֶךְ: This is the high priest, as in *They shall place incense in your nostrils* (Deut. 33:10).

7:6 רֵאשֶׁךְ עֲלֶיךָ כְּחֵרְמֵל: This is Nehemiah ben Hoshiel who is among the descendants of Joseph.²³⁴

וְדֹלֵת רֵאשֶׁךְ: This is Elijah.²³⁵

מלך אסור ברהמים : This is the Messiah who is bound,²³⁶
as our sages transmitted, because he was born on the day
Jerusalem was destroyed.²³⁷

7:7 מה-יפית : because the Congregation of Israel will return
to [its former] grandeur.

7:8 The meaning of *your stately form is like the palm* is as
[Scripture] states, *and your people shall all be righteous*
(Isa. 60:21), and as is written, *The righteous shall flourish*
like the palm tree (Ps. 92:13).

7:9 רריה אפק : This is the high priest who offers the burnt
offerings and burns [the incense].

7:10 חכך : These are the singers.

7:11 אני לדודי : *For the portion of the Lord is His people.*
(Deut. 32:9).

7:12 לכה דודי : The Congregation of Israel said, "Since He has
looked upon the *vineyards*," these being Israel,

7:13 "watch if *the vine has flowered*." As our sages of blessed
memory transmitted, "If the Israelites repent they will be
redeemed and if not . . . He will set up a king over them whose
decrees shall be as the decree of Haman."²³⁸

7:14 "And when they are redeemed then you will surely see that
the mandrakes yield their fragrance, and [that is how you will
know that] these pious ones who are *new* will have joined with
the pious ones of the ancestors." This is the meaning of *both*
new and old.²³⁹

CHAPTER 8

8:1 מי יתנך כאח לי : because there are servants of the Lord in the diaspora who observe the mitzvoth secretly. They long to observe the mitzvoth publicly and that the Shekhinah return as she was in the beginning.

8:2 מייך הרקח : This is the wine libation.²⁴⁰

8:3 שמאלו : [This refers to] the evening and morning burnt-offerings.²⁴¹

8:4 Solomon said, by means of the divine inspiration, "*I have adjured you that you not awaken until the [appointed] end arrives.*"

8:5 מי זאת עולה מן המדבר : Thus said Solomon²⁴² when the Israelites were in the desert²⁴³ and they entered the land [of Israel]. He said, "*In the beginning I adjured you. Thereafter [I said] who is this who comes up.*" The meaning is as in *As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt I will show him marvelous things* (Mic. 7:15). When the Israelites shall come up from the deserts of the peoples they shall say to the Messiah, who is *her lover*, "*Know that beneath the apple tree I awakened you.*" It means "*You were bound* (7:6) *and sleeping* (5:2), and I untied you only by means of my prayer," as in *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver* (Prov. 25:11). "*It is as if my words and my prayers gave birth to you.*"

8:6 שימני לצורתם : These are the words of the Congregation of Israel to the Shekhinah, "because I will cling to you forever."

8:7

Vast waters are the nations compared with water,²⁴⁴ as in *He drew me out of many waters* [he delivered me from my enemy most strong, and from them that hated me, for they were too mighty for me] (Ps. 18:17), and so too [in] *the mighty mass of waters* [of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria and all his multitude] (Isa. 8:7). There are many [passages] like these.

אם-יחן איש: Like Haman the wicked he shall become a mockery,²⁴⁵ for he will not be able to change the religion of Israel because God is the guardian of His Torah, as in *You will guard them, O Lord* (Ps. 12:8), which refers to the preceding verse, *the words of the Lord are pure words* (Ps. 12:7).

8:8

אחרת לנו קטנה: The Congregation of Israel will say, "After you unite there will still remain *unto us a sister beyond the river Kush,*" and these are the two-and-a-half tribes.²⁴⁶

ביום שידובר-בה: on the day of consolation, as in [Comfort, oh comfort, My people, says your God.] *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem* [and declare to her that her term of service is over, that her iniquity is expiated; for she has received at the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.] (Isa. 40:2).²⁴⁷

8:9

אם-חומה היא: "If she guarded herself and did not depart from the religion [of Israel], we will prepare a place for her with palaces full of *silver* and we will walk in her path."²⁴⁸

ואם דלת היא: [If] she did not observe the mitzvoth and opened to all, *we will shut her in* and prevent her from coming to us."

8:10 She will reply, saying, *I am a wall*. [I.e.,] "I have observed [the precepts of] my religion,"²⁴⁹ [Israel] having the written Torah and the oral [Torah]. Then all Israelites shall be at peace.

8:11 כָּרַם הָיָה לְשִׁלְמֹה: These are the Israelites²⁵⁰ over all of whom Solomon was king, and this is the meaning of *in Baal-Hamon*, that the whole *multitude* was his, whereupon he turned around and gave the vineyard *to the guards* who are the kings of Israel.²⁵¹ *A thousand pieces of silver* [refers to] the 10 tribes who were [given over] *to the guards* with each tribe [symbolized by] 100 pieces of silver.²⁵²

8:12 כְּרַמִּי שְׁלִי: Solomon said by means of divine inspiration, "This entire vineyard was mine. It shall once again be *before me*."

הָאֵלֶּף לְךָ שְׁלֹמֹה: He will say to the Messiah, who is his descendant and will be called *Solomon*, *You may have the thousand, O Solomon*. Those whom *the guards* had shall return, [i.e.,] *his fruit* and also the *two hundred* who are Judah and Benjamin.²⁵³

8:13 The Shekhinah said, *The one who dwells in the gardens*, [meaning] "O Congregation of Israel, how the angels²⁵⁴ long to hear your songs."

8:14 The Congregation of Israel replied, "If it is good in the eyes of *my beloved*, depart from the angels and descend upon *the mountains of spices*." These are the hills of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing: *eternal life!* (Ps. 133:3).²⁵⁵

נשלם פירוש שיר השירים תהלה לירוצר אורים

THE EXPLANATION OF THE SONG OF SONGS IS COMPLETE.
PRAISE TO THE CREATOR OF THE LIGHTS!

NOTES TO THE HEBREW TEXT

NOTES TO HEBREW TEXT

1. Cf. I Kings 5:12.
2. Masoretic text (MT) = ומשוש
3. It is unclear from the unvocalized text whether this word is to be understood in the singular or the plural. Some later printed editions have plural treatment.
4. ירשלים follows Aramaic pointing, as in Bomberg text, instead of ירשלים as in some later printed editions.
5. MT = אאתהן. Some later printed editions have corrected the text.
6. MT = עקש ופחלחל
7. Some later printed editions have מהפסוק.
8. MT = זכרו.
9. The *mem* is prefixed by Ibn Ezra, in accordance with the interpretation which immediately precedes the sentence in which this quotation appears.
10. Some later printed editions have שאמר.
11. MT = שזפתו.
12. MT = נטרה. Generally speaking, Ibn Ezra's texts quoting biblical words containing an "o" or "oo" sound write the word with a *vav* whether or not there is a *vav* present in MT. No further notation of this discrepancy is made in these notes.
13. MT = איכה הוא.
14. MT = ויעש העם אל שלל, as read, but ויעש העם אל השלל as written.
15. MT = ומטבי. Ibn Ezra apparently has carried over the *bet* from במות earlier in the verse.
16. בצבאות is missing from the Bomberg text, but it is clearly the scriptural word to which the comment pertains. The comment has been misplaced in some later printed editions to verse 9, as a comment on the word לצבי. That this is a mistake can be seen from the comment's last word, צבאות. A number of later printed editions also interpose a comment on the phrase שמאלו תחת

39. Isa. 5:12 = תרף וחלול. Ps. 150:4 = תרף ומחול.
40. MT = מטכה. Some later printed editions have corrected the misspelling.
41. MT = ווארגמן וכרמיל.
42. This comment and the following one are reversed in order relative to the placement of the words commented upon in the biblical text.
43. This word occurs elsewhere in Scripture as well.
44. The two words would be שלהבת יה.
45. Some later printed editions are missing the words מן צרח עליה: כמוצאת.
46. MT = בבעל המון.
47. A conjunctive *vav* is added to the biblical phrase אל תראוני in order to continue the comment from the previous verse.
48. This is a paraphrase of the biblical verse.
49. Some later printed editions lack הרועים.
50. MT = וחלי כחם.
51. A *yod* is added to the biblical text, to indicate the long "e" sound for proper pronunciation of the unvocalized text. There will be no further annotation of this phenomenon herein.
52. Some later printed editions have the feminine singular ending rather than the masculine (but unisex in application) plural. Bomberg, however, has the plural and this seems to be correct, referring to the plural in the biblical verse at 3:7.
53. Some later printed editions read אמרה.
54. Some later printed editions read הלכן.
55. There is possible dittography in connection with the phrase ואל תחערבי לי באחרת with the later addition of material more appropriate to 6:9.
56. MT = פילגשים.
57. It should be read as if it were דימה אוחה. The biblical text provides no basis for the interjection of a female speaker here.
58. Should probably be אמר. Cf. note 57, *supra*.

73. MT = עם פרי מגדים.
74. MT = יבא דודי לגנו. The phrase ברח דודי occurs in 8:14.
75. MT = אלך אשובה.
76. MT = העת לכם אתם.
77. His full name was זכריה בן ברכיה בן עדו. Zech. 1:1, 1:7.
78. MT = מראות רע.
79. MT = בתרשיש. Some later printed editions have corrected the error.
80. MT = אמונתיה. The manuscript recension continues with a comment on 5:16.
81. MT = שרבי.
82. MT = שיבת.
83. See note 245 to English translation, *infra*.
84. ונמנעוה presents a very difficult grammatical problem. If it is to be understood as *binyan niphāl*, it would be the third person masculine plural perfect form. However, *niphāl* cannot take a suffix, represented here by the ה, for the third person feminine singular. If it is to be understood as *binyan kal* (or possibly *piel*), it would be the common plural imperfect, which can take the prenominal suffix, but could not have the ן which is interposed between the ה and the ץ. This must represent a textual corruption.

NOTES TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

NOTES TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Introductions to the Interpretations of Ibn Ezra

1. This is an apparent allusion to I Kings 5:12, *He (Solomon) composed 3,000 proverbs, and his songs number 1,005.*

2. Deut. 32:8-43.

3. Cf. Ezek. Chapters 38-39; re: return, 39:25-29. Re: dispersion, see Gen. 11:1-9.

4. Sacred books were held to render the hands ritually impure, M. Yad. 3:5; Shab. 13b-14a. Thus, to assert that a book "renders the hands unclean" is to assert that it is a sacred book. The discussion of whether the Song of Songs is such a book, and the affirmative conclusion, are found at M. Yad. 3:5 and Meg. 7a, "Rabbi Akiba said, "God forbid! -- no man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs [that he should say] that it does not render the hands unclean, for all ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings (the hagiographa) are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies." See also Tos. Yad. 2:14 (Zuckerman).

Introduction to the First Interpretation

5. Ibn Ezra may be referring to Solomon Ibn Gabirol. This issue is discussed at pp. 10-12, *supra*.

6. The meaning of *הַמַּתְכִּינָה* is unclear. Ginsburg, at 46, translates it as "literally," that is, apparently referring to its secular or erotic meaning. *Megaleh Sod* comments, "It is the heaven and the earth, and according to this opinion there were revealed in it (the Song of Songs) the secrets of the creation of the universe, but according to the first opinion it is concerned with mysteries of the Godhead." *Ezrah L'havin* interprets the

word as relating to the interaction of the heavenly hosts with earthly beings. For a fuller discussion of the issue, see the introductory essay above, at pp. 10-12.

7. See, e.g., Shab. 88b, A.Z. 25a. See also the Aramaic Targum to the Song of Songs (Targum) generally, and Song of Songs Rabbah (SoSR), throughout.

8. Ibn Ezra takes this verse to be a reference to "the King, Messiah." A contrary view: "Every Solomon mentioned in the Song of Songs is sacred: the Song to Him whose is the peace, except this: . . . *Thou, O Solomon shall have the thousand -- Solomon for himself [shall have the thousand].*" Shebu. 35b.

Introduction to the Second Interpretation

9. That is to say, the events described in the Song of Songs never actually occurred, since such behavior in public would be scandalous and inappropriate.

Introduction to the Third Interpretation

10. This is a reference to Song of Songs Rabbah (SoSR), also known as *Midrash Hazita* from its opening word, חזית, from Prov. 22:29.

11. See note 8, *supra*.

12. Ezek. 37:25, *And David my servant shall be their prince forever*, is understood to refer to the Messiah, of Davidic lineage, not to King David himself as a literal reading of the verse might suggest.

13. The first time: I Kings 6:11 (or: II Chron. 1:7).
The second time: I Kings 9:2 (or: II Chron. 7:12).

14. Asaph, the son of Berechiah (I Chron. 6:24) was a Levite (I Chron. 15:17) and was referred to as a *seer* חוזה (II Chron. 29:30) and a *prophet* נביא (Lev. R. XIII:5). The superscriptions

to Psalms 50 and 73-83 bear his name. Together with Heman, he was a chief singer in King David's time.

15. Heman the son of Joel, a grandson of Samuel (I. Chron. 6:18), was referred to as a seer (I Chron. 25:5). See also, re: Asaph and Heman, SoSR. IV. 4, §1.

The First Interpretation

16. That is, where the following word does not have a prefixed *lamed*.

17. Every kiss is of the mouth. Ibn Ezra infers that the kisses referred to here are on the mouth from the presence of an otherwise superfluous word, פִּיהוּ "his mouth."

18. Saadia.

19. There are two extant versions of the Hebrew text at this point. The alternative reading is הִפֵּךְ. According to *M'hok'kay Yehudah* this has been read הִפְּךָ (see, e.g., *Or Lin'tivah*) and translated "reversed," in reference to the phrase לְרִיחַ שְׁמֹנֶיךָ טוֹבִים which is difficult grammatically. By reversing the word order and placing the first word at the end, the phrase would be rendered, "Your oils are good to smell." The second view reads the word הִפְּךָ, which would be translated "opposite" or "unlike," meaning, "Unlike most other oils, which have no fragrance, your name is like oil poured forth." Others have read the word הִפְּךָ and translated it "the flask" or "cruse" of fine oil. Bomberg and a number of other texts have אִפֶּךָ, literally, "your nose," but apparently meaning "your breath," and this is clearly the correct version.

M'galeh Sod understands אִפֶּךָ as the unnamed commentator's rendering of שְׁמֹנֶיךָ. He comments, "Those who thought that oil has no fragrance found explanation of the text, which attributes fragrance to oil, difficult. Thus they explicated 'your oils' as 'your breath' doing great violence [to the text]. But it appears that they never poured out oil because oils used for anointing

have a volatile aroma" Such an explanation would not be entirely farfetched in light of the phrase *אֶפֶךְ כַּתְּפוּרָחִים* found at 7:9, which is the verse that the unnamed commentator undoubtedly had in mind. A commentator who was unfamiliar with fragrant oils might well make use of 7:9 in interpreting 1:3.

The *lamed* of *לָרִיחַ* is the *lamed* of confirmation, as in Arabic, which appears rarely in the Bible. See also, *לָכֵל*, Deut. 24:5, *וּלְקָדֵשׁ*, Ps. 89:19, and *לָכֵלֵב*, Ecc. 9:4. The verse should be rendered *Indeed your ointments yield a good fragrance. Your name is as oil poured forth.*

20. The interpretation resolves the apparent disagreement of gender between *שָׂמֵן*, a masculine noun, and *תִּרְקֶה* which, if a verbal form, is the third person feminine singular imperfect.

21. According to *M'hok'kay Yehudah* each of these words appears in the gender contrary to its normal appearance once in scripture. *עָמַל*, ordinarily masculine, appears with a feminine verb in Ecc. 10:15. Likewise, *בֵּית* is ordinarily masculine, but may appear in the feminine, as in Prov. 9:1 (see Ibn Ezra, *loc. cit.* *מְקָרֵם* is also ordinarily masculine in gender, but appears with a feminine verb in Job 20:9. It also appears with the feminine *אָחַת* in the written text of II Sam 17:12, though it is read as if the masculine *אָחֵךְ* were written.

22. Used in the making of a sweet fragrance upon the altar. The suggestion is stimulated by the textual problem that arises if *נִזְכִּירָהּ* is taken as the common plural imperfect of the *hiphil*. The meaning would then be causative, "we will cause others to recall." The suggested interpretation would regard the verb as equivalent to *נִרְיַח* "we will savor the fragrance," a suggestion Ibn Ezra apparently favors since he doesn't offer a contrary interpretation.

23. That is, it should be placed before *מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל* also.

24. The rejected interpretation seeks to interpret "black" as a complimentary, rather than a derogatory description. Reference is made to Num. 12:1 where Moses' wife is referred to as *the*

Cushite woman, rather than by name. This in turn raises a problem of the Cushite woman's identity. Is she Zipporah, Moses' first wife, or another woman? The midrash (*Tanhuma, Parashat Tzav*, §13) explains that Zipporah was dark and beautiful but was called the Cushite woman so that the evil eye would not control her. See also, Midr. Psalms 7:18. Ibn Ezra rejects this as a forced and unnecessary interpretation that is refuted by the following verse.

25. That is, the root of שחרחרת is שחר with the second and third radicals doubled to reduce the intensity of the color. Similarly, ירקרק is from the root ירק and אדמדם is from אדם. This is to be distinguished from the doubling of intensification, e.g., סחרחר Ps. 38:11.

26. נטר is a root of Aramaic origin which renders the Hebrew root שמר.

27. The verse is elliptical and should be understood as if it were written *Tell me [you] whom my soul loves, where do you pasture [the flock]? Where do you rest [them] at noon time?*

28. As vocalized איכה means *how*. If vocalized איכה it would mean "where," as in II Kings 6:12, to which Ibn Ezra is apparently referring though our text of Ibn Ezra misquotes the verse. In any event, modern translations render it "where" as the context of the Song of Songs seems to dictate.

29. I.e., it is not an adjective.

30. This explanation accords with Rashi's explanation of נדי in his comment on Ex. 23:19. In commenting on that verse, Ibn Ezra cites Rashi's opinion and rejects it! Re: construct state with "goats," see, e.g., Gen. 31:17.

31. The *yod* has no function. It is a remnant of the old genitive case ending.

32. In his comment on Ex. 30:23 Ibn Ezra attributes this opinion to the Gaon and rejects it.

33. That is, there are two kinds of myrrh, one that is dry and may be gathered and another that is moist and flows.

34. *Kafur* = camphor.

35. *Canfora* or *alcanfor*.

36. Ibn Ezra resorts to rabbinic usage because the word is a hapaxlegomenon. "The very stones of a man's house and the beams of his house *ביתו ורהיטו* testify against him." Ta'an. 11a; Hag. 16a. The manuscript edition of Ibn Ezra's commentary, which cites "Mishnah," has apparently been amended if it was written before the rabbinical recension. Rashi also refers to "the language of the Mishnah" here, quoting the same passage from the Gemara set forth above. The talmudic thought may derive from Hab. 2:11, *For a stone shall cry out from the wall, and a rafter shall answer it from the woodwork.*

37. *ארזים* and *ברושים* appear together frequently in Scripture. See, e.g., Isa. 37:24, Zech. 11:2, I Kings 5:22, 5:24, 9:11, II Kings 19:23 and II Chron. 2:7.

38. From which watering troughs for animals were made.

39. Rashi, perhaps following SoSR II. 1 §3, interprets *חבצלת* as identical in meaning to *שושנה*. The latter word is normally rendered *ורד*, e.g., "rose" in talmudic and midrashic sources. See, e.g., *Targum*, *loc. cit.*

40. From the root *רפד*, meaning *prop up, support, aid* in Arabic.

41. See also Job 17:13, *I have spread my couch רפדתי in the darkness.*

42. *M'hok'kay Yehudah* states that there is a difference between *מדלג* and *מקפץ* in that the former involves jumping from one place to another, citing Ber. 19b, "We used to leap *מדלגין* over coffins," whereas the latter emphasizes speed, citing Shab. 152a, "Old age hastens *קפצה* upon him." See also Maimonides' commentary on M. Ohol. 8:5.

43. *wall* in Hebrew renders the Aramaic *כוחל*. Ezra 5:8 and Dan. 5:5 are the latter word's only appearances in Scripture.

44. The noun *נצנים* derives from the verbal root *נצץ*. *נצנים* may be the regular form of the plural, from the singular *נץ*. Cf. *M. Ukz. 2:3*.

45. Cf. M. Nid. 5:7 "'an unripe fig' פגה while she is yet a child."

46. Fijj - *unripe*.

47. חגרי should be חוני, reversing the *gimel* and the *vav*.

48. חרג and חגר or חגי.

49. דרגא, a *step* or *stair*; דרג, *go on foot, step by step, walk*; intensified root = *rise in grade, rank*.

50. There is a dispute as to the proper reading. *M'hok'kay Yehudah* states that it should be ממנה, *i.e.*, that Ibn Ezra is referring to the context of the verse, the girl's telling the boy "that he should separate himself from her." *Ezrah L'havin* apparently had a text that read ממני and states that it should be ממני! Although Ibn Ezra generally reserves discussion of who is saying what to whom for the second interpretation, I favor the former version.

51. See also חוצה, Gen. 39:13, which Onkelos translates שוקא.

52. Or *like a calf that has not been broken* (NJV) - *i.e.*, that hasn't been trained to pull in a harness.

53. Radak said that its root is פרה with a prefixed *aleph* and that it means a bed in which they used to carry brides. The Gemara uses פוריה to mean "bed" Shab. 77b; Ket. 10b. In the latter text it states that a bed is called פוריה "because they are fruitful פריין and multiply on it," but is probably of Greek origin.

54. That is, רצוף refers not to the palanquin, but to Solomon who was "aflame" with love.

55. See Ibn Ezra to Isa. 6:6, *ad loc.* רצפה, where he comments, גחלת "a live coal." Cf. רצפים, I Kings 19:6. Or, "its place" may refer to Ibn Ezra's second interpretation of this verse.

56. This is the opinion of RSG. קרח appears in Lev. 13:40, but is not translated by Onkelos or Jonathan b. Uziel. However, גבח, which also means "bald," appears in Lev. 13:41 and is translated גלוש by Onkelos and גלשן (= גלוש - Jastrow) by Jonathon b. Uziel. SoSR IV. 1, s3 states, "When a woman's hair grows thick she thins it גלשין; when pumpkins sprout in profusion, they must be thinned." (Soncino translation) Jastrow translates the same

passage as follows, "A woman whose hair is thick parts it so as to show white lines; a young pumpkin, when it sprouts nicely, produces bright stripes."

57. The phrase is elliptical and should be understood as if it read כעדר רחלים הקצובות.

58. This interpretation understands מחאימות as the *hiphil* (causative) participle feminine plural, as opposed to the former interpretation which considers the word adjectival.

59. *E.g.*, Rashi.

60. Thus the word would be compounded from two words חל and פיוח.

61. The root is אלה, the first radical of which, according to this interpretation, was displaced by a prefixed *tav*. According to *M'hok'kay Yehudah* this view is attributed to a R. Marinus in Ibn Ezra's book *S'fat Yeter*, §67.

62. Which is why it is called "locked."

63. The root is ערה.

64. *M'hok'kay Yehudah* understands the literal meaning to be "white wine," and adds, "And thusly the translator translated it." This apparently refers to the Targum, *loc. cit.*

65. See, *e.g.*, נחנעל, Zeb. 88a, and להנעיל, Az. 76a. See also Mal. 1:7.

66. Ex. 39:3 וירקעו *they hammered out* is translated ורדידו by Onkelos.

67. Cf. M. Kil. 3:1, describing the sewing of a garden bed ערוגה with different kinds of seeds in different areas.

68. Suggesting a possible vocalization of מנדלות *causing to grow*, the *piel* active participle feminine plural.

69. Within which are his abdominal muscles and intestines. The two words בטן and מעים appear in parallel usage in Gen. 25:23.

70. Ibn Ezra comments on Jonah 4:8, "ויתעלה" [means] that he (Jonah) wrapped himself with his garments." Cf. also, the benediction for the wearing of the *tallith* which concludes "to wrap oneself להתעתף in a fringed garment."

71. Saadia Gaon. In Ibn Ezra's commentary on Ex. 24:10 *ad loc.* ויראו he states, *inter alia*, "The Gaon said that ספיר is *white* and his evidence is לבנת הספיר, but it is not so: [the meaning of ספיר] is only red. The evidence is that the [Hebrew] language customarily repeats the meaning [of a phrase] in different words (*i.e.*, the well-known phenomenon, biblical parallelism)," citing Lam. 4:7. He continues, "Thus ספיר is like פנינים [*i.e.*, in meaning and thus, in color]."

72. Because, unlike the word מראה *appearance*, the word מעשה expresses the composition of a thing, not its color.

73. A number of kings of Israel reigned in Tirzah, but not Ahab. Tirzah is first mentioned in Scripture briefly in Jos. 12:24 as the last of a list of kingdoms Joshua conquered. It is next mentioned in connection with Jereboam's wife in I Kings 14:17, following the death of Solomon. A number of kings of Israel reigned in Tirzah, beginning with Baasa who reigned there for 24 years (I Kings 15:33). Elah ruled there for 2 years (I Kings 16:8), then Zimri for 7 days (I Kings 16:15), and Omri for 6 years (I Kings 16:23), whereupon he moved the capitol to Samaria. Ahab was Omri's son and ruled in Samaria for 22 years (I Kings 16:29). The next Biblical reference to Tirzah is some hundred years after Ahab's death when Menahem ruled in Tirzah (II Kings 15:14-16). Perhaps our text should read "Omri" instead of "Ahab", Cf. *M'hok'kay Yehudah*. *Ezrah L'havin* would amend the text to read "until the accounts of Ahab." Reference to Tirzah is curious and, given its apparent lack of prominence in Solomon's day, casts doubt on the putative Solomonic authorship of the book. *M'hok'kay Yehudah* (*Karnay Or*) suggests supplying בנות before Tirzah and Jerusalem, rendering the verse, "You are beautiful, O my beloved, as the young women of Tirzah, comely as the young women of Jerusalem Cf. SoSR. VI. 4, §1.

74. The banner signifies a significant encampment and is used to stimulate zeal in battle.

75. Rahab was a primordial mythological dragon symbolizing power, from the root רהב meaning boastfulness, arrogance, or impudence. Thus the causative הרחיב would mean "to overpower" or something similar.

76. The word אגרוז occurs only once in Scripture. It appears a number of times in SoSR. VI. 2, 1. See also, M. Orl. 3:8, Tos. Shab. 14(15); 1, Ket. 77b, Git. 64b.

77. That is, that its root is ארב. This may be a reference to Ex. 9:31 *The barley was in the ear אביב and the flax was in bloom.*

78. This may be a quotation, but it is not found in the Bible and its source is unknown.

79. *E.g.*, Rashi.

80. The *yod* of בני appears to be a remnant of the old genitive case ending though Ibn Ezra did not consider it to be, or was unsure. However, in the case of another occurrence of this phenomenon, לססתי (1:9), Ibn Ezra states that the *yod* is affixed. See First Interpretation, 1:9, *supra*. With respect to Gen. 49:11, Ibn Ezra could conceivably have had in mind the midrash on that verse that "there is not a wild tree (שרק = סרק) that does not produce a load of [fruit sufficient for] two she-asses [to carry]" Ket. 1:11b. The midrash apparently derives from the Hebrew בני which can be understood as the plural of בן in the construct, which would signify no less than two. In his comment on Gen. 49:11, Ibn Ezra comments that the *yod* of אסרי *binding* is affixed, but makes no reference to the *yod* of בני.

81. Cf. Ibn Ezra to Gen. 14:18, *ad loc.* שלם. See also Ps. 76:3.

82. In both cases the *yod* of the singular gives way to an *aleph* in the plural.

83. See, *e.g.*, Ex. 38:23. אסך is a hapaxlegomenon.

84. *Shahr*.

85. See, *e.g.*, M. Nid. 2:6, 7, Pes. 108b, Erub. 54a, Ned. 55a, and B.M. 60a.

86. Ibn Ezra comments on Prov. 9:2, "מִזְנוּגָה is similar to מִסְכָּה, thus mixed wine [is the same as] mingled wine and it means mixture of water with it, and this constitutes improvement for drinking just as cooking is for eating."

87. According to the anonymous interpretation the phrase has no reference to wine, but is to be understood according to its context in the dialogue between the young woman and the young man. She praises him saying that his light will not decrease as does the light of the moon when it wanes.

88. In the second interpretation of 7:3, below.

89. M. Or1. 1:1, M. Avot. 1:1. "They (the men of the Great Synagogue) said three things: be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence סִיג around the Torah." *Ibid.*

90. Its meaning must be inferred from the context, as the continuation of the previous phrase *I say: let me climb the palm; let me take hold of סִנְיָו*. NJV translates *its branches* as does JPS. In talmudic and midrashic sources it is understood as *palm leaves* (San. 93a) or *young shoots* (SoSR. VII. 9, §1).

91. See Ibn Ezra on 1:2, *supra*.

92. See also, Ibn Ezra on Gen. 30:14 *ad loc.* דַּוְדָּאִים.

93. That is, תִּלְמַדְנִי is the third person feminine singular imperfect verb with the first person suffix, meaning "she will teach me" and not the second person masculine, identical with it in form.

94. The root is קָפַק, which in Arabic means to *bind* or *join together*.

95. In his comment on Job 5:7, Ibn Ezra interprets בְּנֵי רֶשֶׁף as *angels and spirits*, citing Ps. 76:4 רֶשֶׁף קֶשֶׁת, *fiery arrows of the bow*.

96. In Ps. 36:7 the word הַרְרִי is in the construct state with the following word אֵל, meaning God, which is used there to indicate enlargement, *i.e.*, *the mighty mountains*, not "the mountains of God."

97. Although the *aleph* has quiesced in הִירְצָאָה, and the *tsaday* is pointed with a *tseray*, here the *aleph* is pointed with the *tseray* and cannot be said to have quiesced. The analogy to יִרְצָאָה should be taken to mean that it, like מִרְצָאָה, is the active participle feminine singular of the *binyan kal*. Ibn Ezra could conceivably have had a biblical text pointed differently from ours, *i.e.*, מִרְצָאָה. *Minhat Shai* wrote, "In a few books the *tsaday* is pointed with a *tseray* and the *aleph* has no vocalization similarly to [the pointing in the verse] *no reward is forthcoming* מִצָּאָה (II Sam. 18:22), and thus Ibn Ezra wrote, 'And the *aleph* has quiesced as is its custom', but in most of the books the *tsaday* [is pointed with] a *shewa* and the *aleph* with a *tseray* (*i.e.*, מִרְצָאָה as in our text). . ."

98. Ibn Ezra discusses the relationship between the Hebrew and Arabic in greater length and detail in his book *Saphah B'rurah*. He states, *inter alia*, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic were [at one time] one language." (*M'hok'kay Yehudah*). In commenting on Gen. 30:37, Ibn Ezra states, ". . . the Gaon said that . . . the two languages [Hebrew and Arabic] and Aramaic were one family [of related languages]."

THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

99. The verse begins by referring to the young man in the third person.

100. *Kisses* is in the plural.

101. The young man is referred to in the second person in the second half of the verse.

102. Saadiah is said to have stated that דִּוְדִיךָ is the saliva beneath the tongue. See Ibn Ezra's First Interpretation, 1:2, *supra*.

103. Literally, "her."

104. Cf. Targum Jonathan on Ps. 22:18 *ad loc.* יִרְאוּ בִי = מִבּוֹן לִי.

105. Unapproachable and unattainable.

106. She adjures them "by gazelles" and "hinds of the field that is, by an oath whose terms refer to the same beautiful type of animal to which the young woman's lover compares her.

107. Ibn Ezra ties this new subsection of the poem to verses 3:6-11 which involve, he says, the contemplation by the shepherd of the girl he has not yet recognized, in connection with the amorous activities of Solomon.

108. See Ibn Ezra's Introduction to the Second Interpretation, *supra*.

109. Ibn Ezra wants to explain the repetition of 2:17a and 4:6a and the difference in the name of the mountain.

110. Ibn Ezra turns the young man's compliment from its plain meaning, a summary of his beloved's physical beauty as described in verses 4:1-6, to a statement about the beauty of her words as a transition to the next theme, "from Lebanon. . .," Mt. Amana being on the border of Israel and Lebanon.

111. Ibn Ezra wants to account for the repetition in verses 6:5-7 of much of the language and imagery of 4:1-3 and to link this with the following verses 8-9.

112. Cf. I Sam. 18:6-7.

113. Verses 7:2-9 speak of a feminine love object if the Masoretic vocalization is accepted. This is inconsistent with the received text of Ibn Ezra's comment on this verse. For a discussion of the textual problem in greater detail, see the prefatory essay above.

114. See Ibn Ezra on Gen. 3:16 *ad loc.* חשוקתך.

115. The context of Jeremiah 12:7 is betrayal of the loved one to her enemies. That is, he did not give her his love, but rather gave his beloved over to others. Or, it means that in Jer. 12:7 the word ידִידוֹת has a *yod* at the beginning and here in יַדִּי, the *yod* is at the end. Cf. *Ezrah L'havin* and *M'hok'kay Yehudah*, *loc cit.*

250. Cf. Targum 8:11 and SoSR. VIII. 11, §1.

251. Cf. Targum 8:11.

252. Cf. Targum 8:11.

253. Cf. Targum 8:12.

254. Cf. SoSR. VIII. 13, §2 (= companions).

255. Ibn Ezra's interpretation, like that of RSG, is the opposite of the Targum's, which interprets *flee* as "flee to Heaven," whereas here Ibn Ezra urges God to depart from the angels and dwell among his people on earth.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX "A"

TABLE OF SCRIPTURAL VERSES QUOTED IN IBN EZRA'S COMMENTARY

<u>BIBLICAL BOOK</u>	<u>COMMENTARY</u>	<u>BIBLICAL BOOK</u>	<u>COMMENTARY</u>
GENESIS		NUMBERS	
3:6	I, 2:14	2:3	I, 2:4
3:16	I, 7:11	14:36	I, 7:10
8:22	I, 2:11	14:40	III, 3:5
12:5	III, 1:3	14:45	III, 3:5
13:4	III, 1:3	24:6	I, 4:14
14:36	I, 7:10	24:17	I, 4:8
15:10	I, 2:17		
26:5	III, 1:2	DEUTERONOMY	
26:8	I, 2:9	12:2	I, 1:16
26:19	II, 4:15	14:25	I, 1:13
27:26	I, 1:2	20:12	I, 8:9
27:27	I, 1:2	32:1	Intro.
29:11	I, 1:2	32:5	Intro.
30:38	I, 1:17	32:8	Intro.
30:38	I, 7:6	32:9	III, 7:11
33:4	I, 1:2	32:10	III, 7:5
39:19	I, 1:6	32:15	III, 6:11
40:10	I, 2:12	32:38	III, 4:16
49:11	I, 6:12	33:29	III, 6:12
50:2	I, 2:13		
EXODUS		JOSHUA	
3:7	III, 2:9	15:19	I, 4:12
3:17	III, 2:10		
4:13	III, 1:8	JUDGES	
6:2	I, 1:4	5:28	I, 4:1
12:35	III, 1:11	8:21	I, 7:3
14:31	III, 2:14	8:26	I, 7:3
15:1	III, 2:14	19:22	I, 5:2
15:1	III, 1:2		
20:23	I, 2:14	I SAMUEL	
24:6	I, 7:3	14:27	I, 5:1
24:7	III, 2:14	14:32	I, 1:7
24:10	I, 5:14	25:14	I, 1:7
28:2	I, 5:14	30:12	I, 4:3
28:17	I, 5:12		
28:17	I, 5:14	II SAMUEL	
28:20	I, 5:14	7:6	III, 5:2
30:23	I, 1:13	7:23	III, 6:9
33:3	III, 2:17	22:43	I, 3:2
33:7	III, 2:17		
LEVITICUS		I KINGS	
1:14	I, 2:12	6:14	III, 4:6
2:2	I, 1:4	6:18	I, 1:5
7:9	I, 1:5	6:25	I, 4:2
11:21	I, 2:8	6:29	I, 3:6
13:40	I, 4:1	8:2	III, 3:11
13:49	I, 1:6		
25:4	I, 2:12	II KINGS	
		6:6	I, 4:2
		6:13	I, 1:7
		23:5	I, 1:11

APPENDIX "B"

VERSES CONTAINING WORDS OR PHRASES COMMENTED UPON OR USED IN THE
PRINTED RECENSION OF THE COMMENTARY BUT NOT IN THE MANUSCRIPT
RECENSION OF THE COMMENTARY

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4:1
4:13
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5:2
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THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

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2:17
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3:5
3:10
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THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

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4:9
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6:8
6:9
7:2
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APPENDIX "C"

VERSES CONTAINING WORDS OR PHRASES COMMENTED UPON OR USED IN THE MANUSCRIPT RECENSION OF THE COMMENTARY BUT NOT IN THE PRINTED RECENSION OF THE COMMENTARY

THE FIRST INTERPRETATION

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THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

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THE THIRD INTERPRETATION

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APPENDIX "E"

TABLE OF OTHER PERSONS REFERRED TO IN THE MANUSCRIPT RECENSION

RABBINIC

ANONYMOUS

"ONE OF THE GEONIM"

I, 1:2

COMMENTATORS

I, 1:7

GRAMMARIANS

I. 4:4

"SOME SAY" AND "OTHERS"

I, 1:4

OUR RABBIS

I, 5:3

I, 1:7 (3x)

I, 6:11

I, 1:10 (2x)

I, 7:3 (2x)

I, 1:13

I, 1:14

I, 2:9

I, 3:10

OUR SAGES

III, 2:7

I, 4:1 (2x)

I, 4:3 (2x)

I, 4:4

I, 5:1 (2x)

II, 7:7 (2x)

III, Intro. (2x)

APPENDIX "H"

VARIATIONS OF THE POCOCK (BODLEIAN) AND
BRITISH MUSEUM MSS.

or

IBN EZRA'S COMMENTARY ON THE CANTICLES
AFTER THE FIRST RECENSION.

SINCE the publication of Abraham ibn Ezra's *Commentary on the Canticles after the First Recension* (London, 1874), according to two complete MSS. (Bodl. Opp., 221 and Paris, 334), the variations of a third MS. (Berlin, 291, Quo.), containing only הפעם הראשונה, being given in a supplement, two additional MSS. of the whole Commentary have been discovered, one in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Poc. 184), the other in the library of the British Museum (Add.27,298), and also a MS. of הפעם הראשונה, corresponding to that of Berlin, in the Library of the Beth ham-Midrash ¹), London,

¹ This fragment, as in the Berlin MS. (cf. Steinschneider, *Ham-mazkir*, 1874, p. 26), is preceded by a short introduction by Menahem ben Jacob. In the Beth ham-Midrash MS., in which it follows immediately, without title, the ספר הכתר, a translation of Averroes' (?) Latin paraphrase of Aristotle's *περί ἔπαινον και ἔγκρητες*, by Solomon Melgueziri (MS. משה שלמה), in the Beth ham-Midrash MS., in which it follows immediately, without title, the ספר הכתר, a translation of Averroes' (?) Latin paraphrase of Aristotle's *περί ἔπαινον και ἔγκρητες*, by Solomon Melgueziri (MS. משה שלמה), cf. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, p. 472), it reads thus: אמר מנחם בן יעקב ז"ל לפי מה שהוריעתנו הרב הגדול ע"ה בספרו הנכבד שאע"פ שנאמר בשלמה ע"ה בגבעון נראה יי אל שלמה אין זה נבואה גמורה כי אמר בסופו ויקץ שלמה והנה חלום... אם כן יראה שכל מה שבאר שלמה ע"ה בספר שיר השירים בדרך הנסתר במדרגת הנבואה לא יצא מדרגת החלום כי אי אפשר שיבאר אדם לזולתו יותר ממה שהשיג בעצמו ולזה ראינו לחבר באור ספר שיר השירים למה שקדם מענין החלום ונקדים ראשונה גלוי כל מלה צפונה אשר פענת החכם רבי אברהם א"ע ע"ה וגם החרוזות שהקדים הוא לפירושו שיר השירים:

The MS., however, gives no commentary by Menahem ben Jacob. Bodl.

