

THE 'POETICS'

of

Moses ibn Ezra

A critical study from a literary and
historical point of view, together with a
sketch of the life and character of the
author, based on the material of the book.

THESIS

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In Love and Devotion

to

My Parents

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CHAPTER I

The tenth Century in Spain saw the rise of the splendid kingdom of Abdu'l Rahman III. He had united the Spanish Moslems into a state which dazzled Europe with its new high levels of culture. He had wrought the warring factions into a harmonious body, bringing order out of chaos, establishing peace both at home and abroad. "Agriculture, manufactures, commerce, the arts and sciences, all flourished". (1). With his death, began the decline of the Umayyad dynasty, (2), and during the eleventh century, his mighty empire was broken up.

"It has been said, with truth, that the history of Spain in the eleventh century bears a close resemblance to that of Italy in the fifteenth. The splendid empire of Abdu'l-Rahman III was broken up, and from its ruins there emerged a fortuitous conglomeration of petty states governed by successful condottieri.... Although it was an age of political decay, the material prosperity of Spain had as yet suffered little diminution, whilst in point of culture the society of this time had reached a level hitherto unequalled" (3).

The empire broke up into the little kingdoms of Seville, Granada, Malaga and so on, but these prospered. The Jews, living among the European Arabs, prospered, too, as is well known. Especially in Granada was this so; it was known as the "The City of the Jews" (4). Jews had often held important posit-

tions under Moslem sovereigns, especially in financial administration; only in Granada, however, could a Jew become Prime Minister! (5). This was the home of the famous statesman, Samuel Ha-levi (Ha-nagid). Here the Jews were wealthy and influential, and took an active interest in politics. Here "they had found, if not the Promised Land, at least manna in the desert...." (6).

In such a city, about 1070 (7), was Moses ben Jacob ibn Ezra (8) born. The memory of Samuel Ha-nagid was still fresh (he had died in 1055)⁹ and his son too had carried on his tradition of encouraging learning among the Jews. So we see that the circumstances and environment were such as to favor the appearance of a poet - and a great poet, such as Moses ibn Ezra was.

We know little of the actual events of his life. Just as we do not know when he was born, so too is the date of his death hidden in obscurity. The date given by Graetz ¹⁰, 1139, is usually accepted. This is based probably on the research of Luzzato, who points out that Moses ibn Ezra was still alive in 1138,¹¹ for in his Diwan is a poem of condolence to his friends, Abu Omar and Abu Ibrahim, sons of Mashcaran, upon the death of their mother;¹² and in another stanza he says that he is past sixty years of age.

He was born into a cultured family, respected for its wealth and learning. His father was an official in the court of King

Habbus, probably receiving honor through Samuel Ha-nagid.¹³
He had three brothers, all of whom he outlived.

Of how he lived, we know very little. We glean a few
side-lights from his writings - and from the writings of his
contemporaries. We know that he was a pupil of Isaac ibn Gayath¹⁴
whom he praises highly in his critical work.¹⁵

There is a romantic story of his love for his niece - a love
which, though reciprocated, was never to bring him happiness, be-
cause of his brother's opposition to his suit. In vain did he
plead, and when even his other brothers sided against him, he
left his native Granada, to wander into Portugal and Castile.¹⁶
This must have been around 1100.

In his exile he seems to have found a patron, whom he praises¹⁷
in the opening poem of his Diwan. But he never quite forgot his
love, for he seems never to have married. Indeed, he probably
spent the rest of his life away from his native soil for, in the
Poetics, which is one of his last works, he refers to himself as
living in exile. He writes...."my fate has cast me, near the end¹⁸
of my days, into a strange and distant land..."

No doubt, time healed the breach with his brothers; certainly
Moses was not vindictive by nature. His Poetics is abundant in
statements illustrating his nobility of soul and gentlemanly fore-
bearance toward vindictive criticism, as will be subsequently shown.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see him make the first step toward re-conciliation with his brothers by writing an elegy for the loved one of his youth, upon her death in 1115.¹⁹

There is a melancholy strain in the life of Moses ibn Ezra which is reflected to some extent in his writings. This accounts, perhaps, for the proficiency he showed in the composition of melancholy liturgical pieces, which earned for him the appellation - *נשור*. Graetz attributes this melancholy to his unsuccessful love affair, which he says, "laid bare his poetic soul". Sachs, too, seems to intimate that Moses never recovered from his hopeless love.²⁰ But he was not a misanthrope; though he inveighs against false friends, and says that a real friend is better than a brother,²¹ he seems to have made many fast and fine friends, as may be seen from the many poems he wrote in praise of his friends, and the many laudatory pieces addressed to him.

He was not a blind optimist; he had no illusions about the cultural conditions of his times. At the very outset he says, "...most of the people of our day pay no heed to matters pertaining to literature."²² And when later he says, "The people of our day are like trees in a barren land, trees which have no verdant branches, and can give no shade,"²³ we need not say that he speaks out of a bitter heart; we can say only that his observation is substantiated in modern times by psychological tests!

But he realized that he was laying himself open to criticism,
for he adds; ²⁴ "As for me, I am not of those who bewail the times
and disparage my contemporaries. There are two reasons for this;
firstly, because I have experienced the extremes of the age-
good and bad have fallen to my lot; a complete cycle of experiences
has passed over me. I have known frustrations after success; I have
been harshly dealt with after having been treated graciously.....
The second reason that I am not discouraged is because God has been
good to me, and I ask only that He allow me to thank Him for it ²⁵
and find a refuge in his goodness, that I may not be ungrateful."
Here is the sober statement of the man who has lived fully, has
known life in its varying aspects, and from the height of years
looks upon life, and sees that good and bad, learning and ignorance,
success and failure, are, after all, is said and done, only phases
of Providence. He was not disappointed in life. He felt, with
Aristotle, whom he quotes, "The fruit of satisfaction with one's
lot is peace." ²⁶ He quotes this happy bit of wisdom, "When I look
upon those who surpass me in piety and right living, I despise
myself; but when I see those who are poorer even than I myself am,
then do I rejoice in my lot". ²⁷ Here certainly is no evidence of
misanthropy and melancholia! Quite the contrary; he never indulged
in sarcasm at the expense of his contemporaries; as he himself says;
"....with regard to poems of mockery, I have never written any about
any particular person.....no man has touched my honor, nor have I
impugned the honor of anyone else". ²⁸

Such was Moses ibn Ezra, the man - gentlemanly, honorable,

one who never stooped to scurrilous attack, a loyal and sympathetic friend, because he valued the friendship of others. In these words does he sum up his life: "And as for me, I am a poor man who is indeed wealthy - a pauper who has many possessions; for after all there is no poverty greater than stupidity, and no man more friendless than he who loves himself".²⁹

He was ready to meet the disappointments of life bravely. He writes, "The upright man, when faced by adverse times, and held in the grip of unfavorable circumstances, will yet stand up like a man, restrain his desires, and prevail over his spirit, to withhold it from that which is loathsome, and direct it toward the desirable qualities...."³⁰

Even in the role of critic we see him as gentle, just, considerate. He says: "I have no need to expatiate on his errors... My aim in this work is not to point out the mistakes of my predecessors and condemn their works and perpetuate their defects... I mention mistakes only when necessary. In such cases I do not give the name of the author, and I mention them only that the reader may not be misled by similar faults".³¹ He gently rebukes his friend, Joseph ibn Sahal, for his vigorous denunciation of the critics of his day. He writes that, if he had withheld his pen from such matters, it would have been more to his credit.³² He was for restraint in all things.

So much for the life and character of Moses ibn Ezra- of

the incidents of his life we know little- but his spirit illumines all his writings, his character shines forth from their pages.

He states that his metrical works number over six hundred.³³
There are extant many of his piutim - these are listed by Dukes.³⁴

He composed ~~a poetical~~ a poetical work called תרשיש or ספר הענף; called תרשיש perhaps because it is composed of 1210 lines, the numerical value of the word תרשיש. This work is mentioned by Elijah Levita under the title תגנית.³⁵ But according to Isaac Broyde,³⁶ tajnis is a type of Arabic style, in which the תרשיש is written.

Dukes also cites a work with the title כתב זרבי אוריח.³⁷
He says it appears to be a work on rhetoric and the history of poetry. The title means, he says, "Flowers of the Garden". In the J.E. this is given as the Arabic title of the תרשיש.³⁸
Dukes has evidently confused this work with the כתב אומצרה יאסדכארה,³⁹ for he refers to Wolf's description of this work, which, however, the latter cites without a title. The statement of the J.E. appears to be more reasonable.

The תרשיש was published by Günzberg, Berlin, 1886. It is a group of secular poems, divided into ten sections.

Another poetical work is described by Luzzato.⁴⁰ It is known as the Diwan. It is as yet unpublished, but according to

⁴¹
Halper, "only in it does M.b.E. shine forth in his glory, and until this book is published in its entirety, critics must withhold their estimates of him".

The known prose works of M. b. E. are two. The one is a philosophical work, written in Arabic, and translated into Hebrew under the title ⁴²ערוגת הבושם. The J.E. says of it, that "it betrays profound knowledge of the Graeco-Arabic philosophy". It does not seem to have been very successful, nor widely known.

His other known prose work is the כתאב אלמחאצרה ועלמזכרה. ⁴³
Graetz translates this as "Script der Unterredung und Erinnerung". The exact intent of this title is not known. It has been translated into modern Hebrew by Ben-Zion Halper, under the title, "שיחת שרגא", which is, as he says, based on the content. It is this edition which is used as the basis for this paper. In the שיחת שרגא on page 76 he mentions another work called, "הפעלות של אנשי המוסר והימים" which is unknown except through this citation. The Arabic title is "פי כפאיל אהל אלדב ועלמחאצרה". ⁴⁴
It is possible also that he wrote a Biblical commentary.

The artist and critic are at variance; it is natural that this is so, because of the divergence of their tasks at the very outset, though they converge on their object. Peculiarly enough, artists seldom excel as critics; and the latter are too frequently unable to perform the feats which they demand of others. With few exceptions, artists have been unable to judge in others those qualities which they themselves seek and often attain. True, we

find a poet like Coleridge, who could write on the theory of criticism, and Poe, and de Quincy. These are outstanding phenomena in English literature.

There was only one medieval Jewish writer who attempted to give to the world a poetic theory. M. b. E. sets out to do this, at the request, presumably, of a young friend. If I may be allowed to postulate that he was a great poet, then I must add that as a critic, too, he deserves high praise. Halper says of him that "....as critic he is the one of his kind, without equal in medieval Jewish literature".⁴⁵

But we must not be misled into believing that his distinction rests only upon his uniqueness. It rests firmly upon the basis of the aesthetic value of his theories and the soundness of his criticism.

First of all, he was an honest critic. There is never a hint of personal feeling against an author in his criticisms. In fact, to repeat what has already been quoted, he says, " I mention mistakes only when necessary.....In such cases I do not give the name of the author...."⁴⁶

He valued and appreciated the beautiful. He says....
"...for one excellent stanza we forgive the faults of the rest of the poem; for one neatly turned phrase we pardon the

mockery of the rest of the piece".⁴⁷ He warns his young
disciple.... "Write down only the best of what you hear; remem-
ber only the choicest of what you read".⁴⁸ He says it is as bad
to read poor books as to associate with ignorant people.⁴⁹

He aims to give the technical elements, the tools with which
the poet works, but he is no pedant. He realizes that the poetic
element is a spirit, and not a form; poetry is more than a con-
coction of rhyme and metre.⁵⁰ The essence of poetry will not
bear analysis; the rationalist will never love poetry.⁵¹ He
remarks that though the truest thing is the best thing - this
cannot be applied to poetry, for the poet is not bound by such
laws; he is free to wander where fancy leads, for the poets "are
the only men who are forgiven their falsehoods!"⁵²

Moses ibn Ezra believed with Alfarabi whom he quotes, that
when poets write, they see with the mind's eye, as we see with our
own eyes.⁵³ The poet makes us to feel with him! To him poetry
was the highest means of expression. "A statement in prose flies
away like a spark, but a song endures as though graven on stone".⁵⁴
And finally, like a true artist, he bewails the sordid mercenary
uses of art. "When men began to make money by it (their poems)..
then its beauty vanished - its crystal waters were defiled".⁵⁵
This is the lament of the artist.

There is only a hint in this work of Biblical criticism.
Though he is supposed by Dukes to have written a commentary, the

work ascribed to him is probably spurious. Once, however, he mentions the hermeneutical device of deriving special meaning from the repeated statement of an idea, as from the phrase, " **וְגִלְתִּי צִרְתִּי** " - or " **כִּי פִעַל וְעִשָּׂה** ". Though some would give a varying meaning to each of the similar words, he says "this explanation is far removed from reason.....As a matter of ⁵⁶ fact, the intention is only to emphasize the statement". This is indeed indicative of a broad, sane, and rational view of the Bible and its meaning and intent.

There is quite a bit of exegesis in the last part of the book, where M. b. E. gives the structural elements of poetry. Here he adduces numerous scriptural verses as examples of the various poetic devices, and in many cases he interprets the verses. But his method is indeed interesting! He analyzes the verse from its literary and grammatical construction, and thus derives a rational meaning - one which is close to the meaning derived to-day by scientific students. M. b. E. was thoroughly modern in spirit.

Moses ibn Ezra was born into a land rich in Arabic culture. His education, as we see from his writings, was as much Arabic as Jewish. His father served in the Arab government. Moses numbered Arabs among his friends, as we may see from the story of his encounter with the Moslem sage, with regard to the language of the Koran. So thoroughly versed was he in the Arab literature, that if he had written a work similar to this one, on the history

of Arab literature, it would no doubt have become an Arabic classic. Psychologically, he was an Arab; but in spirit he was a Jew. And so we see a curious conflict between his art and his religion. He is an objective student; he gives the rules and principles as they apply to literature in general, but if the Torah uses the expression otherwise- this too is correct; for the Torah cannot be wrong! When he illustrates his meaning with a quotation from Arabic literature, he seeks also to find a parallel in Scripture. The Arabic literature is fine, but the Jewish literature (epitomized in the Bible) is best! Especially in the last section of the book, does he take pride in pointing out the uses of the various literary devices in the Bible. It is true that he uses the artificial standards of the Arabs in judging Hebrew poetry. But he loved the Hebrew language. He condemns those exiles who allowed the Hebrew tongue to fall into disuse and decay.⁵⁸ He expresses his attitude in these words: "In every section I shall present an example taken from Arabic poetry, and compare it with a verse from Scripture, so that they shall not despise the Bible and say that it contains none of these literary devices, and that the Arabic language is the only one which contains clever phrases and fine thought, and that the Hebrew language lacks all these. Although Scripture is lacking in examples of several of these devices used by the Arab poets, nevertheless, there are convincing indications in which we can see them used".⁵⁹

I have said that he was modern in his exegesis. But not

modern enough to lose his Jewishness! Artificial exegesis cannot extend to Israel's future hope! As he says,"....he who reads these things in order to test them by natural science, or whose mind doubts at all, ⁶⁰ does not believe in Judaism". In spite of his aesthetic training, and the foreign environment in which he lived- he remained true to his origin, a loyal Jew.

In writing of poetry, a poet must give the rules which he, himself, followed. But can poetry be reduced to rules? Is it to be so rationalized into a definite method of procedure, allowing no deviation? Our author thinks not. Rules are helpful, ⁶¹ but not binding. He writes: "Perhaps the inquirer will ask me: 'Have you observed all the principles which you mention, and have you avoided the faults which you describe, so that your compositions are free from blemish, and without fault?' To this I must answer: 'No!' I must confess the errors which I have made for various reasons. Mere flesh and blood must sin, man's spontaneous capacities are limited, since his temper varies, and fluctuates. For this reason, no man can be found who is perfect in all respects.....There is, indeed, another reason. Among my poetic compositions are some which I wrote during the intoxicating period of youth and the pleasant days of young manhood. At that time, I was not yet ^{subject} chilled and ^{practiced} practiced....But if this reply does not satisfy the questioner.....and if he should desire to dispute with me because I warn others against those things

which I occasionally permit myself, I answer him with the words of one of the commentators: Men, if ye were not rebuked, except by him who is without sin, no man would ever rebuke ye..... And Socrates says something similar; Even though the leader cannot do that which he asks of you, do not refuse the aid of his advice. And so, with this explanation, I leave the judgment to fair-minded men".

Chapter II

The Kitab al Muhadara wal Mudhakara was written some time¹ after 1123; this is the latest date mentioned in the book. There is no other hint as the date of its composition. It was, of course, written in Arabic, a language which M. b. E. handled² as well as did the best Moslem writers. There is a problem as to what script it was written in originally; this question is of³ prime importance to the translator, and is discussed by Halper. To us, however, it is of but passing interest.

The contemporaries, and countrymen of M. b. E. could, of course, read the book in Arabic. But was a Hebrew translation⁴ made, perhaps for the Jews of France? The פירוש יחזקיהו⁵ quotes twice from a work called אשכול הכוהן. Steinschneider identifies this⁶ with our Poetics, but the evidence is slight, and not convincing. There is no other reference to the book in all of medieval literature; it seems to have remained in MSS., waiting for someone to unlock its treasures.

The mention of the book in modern times is by Wolf, in his Bibliothecae Hebraeae^{at}, Hamburg and Leipzig 1727. In volume three, pages three and four, he describes a work, without a title, but which without doubt is the Poetics, for the description which he quotes from Gagnier fits our work perfectly. He says, in part, "He speaks to a certain student....who had proposed various questions.....the work contains six⁷ answers, to as many questions, of which the two first are about the arts of oratory and

poetry, the four last ones pertain to the poetic arts: concern-^{ing} poetry among the Arabs; concerning poetry among the Hebrews; concerning Spanish poetry; and various examples of Hebrew style..." He then gives a list of men quoted or mentioned in the work, but this list is very incomplete, and he fails to point out the historical value and significance of the work. Then too, in the beginning of the description he refers to this work as number 599 of the Huntingtonian MSS., which Huntington describes as "explicatio locorum complurium Scripturae sacrae auctore Avu Harun", - a Biblical commentary. This is probably another work entirely- described by Steinschneider as a spurious MSS. (Cat. Bod. 1801 ff.).

We next meet the work in the ⁸למור השכחה of Abraham Gavison, Livorno, 1752. He writes on p. 91, "...and I saw a book, called in Arabic, Al Mahadara w'al Madhakara, by the great and pious R. Moses ben Ezra Ha-Salah"; and on page 109: "And R. Moses ben Ezra wrote a book in Arabic, called Al Mahadara wal Madhakara"; and finally, "also the great rabbi and Salah, Moses ben Ezra, composed in Arabic, a book, entirely delightful, called Al'Mahadara wal Madhakara, that is to say, "Foundation of Wisdom and Memory"; he who reads it will profit in wisdom, and will devour it as soon as it comes to hand. Would that I could comprehend all its sweetness! He gives examples from the Arab poets for all his words".

What a tribute to the author to call his book כולו מחמדים -⁹ entirely delightful! According to Dukes, this is the only mention of the work by a Jewish writer.

The next mention of the work is by Franz Deltzschⁿ in his "Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie" Leipzig, 1836. He writes, (page 7)...."Still in manuscript, in the library, according to the report of Pococke and Huntington, we have a work, very rich in content, by Abu Marun (Mose Jacob) ibn Ezra, of Granada (born 1620) which, according to the description of Gagnier, in Wolf's Bibliotheca Hebraea Vol. III p. 3, treats of Hebrew poetry and a comparative history of Hebrew and Arabic literature in question and answer form, and contains a rich collection of Hebrew poetry in Arabic paraphrase, from poetical works, to some extent lost".

It is difficult to surmise how he got the date 1620 for M. B. E.'s birth, or whom he had in mind; but he does seem to have some idea of the potential value of the work as a literary and historical source, since he calls it "rich in content" and says that it "contains a rich collection of Hebrew poetryfrom poetical works, to some extent lost". Though he recognizes it as a source, he does not seem to have read it, or he would not have made the erroneous divisions of the Spanish period which we find on pp. 44-45 of this work.

In the monograph of Leopold Dukes, "Moses ben Ezra aus Granada", Altona 1839, pp.5,6, he mentions a work called, "חזקיה ואל סוכה". He says of it, "...which contains various philologic and poetic pieces and which seems to contain exegetical material; but which is extremely difficult to be found in a European library". Evidently he quotes the title from Gavison.

I have already pointed out that he knew the Poetics through Wolf's description, but he gives it the title " ¹¹ ספר זקן אלריאן "

To Steinschneider is probably due the credit for bringing this work to the notice of the scholarly world, and of pointing out its wealth of material, throwing light on the literary men of Spain. This he did by his lengthy description of the work in the Catalogue Bodleian Vol. II, Berlin 1857, col. 1801ff. It was he, by the way, who suggested that ¹² אשכול הכיפר is the Hebrew translation of the Poetics.

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Graetz mentions the work but regrets that no one has as yet made it available. He seems to have known only of the Oxford MS. and that only from Wolf's description of it. So he uses only the extracts from it "which Zacuto in his ¹³ *Or*" has taken from it".

M.S. Munk, in his "Notice sur Abou'l Walid Merwan ibn Djanach" Paris 1851 (reprinted from the Journal Asiatique No. 5, 1850) p. 57-8, quotes from the Bodleian MS., and identifies the work with that cited by Tanhum of Jerusalem in his commentary to I Samuel 18:10. ¹⁴ He (Munk) says, however, that he has not seen the MS itself.

Tanhum cites the work by its Arabic title and Munk rightly connects this with the Bodleian MS.

By far the most important work done on the book was by

Schreiner, in the R.E.J. Vol.21, Vol.22, 1890-1891, in which he gave an analysis of the book, and a discussion of its sources.

Schreiner was probably the only man to read the MS. through (besides Steinschneider). He did go through the entire MS. and gives a summary of its content. He was interested, it seems, chiefly in the literary material it contained, and so his summary is more a literary analysis, than anything else. He utterly ignores the historical material the work contains, and seems to find it more interesting as a piece of Biblical exegesis. In fact he refers to the book as a new type of Jewish exegesis.¹⁵ This is, of course, absurd. What exegetical material it contained is merely incidental, as M.b. E. himself says:¹⁶ "If in the course of the discussion, I adduce a Scriptural passage for which I have seen no satisfactory comment, I shall give my opinion". M. b. E. was interested in linguistics- and only when the passage could be explained by the analysis of the grammatical or syntactical construction, or of the language used, does he attempt an explanation. And he admits that "most of the things that I adduce are various topics which I remember from the sayings of the Sages"¹⁷ Schreiner discusses briefly, too, the sources of the work. He mentions most of the philosophers, critics, and works cited by M. b. E. But on the whole, his summary and analysis are inadequate, and do not give a true estimate of the work, though the concluding paragraph of his article says,¹⁸ "....the book of M.b. E. is not only a valuable source for Jewish history- an interesting phenomenon in the history of Biblical exegesis, but yet an important

production of Jewish intellectual life in Mohammedan Spain, a proof of the literary proclivities of the great poets of the middle ages, a proof of their direct dependence on Mohammedan literature, but at the same time (a proof) of their own originality".

Again, Steinschneider did some work on the Poetics. In "Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlischen Bibliothek zu Berlin" Vol. II, Berlin 1897, he gives a brief description of the work, pp. 29,30, and on pp. 128-131, he gives a complete list of men and works cited or mentioned by M. b. E. This is a valuable index.

It is interesting to note that Fürst in his "Bibliotheca Judaica", Leipzig 1863 makes no mention of this work of Ibn Ezra's. Nor do Winter and Wünsche make mention of it.

The first four chapters of the book were edited by P.K.Kokow-zow, and published in "Vostočnyja Zamětke", St. Petersburg, 1895 (pp. 193-220).

Hirschfeld, in his "Arabic Chrestomathy" London 1892, published a part of the Arabic text in answer to the second question. The Jewish Encyclopedia gives a description of the work, based evidently on Schreiner's article.

Steinschneider, in his "Arabische Literatur der Juden"

Frankfort.a.M. 1902 gives a brief description of the work in Parag.101, pp. 149-150.

Karpeles, in his "Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur" Berlin 1909- Vol. I, p.419, 420, says: "The accomplishments of M.b.E. as literary historian seem to be more significant than as a philosophical investigator. His treatise, "Kitaba-l-Mucahdara wa-l-Mudhakara (Book of Discussions and Memories) is at once Poetics, rhetoric, and a sketch of the history of literature. Unfortunately, this work, which is valuable alike for Jewish and Arabic and Castilian poetry as well, is as yet known only fragmentarily. So much is known of it, however, that it was written in answer to an eager student, who placed before his master various questions about poetry and poets, which (questions) Moses then answers in detail. From the apt characterization which M. b. E. draws in the Poetics, of his predecessor, Gabirol, we may well reach an opinion of the whole work....."

Richard Gottheil, in his article on M. b. E. in "Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" Vol VII, p. 68, says of the work; "The most important work that has come down to us from M.b.E. is his Kitab-al-Muhadara, written in Arabic. It is the only work of its kind written by a Hebrew scholar, and contains a detailed treatise on Hebrew prosody, a history of Hebrew poetry, and a mirror of the history of the Jews of his time. It is evidently fashioned closely upon the model of the Arabic Adab books."

This description is true enough, except the statement about its being 'the mirror of the history of the Jews of his time', for M. b. E. throws little light upon their economic, social, or political position, and refers only to the general low state of culture.

I have tried to give a picture of the extent to which this interesting book has been known since it was written. Few have known even of its existence; fewer have read it; even historians have drawn little from its wells of information about the 'golden age' of Jewish literature.

In 1924, Professor Halper published his Hebrew translation of the work. His translation is based upon the MS. at Oxford, the first four chapters having been compared with that section of the Petrograd MS as published by Kowkowzow. Halper says that in his style, he tried to introduce a breath of the spirit of Medievalism. 19 He does not follow the tradition of the Ibn Tibbons, to translate word for word, but has followed the advice of M. b. E., when he says, "And if you come to translate from Arabic to Hebrew, take the idea and the meaning, but do not translate word for word, for all languages are not alike.....it is best that you carry over the ideas of the source into the best expressions you find in the language into which you are translating". 20

The translation is admirable, clear, succinct, and at all times understandable. It is difficult for me to comment upon

the style of M. b. E. since I have not even a far fetched conception of the original. But if I may, I shall venture a brief estimate, after reading the translation. The style is reminiscent of Montaigne's easy, conversational manner. Like the great French essayist, M. b. E. writes in 'chatty', almost gossip style, starting on a subject, and turning off the road where he finds a pleasant spot to linger. And so, throughout the book, we find the recurring phrase, **נאמר לעתיד**. Then, too, like Montaigne, M. b. E. thoroughly salts his work through with quotations. Greek and Arab philosophers- the Koran and Hebrew Scriptures- all these are cited frequently, familiarly, as old acquaintances. There are sections of the work composed almost entirely of quotation added to quotation. There are sections, which as we read, we feel to have been addressed by the master to his disciple in person; we can almost see him fondly lay his hand upon the youth's shoulder while he gives him the paternal advice to be found in the first part of the eighth^{chapter}/especially. We suspect that he did not really do this, but he wrote as though he were mentally fondling the youth, as he gave him his wisdom. Such was his genial personality!

I have said that Halper's translation is pleasing. Unfortunately, the editing was not so satisfactorily done. Only occasionally does he attempt to identify the men quoted, or mentioned. No effort is made to bring out the significance, for instance, of the fifth chapter. He gives the content and lets the reader make his deductions. This criticism is made because in some few instances

he gives a word about a philosopher quoted by M. b. E. Had he not done so in these instances, we should not have expected more.

Halper gives a discussion in section 8 of his introduction, p. 22 ff., of the sources M. b. E. used in his work. He scarcely mentions books at all; he merely says, 'as so-and-so says'. Very often he quotes without giving the author, though he always makes it clear that it is a quotation, for he despised a literary thief or a plagiarist- as he says: "He who adduces his statements, and does not mention his (the author's) name in connection with them, is like a fly which hovers over a running sore and avoids the healthy spot".²¹

I shall not go into details. M. b. E. quotes the Greek philosophers frequently,- Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Hippocrates, Glaucon, Hermes, Porphyry, also Heraclius, Ptolemy, and Galen- the latter frequently appearing. He mentions Plato's "Timaeus" by name several times. He quotes various Arab philosophers- especially Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi. He mentions and quotes the group of Arab philosophers known as the "Ihwan al-Safa"- the Brethren of Purity. He quotes, more than a dozen times from the Koran. He quotes the Babylonian Talmud frequently, and once from the Palestinian.²² He quotes the Gaonim, Saadya, Hai, and Samuel ben Chofni. He makes one comment which seems to have been taken from the Midrash,²³ **וְרֵאשִׁית יְרֵכָה**. He quotes a comment which may have been taken from the Mechilta.²⁴

Of Jewish writers, he quotes Ibn Gabirol most frequently. He also quotes the poetry of Samuel Ha-nagid, Joseph ibn Sahal, Joseph ibn Chasdai, and makes reference to the **ספר היקקה** of Ibn Janach.

There is only one direct reference to Christian literature, and he says, "Indeed you will also find similar examples in the Christian commentaries (²⁵ **לפנינו הנצרים**)". He mentions John the Baptist (²⁶ **יוחנן בן זכריה**) in connection with the question of the conversion of Rabshakeh. Once he quotes from " ²⁷ **אמר משה** ", but this cannot be identified as Christian. Although he uses Arab writers and the Koran, and Greek philosophy extensively, he seems to have had little acquaintance with Christian thought and literature. In general, the book shows clearly his wide acquaintance with Greek, Arabic, and Jewish literature.

Chapter III

In this chapter I shall attempt to summarize the content of the book. The argument will be presented, and digressions indicated, just as they occur, in the text. This may not make for unity, but it will give a better idea of the style of the book. Men whom M. b. E. quotes will be indicated by name, if not by their statements, to show the sources upon which the author drew. The book is written in the first person, but this summary will be in the third person, excepting direct quotations. The numbers in the margin refer to pages in the text.

The Author's Introduction

- 33 He begins by listing the queries addressed to him by his disciple, who asks concerning:
1. Style and stylists (rhetoric),
 2. Poetry and poets,
 3. Why poetry is natural among the Arabs and artificial among other peoples,
 4. Whether there was rhymed metrical poetry among the Jews in the time of the kingdom, and when the exiled Jews began to write poetry.
 5. Why the Spanish Jews are superior to the other Jews in composing poetry,
 6. That he should give the inquirer his opinions about the poetry which pleases him.
 7. That he should give his opinion of those who say that they composed poetry in their dreams - whether

this be possible.

8. To give the best rules for composing Hebrew poetry after the Arab model.

He comments on the lack of literary appreciation in his generation. He complains of his exile¹ but says that these 34. reasons should not prevent him from answering the questions.

He mentions the Arab writers who have written on this subject - Ibn Qadama,² Ibn al-Mu'tazz,³ al-Hatimi,⁴ ibn Rashi⁵q, and ibn Qutayba.⁶

35 He says that his aim is to give some direction toward the method of poetry among the Jews and Arabs, and the various metres. "I shall be able to show you how the Jews tread in the footsteps of the Arabs, especially in the writing of poetry..... and if in the course of my discourse I adduce a verse of Scripture for which I have found no adequate explanation, I shall give my own opinion, though I may not be sure that it is the true explanation. And most of the matters I introduce are of the various topics which I remember from the writings of the sages and scholars, excepting those things which occurred to me, of my own invention".⁷

36 Then comes a dissertation on the meaning of the word
37 "wisdom", and he ends the chapter with a discussion of how a question should be answered.

The Answer to the First Question

Style and Stylists

38 He says that style (מליצה) is called rhetoric among the Greeks. Aristotle numbers it among the disciplines inferior to strong reason. The aim of rhetoric is to say much in little; to explain deep things in simple fashion.

There are five divisions of learning, which use the various forms of reason: הוכחה - declaration; וכן - argumentation or dialectic; שירה - poetry; מליצה - stylistic prose; and סופיסטיקה - sophistry. Stylists (מליצים) are those who write in prose. Prose is identified by the absence of rhyme and metre.

9 He comments on the aptitude of the Arabs in literature, since God has favored them with a rich language, and quick perceptions.

Then follows a dissertation, with digressions, upon the meaning of the word זביר. He then gives the meanings of the word שיר - either poetry or music. It may also be applied to eulogies and dirges. It may even refer to a work like the שיר השירים.

Scripture abounds in rhetorical passages, especially the prophetic portions. He ends the chapter with a series of illustrative quotations.

The Answer to the Second Question.

Poetry and Poets

44 Poetry is not a science in itself, like mathematics, geometry, or music, nor is it related to the technical sciences; it contains, to some extent, the technical elements, that is, the knowledge of grammar and the laws of language; but it also comprehends the theoretical elements, like the science of metre. In Arabic, poetry is called **שִׁעָר**, from a root whose meaning is 'knowledge; conjecture, or hypothesis'. Others contend that it means 'information' or narration'. Then follows a digression on the various meanings of **נביא** - as for a true, as well as a false prophet, just as **אלהים** may refer to false as well as true gods. Some prophets were messengers; others were not. Every messenger is

45 a prophet, but not every prophet is a messenger. In Hebrew, the poet is called **נביא** and **קוסם**. The **נביא** was astrologer and poet. The expression **חבלי נביאים** in I Samuel 10:5, means a group of poets; the phrase in the following verse, **התנבית עצמך**, means "Thou shalt compose poetry spontaneously". He relates ecstatic prophecy with the spontaneous generation of poetry, getting his idea from the commentary of Saadya on the **ספר יצירה**.

The noun **חרוז**, meaning line or verse, is taken from the idea of 'a string of pearls', gem added to gem, to form a verse, (**ג' י**), and verse added to verse, to form a stanza-(**חזמר**). A verse is at least two words. He gives the structure of a verse, and says that it is explained by ibn Janah in his **ספר הרקמה**.

A parallel to **פיוט** in Hebrew is the word **מלואים**.

Arab writers differ as to which is greater, prose or poetry. "Most of the great ones among them say: "The sun is unlike the moon. Poetry penetrates the ear quickly and clings to the nature of man; it lends itself more readily to noble topics, and is more fitting for marvelous subjects". Another critic says, "A statement in prose flies away like a spark, but poetry endures, as though graven on stone. Poetry preserves forever the generosity of the philanthropist, and the niggardliness of the miser". Poetry is more easily remembered. But, says M. b. E., when men commercialized their art, its beauty departed, and prose was esteemed above poetry.

The Answer to the Third Question.

Why Poetry is Natural Among the Arabs, and Artificial
Among Other Peoples.

47

The inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula (he says) had very little knowledge of the sciences and general learning, except in the study of language. They exalted themselves over other peoples only in respect to the excellency of their language- and their poetic creations, of which they were proud. Aristotle praises them for their attainments in this field - in one of his letters to Alexander.

The Arabs distinguished themselves in the field of poetry
8
during the period of lack of culture, and the later period of Islam. At first, their distinction in this regard was little - growing in

the course of time until excellence of speech came to all- men, women, and children; this quality was theirs because of the temper of their climate, the air of their land, and the drying seas. Therefore, their language was moderately fresh - lower than the speech of the continental Ethiopians- but higher in freshness than the languages of the Sclavs (Slavs). And Galen has said: That for the most part, the features, qualities, and habits of men are related to the nature of the land in which they dwell.

He quotes the letters of the "Faithful Brothers"⁹ to show that Arabia was more fitted to produce poets. He cites Mas'udi¹⁰ who tells of an island in the Indian Ocean- with waters which improve the mind! And he (M. b. E.) even says that the waters of Tiberias increase the understanding.

43 Therefore, the exiles, who were born in Arabia, had pure speech- pleasant voices, and their songs were pleasing- because of the climate and the air. Many were poets; for instance, Samuel ben¹¹ Adijja, who lived in the sixth century, and Rebi'a b. Abi Alhakik¹² or Rabi b. Abi'l-Hukeik.

Perhaps these were Arab poets who chose to adopt the Jewish faith, during the unenlightened period preceding Mohammed, for several Arab tribes had embraced Judaism.¹³ They were the Benu-Kinana, Hamir, and Kinada.

Learned doctors agree that the positions of the planets affect the physical world. He quotes Aristotle- to the effect that the

moon affects the conduct of the world.

He says animals are affected by change of locus- and plants as well. Different animals thrive on different foods. One learned historian says that certain Arab tribes had good memories and imaginations for past events because of their pure language and soft speech. They dabbled in magic and secret learning. These things came to them because they were under the influence of the sphere which controls all things. Discussion of magic- and a Biblical verse follows.

50 Since the Arabs dwelt in the Peninsula close to the borders of Persia, Babylonia, and Syria- their language is delightful, and their poems are pleasing; their writings are more delightful than those of the nomadic Arabs, who dwell in tents in the desert, who are the descendants of Abraham, by his concubines.

51 But our holy people (the Jews) need none of the things which I have ascribed to the Arabs and other peoples, for our principles are divine, and our knowledge comes from the Torah and the prophets. We need no magic or sorcery. All knowledge comes to the Jews by divine revelation, through the medium of the prophets. Then follows a dissertation on **נבואה** and **סודות**.

52 He refers to the claim of the Arabs that the language of the Koran cannot be excelled. He does not contradict the statement here, but refers to Samuel ben Hofni (Gaon of Sura), and to David Alraki
53 Al Mukamatz ¹⁵ in a work called "**עשרים מאמרים**" as well as the works of Saadya. Abu'l-'ala Ma'arri ¹⁶ paraphrased the Koran.

As their political power spread- over Asia Minor and Egypt- so did their language spread; their cities flourished, as did their learning; all extant knowledge was translated into Arabic- because of the richness of their language; they added commentaries to their works.

54 The linguistic relation between Hebrew, Syrian, and Arabic is due to the fact that these peoples live next to each other; therefore they differ little in vocabulary - only in pronunciation and accent. Their respective freshness or dryness is due to physical differences in the air and its humidity, as aforementioned.

Ibrahim ben Barun, in his work "¹⁷ ס'תאן", gives a different reason; because of similarity of a few words to Latin and Greek; But ibn Ezra considers this merely a coincidence.

He cites Dunash ben Tamim Ha-Khairowani ¹⁸ who finds a resemblance in words if not in grammar - but he says he misses the mark.

¹⁹
He quotes Galen, who says Greek is the most pleasant and pure language; most pleasing to mankind, and therefore most acceptable for men of speculative minds. Other languages are grunts and croak-
²⁰
ings, and difficult of utterance. Al-Razi attacks this - but ibn Ezra says that Greece studied so much that philosophy and Greek learning are one!

55 Hebrew also praised purity of speech, and disparaged the impure. But since it ceased to be used, its beauty departed.

In translation, it is oft necessary to paraphrase, because of differences in languages, as Chefez al-Kuti ²¹ points out. *He goes? Churhan?*

The Answer to the Fourth Question.

Whether there was rhymed metrical poetry among the Jews of the kingdom, and when the exiled Jews began to write poetry.

57 In answer to this question he says that we have but the three books, Psalms, Job, and Proverbs. Even these have only an external resemblance to Arabic poetry, since they have no rhyme or metre. A few instances of rhyme may be found, and various poems in prose.

58 It is difficult to determine when the exiles first followed the Arab rules of rhyme and metre. All we can say is that the scattered exiles followed the customs of the people about them.

He introduces the question of Rabshakeh- ²² as to whether he was a converted Jew. He says רבשעק refers to one who is baptized, as Johanan ben Zechariah (John the Baptist) practiced; he also says that Rabshakeh lived before the Christian era.

He says that a traveller reported to him that Ghazni, the capital of Khorasan, contained over 40,000 Jews, who were heavily taxed. ²³

When the Jews were exiled again, they neglected to keep up their language. It has become corrupt- almost lost. Only the books of the canon remain as a model of our ancient language, and

these do not contain a rich vocabulary. Yet all our literature is based on the language of Scripture- prayer,praise, dirge, etc.

The Mishnah is also a source for our own language, though it is oft ungrammatical. And he concludes this chapter by saying that it would be desirable to re-write the Hebrew grammar, taking into account the irregularities of the Mishnah.

The Answer to the Fifth Question.

Why the Spanish Jews are Superior to the Other Jews in Composing Poetry.

There are various reasons for this:

Firstly- because they are of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. And these tribes dwelt in and around Jerusalem. They are the exiles who returned from Babylon and were later exiled into Spain and Rome, as Scripture says (Obadiah 1:20):..."and the captivity of this host of the Children of Israel that are among the Canaanites even unto Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem that is in Sepharad". And we have a tradition that צרפת is France, and

אנדלוס is Spain. The latter country is called Andalusia in Arabic, since the Arabs connect it with a man named Andalsan.²⁴ who lived in the time of the early king Al-adhahhak; in Latin it is Hispania; it is called after the name of a man who was its master in the days of the Romans- before the Goths came. His name was Ishpan, and the capital was Seville (אשפניל). The²⁵ ancients called it אשפניל.

There is no doubt that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, whose descendants, we the Spanish exiles are, were more skilled in purity of diction and jurisprudence than the inhabitants of other cities and villages.²⁶

63

And when the Arabs conquered the Andalusian peninsula from the Goths, who had in turn wrested it from the Romans some three hundred years before,²⁷ (this was in the time of Alwalid b'nu Abdu Almalik b'nu Marwan,²⁸ of the Dynasty of Umjah in Syria, in the 92nd year of their calculation which they call the Hegira.²⁹) the exiles learned from them, in the course of time, the various branches of science. They learned the language of the Arabs, dipped into their books, and enjoyed their poetry. Then the Jews began to learn the grammar of Hebrew, and the rules of Hebrew grammar were explained by Abu Zechariah Judah ben David Alfasi,³⁰ called Hajjuj, and by his confreres.

These works were well received, and explained many things. Several men were aroused to search the speculative sciences, and to gather philosophical learning, though they did not excel in their compositions. They merely became acquainted with the writings of poetry, understood its rules, and appreciated its wonders.

31

In the course of the 47th century there appeared Hasdai ben Isaac ben Shaprut, originally from Jaen, but he flourished in Cordoba.³²

Vk

In those days, the sleeping ones were aroused from their slumbers, when they saw the works of their exalted prince, and his great intellect and generous soul and beautiful character. He drew upon the wisdom of the Orient, and sought pearls of wisdom in distant lands. He strengthened the pillars of wisdom,³³ and gathered unto him men of learning from Syria and Babylon.

His contemporaries composed excellent books, and gathered material on marvelous subjects. They praised him in Arabic works. They were given high rank by him- and he also gave them opportunity and means to achieve their ends.

64 The first to compose a complete grammar, inclusive and comprehensive,³⁴ of the Hebrew language was Abu Zechariah ben David Alfasi who later dwelt in Cordoba. He was known as Hajjuj.

As a matter of fact, others had anticipated him on this subject- Saadya and others. But they did not know the "חֲקֵי הָאֲנִיּוֹת" "הַלֵּלוּ וְהַנְטִיחוּ".

A man in Jerusalem composed a similar work called כּוּלָּם³⁵ - (which included many helpful things) which however followed the ideas of earlier grammarians, and took no account of the weak letters.

Among the authors and poets was Dunash ben Labrat Halevi;³⁶ born in Bagdad, educated in Fez; and his disciple Ibn Shesheth;³⁷

38

also Menahem ben Saruk of Tortosa, later of Cordoba. But none of these attained a high degree of success, nor are they distinguished in their works.

After them appeared a second group, surpassing them in virtuosity and purity of diction; Joseph ben Santash - called ³⁹ ibn Ibrahim of Merida, who later lived in Cordoba; and Isaac ibn Gikitilah⁴⁰; and R. Isaac ben Saul⁴¹. The two latter were from Lucena; they indulged in a quarrel. Ibn Gikitilah was the sharper, since 64 his knowledge of literature was more comprehensive. To this group belong also Isaac abu Kapron⁴² and Hakohen b. Almazram⁴³, both of Cordoba. After them were Abu Omer ben Jaku⁴⁴ and Abu Zechariah⁴⁵ ben Haninah of Cordoba.

And in Lucena at that time there were the leaders- Abu Alwalid Hasdai⁴⁶, and Abu Suleiman ben Raschilah⁴⁷ and Abu Ibrahim Barun⁴⁸. And below them in rank we place Ibn Abi Jaku, called 49 Almatubi, who lived at the end of the period of these poets, and Abu Ibrahim ben Halfon⁵⁰, certainly a poet (his father came to Spain a short time before from N. Africa). He was one of the first Hebrew poets who made poetry his profession. He composed poetry for the presents he received, and travelled about the country receiving gifts from the patrons of the arts in the various cities.

Between the poets aforementioned, and those whom I shall mention later- are those who composed un-metrical piutim. Their

65 diction was pure and unadorned (by unadorned, I mean they used none of the poetic devices which I shall later explain), and their words caused no difficulty to the congregation.

Most of them did not follow Orthodox paths. Some adopted the new style and followed the laws of metre and versification. Their works resembled the earlier productions of the Arabs (but not their later productions!). Some of these early Paitanim, and many later ones, introduced the science of astronomy into their prayers- especially the science of the upper spheres, and burdened the Hebrew language with matters beyond its bounds, until in these compositions we pass from prayer and petition to dialectic and argument.

But he who takes something of these subjects, and uses it to ornament his prayer and beautify it, he is nearer to the proper manner.. The limit of propriety, according to those who discuss it, is that which approximates truth.

After that there was a great war in Spain- the Berber War⁵¹ at the end of the aforementioned century. War and famine caused the decline of science.

When the pressure of the times receded, and men relaxed, a new group of poets arose, whose words were delightful and whose aims were pleasing. Their leader was Samuel, originally of Merida, brought up and educated in Cordoba, and whose sphere⁵² of influence was in Granada.

66

His songs were like a bubbling spring, borne on sweet words, filled with shading and coloring, full of content, beautifully conceived, and brilliant in style. He created many new innovations in thought; this may be seen from his poetical works, *שירי אהרן*

שירי אהרן and so on. He was the greatest of this group. He composed the aforementioned works in his latter years.

(*שירי אהרן*) prayers and petitions with special rhythm and metres, which no other poet, before or after him, has used.

He introduced into this work many Arabian and Persian parables, the wisdom of philosophy, the fruits of nations long vanished, as well as sayings of our ancient saints. These things he clothed in ornamental style. His contemporaries never attained to his skill, and they resemble only the ancient Arabic poets. His works are known all over the world. All his writings excell in style- he clothed his thoughts in beauty and wisdom.

In his day, wisdom recovered from its lowly state, and the stars of knowledge shone once more.....

But why enlarge and expatiate on his virtues- you must know of one whose fame has penetrated **the bounds** of the earth. He had detractors, who later fell upon his verses to find fault with them (since he did not always trouble to be exactly correct in his Hebrew grammar. They fell upon him and ripped his work to pieces, only after he was dead. This **is** neither gentlemanly nor courageous.

It is surprising that for the sake of the general excellency

of his work, they could not forgive him his few errors. Did it not occur to them that only the fleet horse falls- only the sharp sword penetrates- only the mighty man can be humbled? Man is a weak creature. What man does not err?

But with regard to his works- his sagacious parables- and the epigrams scattered through his works, no man can impugn them. And that one is contemptible, who quotes his epigrams without giving his name- in order to show himself off!

68 He was succeeded as ⁵³אֵשֶׁר by his son Joseph. He was charitable. In his day, learning flourished, and the reign of poetry was enhanced. His generous gifts caused the dumb to speak, and the stupid to utter beautiful phrases.

Not only did he know Hebrew thoroughly, but Arabic- and its poetry and prose- and the history of the Arabs and its sources. He went into all these things because of his service to the kingdom and the affairs of state which they placed upon him.

In his Hebrew poems, he lauds war and praises the spiritual qualities. His poems are beautiful- but few. He was killed in Granada on the 20th of ⁵⁴אֲב, 4827. His loss was a great one. There was cause to fear that ancient learning was lost with him. He and his father brought honor to our race, and happiness to us, for a period of 35 years. R. Joseph Hanagid left a young son, named Abu Natzr. Isaac ben Ghayat brought him up. He composed beautiful poetry, but he died in his twentieth year. ⁵⁵

69 Among the poets and writers of that flourishing generation
were: R. Levi ben Saul of Cordoba (later of Tortosa),⁵⁶ M. Joseph
ben Kapriel (who later lived in Granada),⁵⁷ M. Abun ben Sharara,
of Lucena (later of Seville),⁵⁸ and R. Moses ben Gikitila (who
later lived in Sargassa).⁵⁹ The latter was foremost among scholars,
writers, and savants; he was numbered among the renowned writers
of both languages, despite his illness. There were also Abu Ishaq
Hidjadj of Granada,⁶⁰ Abu Ibrahim ben Leb, of Granada,⁶¹ and Abu Al-
Rebiyah ben R. Baruch, of Lucena.⁶²

In this distinguished generation there lived in Eastern Spain
Abu Omar ben Chasdai,⁶³ whose works are few but beautiful. He
wrote a Kasidah called "The Orphaned Song" written for Samuel Ha-
nagid. The latter answered him; so he wrote a poem in praise of
him. He excelled in his ability to portray his visions; in this
poem he introduced many literary devices.

69 Abu Alfahdil,⁶⁴ his son, inherited his knowledge of all branches;
versed in philosophy and literary composition, in both Hebrew and
Arabic. Abu Alhassan Musi ben Al-takanah was of good family and
learned.⁶⁵ He was killed when less than 30 years of age, in the
collapse of a building near Apala.

70 Abu Ajub ben Judah ben Gabirol of Cordoba, born in Malaga
and raised in Sargossa, lived at this time. He curbed his desires
and lower instincts, and chose the best of philosophy. Ben Gabirol
was the most youthful of the poets of his time, but he surpassed
them all in his style. He died after he reached 30, in Valencia.⁶⁶
His poetic style was exceedingly delightful. He resembled the

later Moslem poets. He was the first of the Hebrew poets to use the (style of) poem called **שיר**. He put ethical ideas into his poetry. He wrote poems of **praise and dirges; songs of exultation and sweet love songs; ethical poems, and poems of vindication (apologetics).**

Though he is numbered among the philosophers, in his nature and intellect, his emotional nature dominated his intellect. He could not control his anger; he thought nothing of writing contemptuously of men who praised him. After his death, the critics sought to belittle him- but perfection is God's alone.

I have no need to expatiate and remark on his errors. My aim in this work is not to point out the mistakes of the poets who have preceded me, nor to cast aspersions on their works, nor yet to publish their defects. Neither is it my aim to choose between the good and the bad in their works. My aim is to present their beautiful words, and to give my opinion about their defects; I call attention to mistakes only when it is necessary, and impossible to avoid mentioning them in the course of the discussion. In cases of this kind, I do not give the name of the author, but merely adduce the examples, to warn the reader against similar statements. And there is no use in remembering the example of mistakes adduced, though the science of literary analysis is very important in the study of poetry and the speculative sciences, as has been said, "Analysis of an utterance is more important than the utterance itself".

In my work, called *שו"ת מל"ג*, I found occasion to present several of these statements, and refer to them and investigate their veracity.

72 In the latter years of that generation arose a new group of poets, following in the footsteps of the aforementioned. At times they succeeded in distinguishing themselves exceedingly in 'weaving' poems, and in the delightful quality of their utterances and in the depth of their thought and purity of their style.

The oldest and most distinguished of this company was Isaac ibn Ghayath, of Lucena, the home of Poetry. He was an authority on Hebrew and Syriac (Aramaic?). He wrote much on Halachah and grammar; also liturgical poetry; but did not write many metrical verses, since he was not versed in the arts of the Arabs. He died in Cordoba, 1089, and was buried in Lucena. ⁶⁷

68
Among his contemporaries was Samuel ben Hanania, pious, ascetic, versed in Halachah. He had better style than Isaac ibn Ghayath in letters, rhetoric, and metrical verse. He wrote stories and history.

Also Isaac ben Baruch of Cordoba. He was expert in Halachah and natural sciences. In addition he was a good writer and poet. He served the Abuadia dynasty, with his knowledge of natural science and astronomy. His station was high, and his praise filled the land. He died in Granada, 1094, and was buried in Cordoba. ⁶⁹

73 Isaac ben Reuben of Barcelona, Halachist of renown, also
70 wrote liturgical poetry.

Isaac Fasi had a strong religious feeling. He composed no
71 poetry. Other contemporaries were: Abu Suleiman ben Muhajar 72 and
73 Abu Alfatah ben Ashar, both of Seville. They were poets and learned
in the various sciences, and both came of good families.

74
73 Abu Zechariah-Judah ibn Balam, of Toledo, who later lived
in Seville composed excellent commentaries, separating the grain
from the chaff and concentrating the essences. He had a good
memory, but was unable to control his anger. No one escaped his
destructive attacks. He rudely aired his low opinions of men. I
have described him as a man whose learning is locked in his head,
where he kept it, for there is a distinction between retention
and memory. Memory includes not only retention but also recall.
Ibn Balam had the power of recall as well as retention.

75
74 Other poets of Toledo were: Abu Harun abi Aljaish, and Abu
76 Ishaq ben Alharizi.

77
Poets of Seville were: Joseph ibn Megas, of Granada, who
78 later lived in Seville; Abu Zechariah ben Abun.

'At the end of that generation there lived in Granada Abu
79 Joseph ben Almara. And among the poets who composed passionate
80 poetry and pleasant pieces was my eldest brother Abu Ibrahim. He
learned the art from his extended study of Arabic literature. He
died in Lucena, 1121.

At that time, in Eastern Spain, lived Abu Omar ibn al-Dajjan⁸¹ who wrote ethical works in poetry and prose; and was learned in various sciences. Of the same period were: Abu Ishaq ben Pekuda⁸² and Abu Suleiman ben Amah⁸³. Among the poets was Abu'l hasan⁸⁴ Ezra ibn Elaazar. The best pupil of ibn Ghayath was Abu Omar ibn Sahal⁸⁵, who was of prominent family, of refined intellect, a poet and Halachist. He was sincere in his utterances, but he did not withhold his scorn. Most of his sarcasm was directed against the critics of literature and poetry. But if he had abstained from such references, it would have been more to his credit. He died in Cordoba in 1123.

At the end of this generation appeared a new group- skilled in poetry, following the manner of those who preceded them, and using images and metaphors. They had various methods, and their ranking differs according as they varied in degree of excellence. But, no matter where they lived, they were included in the cycle of beauty and perfection.

The leading ones of this group were: Abu Omar Joseph ben Zadik⁸⁶ of Cordoba (he was of good nature, ready to come to aid of his friends; knew Halachah); Abu Zechariah ben Ghayath⁸⁷ of Lucena, (who later lived in Granada)- his muse was spontaneous, and his knowledge of literature was wonderful.

Among those who excelled in Halachah was Abu Ajub Al'mu'alim⁸⁸ of Seville. He composed well in both languages.

Also Abu'l Hassan ben Ha-levi⁸⁹ who composed sparkling verses and
parables; and Abu Ishaq ben Ezra⁹⁰ who was of the high ranking
writers. Both of these were originally of Toledo, and later
lived in Cordoba. They reached the highest pinnacle of poetry
in the Arab style.

Abu'l Hassan ben Battas⁹¹ was a famous Halachist and poet
who came of an excellent family. Alfaham ben Altuban⁹² was a
great scholar and teacher, poet and writer. His pupil Abu Ibrahim⁹³
ben Barun was of respected family. He wrote in both languages.
Abu'l Hassan ben Elazar⁹⁴ was a natural scientist and poet. Abu
Ibrahim ben Mashcran⁹⁵ was a poet of good taste whose poetry was
exact (סדויק).

Among those who wrote many poems, containing beautiful ideas,
and who translated the best literature from Hebrew into Arabic,
was Abu Saïd Faraz ben Chasdai⁹⁶. Though he was of a race of slaves
he was a free-man in his character.

I met most of these writers, and discussed various things
with them- With few exceptions, their ideas correspond to mine-
though we are separated, yet we are neighbors in thought.

Among these whom I have mentioned are many who devoted their
talent to composing poetry and piutim, who labored in belles
lettres (אגרות סליצק) and good literature.

These groups are like water - dripping at first (their works!), then flowing forth as a mighty stream.

In addition to the poets are the many noble men, of princely family, who have taken over the learning concerning law and

نحو, to Arabic and sacred literature, philosophical and speculative sciences; also in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. But I shall not discuss their labors in these fields, since you have asked me only concerning rhetoric and poetry.

77

He says, that in addition to those whom he has mentioned, there were other poets, of bad character, stupid, etc., who were given to self-love, who were given over to evil and avoided the good. They knew nothing of writing. They judge everything by first ~~by~~ impression, and write in hurried manner. They have no fear of critics, and are unconcerned with the niceties of language. They think that poetry is only a matter of proper rhyme and metre. There is nothing worse than a mediocre poet- a poet should be very hot, or very cold! The first quality arouses wonder; the second sadness; the median- nothing at all.

78

There is another intermediary group, who specialize in sarcasm, avoiding understanding. The length of their tongues compels them to stint on language of taste. Their verbosity drowns their intellect. Better that a man's reason exceed his expression, than vice versa!

78 In weaving, painting, etc., a man's abilities are evaluated
by the people, because they can see and comprehend his work.
79 But in the learned professions- medicine, astrology, mathematics-
a man may claim great things for himself, since the people have
no knowledge of these things.

Then follows a dissertation on Sophists. There is another
group who blaspheme the Bible by using its verses to attack men.

He concludes the chapter by stating that he has mentioned
only the greater poets.

The Answer to the Sixth Question.

His Opinions About the Poetry Which Pleases Him.

81 There is no written work, except the "Prophets" in which the
critic cannot detect faults and errors.
97

Sometimes, for one good stanza we pardon the mistakes of
the rest of the poem; one good line is sufficient to redeem a poem.

82 He then deplores the decline in poetic endeavor, and diverges
into a discussion of the value of a good name as a heritage to
be left behind (he quotes Socrates and Aristotle). He says that
poetry has its place, but it must be born into a receptive world;
he feels that his generation is not especially favorable to writers.
83 But the writer is above the stupid masses. He says, the people

of his generation are like trees in a barren land- without shade or branches; and the animals, from which we get food and leather, are more useful than most men.

He does not number himself among those who bewail the times and the character of the people of his generation. He says that he has tasted the bitter and the sweet of life.

He then gives a digression on the futility of trying to cope with stupidity; and he goes into a discussion of the divine motives, arriving at the same conclusion as Job- that there is no divine retribution in life- no just distribution of wealth and poverty; though he says that God's mercy is indubitable and inscrutable; man can only give thanks to God for His mercy.

The second reason he does not lament is that God has been kind to him, and man should never desire too much; desire creates unhappiness. And he elaborates this. Ambition, hope, and dissatisfaction with one's lot are not desirable qualities. He quotes Plato: ⁹⁸Lessen your goods, and lessen your worries. He quotes Socrates: The real riches - to have sufficient to eat and wear. Another says, "Riches of the spirit are greater than richness in property". Be content with thy lot. If what you seek, cannot be found, seek that which may be found. Despise the world; its phenomena are like a shower which soon disappears.

89

"I am a rich 'poor man', a pauper who has much, for there is no greater poverty than stupidity- and no man more lonesome, than he who loves himself! "

Nevertheless he has never ceased to write poetry, for as Plato says: He who learns, for its own sake, does not tire of it when he finds that it has no market value.....He who studies for monetary profit, ceases when he finds none.

90

He says his metrical works number over six hundred stanzas on various subjects.....many are laudations, some are elegies- of relatives and friends. Some he wrote to amuse himself, and some to preserve the memory of some departed one. Sometimes he uses fictitious names, which some readers apply to known men. He then quotes some of his poems on the people of his times who are slow to understand and appreciate poetry.

91

Here he refers to one of his poems as written **גאון אבות**.
Men of ability have passed away.

92

Touching sarcastic and humorous poetry, he does not concern himself with it nor strive to remember it. They are the products of youth. As for **שירי גאון**, poetry of scorn or mockery, he never composed ^{any} about/particular man, despite the fact that these are very easy to write . But no one assailed his honor, he says, and he had no cause to assail the honor of anyone. Avoid the company of those who revile others- better is solitude than the company of the wicked. Associate with good men. Books are the

best companions (dissertation on books as companions). Men do not always realize their own shortcomings. He who habituates himself to control his desires- desires little.

There are some men who exercise no restraint at all; but he says that he will not cheapen himself by writing about them; besides it is futile; anger distorts the senses. It is better to ignore such people. Jealousy is the greatest worry, and men hate that which they do not understand. A certain righteous man asked God to protect him from those who slandered and reviled him. God answered, "How can I do for you that which I cannot do for myself?"

(Here he gives some stanzas on the subject.)

If it happens that he went beyond bounds in his compositions on certain men, or in despising or praising them, or in writing boastful poems, he has only followed those who went before him, who speak of the two laws of exaggeration: (1) nimbleness of speech, and (2) ornamenting the utterances.

The experts in the field of style, consider limpidity (limpidity of expression) the desired end in poetic endeavors. Some derogate and some praise suggestion or hint in poetry.

These two kinds of poetry are important, and honor is due the one who first used them. They said the purpose of hint (suggestion) was style, and added that when the poet uses something which

exceeds the bounds of reality, and enters the realm of the impossible, he does so only allegorically to illustrate the subject ~~the subject~~ the best way, despite the fact that it has been said: "The best proof is to relate that which will be received by the heart". And "the best thing is the most true". This statement is true enough, but it cannot include poetry, for it has been said, "The excellence of poetry lies in its falsifications!" Some one once asked about the nature of poets, and was answered that "they are men, who alone are forgiven for untruths." But if poetry is stripped of its illusions and delusions, it ceases to be poetry. Poetry contains elements which will not survive close scrutiny (quotes Arabic poem relevant to this: "He is the sea; from whatever side you approach him you will find that his shores are generosity and his bounds are kindness, etc.") All these phrases are figments of style; the poet means only that the man referred to is a generous philanthropist.

But to the rationalist, such phrases will not be valid, because it is necessary to bring proof of their verity, either through reason or the senses; well known facts, or those based on an authentic tradition which cannot be doubted, as for instance "Bagdad is in the universe!" (and proofs taken from well known facts are the best, for they are the individual property of the speaker, while hearsay may be the property of the one addressed.) or by verified experiment. And he who believes a thing contrary to reason, debases the most precious gift of God! Excluded from this category are the miracles performed to prove divine revelation,

and the authority of the prophets.

Aristotle classifies varieties of speech: "There is true and false speech, and median speech which is neither true nor false". "True statements are proofs (or examples) and things similar to them. False statements - are the words of the poets, in their fashion (though) not in the essence of their words. Touching the mean- between true and false, there is the type in which the elements of truth exceed the false, for instance, the words of the **מ'יכיל** (dialecticians), and the type in which the false predominates over the true - for example, the words of the Sophists; and there is yet another in which truth and falsehood are equal - e.g. the words of rhetoricians (stylists) and preachers".

99

The poet uses exaggeration. He quotes Alfarabi, "Poetic utterances on various subjects, are the fruit of the imagination with regard to that subject- whether it be to deride the ugly, or glorify the beautiful.....When poets write, they see with the mind's eye- as we see in reality with our own eyes". The poet makes us to feel with him. Of course we must not let imagination run riot. "We must be able to recognize poetic imagery and not confuse it with fact. A sage thus states this idea briefly: The poet is like the painter. The beautiful, artistic painting is only for the eyes- and is not essentially true".

The Answer to the Seventh Question.

His Opinion of Those Who Say They Compose Poetry in Their Dreams
Whether This Be Possible.

101 This answer requires more explanation than I shall give it, he says. I shall merely present part of the subject: Sleeping and Waking are two conditions which come at disjointed intervals upon the body. Sleep is when the soul ceases entirely to make use of the senses (the body rests from the labor of voluntary action) and uses thought and imagination and other natural powers more than she uses them in waking hours. Then the impulses are collected inward in the body, and the heat and vapors from the body arise and are concentrated within the head, filling its canals and the passages of the brain (מוח).

Then sense perception fades, and innate instincts invade the body, envelop consciousness (הכוח הנלשית) and prevent it from functioning either in motor or sensory capacity. Therefore, sleep prevents the senses from performing their normal functions. When the natural powers (instincts ?) enter the soul, the body rests. And when the body rests, if it is not ill, the senses rest also.

Then comes suggestion (החוש השמימי) which envelops the forms of things which appear material in waking, into the appearance of things immaterial (in sleeping). Things which man sees, in waking, as in having motion, in sleeping, he sees them as stationary- unmoving; and in a state of rest, they are more

pleasant and beautiful than when in motion.

Said Galen: the soul asleep, when it retires within to the inner recesses of the body, away from the external sensations, turns its imagination to things which it saw in waking. Therefore when a man is filled with oppressive troubles, in sleeping he will feel as though weighted down by heavy burdens. And vice versa, when his mind is free of care, he imagines that he flies! And similarly with regard to desire; when a seminal emission occurs; when there is much semen, and desire is strong, the sleeper formulates the image of the one whom he loves and desires.

102 With regard to these introductory remarks- philosophers have already gone into detail, especially Aristotle in his treatise on the senses and the objects of sense perception, and a second work in which he speaks about the science of dreams and action.. But he says that he will only refer to several things from it.

The philosophers state that all powers of the human body are dependent on each other- i.e. they supplement each other. For instance, retention and recall refer to things which are passed, which have been perceived by the senses previously, as though hearing, or seeing, or any of the other senses. Since this is so, the senses convey their impressions first to visionary imagination (הכח המצייר), then to the rational faculty, and finally to memory. The rational faculty chooses between the reality and the (suggested) image, and then the faculty of memory receives it. Visual imagination comprehends the appearance

and form of the object, and memory takes it in, in the median of its tested reality. For memory can retain no more than that which is forgotten; and this depends upon (what is left after) the test (to which the object is put) by Reason.

Dreams are vivid mental pictures, for they are perceived by the inner senses. In the books of prophecy and the Prophets are found many known and certain facts about dreams.

There are two kinds of dreams - false and true.

The true dreams come from the understanding, and the human soul, which moves in a constant fashion and leads to things of the present. For imagery pertaining only to reason is spiritual imagery (which is excluded from the category of the physical images which appear in waking, as a cloud differs from a curtain), and are therefore more sensual and clear, and for this reason early thinkers compared them to heavenly pictures.

False dreams are worthless, coming from the faculty of association. This sense is called "association" because it perceives, (through the physical senses- as for instance, 'seeing') the materialism of objects, and conveys the perception to the spiritual sense, that is, imagination, within the head. Scientists say that false dreams come not from the human soul nor from reason, but from suggestion and imagination.

If a dream comes from sense perception, it is a false and worthless image.

But a true dream comes from the rational faculties. The matter is thus: when the mind wishes to reveal to the soul something which God made known to it, and to show its spiritual visions and spiritual messages which He has, then the mind becomes the intermediary between God and the soul.

From the foregoing, it would appear that dreams of the sensual variety have no meaning. And dreams which come when sense perception ceases, and the body rests, (though sleep does not impair spiritual functions; on the contrary, they are more awake and more pure, since they are more remote from the (influence of) physical senses).

One of the sages of our people said: there are four kinds of dreams:

1) Those sensed by the soul, that is to say, when the soul itself receives the stimulus of the dream, through its own faculties and inner senses, and it (the dream) comes to it from God, with regard to present affairs without intermediary use of the physical senses.

2) A divine power which prevents the soul from knowing rational affairs of the present.

3) When God stirs and awakens the soul and informs it about what will befall it.

4) When the soul indulges in pure reason, and makes no use whatsoever of the senses.

A true dream comes only from pure reason, uninfluenced by suggestion (association); it is not a figment of the imagination,

and the understanding does not know it, and it does not lodge in the memory.

And the images which appear in a dream, when influenced by suggestion and imagination, come from perception and sensation, and are therefore invalid.....

104 (He continues discussion of psychology of dreams).

Dreams at the end of the last watch predict the future- and testify to the good character of the dreamer. Also he says that the soul lives and knows things better than the body- and will know more when separated from the body. He says that we cannot doubt that poetry and prose have been composed in dreams- he says that we have the testimony of reliable men of our own nation. One of these is Hai Gaon ^{the} (on/authority of R. Mazliah Dajjan Zakliah who saw it himself when he visited Hai in Bagdad, and later related it to Samuel Ha-nagid). The incident was as follows: The Gaon did not know the meaning of a certain word he found in the commentary of Saadya. Saadya appeared in a dream ¹⁰⁰ and told him where to find it.

Also Samuel ibn Nagdila, after the death of one of his opponents, the vizier Ibn Abaas- foretold the death of Ibn Abi Musai- ¹⁰¹ the friend of Ibn Abaas, in some stanzas. (He, (ibn Ezra) does not say that they were composed in a dream- but the context denotes this).

A sage said: Dreams of present and past events are not dependable- they are influenced by association and suggestion.

The most valid dream is one concerning the future. But the verses of the Magid comprise elements of both classes.

Isaac ibn Ghayath of Lucena composed a stanza in a dream which gave him the title of one of his poems.

106 We have many other such testimonies- and the ancients looked upon the pure dream as one of the divisions of prophecy. Of course, a true dream may contain some invalid evidence- just as there must be chaff among the grain, excepting prophecy. Then he introduces quotations warning against giving heed to false dreams and dreamers.

Inasmuch as a man may see in his dreams things wonderful, of which he may never have heard, and whose significance he does not understand, he may be inclined to doubt their spiritual significance- and believe that they are beyond the realm of reason. This is not the case, however; they give a hint toward mysterious hidden things. If the interpreter of the dream is wise and learned and pious, and of stronger intellect than the one who had the dream, then he may supplement and complete the interpretation of the parts which the dreamer did not understand. For after all, interpreting dreams is a part of the mysterious divine learning, and men can understand dreams only with the help of God.

107

Natural scientists (חכמי הטבע) interpret dreams and their signs as follows:

He who dreams frequently about rain, and seas, and rivers, and things like these, it is a sign that the moistness of his strength prevails over him.

He who sees in his dreams at successive times fire, and lightning and war, and similar things, it is a sign that happiness (or passion? חרה להיבה) predominates in him.

He who sees scarlet colors, and orange (red) and flowing blood, it is a sign that his blood (or passion? דם) predominates in him.

He who sees black colors, it is a sign that melancholy dominates in his character.

He who sees a warm wind, or a snow storm, it is a sign that he will be warm or cold.

But there is no basis for these statements, and others similar to them.

Some psychologists say: when artisans, i.e. goldsmiths, weavers, and cobblers have dreams in which they appear to be doing the tasks of their waking hours, it is certain that these dreams come from association and suggestion and are not reliable.

The ancient sages say of these dreams: they do not appear to a man except when he is troubled.

And despite the fact that poetics is not a physical trade (אמנות אופנית) but a spiritual one, yet, since the poet utilizes his intellect dilligently in this art, and strives to be productive,

it is possible (by analogy to the dreams of the artisan) to relate his dreams to the faculties of suggestion and association.

Therefore he will recite or compose poetry in his dreams, just as he does when awake. Indeed, such poems are on subjects to which he gave no thought or on matters which he did not purpose, and are diversions conceived by choice. But if he says in his dreams what he purposed and thought about, then he is a prophet. At times the poet may engage his thoughts with matters pertaining to style, whether in poetry or prose, to the degree that God has favored him with equanimity (~~of mind~~). If the poet who meditates on a certain subject is clean in his nature, and of balanced temper, as much as possible, and of pleasing qualities, and his temper inclines toward clean and pure introspection, then when his body and senses rest, his mental powers will dominate those physical powers, which are influenced by the intellect, he will receive what (inspiration?) he desires, and will be shown the path he seeks. And when he awakes, he will entrust his desire to his memory, that he may recall it.

"This is what I have seen fit to bring forth here with regard to the question you asked me. But God alone really knows the answer!!"

The Answer to the Eighth Question.

The Best Rules For Composing Hebrew Poetry After the Arabic Model.

109 Poetry is not a science in itself. like mathematics, or astronomy, or music- whose principles are the same in any language- and whose results can be translated without actually changing them. But literature is bound up with language, and changes in translation.

110 Grammatical knowledge is essential for writing. Cites
102
"פני הקישר" of Judah ibn Balām.

111 It is impossible to learn the art of poetry by hearing or seeing; it must be an innate natural gift. Knowledge of language is not enough. (He cites Arabic writers who composed no
103 104 105 106
poetry: Ibn Almkafa, Abdu Alhamid, Alatzmai, and Alnahitz.

Also Hebrew writers like Alwalid ibn Janah and Abu Ishaq ben
107
112 Saktar - called ibn Jashush- knew the Hebrew language extremely well, but wrote not a stanza of poetry; though Alwalid mentions in his פני הקישר that he composed a few short poems, but people jealous of him ascribed them to ibn Chalfon.

113 If you find that your nature will aid you, and your tongue drives you to write poetry, do so while the clay is damp and the wood soft. One must begin studies early in life; success comes only with labor. A man without knowledge cannot know himself; how much less, others!

114 In the eighth book of the speculative writings of Aristotle, he gives the means of poetic success: (1) vibrant language, (2) delightful meanings, (3) to say much in few words, (4) beautiful imagery, (5) nice transitions (העצירות), (6) coherence (unity of thought... השוויכות), (7) to be particularly excellent in opening and closing verses, (8) and to separate subjects. To three things, says Aristotle, can the poet attain: (1) to economy of expression, (2) to ornamental conceits, and (3) to be explicit in meaning.

The ear tests words; that which pleases you, take and use.
115 The sense of hearing tests the subjects to be studied.

The word is the 'vessel' or container of a subject. An expression that does not contain beautiful meaning or content is worthless.

Spiritual wisdom is received through the ordinary soul, but practical learning comes through the senses. Practical knowledge is finite; spiritual learning can never satisfy.
116 He who receives it always craves more.

Do not hesitate to ask advice of those above you- even though they be above you only in years.

Write only the best of what you have heard, and remember only
117 the best of what you have read.

In his book on ¹⁰⁸ **אידין**, Isaac ben Solomon Israeli gives some good maxims. But do not get your knowledge from books, when you can get it from a man.

Again he says that the art of rhetoric consists in concise expression; and also it is nice thought in pure language.

118 (Digression on the use of the word **770** in Scripture).

119 He, who reads the productions of ignorant people and examines their works, is as bad as though he associated with them.

120 Keep away from vain and intricately interwoven thought.

A wise man learns, before he attempts to do some thing.

121 A man full of worries cannot write. (He quotes ibn Qutayba).

One can never hope to please everyone; nor can one ever entirely escape criticism, since those who have good judgment and exercise it fairly are rare.

121 (Digression on the meaning of **אִיִּם** and **אִיִּם**).

122 Beware of a dissembling man! Beware of one who cannot keep a secret. (Quotes Hermes).

123 Do not listen to a flatterer. Do not fear criticism of friends.

124 Be careful in the use of assonant words, and alliteration,
though it occurs in Scripture, and Scripture, of course, is
correct; yet, since we are following Arab models, we must do
as they suggest.

125 He indicates that he does not believe in midrashic
hermeneutics.

126
127
128 Discussion of Biblical style.
129

109

131 He quotes ibn Al Takhana.

132 When you wish to translate from Arabic to Hebrew- take
the idea- never word for word!

134 Use nice language at the beginning and the end of poems.
Do not overestimate the value of your productions. The wise
135 man knows that he does not know.

136 Give your work to a friend for criticism. (A friend is
indeed a precious thing!) A friend is close in spirit, a brother
in flesh! (Dissertation on 'friend' and 'brother' -- series of
110 quotations).

137 If he gives you counsel out of his heart, receive it eagerly,
138 and thank him. (Discussion of jealousy).

139 Let not thy desire restrain thee from thy work. Passion
mars the intellect. Pleasure is fleeting.

140 Read your works to another as his audition will be a test
of them.

Men of good quality love others of the same qualities; but evil men hate those of their ilk.

141 (Quotes Samuel Gaon ¹¹¹אנן הנהיגה; on praise and disparagement in poetry)

142 Do not overestimate yourself. Exaggeration is undesirable.
He warns the young man to pursue the median path. (Series of
143 quotations on the subject). (Digression on the חנה מדבירה and צמחיה).
144 The wise man learns to control himself.

Do not esteem your own poetry too much, and do not fall into
145 the error of those who praise the works of a man of חסיד and dis-
parage the poetry of an unknown. (Dissertation on the value of
man for himself, not family). Good works are the fruits of reason,
¹¹²
not of family.

146 Comments on the reluctance of people to give praise where it
is due. A man who finds favor in the eyes of the mob is lucky!
Comments on the mob's adulation and admiration of wealth. Monetary
affluence is the popular symbol of success.

147 He says that a man is not justified in creating words merely
for the sake of the metre- though he may use an adjective for its
substantive, as is done in Scripture. Whatever devices are found
in Scripture may be used - but none other! Follow the established
laws; do not seek to invent new ones.

148 He quotes some grammatical errors in Scripture- and warns to
be careful-for in following such errors did Anan and his group go
¹¹³
astray. We must not argue from analogy. He says the Karaites
wished to study the laws of the Torah by analogy (comparison). But

Saadyah answered them. (quotes Saadyah)

149 If you find a root used only in the passive, you must use it only so. (Dissertation on this grammatical point).

Adjectives must agree with nouns, though some exceptions may be found; but this should never be resorted to unless the metre demands it.

150 Also watch the number of nouns. Some are found only in the plural. Words which occur only with another in a phrase are not to be repeated.

151 (A criticism of Ibn Gabirol. But he does not mention him by name).

152 Always use words in their right meaning. (Syntactical points
153 are discussed. Quotes the Jerusalem Talmud, also a quotation
from Ibn Gabirol which corrects our present text.)¹¹⁴

He quotes from Samuel Hanagid.

155 Observe carefully the laws of gender.

156 He recommends the book of Ibn Gikitila with regard to the
laws of gender.¹¹⁵ He says, "The book is small in quantity, but
great in usefulness".

Of course, when a man writes, he cannot consciously observe all the minutiae of the laws of grammar and usage which he gives. He mentions them only to call them to your attention. But he who does not attempt to master them, will never be able to express his ideas.

157

"Perhaps the inquirer will ask, "Did you observe all the rules you mention, so that your poems are perfect?" To that I would answer, "No! I confess to errors I made for various reasons. No man is perfect. Besides, many of them I composed during the intoxicating period of youth and the pleasant life of boyhood. I was then not yet experienced or practiced."

"If this does not satisfy the questioner; if he finds fault with the fact that I advise others against doing things which I have permitted to myself, I can only say, what a Pharisee (or commentator) has said: "If we were to be admonished only by those without sin, we should never be admonished." Or as Socrates puts it, "Even though the ($\Pi\Omega\Delta$) teacher cannot, himself, do what he commands unto you, fail not to accept the value of his advice." I leave the decision to an impartial critic!

"When you have mastered the foregoing precepts, then turn to the 20 sections on the ornamentation of verse. They are the rules laid down by the leading rhetoricians, prose writers, and poets of Islam. "This indeed was the goal I have aimed at thus far in this work- to prepare the reader to understand what follows. The chapters which are to follow are closely related to the rules of Hebrew. In every chapter I shall give an example from Arabic poetry, and compare it with a verse from Scripture, that they may not despise Scripture and think that we have no semblance of such rules; and further, that they may not think that the Arabic language is the only one which has sharp phrases and fine expressions, and that Hebrew lacks these. Though Scripture does lack to some extent the devices employed by the Arab poets, there are hints and traces strong enough to suggest

158 that these are to be found there. I shall refer to the proverbs and riddles (the Arabs class these among wisdom literature) and adduce some ethical precepts. Then I shall introduce some of the works of our poets (as I remember them), who used the devices of the Arabs, or who came upon others by chance. And when I can find an example nowhere else, I shall take my example from my own works."

This is a good general rule: Think a great deal, and ornament your expression. Hang on to every beautiful idea that enters your head. These are the sections which I shall explain to you!.....(here he lists the twenty sections on ornamentation of poetry). "Though I have explained (Chapter 5) that the science of poetry is Arabic, and that the Jews follow them- I would not give heed to one who opposes the rules of the Arabs, because they are not found in Scripture, and are not in accord with the spirit of the Hebrew language. For the Arabs have used them well- and they are their very tools in composing poems and sayings". The poems in which the following ornamentations are found are regarded by them as being in the best taste. In as much as this science is not supernatural but practical, it behooves us to follow the Arabs to the extent of our ability. (Quotes Porphyry)

160

161 The First Section: **המשל** - Metaphor.

He says that **המשל** is one of the most important and pleasing devices of prose and poetry -especially of poetry, since in poetry, such added embellishment is oft necessary, for the sake of the rhyme or metre. And those who object to its use

in our own time, are all wrong- because it is found frequently in Scripture. (He gives examples from the Prophets and Koran)

162 Even Halachists - like Saadya and Hai- explained passages¹¹⁶ metaphorically. And the Christian commentators do likewise. So those who condemn the use of *השאלה* are hasty in their judgment.

The method of metaphor is to describe an unknown quantity in terms of a known one.

The Second Section: On Things Implicit and Explicit: *לפי ופני*

164 " *פני* " - ¹¹⁷(hint); He explains that in poetry a word is used to hint at another meaning. And then he gives some examples, savoring of Midrash, to show how Scripture hints at certain meanings by numerical imputations. ^{such calculations} He ^{says} are very well in their way, until they begin to calculate the time of the Messianic Era, 165 as in the book of Daniel. Says he, "But not one of these calculations has as yet come out right! But he explains that it is not strange that these calculations are wrong; for, after 166 all, God would not reveal to these speculators that which He concealed from His really great prophets; though, in time He would surely make known its coming.

Some *שמות* are aliases for the preservation of someone's honor!

168 The Third Section: He gives examples from the Bible and poets,
On Opposites and Parallels.

169 The Fourth Section: On Puns and Alliteration, and Denominative
Verbs:

Words may have the same sound but different meanings. Verbs
170 taken from numbers - (גנאד) He mentions his book "ענג" in
171 which he uses this method.

The Fifth Section: Distinctions:

חלוק

The poet uses this to explain clearly his meaning by stating
it in varied terms.

The Sixth Section: Parallelism:

הקבלה

The Poet uses this to equate opposites. "please his friends....
pain his 'enemies'".

173 ענג - Arabic translation of Psalms

174 The Seventh Section: Detail:

פירוט

Is concerned with detail in writing.

175 The Eighth Section: Repetition:

השנות

Here the poet suspends a word in the first part of the verse,
and repeats it in the second part.

176 The Ninth Section: Opening:

הפתיחה

To open and close the line with the same word.

177 The Tenth Section: **ה' 715** Addition:

When the poet after completing his meaning adds a few words for the sake of the metre.

178 The Eleventh Section: **השלמה** Completeness:

The poet must remember all details and omit nothing which is necessary for the completion of the meaning. He says he finds no example in Scripture (but he has given one in the sixth section- p. 174).

179 The Twelfth Section: **המאמר והמסגר** Parenthetical Insertions:

This section concerns the case where the poet begins an idea, and before he completes it, he inserts another thought and then returns to the original idea.

180 The Thirteenth Section: **זמיון** Imagery and Simile:

Poets use imagery unceasingly. Simile is used with the **כ"ף**... as **כנגדו**; or without the **כ"ף** as **הוא**.

183 The Fourteenth Section: Words added for the sake of the metre. **המשקל**

184 The Fifteenth Section: **הנל** Paradoxical exception:

When the poet begins to praise a man, and brings in a qualifying or annulling expression like 'but'- as though to say that there are these good qualities- 'but'- and then continues with even greater praise. (e.g. "he is a good man, but he gives all his money to charity"). In other words, the exception given, proves the rule!

- 185 The Sixteenth Section: הגזלה Exaggeration and Hyperbole:
In the course of writing, it is sometimes necessary to indulge in
exaggeration which overstep the bounds of possibility. In the
Talmud this is known as לשון הגזל. In the examples which he
gives, he shows his rational method of Biblical interpretation.
He does not deduce strange laws and fancies from exaggerations,
186 but regards them as only hyperbolical statements, inserted for
the purpose of emphasis.
187 Quotes from Ben Chalpon.

But the statements of the apocalypses are not figurative.
These he regards as "spoken literally". And he further adds that
he who would seek to test these statements by natural science,
188 or whose heart has any doubt with regard to their veracity or
probability, does not believe in the Jewish religion.

R. Zechariah ibn Balam, he says, wrote a book, collecting
all the miracles mentioned in the Bible (Torah and Prophets).¹¹⁸
He, too, testifies that the Messianic era will come. Even non-
Jewish philosophers so testify. Aristotle, in a letter to his
pupil, Alexander, speaks of the hoped-for kingdom, and asserts
that it will come: when men will live together in peace and
security, agreeing, in a body, upon one king, etc. He says
there is a group of thinkers who say that worldly happiness¹¹⁹
cannot come until man is nothing, and this world disappears.
¹²⁰
189 But the philosopher, Isaac ben Solomon Israeli, has given a good
answer to this statement.

189 The Seventeenth Section: השלמה Metonymy or Synecdoche:

This is the case when the poets strikes a word and writes the word following it, from which the intent of the omitted word may be derived. (This may be done by metonymy or synecdoche). Sometimes the adjective alone is used without the substantive.

The Eighteenth Section: יפי ההתחלה

and
The Nineteenth Section: יפי ההתחלה Beauty of the Beginning
and Beauty of Transition:

190 I explain these two together because they are related, but I shall not give examples from Scripture, because all the introductions and conclusions used in the Bible are excellent- and there are no transitions. So I will give examples from the later poets.
191 (Quotes ibn Sahal)

Poems of love are sometimes full of animal desire- passion.
192 He who writes from experience, writes differently than he who writes without it. And he who thinks of evil or sees evil but does not do any himself, it is as though he had never seen it or thought of it.

He says he sees no great beauty in transitional insertions, which the Arabs like to use, though the Hebrew poets use it too.

195 The Twentieth Section: החליף הפתאומי The Sudden Change:

No instance in Scripture occurs, nor is there any instance of its use by Jewish poets. But the Arabs love to use it; and there are some faint hints of its use in Hebrew; to suddenly change

196 from praise to disparagement. Also confusion of uncertainties
with certainties. The Arabs use it frequently.

In addition to the aforementioned devices, poets embellish
their works with parables and riddles. The Arabs especially
197 love parables; and Scripture speaks of חֶזֶן in connection with
Solomon.

198 He quotes a proverb that he who gives wisdom to one not
fit to receive it, it is as though he cast pearls before swine. 121
He then gives a dissertation on philosophy and how it is not
fit for all. The purpose of learning is to teach.

Many parables are to be found in Prophets and Chronicles.
Since most of the people can learn better through the emotions
than through reason, they gave parables that they might learn
ethics through physical obedience.

He quotes a poem by ibn Sahal which has long been ascribed
122
to Solomon ibn Gabirol.

(It is apt and appropriate to close this analysis with the
author's own closing paragraph.)

"In this section I have presented to you, my friend, (may
God perpetuate your memory) indications as to the use of the
conceits of poetry and some brief statements concerning the
various kinds of poetry and rhetoric, that they may guide you
in understanding how to write poetry. A hint to the wise is
sufficient, and there is no need to expatiate; few words

suffice for him; prolixity is unnecessary. Plato says: "When you converse with one wiser than you, give only your meaning alone, in few words; do not trouble to expatiate and explain; but when you talk to one not so wise as you, explain your statements, so that he will comprehend the difficulty which troubled him at the start." He who cannot hope to give his full meaning in many words, it is best that he be niggard with them.

Now that my work is completed I must ask the reader to pardon me if he finds it lacking and poor in thought. Should one ask me to write at length on this subject and explain all the details (even were it possible to do this), I would not be able to do it completely, and I would debase myself. The man who speaks briefly is thanked for whatever benefit is derived from his words. One who completes his work, although he has not succeeded in every respect, has meant well, and we reward for the good he has accomplished. He who ends his discourse is to be praised and honored, and he who finishes what he set out to do, has hit the mark squarely. A reward for trying, is a fitting climax. He who admits his shortcomings, is forgiven them, since he himself recognizes them; and he who is aware of his own failings soon remedies them. But one's failings may cling to him, and he thinks that he does well and right; the defects of such an one will not leave him. And if I have failed to explain that which I have intended, I have not failed to rely upon the truth; and if I have fallen short I am not the first to be deceived by ambition. We should judge a man by his intent, rather than by his accomplishment. A famous sage has said: "I have never congratulated myself upon the happy outcome of something which

I began in despair, nor have I commiserated myself upon the unfortunate conclusion of something which I courageously began." If I have not succeeded in achieving any goal, I can take refuge in God, who will pity and forgive me. He, may He be exalted, will plant in your heart the desire to acquire the good qualities, and secure noble principles; He will give you an ornament of grace when you avoid disgraceful things, and you will bring pleasure to all who behold you- as it is written (Proverbs 23:16) 'Yea my reins will rejoice, when thy lips speak right things' ".

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS

JE Jewish Encyclopedia, as cited

Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.

PERIODICALS:

JQR Jewish Quarterly Review (old and new series) as cited.

REJ Revue des Etudes Juives, as cited.

K.C. " הקדמה " Vol. 4, Prag, 1839.

" הציון " -Zion- Vol. II, 1842, as cited.

LHA R. A. Nicholson: "Literary History of the Arabs", New York
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Berlin 1845.

The foregoing bibliography contains only works to which specific reference has been made, and includes none of the works consulted for orientation and background.

Notes on Chapter I

1. "Spanish Islam", P. A. Dozy. London 1913. pp.445f.
2. "A Literary History of the Arabs", R.A.Nicholson,
New York, 1907. p.412
3. Nicholson, op.cit. p.414
4. Dozy, op. cit. p.608
5. ibid.
6. ibid.
7. Graetz, H. "Geschichte der Juden", Leipzig 1861
Vol. VI. p. 135.
8. He is variously known as Abu Harun Moses ben Jacob ben Ezra
(Wolf, Bibl. Hebraeae, Vol. III, p.3). Samuel David Luzzato,
in the *כרם חמד*, Vol. IV, p. 65, gives the various inscrip-
tions by which he designates himself in his piutim; e.g. as
ח' הנדבך בן יעקב; משה אבן עזרא קטן; משה ברוך יעקב; משה קטן
and once as משה ברוך יעקב אבן עזרא גראנאדי. He is sometimes known
as *הסלח* (Dukes, "Mose ben Ezra aus Granada" p.1, note 1).
Wolf, in his Bibliotheca Hebraeae, Vol. I, p. 884, gives his
father's name as Isaac, following, according to Dukes (loc. cit.)
the statements of the *שולחן ערוך*. There can be, however, no
doubt that his father's name was Jacob, as is pointed out by
Sachs ("Religiose Poesie der Juden in Spanien". Berlin 1845,
p. 277, note 1.)
9. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p.24; Article- "Samuel Ha-nagid".
10. Graetz; loc. cit.
11. *כרם חמד* Vol. IV, p.89. This is section 124 of the Diwan.
Luzzato says, "a poem of condolence to Abu Omar and Abu

Ibrahim, the sons of Mashcaran, for their mother who died in Iyar 4898 (1138); and from here is the proof that M. b. E. lived until close to 1140".

12. Section 173 of the Diwan, as given in *כרך חמשה*, Vol. IV, p.92. Luzzato points out how errors in chronology can perpetuate and magnify themselves,- in his discussion of the dates of M. b. E. in *כרך חמשה*, Vol. IV, p.66. The author of *יובל* says that M. b. E. died "close to 4840 (1080)" .. (ed. Filipowski, London and Edinburg, 1858, p.217.) This date, according to Luzzato, was taken by Ganz in *מנחת חינוך* and from him by Wolf. The latter mis-read the Hebrew date (*ג'תת"ד*), reading the 'mem' as a 'samekh', and so he gives the date of the death of M. b. E. as 1100. This is, of course, untenable, because in the Poetics, he mentions a date as late as 1123 (p.75).
13. Graetz; op. cit. VI, 134.
14. M. Steinschneider, "Arabische Literatur der Juden", Frankfurt, 1902, Par. 101, p.149.
15. Poetics, p.72.
16. Graetz; op. cit. VI, p. 135.
17. Cited in *כרך חמשה* Vol. IV, p.83.
18. Poetics, p. 34.
19. K.C., Vol. IV, p.92, section 177.
20. Sachs; op. cit. p.278.
21. Poetics; p.136
22. Ibid. p.33
23. Ibid. p.83
24. Ibid. p.83

25. Ibid. p.85
26. Ibid. p.85
27. Ibid. p.85
28. Ibid. p.92
29. Ibid. p.89
30. Ibid. pp.88,89
31. Ibid. p.71
32. Ibid. p.74
33. Ibid. p.90
34. Dukes; op. cit. pp.8-14
35. Cited by Dukes, op. cit. p. 20.
36. J.E. VI, p. 526, Art. "Moses ibn Ezra"
37. Dukes, op. cit. p.5. He later identifies this work with the
ש'ש'ר'א, in note in /'S Vol. II, p.118.
38. JE, VI, Art. "Moses ibn Ezra".
39. Wolf. op. cit. III, p.3.
40. K.C. IV, p.80f.
41. Introduction to "Poetics", p.10.
42. JE Vol. VI, art."Moses ibn Ezra".
43. Graetz; op. cit. VI. p.391.
44. Dukes, in note in /'S, Vol. II, p.117. Possible, but not
probable; he bases his statement on the fact that ש'ר' and
the author of ש'ר' quote a comment of his. But these
may have been taken from the Poetics. On the other hand,
this may be the work described by Wolf (Bibl. Hebr. III, p.3)
as No.599 of the Huntingtonian MSS, "an explanation of many
places in Sacred Scripture, done by Abu Harun". There seems
to have been some confusion, either in the cataloging, or
in the information used by Wolf and Dukes.

45. Introduction to Poetics, p.10.
46. Poetics, p.71
47. Ibid. p.81.
48. Ibid. p.116
49. Ibid. p.119
50. Ibid. p.77
51. Ibid. p.98
52. Ibid. pp.97-98
53. Ibid. pp.99-100
54. Ibid. p.46
55. Ibid. p.46
56. Ibid. p.125
57. Ibid. p.56
58. Ibid. p.59
59. Ibid. p.157
60. Ibid. p.188
61. Ibid. pp.156-157

Notes on Chapter II.

1. Poetics, p.75
2. Ibid, Introduction, p.21
3. Ibid. Introduction. p.26
4. ed. Filipowski, London 1857, pp.202, 229
5. Cat. Bodleiana, Vol. II, Col.1801 ff.
6. The identification is based on the following passage in the ו"א, p.202: וא"ך מה שאמר בעל אשכול הכוזב שטעה
מי שאמר רבשקה שהיה משומר אינו אמר

and this passage in the Poetics, p.58: יש מבעלי ההגדה

שאמרו שרבשקה היה משומר אבל אין הדבר נכון, שהרי שרש
המלה הזאת, כפי שבאר אברהם רבנו הא"י גאון ז"ל הוא 'עמר' והא
צריכה להיות משומר אלא שנעשה ה'צ' וכו' וזה המאמר באמונה הטבילה.
Here M.b.E. says that Rabshakeh was not a Christian, because

he lived before the rise of Christianity. The Talmud Sanhedrin 60a says that he was a מומר - a renegade Jew.

It does, however, seem far-fetched to identify a work by a single statement, which after all concerns a character mentioned in Scripture, and which, therefore, might have been mentioned by any Biblical commentator. The statement, itself, is not original with M. b. E., but was taken by him from Hai Gaon.

The other passage in ו"א mentioning הכוזב is on p.229. It concerns the scholars who lived from 940 to 1040. He names Dunash b. Tamim of Khairowan; Dunash b. Labrat of Bagdad of the stem of Alfasi the Nagid; ibn Shesheth, his pupil; Menahem b. Saruk of Tortosa and Cordoba; Isaac ibn Gikitila; Isaac b. Saul b. Gikitila; and other scholars, all preceding

Samuel Ha-nagid. This passage continues with the chronology, but the quotation must be taken as ending with the words:

" כולם קודם י' שמות הנגיד אלמורדי נשיא אנא-טא "

in order to keep it within the limit of 940-1040.

Graetz (op. cit. VI, p.392) takes a much larger section as the quotation, and then remarks that there is an error in chronology! By ending the quotation with Samuel, this error disappears.

The quotation cited by /'071' from the אשכול הכסף parallels the order of the names given in the Poetics (p.64), though some have been omitted in the /'071'. There may have been a Hebrew translation of the Poetics; but my own feeling is that there was not, for, if it had been translated into Hebrew; it would have been very popular, and would have been preserved.

7. There are eight questions. According to this description the last three are classed as one.
8. Cited by Dukes, op. cit. pp.5,6.
9. Dukes, op. cit. p.5
10. His classification is just one century behind the correct one! Perhaps he mis-read a Hebrew date in one of his sources. It is evidently taken from a Hebrew source, since he begins the classification with 840 (probably the Hebrew date was - meaning the 46th Century, 840ff!).
11. I have already pointed out that he confused the works. See Ch. I, note 37.
12. Graetz; op. cit. VI, p.391

13. Ibid. loc. cit.
14. Munk, M.S.: "Notice sur Aboul Walid Merwan ibn Janah"
Paris, 1851, p. 58, note.
15. REJ Vol. XXII, 1891, p. ~~242~~ p. 236.
16. Poetics, p.35.
17. Ibid. p.35.
18. REJ Vol. XXII, 1891, p.249
19. Poetics, p.29
20. Ibid. p.132
21. Ibid. p.67
22. Ibid. p.153
23. Ibid. p.165
24. Ibid. p.57
25. Ibid. p.162
26. Ibid. p.59
27. Ibid. p.86

Notes on Chapter III.

1. Poetics, p.34
2. I have not been able to identify this writer, unless he be ibn Khidam, mentioned in Nicholson, op. cit. p.105, note 1.
3. Son of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz. Lived 861-908. He composed the first important work on Poetics, "Kitabu 'l-Badi" (Nicholson, op. cit. p.325)
4. Perhaps Hatim of Tayyi (Nicholson, op. cit. 85-87).
5. Ibn Rashiq, lived about 1070, wrote an 'Umda on the art of poetry. (Nicholson, op. cit. p.288)
6. Lived in the latter part of the ninth century (LHA, p.286). He wrote a "Book of Poetry and Poets" (Kitabu 'l-Shir wa-'l-Shu'ara). It is significant that of the five Arab writers whom M.b.E. mentions here, three wrote treatises on poetry. We do not have to seek far for his inspiration.
7. This passage shows that he was not a Biblical exegete, and causes us to doubt whether he wrote a commentary.
8. This is the pre-Mohammedan era.
9. Known in Arabic as Ikhwanu'l-Safa. This was a fraternal group, which attempted to harmonize authority with reason, and to construct a universal system of religious philosophy. They compiled a great encyclopaedic work in fifty tractates. It is from this, evidently, that our author quotes. The name means literally, "The True Friends" (LHA, p.370 ff.).

Malter (in a note in JQR -new series- Vol. II, p.456) comments that they are not referred to by name in Hebrew writings, except in the עֲרֵב רֵעִים. Our work was written

in Arabic, and is, therefore, no exception.

10. This is an Arab writer and traveller named 'Ali b. Husayn, who lived in the first half of the tenth century. Only a remnant of his voluminous works has been preserved. (LHA, 352)
11. This is the famous Jewish soldier and poet who was noted for his faithfulness. The story is given by Nicholson (LHA, p.84) where he is described as an Arab of Jewish descent, and a Jew by religion. Wellhausen seems to think that he was a Jew of Arabic descent- or in other words, a proselyte. (This is quoted in JQR -o.s- Vol. IX p.236). This would be borne out by the statement of M. b. E. on p.49: "....perhaps these poets were Arabs who adopted Judaism". He lived in the middle of the sixth century. (Steinschneider, A.L.d.J. p.4)
12. He was probably a convert to Judaism. (Steinschneider, in JQR old series, Vol. XI, p.609, note 1., says that he was probably "a Muslim", but he must have changed his mind about him later, because he includes him in his "Arabische Literatur der Juden" (p.6).
13. There is no direct proof that these conversions took place, but there are very strong traditions, and this statement of M. b. E.'s would tend to strengthen these traditions. According to Noeldecke , the greater part of the Jews of Northern Arabia probably were the descendant of Arabic proselytes. Wellhausen doubts whether a number (of Arabs)...worth mentioning adopted Judaism. (These opinions are quoted by Steinschneider in JQR -o.s.- Vol. IX, p.236).
14. I have been able to find no work to identify with חֲבֵרַת הַתּוֹרָה .

Perhaps the Arabic title from which Halper translated this might be identified. The other work is probably the " } ٥
אלשיך ואציל ארין יפרועה
 " described by Steinschneider (A.L.d.J. p.109). In his "Polemische und Apologische Literatur", Leipzig 1877, Steinschneider cites an extract from this work, on page 103.

15. It is not known whether he lived in the ninth century or the tenth. Only fragments of his work have been preserved. It is probably the oldest of the Jewish theological writings. (Steinschneider, A.L.d.J. p.37, and "Pol. und Apol. Lit." .68).
16. One of the greatest and most original of Arab poets. He lived 973 - 1057. The work referred to by M. b. E. is "al-Fusul wa-'l-Ghayat".
17. The Arabic title of this work is אלמואנה. Part of it was cited by Kowkowzow. (A.L.d.J. pp.145,146)
18. He was known as a Hebraist, but this shows that he knew Arabic as well. He lived in the middle of the 10th century. M. b. E. designates him as אלשיך. The meaning of this term is unknown. (cf. A.L.d.J. pp.72,73)
19. Greek physician and philosopher. Lived in latter part of second century. He is quoted frequently by M. b. E. (JE, V,548)
20. Abu Bakr al-Razi, a famous Arabic physician who died about 923. (LHA p.361)
21. Very little is known of him beyond the fact that he put the Psalms into Arabic verse. (A.L.d.J. p.111)
22. This is the passage which is used as basis for identification of this work with the אשכנזי הכותב.
23. I have found no verification of this statement.

24. There was no king of this name. This may refer to Dhahhak who was governor of Damascus about 680 (Dozy, op. cit. pp.71-75). He engaged in the coup d'etat following the death of Mu'awiya II in 683 (Dozy op. cit. pp.69,70) and was killed shortly thereafter.
25. Cf. Targum to Obadiah 1:20
26. This was a common tradition among the Spanish Jews, that they had been there since the exile. But there is no evidence of the truth of this tradition.
27. This is accurate. The Arabs came to Spain in 711; the Goths had conquered the Romans in the beginning of the fifth century.
28. Walid came to the throne in 705. (Dozy, op. cit. p.115)
By Umjah he means, of course, the Omayyads.
29. This is the only instance in which he uses the Arab calculation. He gives all ~~the~~ other dates anno mundi (סבריגא ה'תק"ה)
30. Lived about the beginning of the eleventh century. Founder of the science of Hebrew grammar, inasmuch as he was the first to attempt to prove the theory of the tri-literality of verbs. (A.L.d.J. p.118).
31. By the 47th century, he must mean the century beginning with the year 4700, just as we might say 'the nineteen hundreds' to refer to the twentieth century; because Hasdai lived after 940.
32. He was born about 915 C.E. and lived until 970, or 990. He served the Khalif Abd-al-Rahman III and his successor Hakam II. (JE Vol.VI. p.248, and ~~Mann~~ Margolis and Marx p.308)
33. Cf. JE Vol. VI, p.249

34. Cf. Note 30 supra.
35. This work is unknown.
36. Born about 920, died about 990 (Rabinowitz transl. of Graetz op. cit. Vol.III, p.352, note 1.)
37. Unknown, except through several isolated references. If he was a pupil of Dunash, he would not be the Shesheth to whom Graetz refers in a note (in German edition 1861, Vol.VI, p.392) as living 1131 - 1203, or over 150 years after his teacher!
38. Born 910, died 970. An opponent of Dunas^h. (Rabinowitz transl. of Graetz op. cit. Vol.III, p.349, note 1).
39. Identified with Joseph ibn Abitur. Lived at the end of the tenth century. (A.L.d.J. p.117)
40. Lived at the beginning of the eleventh century. This passage is cited by Steinschneider.(A.L.d.J. p.121)
41. A contemporary of the preceding man; teacher of Jonah ibn Janah. (A.L.d.J. p.120)
42. Nothing is known of his life. Some of his poetry has been published in the *שירי נשי*, Brody and Albrecht, London, 1906, p.7. Kapron is probably a Spanish name. (Steinschneider, in JQR.-o.s.- Vol. XI, p.607)
43. Unknown.
44. Bacher identifies him with Almutunnabi (Bacher, "Leben und Werke des Abulwalid Merwan ibn Ganah", Budapest, 1885. p.4) But this cannot be so, since M. b. E. cites Almutabi a little farther on. Nothing seems to be known of him. (cf. A.L.d.J. p. 122).
45. Unknown
46. Contemporary of ibn Janah (Bacher op. cit. p.5)

47. Known only through this citation. (Cf. Bacher op. cit. p.5)
48. Lived before and after 1100. Pupil of Levi ibn al-Tabban.
(A.L.d.J. p.145)
49. See note 44 supra.
50. This passage is almost the extent of our knowledge about him, though Bacher mentions him (op. cit. p.2) and the JE Vol.VI page 621. The comment of M. b. E. is interesting. Was he the first professional poet among the Jews?
51. Dozy, op. cit. pp.495 ff. M. b. E. refers to the schism between Hishan II and Ibn Ami Amir, which caused civil warfare for about twenty years, causing the dissolution of the caliphate.
52. The statement of M. b. E. is not explicit, as to whether he was born in Merida. It might mean that his family was extracted from thence, as Margolis and Marx take it. (p.315).
53. Dozy, op. cit. pp.650-653, pictures him as a very haughty character.
54. Dozy gives this date as Dec. 30, 1066 (op. cit. p.653) as do M & M p.321. I do not know what their authority is; but I am inclined to accept the statement of M. b. E. especially when he gives a detailed date, since he seems to be sane and conservative in all his statements. The 1071 1090 (ed. Filipowski, London 1857, p.229, gives the date as the 9th of Tebeth 4827. This would be Dec. 30, 1066. M. b. E. gives the 20th of Tebeth, which would be Jan. 10, 1067. But both M. b. E. and Zacuto say it was on א' שבט and Jan.10,1067 was on a Saturday, while Dec. 30, 1066 was on a Tuesday!
(Conversions of Jewish dates to Julian calendar according

- to Raab-Universal-Kalendar, Budapest 1885).
55. Known only through this citation.
 56. Zunz (Literaturgeschichte der Synagogalen Poesie, Berlin, 1865, on p.187) identifies him with Isaac ben Saul of Lucena (See note 41 above), but the latter was from Lucena, and this one is from Cordoba.
 57. Perhaps this is Abu-Omar ben Kamniel, for whose wedding M. b. E. writes a poem (Luzzato, in K.C. Vol. IV, p.92). Abu Omar is the Kunya commonly connected with the name of Joseph. (Steinschneider in JQR -o.s.- Vol. XI, p.486). There is also a possibility, therefore, of connecting this man with Joseph ^q, mentioned by Zunz (op. cit. p. 575, no.136) ^{latter} Perhaps this _A is the very marriage song from the Diwan of M. b. E..
 58. Known only through citations. (Cf. JE Vol.I, p.144)
 59. Lived in the latter part of the eleventh century. (Steinschneider, A.L.d.J. pp.137-138)
 60. Unknown
 61. Unknown
 62. Unknown
 63. Contemporary of Samuel Ha-nagid, brother of the grammarian Alwalid ben Chasdai (cf. note 46 supra). (Graetz, op. cit. Vol. VI, pp.53, 54.)
 64. Al-Fahdhil (the excellent) Musa ben Al fahdil ben Chasdai is mentioned in MS. Bodl. Number 2328. (Steinschneider in JQR -o.s.- Vol.XI, p.586)
 65. | מו"ב cited by Zunz (op. cit. p.215)
 66. This is another bit of evidence toward the theory that he

- died at the age of thirty. M. b. E. lived close enough to his time to be taken as an authority.
67. Teacher of M. b. E. Since he died in 1089- we assume that M. b. E. was not born much after 1070. M. b. E. cites him as grammarian, but according to Steinschneider (A.L.d.J. p.136) his linguistic works are not known.
 68. Unknown
 69. This is Isaac b. Baruch b. Jacob ibn al-Balia, born 1035, died 1094. Under the Abbadid Caliph al-Mutamid (1069-1091) he served as court astrologer and counsellor. (A.L.d.J. pp.131-2)
 70. Born 1043, died 1103. (Zunz, op. cit. p.201)
 71. This is the famous ר'י, commentator on the Talmud.
 72. Graetz, quoting Abraham ibn Ezra, says he was from Granada. (op. cit. Vol. VI, p.434). Abu Suleiman is the Kunya for David. (JQR -o.s.- Vol. IX p.623, no.7)
 73. His name in Hebrew is אברהם בן יצחק (Dukes, "M. b. E. aus Granada" p.103). Graetz says he was rabbi in Seville. (Graetz, op. cit. Vol.VI, p.123)
 74. Flourished at the end of the eleventh century. (A.L.d.J. pp.138-143)
 75. Could this be Abu'l-Rabi ibn Ja'isch whom Steinschneider cites as an Arab lexicographer? (JQR -o.s.- Vol.XII, p.605). If so, the date he gives, 1345, is far removed from actuality.
 76. Mentioned by Judah Alharizi. (quoted in אברהם: אברהם בן יצחק Warsaw, 1923, p.10)
 77. 1077-1141. Graetz does not mention that he was born in Granada. (Graetz, op. cit. Vol. VI, pp.127-128)
 78. Cf. JE Vol.VII, p.339.

79. Unknown
80. Known only through such references. (cf. Graetz, op. cit. Vol.VI, p.134, note 1)
81. Unknown
82. Unknown
83. Unknown
84. Composed a grammatical work; that is if the identification of Graetz is correct . (op. cit. Vol.VI, p.132 note 1)
85. Friend of M. b. E. (Graetz, op. cit. Vol.VI, p.123) to whom he addresses a laudatory poem in his Diwan, No.145 (quoted in K.C. Vol.IV, p.91).
86. Cf. Zunz (op. cit. p.216) and A.L.d.J. p.151.
87. Judah ibn Ghayath, son of Isaac (teacher of M. b. E.) (cf. Graetz, op. cit. Vol.VI, p.133)
88. Poet, physician of early twelfth century. (cf. Graetz, op. cit. Vol. VI, p.119).
89. Probably Judah Ha-Levi.
90. Abraham ibn Ezra (JQR -o.s.- Vol. IX, p.619)
91. Unknown
92. Levi al-Tabban, early 12th century. (A.L.d.J. p.145)
93. Pupil of preceding man; probably worked in comparing Hebrew and Arabic grammatical forms. (A.L.d.J. p.145)
94. Unknown. Cf. Note 84 supra.
95. Cf. Zunz op. cit. p.218, and JQR -o.s.- Vol. XI, p.149, no. 391.
96. Unknown
97. This well illustrates his Jewish consciousness, which approaches chauvinism.

98. Cf. Aboth II:8
99. Lived circa 950. Arab philosopher of Turkish descent. His full name was Abu Nasr Al-farabi (Nicholson, op. cit. p. 360).
100. According to Steinschneider (A.L.d.J. p. 132) Mazlish wrote for Samuel an account of Hai's method of daily life.
101. Ibn Abbas, vizier of neighboring kingdom of Almeria; He despised Berbers and Jews. (cf. Dozy, op. cit. pp. 610-616). Ibn Abi Musai is to be identified with Ibn Bakanna.
102. I have been unable to identify this among the works listed by Steinschneider, A.L.d.J. pp. 139-142).
103. This is the Persian Ruzbih, known as Abdullah Ibun al-Muquaffa - died about 760. Translated from Persian into Arabic. (Nicholson, op. cit. p. 346)
104. "Abdu'l -Hamid flourished in the latter days of the Umayyad dynasty" (Nicholson, op. cit. pp. 344, 345)
106. The 'nun' must be a misprint for a 'gimel'. Al-Jahiz, Arabic free-thinker of ninth century. Wrote a "Book of Eloquence and Exposition" (op. cit. Nicholson, pp. 346, 347).
107. 982-1057. Of Toledo. Physician and grammarian. (Graetz, op. cit. Vol. VI, p. 53).
108. Physician and writer of the tenth century. The work referred to here is probably the " האגדה והלכה " described in A.L.d.J. p. 40, No. 2.
109. Cf. note 65 supra.
110. This is probably a result of the quarrel with his brothers. (Graetz, op. cit. Vol. VI, p. 135).
111. This work is the האגדה והלכה , described in A.L.d.J. p. 109, No. 9.

112. Compare this passage with the one which Nicholson quotes from Ibn Qutayba (op. cit. p.287). This was quite an advance in the standards of literary criticism of that age.
113. An isolated reference to the Karaites.
114. Halper points this out in Note 9, p.153, of the Poetics.
115. מִלְּפָנֵי הַיְיָ - described in A.L.d.J. p.138.
116. This is the only direct refernce to Christian literature which M. b. E. makes. He was, it seems, not acquainted with it to any extent.
117. It is impossible to translate these terms into English equivalents. I have tried to point out their meaning according to their use.
118. This work seems to be known only through this citation. (cf. A.L.d.J. p.142, no.6).
119. This may be a polemic against Christian theology.
120. Cf. note 108 supra.
121. Halper suggests that this be compared with Matthew 7:6. But the statements are not sufficiently of parallel intent, to warrant our saying that M. b. E. quotes the New Testament. The phrase, "casting pearls before swine", may be a common idiom of the Orient.
122. Halper points this out in note 6, on p.206, of the 'Poetics'.

. Note of the Translator

I have translated the following chapter for two reasons: firstly, because it is characteristic in style, punctuated with quotations, and marked by digressions; and secondly, because it contains practically all of the material of value to the historian.

The translation is almost a literal one - faithful even to the sentence structure. I realize, of course, that the English style will be at fault, but only in this way can I achieve my aim - to give the reader an insight into the manner and style of M. b. E. I ask pardon, therefore, only in the degree in which I have succeeded.

The Fifth Question

Why the Jews of Spain excell all others in the composition of poetry, rhetorical pieces, and letters, in Hebrew.

There are many reasons for this. Firstly; because they are of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, for does not Scripture say (Ezra 1:5). "Then rose up the heads of the father's houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred up." And again (Nehemiah 7:6), "These are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and that returned unto Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city." And the tribes described above are the inhabitants of the exalted mount, Jerusalem, the Holy City (May it be speedily rebuilt!) and its environs. They are the exiles who returned from Babylon, and who were later exiled into the lands of Rome and Spain, as Scripture says (Obadiah 1:20): "And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, that are among the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem, that is in Sepharad....." And we have a tradition that Zarephath is France, and Sepharad is Spain. The latter country is called 'Andalus' in Arabic, since the Arabs connect it with a man named 'Andalsun', who lived in the time of the early king Al'Azdhak; in Latin it is called Ispania, - it is called after the name of the man who was its ruler during the period of Roman dominion, prior to the coming of the Goths. His name was Ishpan, and the capital was Seville.

The early teachers called that land Spain (כ'דב"ח cf. targum to Obadiah 1:20).

There is no doubt that the natives of Jerusalem, whose descendants we, the exiles of Spain, are, were superior to the inhabitants of the other cities and villages in clearness of diction, and in the traditions of legal lore, as Scripture has it (Deut. 17:8): "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment.....then shalt thou arise and get thee up unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose". And another passage points to this meaning in explicit terms, though it belongs to that class of promises to whose fulfillment we look forward, (Isaiah 2:3): "For from Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of God from Jerusalem." And when the Arabs conquered the aforementioned Andalusian Peninsula from the Goths, who had wrested it from the Romans some three hundred years before the Arab conquest took place (this was in the time of Al Walid benu Abdu Almalik benu Marwan of the Syrian dynasty of Umjah, in the 92nd year of the calculation which they call the Hegira) our brothers who dwelt on the peninsula learned from them, in the course of time, the various branches of learning. After wearying labor, they learned the Arabic language, became acquainted with its literature, probed the depth and meaning of its writings, became expert in their branches of knowledge, and enjoyed the sweetness of their poetry. Later, God revealed to them the secrets of the Hebrew language and its grammar with regard to the weak letters, (אגיות יסיות ונטיות, התנועות והשוא' ו החליפים, והגזירות), and the letters used in declension, long and short vowels, letters

changed in conjugation , and letters elided.

These rules were explained with clear examples and sufficient proofs by Abu Zeshariah Judah b. David Alfasi, known as Hayuj, and his confreres, may God have mercy on them! Their ideas were quickly taken to heart, and many subjects which were obscure up to this time were explained satisfactorily. Several men were stimulated to investigate the speculative sciences, and to follow intellectual pursuits, although they did not excell in their works. They merely grew acquainted with the art of poetry, understood to some extent its methods, and were conscious of its wonderful possibilities. But in the course of the seventh century of the fifth thousand anno mundi, appeared Abu Joseph Hasdai b. Isaac b. Shaprut (originally of Jaen, but he flourished in Cordoba) May God be gracious unto him! At that time, minds awakened from their sleep, arose from their slumbers, when they saw the works of this princely leader- his exalted thought, the nobility of his generous soul, the depths of his beautiful nature. He dipped into the wells of wisdom of the East; he fetched Pearls of Knowledge from all far lands. He strengthened the pillars of wisdom, and gathered unto him the learned men from Syria and Babylon. Thinking men of his age sought to develop the wisdom and knowledge which God had implanted within them. They wrote excellent books, and collected marvelous subjects. They praised him in lofty verse and beautiful Arabic prose. They were held in high esteem by him, and he made it possible for them to reach their goal, and attain the ends which they sought.

The first to write a complete grammar of the Hebrew language, comprehensive and inclusive, was Abu Zechariah Judah b. David Alfasi (who later lived in Cordoba), known as Hayyuj. As a matter of fact, Saadya and others had anticipated him in this; but they were not aware of the rules concerning the weak letters, and the letters used in declension. Then, too, a certain man from Jerusalem wrote a book on this subject, called " שׁוּבָה " (which, indeed, contains many valuable ideas); but he too followed in the steps of the grammarians who preceded him with regard to the irregular verbs , and he did not take into account the weak letters. Among the writers, authors, and poets were Dunash b. Labrat Ha-levi (born in Bagdad, educated in Fez), and ibn Shesheth, his pupil, and Menahem b. Saruk of Tortosa (Who afterward lived in Cordoba), who are known from their works, each one according to his abilities. But they did not attain a high degree of perfection, and did not excell in their compositions.

After them appeared a second group, which surpassed them in virtuosity and purity of diction, as for instance, R. Joseph b. Santash, known as ibn Ibrahim of Merida (he later lived in Cordoba) and R. Isaac ibn Gikitila, and R. Isaac b. Saul. The two latter were from Lucena, and quarreled, but ibn Gikitila was sharper and more successful, since his knowledge of Arabic literature was more comprehensive. To that group also belong Isaac abu Kapron and Ha-kohen b. Almazram (both lived in Cordoba), and after them Abu Omar b. Jaku and Abu Zechariah b. Chaninah (both of Cordoba). At that time, in Lucena, lived the leader, Abu'l-walid Hasdai and Abu Suleiman b. Rashlah

and Abu Ibrahim b. Barun. Below them in rank were ibn Abi Jaku, called Almatubi, who lived at the end of the period of the preceding group, and Abu Ibrahim b. Halfon, certainly a poet (his father came to Spain from Africa not long ago). He was one of the first Jewish poets to adopt poetry as his profession, and used it as a spade wherewith to dig. He composed poetry in order to receive gifts, and went about from city to city, receiving whatever he wished from the leading men.

Among the poets aforementioned, and those whom I shall mention later, were those who composed the best of their poetic works without metre, which are read by the congregation on the Day of Atonement, and the rest of the seasons, fasts, festivals, and holidays. They used a pure, unadorned Hebrew style (by ' 9145 ' I mean a style lacking the various devices which I shall describe, with the help of God, in this work), and their compositions did not burden the congregation. But most of them did not follow in the footsteps of the grammarians. Some of them adopted the new ways, and followed the rules of metre, and wrote rhymes. Their works resemble the works of the Arab poets during the period of the unenlightenment, but not those of a later period. Several of these early writers, and some who followed them (and these are greater in number!) introduced the science of astronomy, especially the science of the upper spheres, into their prayers, and burdened the Hebrew language with things it could not express, until in those compositions we pass from prayer and petition to dialectics and argument.

But on the other hand, he who took a smattering of these topics, and used them to ornament his prayer, and beautified it, he is nearer to the proper method (the limit of propriety, according to some writers, is that which approximates truth!).

Then came a horrible war in Spain, whose like has never been seen, known as the 'Berber War', at the end of the century mentioned above. Then all sorts of trials and troubles spread through the country. Famine spread through the country, high prices prevailed in the cities; the bad conditions penetrated up to the very gates of the government, even to Cordoba, the capital. Varied misfortunes passed over this city until it was destroyed, or rather, almost destroyed. Then all learning declined, since the scholars had disappeared, and men were burdened with the troubles of the times. But when the pressure of the times receded, and men relaxed, another group of poets appeared, whose works were delightful, and whose meanings and aims were pleasant. The leader and most honored among them was the Nagid, R. Samuel, originally of Merida, educated in Cordoba, who flourished in Granada. His poetry is like a bubbling spring, studded with pleasing words, full of shadings, full of content, beautifully constructed, original in thought, and sparkling in style. He created many new ideas. All this is evident from his poetic works: *ש'לחן* 1, *ש'לחן* 1, *ש'לחן* 1; he was the greatest, the best stylist, and clearest among all these poets. These works he wrote when he was past middle age, and it has long been said that a man's works testify as to his character. His book, *ש'לחן* 1, contains only prayers and petitions,

written in unique rhyme and rhythm, which have been used by no poet either before or after him. He applied himself to this work with extraordinary zeal, and worked hard to ornament his expressions. He introduced into his work many parables of Arabia and Persia, philosophy, the flowered thought of vanished peoples, and the maxims of our early pious sages. All these things he decked in beautiful style and clear expression. The poets of his generation who strove to imitate him, and followed his method, did not succeed in this, and they are like the ^{أدباء} (early Arab poets) who lived in the period between the period of unenlightenment, and the rise of Mohammed. With regard to his books, and essays, and letters, are they not known from East to West; (has not their fame) reached from shore to shore? Have they not reached the leaders of Babylon, the sages of Syria, the scholars of Egypt, the ^{فلاسفة} of Africa, the prominent men of the West, and the nobility of Spain? In all that he wrote, he excelled because of his brilliant style, and the correctness and polish of his ideas. He clothed his words and ideas in princely beauty and decked them with a mantle of virtuosity and covered them with a cloak of wisdom, and ornamented them with beautiful metaphor. In his age/^{wisdom} was again exalted, after its fall, and the stars of science shone again, after their light had been dimmed. God favored him with an intellect which reached to the upper spheres, and penetrated to the stars, for he loved wisdom and its devotees, and honored his religion and those who professed it. He did not discriminate between those who achieved much and those who achieved little. (Perhaps no discrimination between Jew and Gentile?). But since it is my purpose in this essay

to explain only that which you asked of me, I will refrain from describing even a few of his virtues, and the nobility of his soul, and his perfection in literary creation. In general, this needs no proof, and needs no argument or explanation, since he is renowned in all lands, every tongue utters his praise, until it is almost impossible to enumerate his admirers, as Job says: "Every ear that heard of me praised me." He, may God favor him, departed this earthly life at the age of 63, in the eighth century anno mundi. He had many jealous critics, who came after him, and fell upon him to find fault with certain stanzas of his poetry, since he was not always meticulous about the grammatical structure of Hebrew, and with conjunctives. His enemies fell upon him as wild beasts upon lambs and as a hawk swoops down upon its prey. They reviled him in their compositions and fell upon him in their writings. They took their revenge on him when he was in the grave and rent his flesh after he was dead. The actions of men like these are contrary to religion, custom, and uprightness, and are not evidence of courage. We have already spoken sufficiently about the disgraceful quarrel which occurred between him, may God be gracious to him, and his opponents. And, indeed, it is best to be reticent about this matter since the contending factions have been gathered to God, and both the oppressor and the oppressed will seek mercy from His goodness, since He is forgiving and merciful. The strange thing is that these men did not forgive his few errors; they forgot his fruitful work and his excellent creations in all branches Halacha, and in the science of language, and his labors for the good of the government. It did not occur to them that only the fleet horse stumbles, that

only the sharp sword wounds, that only the mighty man can be humbled. Man is loathsome flesh and blood, a weak creature; he remembers and forgets; he aims at his mark and misses it; he hastens and falls behind. Weakness comes upon him, his hand fails, and he is brought to nought. Where is a human to be found free from error? Plato has said, "When the wisdom of the sage grows, his mistakes increase." For the knowledge of the person of little intelligence comes from the senses, therefore his errors are minor ones; but the knowledge of the sage comes through reason, and therefore his errors are greater. With regard to the maxims of Rav Sh'muel ha-Nagid and the sagacious parables which are scattered through his multitudinous works, no man can cast aspersions upon them. They are more renowned and widespread than the miracle upon the mount and their splendor is greater than that of the sun at its zenith. He who quotes his maxims without mentioning him as their author (whether it be that he wishes to glorify himself as their author, or whether he omits the name through error) is like the fly, which leaves a clean place to hover over a place reeking with filth. May God pardon us and them, and forgive their sins as well as ours. Praise be to God, who alone is omniscient. There is no God besides Him.

Following him, his son, R. Joseph (May God be merciful to him!) was raised to the position of Nagid. He withheld from the poor nothing but his soul. In his day, the power of learning and of the scholars waxed strong, and the sphere of poetry and the poets was strengthened. His generous gifts opened the

mouths of the dumb, and his philanthropy caused the derided ones to speak poetically. Not only was he skilled in all details of the Hebrew language, but he was also master of all branches of the Arabic language; he knew its poetry, its rhetoric, he knew the history of the Arabs, and its sources. He studied all these subjects because of his connection with the government and the affairs of state which they placed upon his shoulders. In his Hebrew poetry he lauds the valor of battle, and praises the spiritual qualities. His poems are, as they say, beautiful, but they are few. He and a great many others were killed in Granada on Saturday, Tebeth 20th, 4827 anno mundi, (1067 C.E.). His death did not mean merely the loss of one man, but the whole structure of the people was then laid low. There was reason to feel that in his death was ancient learning destroyed. He and his father lent honor to our people and brought us much fortune over a period of thirty five years, but those two are gone. All that generation is vanished, and it all seems to us as a dream that is passed.

R. Joseph ha-Nagid left behind him a young son who had not reached maturity, whose name was Abu Nazr. R. Isaac b. Gayath, may his memory be for a blessing, adopted him and raised him like his own son, and loved him exceedingly. And this man, God is his portion, has no equal in his proficiency in Hebrew studies. He composed lovely poetry in which every reader will find delight because of his limpid flowing style. He died when he reached his twentieth year, and was buried in Lucena, may God accept him.

Among the poets and stylists of that generation who praised that exalted group (their poems and their praises flow freely from the lips of those who tell them) were R. Levi b. Saul of Cordoba (who lived later in Tortosa), and Joseph b. Kapriel of Cordoba (who later lived in Granada), and Abun b. Sharara, of Lucena (who later lived in Seville), and R. Moses b. Gikitila, of Cordoba (who later lived in Sargassa; he occupied first rank among scholars, linguists, men learned in various sciences, and famous authors; he was numbered among the greatest writers and poets of both languages, despite the disease which fastened itself upon him and afflicted him when he sat among the great); and Abu Ishak Hidjadj of Granada, and Abu Ibrahim ben Leb, of Granada, and Abu Al-Rebiyah ben R. Baruch, of Lucena.

In this distinguished generation lived in the East of Spain Abu Omar ben Chasdai, whose works are few but beautiful. To him is possible to apply the proverb, "Better a little with beauty than much without it". He composed the famous Kasidah, *השיר היתום*, ("The Orphaned Song") which he wrote about R. Samuel, (May his memory be for a blessing). The latter returned the compliment and wrote a laudatory poem about him. The Nagid, as usual, composed a poem, excellent in style because of the purity of his diction and his power; but the poem of Abu Omar is more sweet and pleasing. He was remarkably successful in depicting his ideas, and he introduced into several stanzas of the poem many poetic conceits and devices as, for instance, puns imagery, negatives and positives, transitions....., and other

similar ones. And besides, he sprinkled it through with artistic expressions from Scripture. Abu Alpetzel⁽¹⁾, his son, inherited all his wisdom, was well versed in philosophy, was proficient in poetry and prose in both Hebrew and Arabic. In that generation lived also Abu Alhassan Musi ben Al-Takanah, known as Altian, of good lineage and learning; he was excellent in his laudatory writings and clever in his sarcasms. He was killed beneath a fallen ruin on the road to Apala, when he was less than thirty years old.

In those days lived Abu Ajub Solomon b. Judah b. Gabirol, of Cordoba, who was born in Malaga, and was brought up in Sargossa. He fixed the temper of his spirit and trained his nature and drove out earthly desires and directed his soul toward spiritual matters, after purging it of the disease of ambition, and it imbibed according to its capacities, the best of philosophy, the natural sciences, and astronomy. The philosopher says, "Wisdom is the color of the soul, and it is impossible to recognize the color of anything until it has been cleansed of its dirt." Plato says, "He whose spiritual qualities are not good, will not be able to attempt to learn anything." Hippocrates would say with regard to the nature of bodies which are not pure, "In feeding them you add evil to them." Ibn Gabirol, may God be gracious to him, was the youngest in years of the group of poets of his generation, but he surpassed them all in his writings. Most of them were good poets; their poems were sweet, and their writings were pleasing. Their rank varied, but they all excelled in the beauty of their writings and the delightful quality of

(1) See note 64 in Chapter III

their conceits. Nevertheless, Abu Ajub surpassed them all; he was a wonderful artist and an excellent writer. He used his poetic spirit in marvelous fashion, aimed at the loftiest ideals and achieved to highest thought. His style and poetry is delightful, and he resembles the later Moslem poets. He is known as the exponent of style and the artist of poetry. There is pleasure and gentleness in his words and sweetness to their meanings. Men of learning were drawn to him and even those who were jealous of him praised him. He was the first of the Hebrew poets to write the type of poem known as $\gamma' \gamma \gamma$. Those who came after him followed in his footsteps, as shall be explained further on, and as is clear to him who reads his poetry and comprehends their meanings. He puts into his poetry ideas founded upon the statutes of the Torah, and which correspond to oral tradition (or to the Kabala); as the philosopher, Plato, says, "The statutes command us to perform good deeds, and philosophy explains to us the reasons therefore." The difference between law and philosophy lies in authority. The actions which man performs in accordance with philosophy are faulty and defective and depend upon laws. But the deeds which man performs, according to divine statutes are complete and perfect and are not dependent upon secular authorities.

To return to our subject- this youth (of blessed memory) composed poems of praise and dirges, and achieved perfection in his ideas; he also wrote poems of exaltation, sweet love songs, and ethical poetry, in which he excelled; he also wrote subtle apologetic poems, and sharp sarcastic works. Although he is

counted among the philosophers, because of his nature and intellect, nevertheless his passions ruled his mind. He could not subdue his anger and prevail over the evil inclinations within him. He thought nothing of being praised by great men, and then mocking them. Plato says, "He who is ruled by his anger, and whose desires draw him on to those things which have been stamped as evil by the intellect, this is evidence that his spirit is weak; it has no strength or vitality." The aim of philosophy is to subject the lower inclinations to the higher; that is, the intellect must control all natural tendencies. But this form of perfection is with God alone—may He be exalted and sanctified. This youth died at the beginning of the eighth century (4800),^{in Valencia} after he had reached his thirtieth^{year} and was buried there.

Critics examined his works, and found them to contain errors. But the sympathetic critic will find excuse for him in the fact of his youth, and the precipitateness of boyhood. I have no need to dwell on his errors nor comment on them. My aim in this essay is not to point out the mistakes of the poets who preceded me, nor to derogate their words, nor to publish their defections. Neither is it my intention to discriminate between the good and bad of their poetry. My aim is to present their beautiful works and give my opinion of their faults; I call attention to errors, only when it is necessary, and it is impossible to avoid mentioning them during the course of the discussion. In all such instances, I do not mention the authors by name; but merely call attention to their faults, to warn the

reader, that he may not fall into similar error. There is no benefit to be derived from remembering errors which have been mentioned, although the science of literary analysis is of great importance in poetic studies, and exceedingly helpful in the science of logic; for it has been said: "The analysis of a statement is more important than the statement itself." and in my work, called the *ḥuṣṣat ha-ḥalukot* I found it necessary to introduce several of these matters, to refer to them, and to establish their truth.

In the latter years of that generation another group of poets arose, who followed in the footsteps of their predecessors, and imitated their works. And at times they succeeded pre-eminently in composing poems, because of the pleasantness of their words, the power of their conceits, and the purity of their style. The eldest and most distinguished of that group was R. Isaac ibn Ghayath, *יצחק*, of Lucena, the city of song, where was both its origin and its fruition. He was a well of literary style and a fountain of purity of expression, master both of Hebrew and Syriac. He wrote essays and composed brilliant poems. With great delicacy, he praised the wise men of his day and bewailed the leaders of his generation. He wrote many works on *Hallahah* and linguistics and did not rest until he had elucidated many varied subjects. He wrote more than his predecessors, ethical works, prayers, songs of praise and dirges. But he did not write many metrical poems because he was not skilled in the Arab sciences. He used pleasing language whose meaning was clear. His poems are read

and transmitted from person to person. The few works of his which I have are like a drop out of the sea of his works or like a spark from his flame. He died in Cordoba in 1089 and was buried in Lucena.

Among the contemporaries and friends of Isaac ibn Ghayath was R. Samuel b. Hanina , ^ר, a man wonderful and noble. He was pious by nature, and removed himself from worldly pleasures and became expert in the Halacha. He surpassed R. Isaac in writing essays, letters and metrical verse; he dipped deeply into literature and history. Likewise R. Isaac b. Baruch, ^ר . of Cordoba, was well learned in the various sciences, expert in Halacha and natural science. Besides this, he was an excellent poet and writer. He served the Abuadid dynasty with his extensive knowledge of natural science and astronomy. His nature was very noble, and praise of him filled the land. He died in Granada in 1094, and was buried in Cordoba. In that time also lived R. Isaac b. Reuben, ^ר, of Barcelona, who was one of the most noted authorities on the Halacha. He succeeded admirably in choosing the best things out of the books of the prophets and introducing them into prayers. To that generation also belongs the distinguished Rabbi Isaac Fasi. May God bring his soul to rest in the garden of Eden and sweeten his clods of dust. He had a strong religious feeling, the like of which is hard to find, and a brilliant mind, without equal . His knowledge was deep, incomparably deep, and his pen was facile; one could not keep up with it. But he wrote absolutely no poetry, and therefore I do not number him among the poetic Halachists. Contemporaries of all these were Abu Ajub Suleiman

bnu Muhagar and Abu Alfatah bnu Ashar, both of them from Seville. They were poets and well versed in all the various branches of learning. They were also of noble families, noted throughout the land.

Among the men who were sparing of their words was Abu Zechariah Judah ibn Balam of Toledo, who later lived in Seville, a sage who guarded his knowledge and remembered it and who in his latter days gave himself over to the study of Halacha. He composed excellent commentaries and fine explanations which are in the hands of the public. He was successful in separating the grain from the chaff, in discarding the husk and retaining the kernel, in extracting the beautiful essence of everything and dispensing with the superfluities, and in summarizing lengthy topics. But his irritable nature and irascible temper annulled his philosophic nature and his equanimity. No man escaped his devastating temper. He boorishly disseminated the low opinions he held of any man, as is apparent to the reader of his works. I have described him as a man whose knowledge is locked within his head and who can recall it, for there is a distinction between retention and recall. Retention refers to those things which a man hears and knows and which remain with him unforgetten. As Scripture says, (Deut 4:6), "And ye shall keep them and do them". But recall refers to those things which have already been forgotten and are then recalled, and therefore, the one is dependent upon the other, as Scripture says, (Num. 15:39), "Ye shall see it and remember it". It has been said: He whose memory is good, can recall to mind the name and quality of anything, and he whose power of recall is good can bring to mind

the appearance of anything, and he who has both qualities well developed can bring to mind any detail about the object. Another has said: Recall is to produce things found within the soul by probing and searching. And yet another has said: Memory pertains to form and appearance. And in the Ibn Balam mentioned above were included most of the aforementioned qualities.

Among the poets of Toledo was Abu Harun ibn Abi Alja'isch, and after him Abu Ishaq (Abraham) Alharizi. Among the poets of Seville were Abu Joseph b. Megas of Granada (who later lived in Seville) and Abu Zechariah b. Abun. At the end of that generation lived Abu Joseph b. Almara, in Granada. Among the poets who composed brilliant poetry and pleasant works was my eldest brother Abu Ibrahim. He, may God be gracious to him, learned to write beautiful essays and delightful poetry, devoting himself to Arabic literature. He died in Lucena, in 1121. At that time, there lived in the eastern part of Spain Abu Omar ibn Aldajjan. He was a pillar of the Torah and a mountain of generosity and nobility of character. He composed beautiful pieces on ethical topics in both prose and poetry, after he had indulged in varied studies. To that period also belong Abu Ishaq b. Pekuda and Abu Suleiman b. Ama, may God be gracious unto them. Among the poets was Abu'l Hassan Ezra ibn Elazar. The best pupil of ibn Ghayath at that time was Abu Omar ibn Sahal (indeed, he was among the best in the whole of Spain), who came of a distinguished family, who had a sparkling intellect, who was an excellent writer, and was well versed in Halacha. He was of the cognoscenti, and he always spoke the truth (as the

ancients say: Truth is the human soul, but understanding is the soul of wisdom. He who lacks the capacity for truth lacks all.). The poems of Ibn Sahal are full of tenderness and sweetness, but they display power and freedom. They are known and read everywhere, and all must give them consideration. He wrote profound prayers, and dirges, as well as penetrating sarcasm. He did not restrain the barbs of his sharp irony, but he sent them forth, unrestrained, as it suited his fancy. Most of his mockery is directed against those who attack literature and disparage poetic efforts. In his descriptions of this group he amused his readers and caused them much merriment by the way he exposed them. But if he had refrained from such things, it would have been to his greater glory. He excelled in anything he undertook. And it has been said that he who can do this, even if he be an evil man, will succeed in doing that in which the good man fails. He was, may God be gracious unto him, the last of the aforementioned group of distinguished elders. Oh, for those who have passed away! The world was orphaned in their death, and evil came upon man with their departure. It has been said: "The death of the righteous is a benefit to them, but a loss to the world". Ibn Sahal died in Cordoba in 1123.

Toward the end of that generation appeared a noble and pleasing group of poets, who followed in the path of the sages mentioned above. They understood the science of poetry, and they composed their poems according to the manner and laws established by their predecessors. They excelled especially in the tenderness and sweetness (of their verse) and succeeded

in composing poems of utmost perfection, ornamenting them with imagery and parables. Their method of writing varied, just as they varied in rank (it has been said: Men are like the rungs of a ladder, some uppermost, some lowly, some median.) But all of them, no matter what city they lived in, were included in the circle of beauty, pleasantness, and perfection. The leaders of this group were Abu Omar Joseph b. Zaddik of Cordoba (of fine character, ready to aid his friends; he was well-versed in Halacha) and Abu Zechariah b. Ghayath of Lucena (who later lived in Granada; his muse was original, and his knowledge of literature was wonderful.). Among the prominent Halachists was Abu Ajub Almu'alim of Seville, the city of poetry. His genius shone forth, and the gems (of his wisdom) sparkled. His writings in both languages were full of magic, and he composed poetry in both (languages). May God be gracious to him! Also Abu'l Hassan b. Ha-Levi, who brought forth gems, and composed brilliant parables and maxims; and Abu Ishaq b. Ezra, who was of the best group of writers and stylists. They were both of Toledo, but they later lived in Cordoba. They achieved the highest degree of excellence in composing poetry after the Arab fashion. Abu'l Hassan b'nu Bettas was among the most noted Halachists and poets; he was of ancient and distinguished lineage. The noted teacher and sage Abu Alfahin b'nu Altubban was among the writers who composed poetry and essays. The distinguished scholar, Abu Ibrahim b. Barun, his disciple, descended from an honored family of pious teachers, was among the group of writers who wrote essays in both languages. Abu'l Hassan b. Elazar was a natural scientist and a poet. Abu Ibrahim b. Mashcran was among the

poets of good taste, whose works are exact. Abu Saïd Faradj b. Hasdai, *חסדאי*, was among those who composed many poems introducing into them beautiful ideas, and who translated the choice parts of Hebrew literature into Arabic. Although he was of a race of slaves, he was a free man in his nature.

I met most of these writers, and engaged in discussion with the most noted among them; only a few of them are exceptionally great. Concerning such as these, the poet said:

" They are men whose manner of thought approaches mine:
And though they are scattered over the earth, they are
my neighbors (in spirit)."

Among those whom I have mentioned, are to be found many who devoted their talents to the writing of poetry, liturgical poems, and indulged in belles lettres and fine literature. They created new ideas, and witty maxims are to be found among their works; and we may safely assert about each of them that he strikes the truth in his implications. These groups of poets are like water: at the outset dripping slowly, then pouring forth in a gushing stream. It has been said: "Each generation has its men". In the provinces mentioned above are to be found men who are incomparable in generosity and nobility. Furthermore, they are of noble spirit, men of ability and good lineage. They are of finer character than most writers and poets. These men, together with those mentioned above, mastered the various branches of knowledge developed by the noted sages of all ages, except the art of poetry. They mastered the branches of knowledge pertaining to religion and Halacha, Arabic literature and the Bible, to philosophy and logic, to astronomy, mathematics,

and medicine. Each one studied these sciences according to his ability, and each group according to its talents. But I shall not trouble to expatiate on these matters, because your question touches only on poetry and style. But in my essay entitled " **התעלות של אנשי הכושר והיחוס** " which I wrote on this subject, I have introduced and analyzed all these matters. On the other hand, all the generations mentioned above did not lack men of low character, whose names I shall not mention because of their degeneracy. Then too, they did not lack inferior and untrustworthy men who wrote poetry. They were smitten with ignorance and given over to self-praise; they inclined toward self-love, and avoided that which is good; they clung to mean habits and did not appreciate the value of knowledge. They lacked the ability to incline toward the good, and to understand the proper outlook. They were governed by light-mindedness, and had no understanding of the parts of speech nor of the composition of essays and poetry. They judge everything at first blush; they hastened to write poetry and essays, and ride (roughshod) through verse. The ancients have said: "Only the genius or the fool hastens to write". But these men follow one course, and the true poets follow another. They do not fear critics, and are not appalled by caustic language; they imagine that the essence of poetry lies in exactness in rhyme and metre. The Arabic poet has aptly said: "Beauty can be perceived in two things: in a scintillating verse of poetry (well constructed) or in a clever poetic maxim." The subject matter with which these men deal is inferior, and their allusions are abominable. Therefore their works are disjointed, imperfectly

constructed, and the various parts lack unity. Their works grate on the ear of the hearer and pain him, though some evoke an indifferent reaction, neither laughter nor tears. Their works grieve the spirit and burden the heart. Only the degenerate can be fed on such literature. The question was once asked: "Who is the greatest poet?" and the answer was: "He whose tragedy is awe-inspiring, or whose satire is entertaining". We can likewise say: "The worst poet is the mediocre one. This subject is like water: the poet must be very hot, or very cold. The first quality arouses wonder and praise; the second induces depression; but the mediocre interpreter is entirely undesirable."

There is one more mediocre group. These indulge excessively in sarcasm, and avoid sensible statements. The length of their tongues ~~tongues~~ compels them to be niggard with words of taste. They use tiresome idioms and undesirable expressions, which tire the hearer and offend his sensibilities. Their works are disjointed, their ideas are immature, their style is incomprehensible, their message is confusing, and their poetry is worthless. It has been said: "The lowest man is he whose power of speech is beyond his intellect". Another maxim says: "It is better that man let his intellect go beyond his speech, than his speech go beyond his intellect". Another has said: "The fool's tongue is prolix". A sage was once asked: "When does knowledge of literature become harmful?" and he answered: "When it increases one's knowledge and destroys one's originality (or ingenuity)". It has been said: "Excess

of intellect over speech is a virtue, but excess of speech over intellect is a fault". And the sage says: "Sin cannot be avoided in verbosity". And it has also been said: "The folly of fools is to be seen in their verbosity". And it has also been said: "The words of the wise are pleasing, but the lips of a fool devour him". The meaning of this verse is: the wise man is respected by humanity because of the words of wisdom which are ever on his tongue; to the contrary, the fool is not mindful of his self-respect, when he utters abominable, disgraceful things.

This group, which is not mindful of its utterances, is well-known among the people despite the uproar which they make, and their false coinage will not pass in the marts of trade. In the mechanical crafts, e.g. weaving, sewing, and painting, if a man boasts that he is an expert craftsman, but does not know how to produce a good piece of work, he is despised by the people, because the shortcomings of the craftsman or the artist are perceptible to the senses. But in the academic occupations, as for instance medicine, astronomy, poetry, and literature (in general), it is possible for the ignoramus, who capitalizes his small stock of knowledge, to glorify himself in the public eye, even though he has no thorough knowledge of the subject, because the masses are ignorant, do not discriminate between truth and falsehood, and cannot distinguish between genuine and false learning. And if you should, by chance, encounter a nice phrase or an apt word, or a poetic verse in (the works of) one of this

degraded class, do not honor the author or esteem his qualities, because he does not prefer the truth and does not depend on it, nor does he perceive falsehood, and avoid it. It is only unconsciously, by chance, that he occasionally uses a good expression. For, after all, the habitual liar speaks the truth occasionally; an errant person may sometime hit the mark. It may happen that an ignoramus may stumble upon the truth, just as it may happen that the wise man should err. The sage, Hippocrates, says in his book on nature: "Do not be deceived by the exceptional things a man produces". And among the clever maxims of our ancient sages, may God be gracious to them; "Even so is the punishment of the deceiver- that even when he tells the truth, we do not hearken to him." It is possible, too, that the good which you find in their works is really worthless, being only apparently good, like the sayings of the Sophists (that is to say, the masters of apparent truth). This word is Greek, and the sages think it is derived from the name of a Greek man called Sophisto. He was a controversial person, and his method was to argue that the false is true, and the truth is false. However, Abu Natyr Al-Farabi refutes this statement. According to his statement, the word is Greek, derived from 'Sophia', meaning 'knowledge', and from 'aesteth' (αἰσθη) meaning 'doubtful'. Therefore the word seems to mean 'apparent truth'. And anyone who can indulge in confusing arguments is known by this term, and an ordinary person who is merely plated with silver or gold is known in Arabic as ' متمم ', that is, 'doubtful'. An Arabic proverb says: "An

earthen vessel, o'erlaid with silver dross." (This maxim, borrowed from the people, is more rhetorical.). You must beware of the tortuous paths of this vexatious group. And if you should see wise and important men of the leading group arguing with the Sophists on trifling matters and countering with empty words, do not doubt the truth of my words; your own reason and understanding will see through the whole matter. It has been said: "The man who is most endangered is that one who is honored by the people because they fear his tongue". Another sage has said: "He who seeks good, fears evil." A famous logician said: "At times we publicly honor people whom we inwardly despise." But he who chooses this group because he believes in it, or praises it for some secondary reason, such an one emphasizes that which is devoid of beauty, and stamps counterfeit coin. With regard to such did the sage (Solomon) say: "They who forsake the law praise the wicked, but they who follow the law, contend with them."

There is yet another foolish and stupid group, more lowly of expression and of less understanding than the group aforementioned. These men defile the Holy Book of God by reviling people, destroying their paths with their words, and defiling its sacred verses with innocent blood. Indeed, one should rather avoid them, one should not mention their evil thoughts. Once a wise man heard a fool reviling a decent man; said he (to the fool): "Go wash thyself again, for never before wert thou so besmirched." The philosopher says: "The disgrace of most men is between their loins, but the disgrace of the fool

is between his cheeks!" The works of the distinguished poets mentioned above exist and are alive, though their bones are rotting in the grave, but the works of the stupid group perish before the very eyes of their authors. With regard to this the Arab poet wrote: "The shameful poem dies before its composer, while the beautiful poem lives long after the poet passes away".

I have not cited the choicest works of the distinguished poets, nor have I mentioned their beautiful writings, because they are well-known, and they flow freely from the lips of those who recite them. For (after all) the lightning's flash is not to be imprisoned in a candelabrum- how much less is the sun to be encompassed in a candle! I have mentioned briefly the members of the distinguished group, but I have not discussed those of their contemporaries who did not attain highest rank.