INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES AND PRIZE ESSAYS

AUTHOR Jan David Katzew

TITLE "Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi: Two Experiences of Exile"

TYPE OF THESIS: Ph.D. [ ] D.H.L. [ ] Rabbinic [X]

Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

1. May circulate [X]) Not necessary
2. Is restricted [ ] for ___ years.) for Ph.D.) thesis

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses or prize essays for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ___ yes X no

February 15, 1983
Date

Signature of Author

Library Record

Microfilmed
Date

Signature of Library Staff Member

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

by
Jan David Katzew

MOSES IBN EZRA AND JUDAH HALEVI: TWO EXPERIENCES OF EXILE

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
1983

Referee: Prof. Ezra Spicehandler

To Lanie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

DIGEST iv

PART I. BIOGRAPHIES

Chapter

I. MOSES IBN EZRA 1

II. JUDAH HALEVI 28

PART II. IBN EZRA'S AND HALEVI'S EXPERIENCES OF EXILE AS RELATED IN:

III. THEIR POETRY 63

IV. THEIR POETICS 99

V. THEIR PHILOSOPHY 128

APPENDIX A: 20 Axioms on Poetic Embellishment . . 154

APPENDIX B: A History of Hebrew Poetry in Spain . 215

BIBLIOGRAPHY 252

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"מכל מלמדי השכלתי" -

From all my teachers I have acquired wisdom.

"אך כאשר מצאתי את אשתי מצאתי טוב" -

But when I found my wife I found goodness.

As the best of lovers, friends and teachers, Lanie shares in the spirit behind every word in this thesis.

Dr. Ezra Spicehandler has been my teacher and has become my friend. This work is a product of both his tutelage and his friendship.

Kathy Trummel has dedicated her typing skills to make this work readable and her patience to make this author relaxed.

DIGEST

Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi represent the zenith attained by Jewish culture in the Medieval period. Both men lived in Spain at the turn of the twelfth century. Though similar in spatial and temporal terms, Ibn Ezra and Halevi differed on essential issues that faced post-Exilic Jewry. Each man lived in exile. It is the character of their experiences of exile that receives an in-depth treatment in this thesis. Ibn Ezra and Halevi wrote extensively and passionately about exile, and these writings comprise the cornerstone of this work.

The first two chapters are biographical in nature. Much of what is known about Ibn Ezra and Halevi is heretofore inaccessible to a non-Hebrew readership. These chapters address this problem and seek to provide biographical underpinnings to the central thesis of this work, namely that Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi lived in two different exiles.

Chapter Three is devoted to a comparison and content analysis of Ibn Ezra's and Halevi's poetry involving exile. The following questions are taken up in turn:

1. What did each man believe caused his exile?
2. From where was each exiled?
3. What act would effect a "return"?

The chapter concludes with an argument suggesting a harmony of thought and behavior for both Ibn Ezra and Halevi, i.e., correspondence between biography and poetry.

The fourth chapter deals with the science of poetics. Moses Ibn Ezra wrote the sole volume devoted to Medieval Hebrew poetics. The roots of this singular work are examined with an eye towards Ibn Ezra's reaction to exile in general and to life in Moslem versus Christian Spain in particular. Though Halevi's discourse on the subject is much more limited than Ibn Ezra's, a contrast in style and theme between their works serves to buttress the contentions made in previous chapters. Indeed, Ibn Ezra's poetics suggest a Moslem preeminence, whereas Halevi's comments leave no alternative to the superiority of the Hebrew language and the Jewish people.

Chapter Five concentrates on the philosophical perspectives endorsed by Halevi and Ibn Ezra. Halevi's yearning for Zion stood in contradistinction to Ibn Ezra's profound appreciation for Arabic culture. Ibn Ezra's reasoned a posteriori approach to the question of exile contrasted sharply with Halevi's impassioned a priori assertion that the land of Israel and its people remain eternally without peer. Ibn Ezra's philosophy allowed for exile from the city of his youth, Granada. Halevi's philosophy allowed only for exile from the city of his ancestors, Jerusalem.

The appendices proffer an English translation, with notes, of two sections taken from Moses Ibn Ezra's book on Hebrew poetics. Appendix A treats the 20 canons of Hebrew

poetic embellishments, principally derived from earlier Arabic works. Appendix B presents Ibn Ezra's account of Hebrew poetry in Spain up to the first third of the twelfth century. Together, these excerpts exemplify the form and content of Moses Ibn Ezra's Medieval Hebrew poetics.

CHAPTER I

Jews in eleventh century Spain lived at the crossroads and often in the crossfire of an internecine war waged by Moslems and Christians.[1] In 711 C.E. the Moslems began to conquer Spain by vanquishing the Visogoths. From that very year, the Christian agenda for the next six centuries was set, Reconquista. For six hundred years, the Moslems and Christians played a life-size game of chess. The knights, the kings and the bishops were all real. So were the pawns, often known as Jews. At the same moment in history that Jews scaled new literary mountains, they made valleys into graves. In the Rhineland, in Palestine, and in Spain the Jews who lived in the eleventh century were killed, caught in the vise of either Moslem or Christian might. Intermittently, the Jews were valued for their linguistic and financial acumen. But, much too often, the Jews were simply in the way.

It is simplistic and reductionist to claim that in

---

[1] Among the works that can be considered as treating the history of the Jews in Medieval Spain are:

a. Ashtor, Eliyahu. The Jews of Moslem Spain (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1973).

b. Baer, Yitzhak. A History of The Jews in Christian Spain (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1961).

Another book which provides a more limited, but nonetheless significant perspective on the Jews in both the Moslem and Christian contexts is:

c. Glick, Thomas. Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979).

Each of these texts includes extensive bibliographical references that enable a student of this area to acquire competence.

the eleventh century the Arabs were fighting the Christians. For neither of these groups was of a piece. The Arabs, concentrated in the southern part of Spain, Andalusia, constituted an elite group in more ways than one. The Arabs, who were frequently in the position of minority rulers, achieved power and held it due to their political, intellectual, and cultural talents.[2] The Berbers functioned primarily as "the muscle." They acted as the policemen of Arab society until they recognized their intermediary status and seized the opportunity to unseat the culturally superior but militarily inferior Arabs. The Jews who lived in Andalusia benefited from the stimulating intellectual environment, as well as from their "tolerated status" as a "people of the book."[3] The Jews suffered, however, when they happened to

---

[2]Thomas Glick. Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages (Princeton, 1979), p. 178ff. An important theme in this book is the ethnic tension operative in Moslem Spain. Arabs are said to have feared "Berberization" precisely because of the cultural chasm that separated these two groups. It was during the eleventh century that the Caliphate fell (1031). As a result, Moslems factionalized with each fiefdom seeking to gain power over Andalusia. The struggle ended with a foreign force, the Berbers, consolidating Moslem power, but only temporarily.

[3]Ibid., pp. 166-178. The concept of dhimmis (protected peoples) in Islam prescribed an outline for Moslem behavior towards Jews and Christians. The Christians adapted this policy vis a vis the Jews, but with major alterations. To wit: the Christian practice was not uniform as was Moslem practice. The court system in Christian Spain set limits on religious autonomy. These strictures increased with the passage of time. In contrast, the legal system in Moslem Spain permitted religious autonomy, and thereby, the Jews preserved Talmudic authority.

be associated with the losing side, or when, as a result of a defeat, one faction or another decided to punish the Jews.[4]

To the north lay Christian Spain. The Christians of the period tended to treat the Jews with ambivalence. On one hand, the Jews were judged to be more trustworthy than the Moslems. This allowed Jews economic as well as political opportunities. In the courts of Christian Spain, Jews enjoyed financial security and political protection. On the other hand, the Jews of Christian Spain suffered culturally in relation to their brethren in Andalusia. Because Jews denied the fundament of Christianity, i.e., the divinity of Jesus, an ineluctable tension between Jews and Christians in Spain obtained. This tension was heightened by the Crusades. Jews despised the Christians for their inhumane acts in Palestine, and Christians grew increasingly suspicious of Jewish loyalty. The Crusades left an indelible impression on Jews and Christians all over the Medieval world. Christian Spain lacked the burgeoning of ideas that took place in Moslem Spain. But due to financial reward and Christian preoccupation with Reconquista, the court Jews in eleventh and twelfth century Christian Spain

---

[4] An example of this phenomenon occurred in 1066, in Granada where Joseph Hanagid had acted as vizier. He, along with much of the Jewish community, was killed by the same Arabs who had once been predisposed to delegate authority to him. With Andalusia fragmented, the Jews' scapegoat status rose precipitously.

thrived.[5] Whereas the Jews in Moslem Spain orchestrated an intellectual symphony, their Christian counterparts, at least those of the courtier status, concentrated on economic and political success. Andalusia offered a stimulating intellectual environment while Christian Spain offered physical security for the masses and fiscal prosperity for the privileged few.

Where a Jew lived, however, was less a matter of choice than of necessity. Circumstances often dictated a course of action. This is why an analogy to the game of chess is particularly apt with respect to the status of the Jewish people in Medieval Spain. Even when the Jews were not persecuted, they were used to either Moslem or Christian advantage. The fate of the Jews depended upon whose "move" it was in the quest to rule all of Spain. In the eleventh century, and to an even greater degree in the twelfth, the Christians were on the military and political offensive. The Moslems were divided and fighting among themselves. Where were the Jews? They were caught in the vortex, hoping to choose the "right" side. Both "Spains" played a significant role in Medieval Jewish history. Together they make up the place and time of the "Golden Age." Taken separately, each "Spain" constituted "home" or "exile" for the Medieval Jew.

---

[5]Baer. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, p. 36.

Both Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi lived under the "Cross" as well as the "Crescent." Because of this, they provide us with a comparative perspective, telling a story about life as a Jew in Christian society and in Moslem society. The stories they tell are replete with personal success and tragedy, poetic brilliance, and philosophical insight. Their stories are nearly coincident as their lives overlapped in time and space. But, they lived in very different worlds, both in Spain, both in exile, but in different "Spains" and in different "exiles." With that hypothesis we begin.

Moses Ibn Ezra was born between 1055 and 1060 in Granada, a city steeped in Arabic culture. That we cannot pinpoint Moses' date of birth is more than a detail of casual import. What we do know about Moses Ibn Ezra is riddled with probability and conjecture. We face an imposing obstacle when we study the past. We ask more questions than we find answers. We are cursed with a paucity of sources, and when we want to locate something as basic as a date of birth, we cannot. What has come down to us is a series of fragments, and until new fragments are discovered, we have no choice but to end many statements with a question mark and to respond to many questions with silence. On the other hand, we are blessed with fragments, for without them we would not even be able to inquire about the past, to say nothing of learning from it.

Moses Ibn Ezra came from a wealthy and respected family.

He was the second of four boys, Isaac being older and Joseph and Judah younger. His brothers played leading roles in Moses' adult life and they figured prominently in Moses' poetry. Moses received an extensive education which included Bible, Rabbinic texts, and previously written Hebrew poetry. He was fluent in Arabic and studied Arabic poetry and poetics. He was at home in both Jewish and Arabic philosophy as well as Arabic translations of Greek philosophy. He studied with his older brother Isaac and Isaac Ibn Giyyat, head of the Yeshiva in Lucena and a poet in his own right. Moses acquired the intellectual tools necessary to live as part of the Jewish elite in Spain. This, coupled with his lineage, could have led to a prosperous and protected life, but it was not to be.

In 1066, Moses' birthplace, Granada, was beseiged and its Jewish community devastated. The murder of Joseph Hanagid provoked Ibn Daud to write in the twelfth century, "From the days of our Sages, of blessed memory, who wrote the מגלת תענית (The Scroll of Fasting) and decreed a fast on the ninth day of Tebet, we did not know why they did so. From now on (Joseph Hanagid, who succeeded his father Samuel as the vizier of Granada died on that day), we understand the intent of the Holy Scriptures with respect to this day."[6]

---

[6] J. Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1960), vol. 2, p. 362. (in Hebrew).

We do not know where Moses was in 1066. Perhaps he went to Lucena with other refugees and it was at that time that he studied with Isaac Ibn Giyyat. The massacre of Jews in 1066 in Granada was a portent which went largely unheeded. It was precipitated by vicious propaganda. "The Jews divide the kingdom of Granada among themselves into districts . . . they collect the taxes. They eat their fill and dress luxuriously. They slaughter their cattle in Arab markets and leave to the non-Jews the meat ritually forbidden to themselves. Joseph (Hanagid) built himself a palace of marble . . . the welfare of the Arabs is in his hands; and while they wait at his door, he scoffs at them and their religion."[7] This perception helps to clarify two seemingly contradictory events. The Arabs slaughtered Granada's Jewish community and its leader, Joseph Hanagid, as a result of jealousy and vengeance. The Jews returned to Granada soon after the massacre because life had been good to them up until 1066. The Arabs had proved their point and the Jews came back hoping that the Arabs had satisfied their appetite for killing Jews.

Sometime after 1066, Moses returned to Granada where he held the probably honorific title of "chief of police."[8] Moses thrived in Granada, and when he was later on foreign

---

[7]Baer. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, p. 36.

[8]Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 362.

soil he yearned for the time when "he was in the loveliest of all lands."[9] During this early period of his life, prior to 1090, Moses lived among Jewish intellectuals and poets. One of his closest and most enduring relationships was with a poet he invited to join him in Granada, Judah Halevi. The effects they had on one another are to be the subject of intensive scrutiny. Before he reached the age of 35, Moses Ibn Ezra had become fluent in Arabic to the extent that he used the choicest and rarest of its idioms.[10] He also began his prodigious writing at an early age. ספר הענק, by Moses, is a book of poetry in which the stanzas of each poem end in homonyms. It was the first of its kind in Hebrew.[11] It foreshadowed a life of poetry that paid extreme attention to poetic form. ספר הענק, though it is a book of poetry, may be seen as an introductory chapter to a study of poetics. Even in his youth, Moses Ibn Ezra was apparently fascinated with the formal aspects of poetry.

Since Jews were not in control of their destiny, they depended upon an environment conducive to their growth. Translated into political terms, that meant that the Jews of Medieval Spain hoped for extended periods of tranquility. The eleventh century provided very little of that. The clash between Moslems and Christians reached a frenetic pitch in 1086 when the Christian King Alfonso the 6th conquered the Arab city

---

[9] Ibid. [10] Ibid., p. 363. [11] Ibid.

of Toledo. The Arabs had been preoccupied with their own domestic battles, each ruler seeking out his own fiefdom, until they realized that the entire enterprise was in danger. Unless the Moslems turned their attention, and their swords, against the Christians instead of their contending brothers, there would be no Moslem Spain. Fearing that it was too late to regroup, the Andalusian rulers called to the Berbers for military support. Joseph Ibn Tashufin, head of the Almoravids in North Africa, transferred his troops into Spain where, in 1086, they were victorious in a decisive battle against the Christians.

This only delayed the inevitable, and less than a year later, Tashufin was recalled to Moslem Spain to fight off the Christian onslaught. This time, the Almoravids seized the opportunity to defeat the divided, and therefore, vulnerable Moslem citizenries. Andalusia was united once again as it had last been in 1013.[12] In 1090, Ibn Tashufin captured Granada, an event which altered Moses Ibn Ezra's life and fate. For the second time in a generation, the Jewish community of Granada was destroyed. Nearly every Jew who could escape left Granada. One of the exceptions was Moses Ibn Ezra, who had to remain for some unknown reason.[13] The Ibn Ezra family split up. Moses was alone and destitute in a city that had once been regarded as a place of prosperity. "I remained

---

[12] Ibid. [13] Ibid.

alone in my birthplace. No one was with me. I was considered an alien. No one from my family or my home lived near me."[14] Why did Moses stay in Granada? We lack hard evidence, so we rely on conjecture. Perhaps he could not leave because he was connected to the vanquished rulers. Soon after Moses bemoaned his isolation, he was able to get out of Granada. The last decade in the eleventh century remains shrouded in mystery as far as Moses Ibn Ezra is concerned. His behavior creates the impression that he was banished from Granada and forbidden to return.

He once wrote in a poem that his plight was caused by his brother Isaac's daughter. "My foot was caught here in a trap, and like a netted buffalo, I burst out. Because of her, I entered a crucible of affliction and I threw my soul into an aimless projectile."[15] This excerpt beclouds more than it clarifies. We do not know how this woman caused his demise. The first latter day student of Moses Ibn Ezra, Hayyim Luzzato, believed that Moses was in love with his niece, who returned his love. But, because of his brother's opposition to the liaison, Moses left his city of Granada.[16] Michael Sachs went so far as to claim that Moses Ibn Ezra

---

[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid., p. 364.

[16] H. Brody, "Moses Ibn Ezra --Incidents in his Life" (Jewish Quarterly Review, 1934), p. 309.

married his niece.[17] Luzzato regards this as conjecture, but others have treated this hypothesis as factual. The passage of time turned this romance into a fable, i.e., Moses left Granada because of familial pressure. To confuse matters further, other students of Moses' poetry have been persuaded that he left Granada in his old age. "He was already old when he left Granada. The absence of his brothers made his stay intolerable, and therefore, his departure had nothing to do with an alleged courtship of his niece."[18]

We are nearly certain that when Granada was sacked in 1090 prominent Jews, including the brothers of Moses Ibn Ezra, fled the city. We know also that when Moses wrote a poetic elegy marking the death of his sister-in-law, Isaac's wife, in 1095, he was outside of Granada's environs.[19] Moses' whereabouts between 1090 and 1095 remain the subject of speculation and controversy. This period assumes crucial significance because for the remainder of his life, Moses longed to return to Granada and because Granada played a central role in the poetry and poetics that he wrote afterwards.

---

[17] Ibid. Although Brody discounts the theory, he ascribes it to Sachs.

[18] Ibid., p. 311. This line of reasoning derives from the poem Moses Ibn Ezra wrote regarding the absence of his brothers when he was old.

[19] Ibid., p. 313.

Moses Ibn Ezra was a privileged citizen under the regime of Abdallah, the last of the Zeride kings. For close to two centuries, Granada was under the stewardship of the Zerides. If we can attribute any substantive meaning to Moses' title "chief of police," then it is reasonable to infer that Jews in general and Ibn Ezra's in particular were accorded full rights of citizenship and all its attendant privileges. Moses was free to be a Jew, to write poetry, to participate in and even convene meetings of Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals. Abdallah himself was a cultured man. He was schooled in Arabic poetry and rhetoric, and had a reputation as a man of letters, possessing a rich vocabulary and well honed communication skills.[20] This fact is important in more than its biographical dimension. Abdallah, a Moslem ruler, could identify with the poetic skills of a man like Moses Ibn Ezra. Abdallah was a Moslem, but he was also an Arab. Although he maintained a religious affiliation, Abdallah and Moslems of his ilk, had an appreciation for culture that transcended theological bounds. A Moslem was and is a believer in Islam. An Arab was someone nurtured in passion for science, for philosophy, and for language. Moses Ibn Ezra was a master of languages, Arabic among them. This provided a strong link between people of different faiths. They shared a cultural milieu, not Moslem,

---

[20] L. Provencal, Les Mémoires Du Roi Zeride Abd Allah (Al-Andalus, vol. 3), p. 259.

not Jewish, but Arab. This cultural context needs to be taken up further in connection with Ibn Ezra's poetry and poetics. But, with respect to Moses Ibn Ezra's sitz im leben under Abdallah, both Moslem and Jew could share in Arabic culture.

Relying purely on conjecture, scholars have postulated that relations between Moses and his brothers were strained, and that is why they left Granada separately. In an article entitled "Moses Ibn Ezra -- Incidents in his Life," H. Brody avers, "Moses did write about strife between him and his brothers, but he did so poetically, and therefore, any attempt to project this state of affairs into Ibn Ezra's life is suspect."[21] In one poem, Moses addresses a "faithless brother."[22] But which one could it have been? Ostensibly, neither Isaac, father of Moses' alleged paramour, nor Joseph were likely candidates. From other poems addressed to them, Moses seems to be on good terms with both.[23] Joseph supported Moses and took care of his children when Moses left them behind in Granada. In his poetic eulogy of Joseph, Moses wrote, "How will he survive without his dear Joseph? Can a body live

---

[21] H. Brody. Incidents, p. 315. Brody contrasts his view with that held by Luzzato.

[22] Ibid., p. 316.

[23] Ibid. The poems include panegyrics as well as eulogies.

without its soul?"[24] It is even plausible that Joseph asked Moses to take one of his sons in order to provide him with an education. Isaac, who had been one of Moses' teachers, is the subject of one of Moses' more passionate and personal elegies.[25] But, the Diwan of Moses Ibn Ezra contains no poem addressed to Judah which "breathes love and no elegy upon his death."[26] In an apopemtic full of remorse which Moses wrote just before he began wandering, he included these stanzas, "I leave the judgment to you. If you wish to be honest, you will have to admit that you acted unjustly and without love."[27] In another poem, presumably written later, Moses promises to forget all the pain he suffered and to requite evil with good.[28]

Out of this matrix of poetic fragments, Brody concluded that Moses fled Granada because his life was endangered. The niece may have played an incidental role. Perhaps he left to save her, or perhaps he had violated some type of military command, but it had nothing to do with love.[29] This conclusion is shared by J. Schirmann, but only because he asserts that Luzzato's claim that Moses' brothers banished him due to their collective disapproval of a

---

[24]Ibid. [25]Ibid. [26]Ibid., p. 317. [27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 318.

[29]Ibid. The only emphatic argument of Brody's is negative. He vehemently differs with Luzzato, but he offers no reasoned alternative, at least one that is definitive.

propinquitous relationship is untenable.[30] If I may be permitted to speculate, let me offer the following alternative.

When Granada was conquered in 1090, Moses Ibn Ezra was caught on the horns of a dilemma. He had poetically expressed his love for the city. He laid claim to a title, though probably without authority. He flourished in the intellectual climate and had earned a reputation in the Jewish and Moslem communities. For these reasons, he hoped to remain in Granada. On the other hand, his remaining in Granada meant self-imposed isolation and loneliness as well as poverty. Moses weighed the alternatives, and since he had already lived through a seige of Granada in 1066, a seige that lasted only a few years before the Jews had returned to prosperity, he thought he could endure a temporary period of suffering. But, the conquest of Ibn Tashufin and the Berbers was not short-lived. Moses may have remained in hiding, hoping to wait out an evanescent invasion. But he was apprehended and exiled. Perhaps the poem written in exile to the "one who acted unjustly and without love"[31] was addressed to the person who betrayed him by telling the Berbers his whereabouts in Granada. In support of this theory, we know that it was standard practice for conquerers of a city or

---

[30] Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 364.

[31] H. Brody. Incidents, p. 3.7. See footnote 27. There, Brody suggests the identity of the poem's addressee is Judah Ibn Ezra. It is plausible, but a close friend may fit the character also.

province to send anyone associated with the previous regime into exile.[32] Moses Ibn Ezra lived in the "Spain of El Cid," and the suffering of exiles in this period is well documented. My contention, albeit in consonance with contemporary scholarship, supersedes it in one respect. Moses' behavior, heretofore unintelligible, or at best illogical, was neither. He left Moslem Spain because he was compelled to do so by political fiat. Moses' dual identity as part of the previous administration, coupled with his religious status, made him a natural and convenient candidate for exile. When the Arabs under Abdallah were displaced by the more militarily able and less culturally developed Almoravids, Moses Ibn Ezra became a dispensible pawn. When the "king" was overthrown, Moses was cast into exile. Though there was a delay between the capture of Granada in 1090 and Moses' exile, Ibn Ezra's fate had been sealed. Joseph Ibn Tashufin's entry into Granada signalled the beginning of exile for Moses Ibn Ezra.

Scholars have focused their attention on the incidents in Moses Ibn Ezra's life because his experience undoubtedly informed his poetry. Because it is Ibn Ezra's poetry, and

---

[32] A fundament of the Jewish experience in Medieval Spain was confronting exile. The poetry of Samuel Hanagid, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi speaks for itself on this point. The political realities associated with Reconquista made exile a viable option and the prevailing attitude of both the Moslems and the Christians towards the Jews made exile common. cf. R. Menendez Pidal, The Spain of El Cid for another perspective of exile in Medieval Spain.

not his diary, that has survived, scholars have used Moses' verse to fill in the lacuna in his life. Such a process risks a loss of objective scholarship. Any inferences about Moses' life derived from his poetry are suspect. This caveate may preserve gaps in understanding, but it obviates the problems to which "arguing from silence" gives rise. This applies to the life of Moses Ibn Ezra in the following way; better that we satisfy ourselves with a skeletal outline than try to reconstruct an altogether new and different human being. We can only be sure that as a result of the Almoravid conquest, Moses Ibn Ezra spent more than half his life in exile, away from his family, away from his friends, away from a nurturing poetic environment, and away from his home, Granada.

Moses bemoaned his destiny, "wrongs such as have not been committed since the world came into being. Merely hearing of them makes our ears tingle . . . Yet while I dwell in the pit of fortune's fury, they dwell securely beneath its beneficent wing."[33] This sentiment adumbrated the overriding concern that Moses Ibn Ezra lamented for forty years until his death in 1135. He had been betrayed, wronged bevond all reasonable cause. He was never able to climb out of "the pit of fortune's fury," but he was able to write more poetry

---

[33]Baer. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, p. 61.

and to lay out the only system of Medieval Hebrew poetics.[34]

When they left Granada, Moses' brothers, Joseph, Judah, and Isaac, went to Toledo. Moses, too, went north to Christian Spain. But, he left his heart in Granada. "Journey follows journey, but I find no resting place, no calm repose in Castille."[35] Having been a respected poet and courtier in Granada, Moses was crestfallen when he was thrust into an environment that did not appreciate his talents.

> Fortune has hurled me to a land where the
> lights of my understanding dimmed
> And the stars of my reason were beclouded
> with the murk of faltering knowledge and
> stammering speech.
> I have come to the iniquitous domain of a
> people scorned by God and accursed by man,
> Amongst savages who love corruption and
> set an ambush for the blood of the righteous
> and innocent.
> They have adopted their neighbors' ways,
> anxious to enter their midst,
> And mingling with them they share their deeds
> and are now reckoned among their number.
> Those nurtured in their youth, in the gardens
> of truth, hew, in old age, the wood of forests
> of folly.[36]

---

[34] שפר העיונים והדיונים by Moses Ibn Ezra is not truly a systematic work. But, clearly it responds to perceived needs for a structure of Hebrew poetics. It is premature to assume that the response is systematized. Rather, the thrust is on the uniqueness of the endeavor and its stated intention, i.e., the application of Arabic poetics to Hebrew poetry.

[35] Baer. A History of the Jews In Christian Spain, p. 62.

[36] Ibid., pp. 63-64. "Forests of folly" refers to Christian values.

Moses addressed in these lines the assimilation of the Jews in Christian Spain. He must have experienced culture shock. Jews participated in a cultural exchange in Andalusia. From the Arabs, Jews learned philology, philosophy and poetry. Jews learned to appreciate the beauty and precision of Arabic, and yet retain a sense of linguistic autonomy by adapting Arabic to suit their needs instead of adopting Arabic and its concomitant ties to the Koran. In contrast, the Jews who lived in Christian Spain thrived economically but were culturally impoverished. Whereas the Jews in Andalusia tended to integrate into the Arabic milieu while preserving their identity, the Jews in Christian Spain were perceived by Moses to have acquiesced to the prevailing power by prostituting their religious integrity.[37]

Some Jews grew to accept Christian values and became courtiers in Christian courts just as they had been in their Moslem counterparts previously. But the concentration of intellectuals and poets that figured prominently in Granada and other Jewish communities in Moslem Spain was nowhere to be found in Christian Spain. Predictably fascinating was the range of Jewish response to their plight. Messianism was born

---

[37]This is actually a corollary. The principal thesis, articulated by Glick, portrays Moslem society as having a significant secular component found wanting in Christian Spain. This generalization, by definition, knows exception. It is clear that Moses Ibn Ezra perceived Spain in these terms, and it is perception, even more than historicity that concerns us here.

out of despair. The war between "Edom" and "Kedar" had reached a feverish pitch, and some Jews became convinced that this was an overture to the apocalyptic era.[38] Primarily because of the Crusades, many Jews hated Christians more than the Moslems, and hoped for a massive, final defeat of the Christian forces.

The "culture shock" was too great for Moses to weather. He lived the last forty years of his life as a broken man, unable to integrate into his environment. He wandered in Castille, in Aragon, and in Navarre. Uprooted from his beloved home and its efflorescent culture, Moses lived in squalor and depression. He complained about his loneliness, vilifying with contempt the Christian Spaniards amongst whom he was compelled to live. He thought of the Christians as hypocritical, haughty boors.[39] His memories of Granada in its glory contrasted with his solitude and intellectual starvation. His dotage was replete with travail and suffering. His son Jacob died in Abbo. His other sons derided their father and were alienated from him. As "the last straw," Moses' brother Judah turned his back when he could have "rescued" Moses from Christian Spain.[40] He found some consolation in the assistance he obtained from patrons, among them

---

[38]Baer. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, p. 62.

[39]Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 364.

[40]Ibid.

well-to-do exiles from Granada, and from correspondence with his brothers, Isaac and Joseph. Because of his fame in poetic circles, he exchanged poems with neophytes. Such activity helped to stir his creative energies.

Moses' agony suffused his poetry. He loved to play rhetorically, and to make human sounds beautiful in their simplicity.[41] He loved Granada and he yearned to return, but in vain. As if the stark cultural contrast between Moslem and Christian Spain was insufficient cause for Moses' despair, another even more heart wrenching reality faced him. The Jews Moses met in Christian Spain did not appreciate his talent and he was forced to compromise his poetry in order to find patrons. He was forced to accept money from "evil morons."[42] Without his family, his circle of poets, and a discerning readership, Moses Ibn Ezra despised his surroundings. He languished in Christian Spain where he lived in exile.

Moses' whereabouts in "Edom"[43] remain unclear. He established connections with wealthy members of the Barcelona and Saragossa communities, and it is logical to posit that he went there.[44] Poetically, Ibn Ezra retained and even

---

[41] Ibid. [42] Ibid.

[43] For the relationship of "Edom," "Seir," "Esau" and Christianity, see Gershon Cohen, "Esau as a Symbol in Medieval Thought" in Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Vol. 4, ed. A. Altmann, Harvard Press, 1964, pp. 19-48.

[44] Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 364.

refined his skills. Even in exile he knew how to create florid images depicting the grandeur of nature and worldly delights. Late in life, he grew to accept his fate with greater equanimity. "I am a rich poor man, an impoverished one who has much, because there is no greater poverty than ignorance and no greater solitude than that of a man who loves himself."[45]

One after another, members of Moses' family died far away from him. He eulogized them in verse. He lamented his spatial and temporal distance from his niece, his brother Isaac, and his brother Joseph. "When I die those who will cry and wail on my grave will be few, and I will be left in God's hands (the God) whose name is the Father of Orphans."[46] Moses Ibn Ezra lived for more than eighty years, long enough to mourn all of his children. As the date of his birth is unknown to us, so is the date and place of his death. In spite of all this personal tragedy, Moses Ibn Ezra bequeathed to his people a magnificent legacy of poetry and poetic thought.

Moses Ibn Ezra wrote about the essence of poetry and its forms, poetic creativity, and the necessary qualities of the poet. He provided the only book of its type, a Medieval Hebrew poetics. Entitled <u>ספר העיונים והדיונים</u>, the book responds to eight questions asked by "Joseph."

---

[45]Ibid. [46]Ibid., p. 365.

Although Moses authored a philosophical work, it is for his poetics that he is most highly acclaimed.[47] It is worth noting that Moses wrote both his philosophy and his poetics while he lived in "exile," so we can infer that even in Christian Spain he found people who recognized his abilities. We are aware of numerous Arab books on poetics, and in his introduction Moses mentions five of them. It is apparent that Moses received his fundamental concepts of poetics from the Arabs, but he did not merely copy them. He addressed specifically Jewish issues, proffered a historical review of Hebrew poetry in Spain, and defended the primacy of Hebrew poetry in its biblical idiom. More than half the work treats the eighth and last question, "What is the best means of writing Hebrew poetry according to Arabic rules?". In it, he developed a "system" through which a poet could embellish a poem's content, style and form. This chapter lends a vital perspective to the study of criticism and literary analysis in the Medieval Period.[48] In other chapters, he combines essentials with incidentals, jumping from subject to subject and returning to the main point only after several digressions. "The book, despite all its detours, reveals the profundity of Moses' perceptions, e.g., his personal experiences, his thoughts about a natural talent for poetry,

---

[47] B. Halper. עיונת ישראל (his translation of Moses Ibn Ezra's ספר העיונים והדיונים), p. 10.

[48] Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 365.

the possibility of learning poetry, and poetry among friends."[49] This work deserves, and will receive more in depth study in its proper setting.[50] Nevertheless, because Moses wrote his poetics as an elder in exile, it is noteworthy in a biographical sense as well.

In the opinion of H. Schirmann,

> His expertise as a poet is reflected by many of his works. He sought to improve poetry with many embellishments and in so doing demonstrate his technical artistry. He especially admired the poetry of Samuel Hanagid whom he tried to emulate. But, he was not blessed with Hanagid's stamina, and therefore, many of Moses' longer poems give the impression that they were not of one piece. What excell are the 'girdle poems' and the aphorisms in which he displays his genius as a poet, e.g., his images that portray agility and litheness as a gifted dancer.[51]

What made Moses' love poetry distinctive was his treatment of love's joy. This stood in contrast to the typical poetic expression of unfulfilled and unrequited love. He overcame inhibitions in voicing deeply sensual and passionate feelings. As he matured, however, restraint entered his verse. "Perverted thoughts arise only from those who seek whoredom. Be satisfied with looking and avoid invading the space of another."[52] Moses possessed the ability to portray sensuality

---

[49] Ibid., p. 366.

[50] A full chapter of this work is devoted to poetics, and both Ibn Ezra's history of Hebrew poetry in Spain and his "canons" of Hebrew poetics are translated.

[51] Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 366.

[52] Ibid.

on the one hand and the abyss on the other. His abilities in the sphere of liturgical poetry so impressed his readers that Moses received the appellation סלחה (the author of sacred poems of forgiveness). "He knew how to express beautiful thoughts, sweet in sound and yet inclusive of motifs borrowed from his non-liturgical poetry without the reader sensing it."[53] The scope of Moses' poetry spans the ridiculous and the sublime, the holy and the secular, the particular and the universal, and yet all of it shares a common source. The poetry of Moses Ibn Ezra, like his life, is a pastiche, reflecting triumph and defeat, a sense of humor and a sense of agony.

When Moses was still in Granada, he came in contact with an aspiring poet who showed signs of poetic greatness in his youth, Judah Halevi. After receiving letters in verse from him, Moses invited Judah to join him in Granada. The friendship that ensued lasted through Moses' extensive peregrinations. In the beginning of their relationship, Moses was Judah's patron, both financially and poetically. At the end of Moses' life, Judah Halevi had emerged as the greater poet. When Ibn Ezra and Halevi went their separate ways prior to the Almoravid invasion of Granada in 1090, they were fated never to meet again. There is evidence to indicate that in the mid-1120's, about 10 years before Moses'

---

[53]Ibid., p. 367.

death, Joseph Ibn Ezra and Halevi tried to convince Moses to return to Granada, but their efforts failed. Moses and Judah lived in separate "exiles" though they shared a mutual admiration and respect. The two of them corresponded and thereby maintained a "poetic relationship" trading verses as if they were inspirational transfusions. They lauded each other's ability to the extent that most of Halevi's honorific poetry was addressed to Ibn Ezra.[54] When Moses was in exile, Judah cried poetically for his return. In his commentary on Medieval poetry, Al-Harizi praised Moses Ibn Ezra, "He cultivated rhetorical pearls and the poetry he composed for nights of supplication is repeated on the lips of those who sleep."[55]

Not long after Moses Ibn Ezra breathed his last, Judah Halevi wrote a moving poetic tribute about his patron, his colleague and his friend. " . . . Sweet singer of Israel . . . last of the outstanding brothers who longed for his family as long as he lived, and in his yearning for them he was 'gathered in,' and his bitter life ended."[56] His relationship with Judah Halevi undoubtedly gave Moses Ibn Ezra a sense of purpose and joy. He was deeply respected in life and sorely missed in death by his gifted contemporary.

---

[54]Halper. שירת ישראל, p. 13. [55]Ibid., p. 14

[56]Schirmann. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, p. 365.

Ironically fitting as an autobiographical epitaph is this line excerpted from Moses Ibn Ezra's voluminous verse, ". . . the sheep who wanders from the flock will be eaten by the wolf."[57] In his poetry, Moses did not wander, he was firmly grounded in conventional wisdom. In his poetics, Moses did not wander, he sought to synthesize his Jewish heritage and his Arab environs. But, in his life, Moses did wander, and as he himself stated, "the wolf" got the better of him. The wolf that enveloped and ultimately devoured Moses Ibn Ezra is otherwise known as exile.

---

[57] Halper. שירת ישראל, p. 10.

CHAPTER II

In Medieval Spain, a few Jews rose above the tide of history and swam against the prevailing Moslem or Christian current. Judah Halevi was one of them. His contribution to the Jewish people attained timeless status.

> When a race or nation is arraigned at the bar of History and asked what are its claims to the recognition of humanity, the answer must be in the last resort that it has produced men such as these. And when the question is asked of the Jews, no one will deny that among the representative men of Israel must be numbered the name of Judah Halevi.[1]

If there was one dominant quality of Halevi's life, it was a rarely achieved harmony of thought and action. What kept Halevi's life of a piece was a constant passion for the land of Israel which began as a poetic whisper and reached a crescendo near the end of his life. To say that Halevi was a proto-Zionist fails to capture the spirit of his essence. Judah Halevi's love for the Jewish people and for ארץ ישראל stood at the very center of his being.

Where Judah Halevi's life began or ended we know not. Both the place of his birth and his death have been the subjects of scholars and raconteurs alike. Because Halevi lived an extraordinary life, Jewish tradition sought to cloak his death in a beautiful legend. A Medieval story-teller substituted his story for history and Halevi was made to die as he approached the realization of his dream.

---

[1]Joseph Jacobs, Judah Halevi: Pilgrim and Poet, Jews College Literary Society, 1886-1887, p. 98.

With Jerusalem in sight, an Arab swordsman was alleged to have run him through as he recited his Ode to Zion. "But the myth may be true though the fact is not, for it embodies the thoughts of men as to how such a man should die."[2]

What was Halevi's genius? Certainly, his poetry and his philosophy exemplify the pinnacle of achievement. But, truly, Halevi's genius was not limited to these disciplines. They were merely extensions of his life, and because he was able to synthesize his mind and his body, it is in the story of his life that his poetry and his philosophy take on their essential meaning. Judah Halevi lived according to his beliefs, and if his thoughts were radical in his day, his actions were little short of intrepid.

With Moslems fighting each other in Andalusia, mutual hate brought Christian forces into the fray. The Christians took full advantage of their opportunity, beginning in 1013 with the destruction of Cordoba. Alfonso the sixth accelerated the pace of Christian conquests, taking the city of Toledo in 1085. The Moslems responded, but their efforts failed to stem the Christian tide. The Almoravids and the Almohades in turn had brief and turbulent reigns. Moslem Spain deteriorated culturally and economically as Christian forces won military victories. Each Moslem ruler sought to make his capital a cultural center and

---

[2]Ibid., p. 112.

encouraged people of renown to live there.[3] Absorbed into the Arabic milieu, the Jews of Andalusia experienced temporary prosperity. Arab literature, poetry in particular, flourished. "In this period, a large class of well-to-do Jews supported poetry and the arts."[4] We have little knowledge of the composition of the Jewish community with respect to the overall standard of life. We are cognizant of Jews who were land owners, vintners, farmers, merchants, doctors, clerks, and tax collectors. Born into this society was Judah Halevi. Of his family, we know nothing. Regarding his birth, scholars differ. In his work dealing with Hebrew poetics, Moses Ibn Ezra makes mention of Judah Halevi.[5] "Abu Alhasan Ibn Allevi brought up pearls from the sea and authored precious and illuminating things along with Abu Isaq Almagid Ibn Ezra of the Kalam rhetoricians were from Toledo, and later from Cordoba."[6] This statement, however, only begins the controversy. Moses Ibn Ezra's reliability is unquestioned. But, the manuscripts we possess are blurred. In particular, the city of their birth is close to illegible. Scholars had tacitly accepted the theory that Halevi was born in Toledo, especially because in a later poem, Moses Ibn Ezra addressed Halevi as having

---

[3] p. 35, 1937, 9 חרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי, J. Schirmann.

[4] Ibid., p. 36 [5] Ibid., p. 237 [6] Ibid.

come from Seir, i.e., Christian Spain.[7] J. Schirmann, in 1937, offered a plausible, if not cogent alternative. After performing some reconstructive linguistic surgery, Schirmann posits that Halevi's birthplace was actually in Moslem Spain, not far from the Christian border, in Tudela.[8] Scholars are only certain about a terminus ad quem for the date of Halevi's birth, that being 1075. From his youth, Judah had contact with Arab culture. His initial work shows evidence of Arabic poetry and poetics.[9] Believing that he could not satisfy his aspirations in Christian Spain, Halevi went south to Andalusia. For some reason that eludes our grasp, Halevi was not permitted to enter Granada directly.[10] In his wanderings, Judah met up with a group of intellectuals who received him warmly. They engaged in mental gymnastics and Halevi impressed them with his poetic skill. News of Halevi's prowess reached Moses Ibn Ezra who sent him a letter of friendship.[11] Poets were known to play a variety of games, one of which began with the recitation of a poem aloud. A listener who composed his own poem in the same form, meter, and rhyme won the contest. Once Halevi suggested the poem "לו למחשבה לב העירה" by Moses Ibn Ezra. At another occasion, in Cordoba, a group of poets tried to imitate a complicated poem by

---

[7]Ibid., p. 239. [8]Ibid. [9]Ibid., p. 37.

[10]Ibid., p. 38. [11]Ibid.

Moses Ibn Ezra. They were unable to match the poetic structure, so they turned to Halevi for help. After some goading, Halevi acquiesced and demonstrated his superior skill.[12]

Halevi sent Ibn Ezra a parody of one of Ibn Ezra's poems. Ibn Ezra, who was already a recognized poet, sensed Halevi's incipient genius. "For in the youth from the imperiled land is hidden prodigious talent."[13] He sent a poetic invitation to Halevi in which he offered physical and financial support.[14] Halevi accepted and went to Granada where he made friends with Ibn Ezra and his poetry. Sometime during the 80's of the eleventh century, Halevi made Granada his home. It was at this time that Moses Ibn Ezra enjoyed prosperity which enabled him to act as Judah's patron. Ibn Ezra taught Halevi the canons of poetics.[15] For this and for Ibn Ezra's generosity, Halevi remained grateful. It is reasonable to assume that Halevi knew the entire Ibn Ezra family. Halevi did not remain in Granada in spite of the indelible mark it made on the rest of his life. Halevi traveled between Granada, Seville,

---

[12] Ibid., p. 38 and S. Abramson, "איגרת רב יהודה הלוי לרב משה בן עזרה" ספר חיים שירמן (Jerusalem: 1970) pp. 400-408.

[13] Schirmann, חיי יהודה הלוי, p. 39.

[14] Ibid. [15] Ibid, p. 41.

Guadix, and perhaps Valencia.[16] He corresponded widely, making colleagues and acquaintances with equal ease. He, in all likelihood, spent several intervals in the environs of Granada, once searching in vain for Ibn Giyyat, and another time on some political mission.[17]

Moses Ibn Ezra and Halevi were together for a brief moment in their lives, but both of them spent decades bemoaning their separation in florid verse. Halevi compared being with Moses Ibn Ezra to being blessed with "manna."[18] An episode alleged to have taken place after 1090 reveals the wit which Halevi shared with his friends and fellow poets.

> Once a few poets assembled to share their art. A beautiful woman entered the room and captured the hearts of the men who exclaimed, "How magnificent is God's creation!". When she opened her mouth, her voice betrayed her beauty, for it was crude and ugly. Halevi riposted, "The mouth that proscribes is the mouth that prescribes."[19]

In 1090, Ibn Tashufin conquered Granada and the complexion of the city changed overnight. We have no information about its Jewish community at the time, but from the Diwan of Moses Ibn Ezra, it is clear that suffering abounded. "The hand of the Lord is upon her (Granada); the anger of His wrath has not turned from her nobles."[20] Every Jew

---

[16] Ibid., p. 42. [17] Ibid., p. 44. [18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 45. [20] Ibid., p. 46.

who could leave Granada did so; Moses Ibn Ezra remained alone. Halevi wrote two poems to members of the Ibn Ezra family after 1090. The latter of these poems was addressed to Moses Ibn Ezra in Christian Spain for he had already left Granada. Halevi probably traveled all over Spain, but from the Diwan we know only about his stays at Lucena, Seville, Toledo?, and Cordoba without any chronological order.[21] The city of Lucena is a case in point. Halevi had contact with Lucena from his youth. Apparently, he entered and left this city freely and frequently. He knew the city intimately, but although he wrote poetry about Lucena, there is no means of determining when he was there, to say nothing of knowing when such poetry was composed. We are left to speculate as to Halevi's whereabouts during much of his life, but an overall picture of Halevi's travels clearly portrays the image of a man possessing profound insight into his environment.[22]

One benefit Halevi derived from his peripatetic life-style, was making contact with other leading Jews in Spain. Isaac Alfasi, a leading Talmudic scholar and expositor who died in Lucena in 1003, ostensibly knew Halevi, though the parameters of the relationship are shrouded in mystery.

---

[21]Ibid., p. 47.

[22]This is more than a veiled allusion to Halevi's own concept of "the inner eye" in ספר הכוזרי.

Other luminaries with whom Halevi shared his poetry and his life include Joseph Ben Meir Ibn Migash who succeeded Alfasi as head of the ישיבה in Lucena and Barukh Ibn Albalia, another of Alfasi's disciples.[23] In Seville, the city labeled by Moses Ibn Ezra as "the city of poetry," Halevi met with disappointment. Looking for a patron, Judah came away with the impression that the Jews loved money more than poetry. "Those that think of money as the 'Tree of Knowledge' are therefore fearful to touch the true 'Tree of Knowledge.'"[24] Ironically, this accusation introduces a passage extolling the generosity of a Jew from Seville named Ibn Kamniel.[25] Halevi befriended many wealthy Jews from Seville. Kamniel held the title "Grand Vizier" which likely carried with it political privileges and authority, though there is no extant proof to that effect. Halevi shared poetry with at least three other prominent Jews, Ibn Azhar, Ibn Almahajar, and Ibn Mar Abun.[26] Halevi poetically praised the virtues of these men in such personal terms that we can assume he had a close and continued relationship with them.

Halevi's ability to cultivate friends throughout Spain testifies to more than an amiable demeanor. He seemed to

---

[23]Schirmann, חיי יהודה הלוי, p. 49.

[24]Ibid., p. 51. [25]Ibid. [26]Ibid., p. 54.

be at "home" in Spain. But, he grew disillusioned with his peripatetic lifestyle. Like Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Halevi eventually decided to leave his land, his birthplace and his roots. Their motives differed, however. Moses left Granada because he was exiled. Judah left Tudela and its environs because he was impelled to do so. Although Halevi made lifetime friends in Spain, he himself chose not to remain. Because this choice was for Halevi the most momentous in his life, and because its implications are pertinent to this study, a close analysis is in order.

The Almoravid reign in southern Spain lasted for fifty years, from 1090 to 1140. It came to an end as the result of the Almoahid invasion, an incursion which profoundly affected the character of life in Andalusia. But, between 1090 and 1140, the development of Jewish culture reached its peak. This is the period in which Judah Halevi lived. He represented the pinnacle of poetic achievement in the Golden Age.

> Critics of Hebrew literature emphasize correctly his stature. Since the Bible no Hebrew poet had composed, like him, the words of praise about the land of Israel and the yearning of the people of Israel for the land.[27]

---

[27] השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובנס, J. Schirmann, p. 425, vol. 2.

It is the motif of Israel in its most concrete sense, rather than in a hypostasized or eschatological vein, that distinguished Halevi's poetry and his life. His poetry merited the accolades of Alharizi, "Judah Halevi's talent is revealed in every word that he wrote. In the field of liturgical poetry his language was a lucid, sharpened arrow. In his poetic praises there is no one who surpasses him. In his plaintive poetry he attracts and conquers every heart. In his penitential (poetry of desire) poetry, his idiom was like the layer of liquid which ignited glowing embers. With his elegies, the weeping cloud flows and splits. When he composed an epistle or scroll, every good rhetorical device was included in it, as though it had been stolen from heaven or emanated from divine inspiration."[28]

Scholars assume that Halevi's early travels in Andalusia stemmed from his desire to dwell in the spiritual center of Spain, the home of outstanding Talmudists, scientists and poets. It was at this time that Moses Ibn Ezra served as Halevi's patron. At the beginning of the twelfth century, after having been separated from Ibn Ezra, Halevi had to leave Andalusia for Toledo which, after Alfonso 6th's conquest in 1086, was the capital of Castille. He turned to medicine as his principal source of income, and

---

[28]Ibid., p. 426.

he established his credentials in this discipline as he already had in poetry. Medicine, however, provided something that poetry lacked, a skill needed and desired by Christians and Moslems alike.

Upon learning about the death of a prominent Jew, Solomon Ibn Peruzziel, at the hands of Christians as he was returning from Aragon to Toledo, Judah poured forth his wrath in verse.

> God will pour torrents of wrath upon Edom. He will crush its root and chop down its trees. He will requite its breast with barrenness and widowhood. He will humble (subdue) all its masses as all its idolatrous images. A scythe will send forth and reap its harvest, and a wine press will trample its people until the end of all its vintage.[29]

Evidently, Christian Spain did not offer the Jews a viable alternative from Halevi's perspective. Though his renown as a physician spread and he prospered financially in contrast to his life in Andalusia, Judah Halevi gradually came to the conclusion that neither Spain offered him what he desired most, a home.

Meanwhile, conditions in Andalusia deteriorated further. In order to support what would now be called a "war of attrition," the Jews were oppressed by heavy taxation. "Between the armies of Seir and Kedar, my army perished and was absent" Halevi lamented.[30] Many Jews became apostates,

---

[29]Ibid., p. 427-8. [30]Ibid., p. 428.

while Jews who retained their faith perceived the war between Moslems and Christians in messianic terms. Gog and Magog were engaged in an apocalyptic confrontation. The Crusades only served as fuel for the messianic torch. Moses Dari declared in Fez that the Messiah was revealed to him in a dream in 1130.[31] Judah also had a dream in 1130 forecasting the collapse of the Moslem kingdom.[32] Halevi did not have to rely solely on a dream. The Moslems had precipitated their own defeat. The Berbers and Moslems hated each other to the degree that they sought Christian military assistance, without recognizing the implications of their alliances.[33] The Christians actually had infiltrated Andalusia with Moslem permission and even at Moslem request.[34] When the Moslems eventually pleaded for Berber intervention, their action was too little and too late. Under the Almoravids and the Almohades, Andalusia disintegrated politically in contrast to Christian consolidation of areas under their control.

Paradoxically, at the same time Moslem Spain weakened politically, it attained its literary zenith. Moslem rulers

---

[31]Ibid., p. 428. [32]Ibid., p. 429 and p. 94 of this work.

[33]p. 35, 1937, 9 חרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי, J. Schirmann.

[34]Ibid., p. 36.

competed for poets and literateurs who could earn their city a reputation as a cultural center.[35] The Arabs' preoccupation with the advancement of science and the arts enabled the Jews who lived within the Moslem ambit to prosper culturally. Since Jews occupied positions of power and wealth, Jewish poets were supplied with two elements indispensible to their art. The Arabs provided a cultural context which valued poetic excellence and the Jewish patrons enabled poets to meet their fiscal needs. The aesthetic sophistication of the Jewish community fostered the careers of such talented poets as Samuel Hanagid, Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi.

Having been nurtured in an environment wholly in favor of artistic expression, Halevi benefited intellectually from regular contact with Arab poets and philosophers. These relationships proved to have a substantive effect upon Halevi's life and thought, although unlike Moses Ibn Ezra, Halevi became disenchanted not solely with Christian Spain and its culture, but with Moslem Spain and its distinctively Arab culture. Halevi travelled frequently between Moslem and Christian Spain, with Toledo functioning as a regular stopping point. In one poem to Judah Ibn Giyyat, Halevi explained that he was forced to

---

[35]Ibid., p. 36.

flee to the north.[36] Eventually, the two met again in Granada. In another poem, Halevi complained about his "eastern," i.e., Christian friends who betrayed him and sold him as did the brothers of the Biblical Joseph.[37]

Cordoba was perhaps the principal city of Halevi's wanderings. Despite deprivation under the Almoravids, Cordoba remained a city in which authors, poets and scholars lived.[38] For example, in 1135 Maimonides was born in Cordoba. Halevi's fame spread throughout Spain. In his Diwan, Halevi left enduring reminiscences of a great many acquaintances: authors, critics, poets, rabbis, physicians and patrons.[39] Without the Diwans of Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra we would not know many of these people's names. Even though the poems fix neither time nor place from which they were sent, we can systematize their data and draw inferences from them.[40]

---

[36]Ibid., p. 220. [37]Ibid., p. 221. [38]Ibid., p. 222.

[39]Ibid., p. 223.

[40]Ibid., To wit: the myriad partners of Halevi's correspondence, e.g., Judah Ibn Giyyat, Joseph Ibn Muatka, Joseph Ibn Alshami - Halevi acted as a mediator between the last two (Alshami and Barukh ben Avun). He was also called upon to judge the relative merits of two poets (Isaac Ben Asael and Jacob Ibn Labil, who was the victor). Isaac bar Barun corresponded with Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra. He once sent Halevi raisins, dates and citrons from Malaga. Joseph Ibn Barun was yet another friend of Halevi's. Jacob Ibn Bazaz knew Halevi and Ibn Ezra. Ibn Karshafin, who was a prominent official and patron, kept in contact with Halevi; for more see pp. 226-230.

The first artifact that reached Halevi from Israel was a coin sent to him by Judah Alsagalat.[41] Ostensibly, Halevi already envisioned going to the land of Israel. But, the coin represented more than just a cherished object, since it had somehow made it from Israel to Spain. The thought of making the same trek, though in reverse, suddenly became possible. In his poems to Solomon Ibn Gabbai, there are allusions to important events in Halevi's life. "He wandered in 'Yemen' - alone without a friend as though he were a widower. He suffered from hunger until Ibn Gabbai succored him." From his correspondence with David ben Joseph from Narbonne, France, Halevi gives us insight into the questions and responses addressed in scholarly discourse. "Narbonni" and Halevi never met, but their correspondence reveals a healthy mutuality of respect and admiration.[42] Aside from his manifold contacts in Spain and Narbonni in France, Halevi managed to keep in touch with Jews from North Africa. He wrote elegies after the deaths of two prominent Jews from Morocco.[43] Despite any hopes Halevi harbored about going to the land of Israel, he understood that in order to realize his goal he had to combine a medical practice with the honoraria he received from

---

[41] p. 226, 1937, 9 תרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי, J. Schirmann.

[42] Ibid., p. 228, f. 43. [43] Ibid., p. 229.

patrons. Eventually, Halevi accumulated the funds requisite for the trip to Palestine.

As far as we can tell, Halevi was at peace with his contemporaries. He was not cast in the role of tragic misanthrope as was Solomon Ibn Gabirol. Nor was Halevi the lonely, languid, embittered soul that was Moses Ibn Ezra.[44] His desire to live in Palestine caused the only controversy among his friends and community. He parried playfully in his poetry with those "who think they are wise, who call their lies faith and his faith sorcery."[45] He thought highly of satire and he possessed the gift of being able to cloak any opinion in rhyme.

We know little about Halevi's immediate family. His wife died before he left Spain for Israel. He had a daughter and a grandson Judah. Regrettably, these terse statements will have to suffice. We know more about Halevi's literary friends than his intimate relatives. This underscores the painfully obvious fact that we know about Halevi's life only through his poetry and philosophy. He left no additional biographical data.

Halevi wrote a series of elegies, four of which pertained to the Ibn Ezra family.[46] He wrote what have become

---

[44]Ibid., p. 230. [45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., p. 232 and refer to translation of elegy about Moses in poetry chapter, cf. pp. 75-82.

eternal memorials of people who otherwise would have remained unknown. When Barukh Ibn Albalia died in Cordoba in 1128, Halevi wrote four elegies, one of which was designed for public reading. The eulogy written by Halevi for Moses Ibn Ezra showed the depth of his poetic expression as well as the depth of his friendship. All the poetry composed by Halevi in Spain, indeed all of Halevi's life in Spain was a preface, a prelude to the life of which he dreamed, and the life which he set out to live, in the land of Israel.

"Zion is in the chain if Edom and I am in the west."[47] This was part of Halevi's reaction to the Crusades. He expressed the sentiment of a sizable contingent of the Jews in Spain. In essence, the war between the Moslems and the Christians had widened its front from Spain to Palestine. The tide of the titanic battle in Spain swung heavily in favor of the Christians. The Berbers could not even control the cities they conquered. In 1121, the people of Cordoba rebelled against their corrupt rulers. Ali ben Joseph quashed the rebellion with a great army from North Africa. He killed all the recalcitrants.[48] In 1133, Alfonso 7th conquered the territory from Castille to the outskirts of Cordoba, Seville and Juarez. The people of

---

[47] p. 235, 1937, 9 חיי יהודה הלוי, חרביץ, J. Schirmann.

[48] Ibid.

Seville beseeched Alfonso 7th to break the Almoravid yoke for they hated the Berbers even more than the Christians.[49] In 1138, the Christian forces assumed control of Jaen, Baesa, Ubeda and Andujar. They left the towns in the hands of robbers and looters who effectively brought the regional economy to its knees.[50] This precipitated great hardships for the poets who depended upon patrons for sustenance. The Jews, in particular, were bled for funds to supply the empty war coffers of the Moslems.[51] Bribery was often an insufficient deterrent to prevent the warring factions from killing the hapless Jews. Halevi captured the horrors of these conditions in verse. "Scholars, men of discernment and heads of Israel . . . An edict was decreed from God to kill a city and a 'mother in Israel' due to the revenge of the children of Seir, when Israel had its corpses fill the streets . . ."[52] In his liturgical poetry, Halevi reflects upon the pain experienced by his fellow Jews who lived under the reign of "Ishmael" and "Edom." The people of Israel is portrayed symbolically as pursued like the widow without divorce papers, unrequited lovers, the yearning dove, and the ship tossed in a raging sea.[53] The victors are typically cast in the role of contumacious

---

[49]Ibid., p. 236. [50]Ibid. [51]Ibid. [52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., p. 237.

prosletyzers. They mock the Jews by asking when their Messiah will come and save them from persecution. Halevi phrased the question in another way, more in consonance with the story of his own life, "how long will we dwell in exile?".[54]

Gradually, Halevi felt the urge to leave "exile" altogether and return to the land of the patriarchs. Outwardly, the move made little sense. The Holy Land was in "strangers'" hands as was Spain. He could expect to continue suffering whether he was in "exile" or not. But he was ready to endure hardships if he experienced them in the land of Israel. Though this sentiment took most of his life to surface, it fermented in some of the most sublime Hebrew poetry ever composed.[55] Current scholarship suggests the most immediate cause of Halevi's עליה was a reasoned assessment of Spain's political realities. Halevi foresaw that whoever won the armeggedon, the Jews would lose. "We have no hope under the East or the West" (Christians or Moslems).[56] His friends tried to convince Halevi otherwise. "They did not understand that Halevi was exchanging this world for the world to

---

[54]Ibid., p. 238. [55]Ibid., שירי ציון.

[56]p. 238, 1937, 9 חיי יהודה הלוי,תרביץ, J. Schirmann. cf. Baer in Zion vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

come."[57] The unbroken chain of tradition linking the Jewish people with the land of Israel pulled Judah Halevi, first poetically, and then physically.

It was in Israel that the Jewish people crystallized, attained the summit of prophecy, and experienced Revelation. "Halevi was like a bird who could not enjoy living in captivity. He had to fly away."[58] Any attempts to dissuade him were doomed to failure. Not only had Judah Halevi made up his mind, he had invested his soul in making עליה. Halevi's genius extended beyond the field of poetry. His work, commonly known as ספר הכוזרי, which was actually entitled A Book of Rejoinders to Claims Against the Despised Religion and The Adducing of Evidence in Its Defense, articulates the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings which supported Halevi's decision. The book's conclusion suggests an autobiographical reading.

> . . . The Haver resolved to leave the land of the Khazars and go to Jerusalem. The Khazar king found the prospect of separation from the Haver difficult and hence, spoke with him thusly:
>
> The Khazar king: What can be sought in the land of Israel at this time, in which the Divine Presence is absent from it? Whereas nearness to God is possible to attain anywhere by a pure mind and strong will. Why subject yourself to the danger of deserts and seas and the enmity of various peoples?

---

[57] p. 239, 1937, 9 חיי יהודה הלוי, תרביץ, J. Schirmann.

[58] Ibid.

> Haver: Indeed, the visible Divine Presence is absent currently in the land of Israel, because the Divine Presence rests only upon a prophet or on favored community, and only in a special place. That is why we expect His return to us according to the promise, "For every eye shall behold the Lord's return to Zion" (Is. 52:8). Likewise we say in our prayer, "May our eyes behold your return in mercy to Zion." But the concealed spiritual Divine Presence is with every Jew who is virtuous and pure of mind, and whose every sacred yearning is for the God of Israel. The land of Israel is unique for the God of Israel (mine). There are only complete deeds in it, and many of the Divine commands that were given to Israel are nullified for he who does not live in the land of Israel. The mind cannot become pure nor can intention be entirely sacred to God other than in a place which is believed to be unique to God, even when there is nothing to this belief other than imagination and metaphor, how much the more so if the belief is true as we have demonstrated earlier.[59]

There is no doubt that this is an allusion to the planned עליה of the author, the man who also wrote, "at the end of my thoughts, may my resting place be with the graves of my fathers."[60] Halevi made explicit his perception of Jewish life outside the confines of the land of Israel. Between 1135 and 1145, Halevi separated from his loved ones and left Andalusia with a group of Jewish travellers. From which port he departed we know not. However, Maimonides

---

[59] ספר הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי. יהודה אבן שמואל מתרגם; דביר, תל - אביב, 1972, pp. 233-34.

[60] חיי יהודה הלוי, הרביץ 9, 1937, p. 239. J. Schirmann.

remarked that Jews typically left Spain by way of Seville.[61]

It is well-nigh impossible for us to imagine what life was like aboard ship in the twelfth century in general or for Judah Halevi in particular. Only if we can appreciate the circumstances of sea travel in the Middle Ages can we understand the heroic attitude demanded of the Jews who reified their dream of עליה. Because agents from both Christian and Moslem Spain traded with parties in the Near East, Jews had the opportunity to make עליה.[62] Nevertheless, anyone who ventured by sea entrusted his life to God. Even the most successful crossings were fraught with danger. During this period, ships tried not to stray too far from shore and stopped frequently at different ports. The reasons for this method of travel were two, 1) the need to replenish supplies, and 2) fear of being caught in a storm that necessitated rowing ashore. In 1183, or approximately 45 years after Halevi's trip, the Arab, Ibn Jubar, sailed from Spain to the Near East. Halevi's course may have been similar - to the south of Spain through the straits to Morocco, then on to Alexandria by way of Sardinia and Crete.[63] In Halevi's sea poems the "Philistine Sea" must refer to the Mediterranian near the land of the Berbers,

---

[61] Ibid., p. 240, footnote 92. [62] Ibid., p. 284, footnote 3.

[63] Ibid., p. 285.

i.e., the North African coast or the southeastern shore[64] of Spain. The trip to Alexandria ought to have taken Halevi and his shipmates at least a month. Ibn Jubar's uneventful trip took 32 days. As late as the sixteenth century, Christian pilgrims spent at least six weeks travelling from Venice to Jaffa, and the distance between those cities is shorter than from Seville to Alexandria.[65]

Ships could be delayed by weeks or even months. Ibn Jubar told of a case when a ship caught in a storm took about fifty days to arrive at the Greek Islands departing from Alexandria. Ships not only had to contend with storms, but also with wind blowing in the "wrong" direction or with no wind at all. Ibn Jubar told of a case in which a ship had to anchor for twelve straight days in Acco because there was no east wind. Halevi praised the west wind because it would have brought his ship closer to the land of Israel. "He entrusted his spirit to the power of the winds . . . I thank the waves and the west wind."[66] He also prayed that God would prevent the east wind from blowing. The ship, like all of the others in its day, was small and lacking in any form of self-propulsion. Halevi expressed feelings of loneliness and dejection that dominated his life aboard ship on the great, awesome sea. "I scan

---

[64] Ibid. [65] Ibid. [66] Ibid., p. 286.

all over and there is nothing but water, and sky, and ship. The heart of the sea denies the ship as though it were a thief in the power of the sea."[67] On the ship, people of different and even competing religions ate and slept together in horribly crowded conditions. People spent weeks at a time trying to cope with boredom by telling stories and playing games. The cramped quarters fostered the spread of contagious disease, and without a doctor, death was a common occurrence.

To make an already perilous experience more risky, the travellers had to contend with a crew often composed of adventurers or criminals. Further beleagered at the prospect of famine or thirst, one who ventured off into the sea had to possess courage. Especially harsh were the conditions of Jewish travellers. Halevi bemoaned his fate, "He sits and cannot stand; he lies and his legs are unstretched. He is sick and afraid because of the Gentiles, the pirates, and the winds."[68] Other fears were of a chimeric nature, e.g., a great sea beast would swallow the entire ship. The omnipresent fear, however, was nature itself. Halevi dedicated poems to the raging sea, although it would be speculative to presume that he composed them all while at sea. At least some of them, however, portrayed a vivid picture of travel by ship, of the storms, the musings

---

[67]Ibid. [68]Ibid., p. 287.

of other passengers and the ever-changing spirit of the poet. The ships, themselves were practically devoid of protection against the whim of the winds. When the sailors' strength gave out, they turned to God and prayed for Divine intervention.[69] The outstanding component of Halevi's sea poetry reveals the emotional "seascape" of the poet. He thought of Zion and of God. If he was fated to die at sea, then it would have been God's will. But, Halevi seemed convinced that his faith in God would ultimately lead him to reach his personal, and yet prophetic goal.[70] The knowledge that each day brought him closer to Israel buoyed his hopes and gave him the strength to cope with despair. "All the pains were transformed into delights as he connected whatever he saw with Zion."[71] ". . . suspended between water and sky, I circle and I move, and this was vile until I celebrate within Jerusalem . . . The sea rages, but my soul delights because Jerusalem's Temple nears."[72]

After a harrowing trek, Halevi's ship entered the port of Alexandria. Knowing that he had to stop there for awhile, Halevi thought that he could approach Israel overland,

---

[69] Ibid., p. 289.

[70] Ibid., p. 289, as to the prophetic aspect of his "Mission," much has been written, e.g., Kogan, B. "The Doctrine of Prophecy in Judah Halevi's Philosophical and Poetic Writings," Thesis, HUC-JIR, 1971.

[71] Ibid. [72] Ibid.

through the Sinai, perhaps as a reenactment of the Exodus from Egypt. Even in the twelfth century, Alexandria was a highly trafficked port. In 1173, Benjamin of Tudela named fifty-three countries and cities that sent their ships to Alexandria.[73] Later, Ibn Jubar described what the disembarking passenger faced upon arrival.[74] Although Egypt was generally depressed economically, Alexandria had a sizable Jewish community, thought by Benjamin of Tudela to have been in the vicinity of three thousand.[75] At first, Halevi thought of Alexandria as a way station. "I imagined making Alexandria like Capandria."[76] Despite his original intention, Halevi remained in Alexandria for an extended period where, almost immediately, he befriended the leaders of Alexandria's Jewish community.

Aaron ben Joshua Ibn Al'mani was one of the elders among Alexandria's Jews. He was a doctor and poet who lived most of his life in Alexandria after having been born in Israel. This provenance gave him great status in Halevi's eyes.[77] Al'mani was wealthy and generous.

---

[73] Ibid., p. 290.

[74] Ibid., This gives us a picture of what life was like for Halevi.

[75] p. 290, 1937, 9 תרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי. J. Schirmann.

[76] Ibid. [77] Ibid., p. 291, cf. panegyric.

He fulfilled the mitzvah of הכנסת אורחים when he invited all the Jews on the ship to his villa. Halevi wrote of the palatial gardens and the fountains that were part of Al'mani's estate. He participated in parties, enjoying the conversation, the food and the drink. Halevi sent back a description of his stay in Alexandria concentrating on the sybaritic luxury that surrounded him. "For the finest farms, the choicest nards (flowers), the first of the perfumes and types of sweets, an arranged flower bed, surrounded by a pool in a blessed valley and the spring of saints . . ."[78] In the same poem, Halevi praises Al'mani, the religious judge, and his five sons, יהושע, מבורך, יהודה, שמואל and צדוק. יהושע, the oldest, was a physician, צדוק a poet, but Halevi felt himself to be closest to מבורך.[79]

Once when Halevi went from Alexandria to a place in the east near the sea, he wrote of a reawakened desire to make עליה again, despite the physical effort it would require and the emotional investment he had in his new friends. Halevi continued to correspond with Al'mani after he left

---

[78] Ibid., pp. 291-292, an extended verse extolling the physical beauty of Halevi's environs.

[79] Ibid., p. 292, two poems speak of this friendship, one of which tells of Halevi receiving a gift. Among Halevi's other friends was Abu Netser ben Elisha. In one poem, Halevi explained that he had intended to visit him but had contracted some type of eye ailment that was particularly common in Alexandria.

Alexandria and expressed his appreciation for the kindness Al'mani had extended towards him. He went to Damiette, on the eastern edge of the Nile delta, a two day excursion from Alexandria. But, in at least two dimensions Damiette was far from Alexandria: 1) from the standpoint of economic stability, and 2) from the perspective of a Jewish community.[80] These factors notwithstanding, Damiette was considered a major port in the Near East, and the battles waged in its environs in 1169 and 1220 testify to its strategic significance. The move also enabled Halevi to inch closer to the land of Israel, and therein lies its principal meaning.[81]

His association with a particular Jew in Damiette, Halfon Halevi, led to a cycle of commemorative pieces, one of which was a brief article on Hebrew poetics.[82] Halevi befriended other members of the community in his two or three month stay in Damiette. He again confronted the pain of separation realizing the insatiable nature of

---

[80] Ibid., p. 294, about fifty years after Halevi's death c.200 Jews lived there (Benjamin of Tudela).

[81] Historically, this would be a footnote of minor import, but if we assume that the major force behind Halevi's actions was עלייה, then any physical displacement in the direction of Jerusalem needs to be considered an ascension.

[82] cf. Brody 1930 edition (Berlin), Halevi - Die Schonen Versemass, pp. 5-6. The brevity of the work stands in contrast to the Book of Dialogues and Arguments by Moses Ibn Ezra. Halevi's forays into the field of Hebrew poetics are limited in number and scope, making a systematic analysis impossible.

his desire to reach Jerusalem. "What can I do about him? For Canaan is my desired haven while Egypt is his . . . Israel is my sister, my beauteous one . . ."[83] Though Halevi's desire for Zion was great, he heeded the advice of Halfon and did not make haste. He returned to Damiette and remained there for two years.[84] Even from there, he did not attempt to travel directly to Jerusalem. He went on to Cairo after having made contact with some prominent Jews in that community. With a twist of irony, one of Halevi's acquaintances chided him for not fulfilling his vow to make עליה.[85] Halevi responded to the criticism with verses in praise of Cairo's virtues, in particular its identification with the Biblical Egypt, the place where the people of Israel crystallized and where Moses and Aaron were born.[86]

Halevi's ambivalence is highly enigmatic. Why would a man leave his family, his friends and his coterie of admirers in Spain and then abandon his vision? It is a proposition that is very difficult to accept. We have no reason to believe that he went through a personal crisis,

---

[83] p. 296, 1937, 9 תרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי. J. Schirmann.

[84] Ibid. [85] Ibid.

[86] Halevi enumerated the virtues of Egypt only to arrive at a rejection of his line of reasoning. The Divine Presence dwelled only temporarily in Egypt - only in Israel was "She" home.

so we are led to believe that external factors contributed to his behavior.[87] It is possible that a Jew could not enter the land of Israel, but since we know next to nothing about Israel in this period, such a theory remains unsubstantiated. I wonder if Halevi envisaged only dying in Jerusalem and did not aspire to live for any length of time in an Israel that differed so radically from the Israel in his dreams and in his poems. Perhaps, Halevi awaited a sign, a prophetic epiphany. There is little question that עליה was considered a holy act. Maybe Halevi wanted that act to be presaged by a holy communique.[88] Nevertheless, Halevi was willing to delay his entrance into the land of Israel while living in Cairo. The latter years of Halevi's life were spent in a disconsolate state. He wandered from place to place in the country that bordered on his "envisaged" home.

If it was the case that Halevi agreed to a moratorium with respect to עליה, he did not assent to the abandonment of his ideal. He hoped that Samuel ben Hanina, a leading

---

[87] p. 297, 1937, 9 הרביץ, היו יהודה הלוי. J. Schirmann.

[88] I offer these suggestions as a means of interpreting behavior that is otherwise out of concert with Halevi's vision. We lack a piece in this puzzle, but it is difficult to resist the temptation to try and find it.

Jew living at the time in Cairo, would facilitate his trip to Jerusalem.[89] Though he may have contemplated making his way from Cairo to Jerusalem via the Sinai, Halevi mentioned another attraction Cairo held for him. "The earth donned fine linen and embroidery, as necklaces interwoven with gold."[90] Yet, he also wrote in despair fearing that his demise would precede his earthly victory.

> If your will is to fulfill mine, send me and I will walk to my Lord, because I will not rest my foot until I establish my residence in His sanctuary . . . Do not delay me from going, for I fear that my death is near . . . and my resting place shall be with that of my fathers.[91]

He prayed for a safe excursion to Cairo, "Be a help to a servant that believes in You."[92] When Halevi arrived in Cairo, Samuel ben Hanina had already made arrangements for a regal reception.[93] Hanina, as a member of the king's court, had earned a reputation that extended beyond the local community to the entirety of the Jewish world. Most of what we know about him has been transmitted through

---

[89] p. 298, 1937, 9 הרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי. J. Schirmann.

[90] Ibid., p. 299. [91] Ibid. [92] Ibid., p. 300.

[93] Halevi wrote Hanina a poem expressing his profound thanks for the courtesy extended him. cf. Diwan 1:64:4.

Halevi's poetic art.[94] It is likely that Halevi died before he could get from Cairo to Jerusalem.[95]

Students of Halevi have typically been uncomfortable with such a dénouement to an exceptional life. But, in their preoccupation with a fitting conclusion, it is possible that scholars have obfuscated the main plot of Halevi's life. He never made it home. Judah Halevi spent his entire life in exile. He was able to appreciate earthly riches, but he was never content with them. Because Halevi the poet possessed a visionary genius it seems incongruous that his biography ended in personal tragedy, failing to fulfill the vision. But, I submit that the contrary ought to be true. By never having set foot in Israel, Halevi kept alive the Israel he had in his mind. Though we know very little about Israel in the twelfth century, we may rest assured that the plight of the Jews who lived there was pitiable. This was not Halevi's ארץ ישראל. This was the soil without the soul, and the Israel that Halevi sought was the Holy Land. He never reached it, because it was not there.

---

[94] p. 302, 1937, 9 תרביץ, חיי יהודה הלוי. J. Schirmann. where further details describing Halevi's relations with the Cairo Jewish community are provided. One detail of note involves a correspondence with one Moses ben Harosh who sent Halevi a lengthy poem written according to the canons of Arabic poetics. Also coming from this period is a letter written about life in Damiette in which Halevi makes it explicit that he could enjoy life while striving to live in the land of Israel.

[95] Ibid., p. 305.

In ספר הכוזרי, Halevi devoted his considerable energies to the defense of the Jewish religion against its most important adversaries in general, Christianity and Islam, and the philosophers in particular.[96] He apparently felt the need to apologize for the state of world affairs vis a vis the Jewish people. Although it may have been Halevi's chief concern that Judaism be defended against other religious and philosophical alternatives, a secondary objective met in the work defends Judaism to the Jews. Halevi was an exception in the Jewish community in Spain. He left. The majority of Spanish Jews did not follow Halevi's footsteps, physically or otherwise. Halevi failed to convince his own people of the imminent need to return to the land of Israel. That, more than his own failure to reach Jerusalem, is the more profound conclusion inferred from the Kuzari and from Halevi's life. The tendency to romanticize Halevi's life is alluring, but is best resisted. The best reconstruction of Judah Halevi's biography available to us is the story he told about himself in his poetry, in his correspondence, and in his artful defense of Judaism in the Kuzari. The story is remarkably integrated. He was a dreamer and a pursuer of dreams whose end justified the

---

[96] Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing (The Free Press, Glencoe: 1952), p. 98.

means. That Halevi did not recite his Ode to Zion outside the remains of the Temple ought not be construed as a cataclysmic tragedy. He wrote his verse not out of narcissism, but out of a love for the only place he believed that a Jew could be fully at home. His dream was not only for himself, but for his people. Halevi was unable to fulfill his personal mission, to make עלית. But, that had only secondary significance. He dreamed of the day on which the Jewish people would no longer be despised, and that every Jew would have a haven, a home called Jerusalem.

The lives of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi bear a striking resemblance to one another. Their lives spanned the turn of the twelfth century. They merit recognition as outstanding Jews of their time, as exemplary poets, and men of discernment. They lived in exile, Ibn Ezra for more than half his life and Halevi for all of his. They lived as dear friends, yet they apparently disagreed on a fundamental issue. Ibn Ezra lamented his exile from Granada; Halevi bewailed his exile from Jerusalem. In order to substantiate this contention, it is necessary to find support for it in their respective works of poetry, poetics and philosophy. Although the extant literature is unbalanced with respect to both its quantity and quality, with Ibn Ezra the more prolific and proficient expounder of poetics, and Halevi the superior poet and philosopher, data worthy of scrutiny obtains.

Even though Halevi outlived Ibn Ezra, in his review of Hebrew poetry in Spain Ibn Ezra offers an insightful eulogy. "Abu Alhasan ben Halevi plumbed the depths to draw up pearls."[97] Though Ibn Ezra was referring to Halevi's poetry, he may as well have been speaking of his life. Halevi probed the depths of the Jewish experience after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. After that time, until 1948 and the founding of the State of Israel, the Jewish people lived in exile.[98] Fittingly, Halevi himself composed a poem worthy of inscription on his own gravestone.

> It holds a princely man, blameless and upright,
> a God-fearing man, discreet and wise.[99]

The only respect in which this fails to capture the spirit of Judah Halevi's life is the sublime degree to which he aspired and achieved a harmony of thought and deed. Judah Halevi's prose and poetry would somehow not be the same had the author not lived according to their stated vision, a Jew on the way home.

---

[97] cf. page 185 of this work.

[98] This comports with traditional Jewish belief. Any notion of complete Jewish life in the Diaspora would have been anachronistic if not unthinkable in the twelfth century.

[99] The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, trans. by T. Carmi, Penguin Books, 1981, p. 339.

CHAPTER III

Hebrew poetry in Spain fulfilled what was in post-exilic history an unprecedented function. Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra were both professional poets, though both were compelled to earn money from other sources as well. This simply could not have been the case unless the Spanish community in general and the Jewish community in Spain in particular were willing to encourage and support the art of poetry.

> Religious poetry in earlier days was written for use in divine service and certainly not for profit. In general, poetry was not appreciated in a literary sense, but rather as a means to an end (prayer). But it was reserved for Spain to produce Hebrew poems that were intended neither for study nor for use in the synagogue. It was also there, for the first time in the literary history of the Jews that men earned their livelihood from poetry.[1]

Poetry filled a need in Medieval Spain. The existence of a community of educated and motivated readers enabled poets to function. This thirst for cultural fulfillment coupled with propitious economic circumstances enabled the Jews to clamor for a small class of professional poets and provide for it.

The poets relied on wealthy educated officials, financiers, physicians and the landed Jewish aristocracy to act as patrons of the poetic art. Due to the nature of the

---

[1] J. Schirmann, "The Function of the Hebrew Poet in Medieval Spain" (Jewish Social Studies, vol. 16, 1954), p. 235.

poet-patron relationship, a great number of panegyrics were composed in Arabic, Provencal and Hebrew. Occasionally, the poet's blandishments resulted in sycophancy. Nevertheless, the situation fostered superior poetry written about individuals instead of strictly liturgical compositions. It would be misleading to categorize all of this poetry as necessarily secular, but it was not designed solely for inclusion in worship. Liturgical poetry did not experience any appreciable decline in this period principally due to the deep-seated religiosity of the Spanish Jews.[2] The form of Hebrew poetry changed along with its content. Arabic meter and rhyme schemes were adopted by Jewish poets after the beginning of the eleventh century.

Among Spanish Jews, poetry became so widespread that even Maimonides, though not a poet, was able to write rhymed prose and metered epigrams.[3] Gradually, a literary tradition emerged wherein neophytes read the works of famous poets in order to inspire their own creativity.

---

[2]Non-liturgical poetry did not make liturgical verse outmoded. The same poets who wrote about wine, women and song wrote פיוטים. Hebrew poetry reached its summit concurrently with the efflorescence of Talmudic and Biblical commentaries. In no way did poetry supplant the primacy of textual study.

[3]J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 237 and "Maimonides and Hebrew Poetry" in תרביץ, vol. 3, 1935, pp. 433-436. This ability may be traced to training in poetic composition as part of his general education.

Few sources referring to the nature of instruction in poetry have filtered down to the present day. Some incontrovertible facts may suggest a pattern.

> Many followed Moses Ibn Ezra's advice and commenced the study of poetry at an early age. This can be inferred from Isaac Giyyat's achievement of composing at age seventeen a most difficult Aramaic poem in meter. Solomon Ibn Gabirol was productive at sixteen, and Samuel Hanagid's son, Joseph, wrote a poem at age nine."[4]

Few poets were self-supporting. Typically, they were חזנים, who composed liturgy, and teachers of Talmud. Others were judges, brokers, physicians, and finance ministers.[5] Those who were strictly professional poets paid a heavy toll. They were beholden to patrons, and when the money or just the favor ran out, the poet suffered.[6] A professional poet was either a "free-lance" writer looking for a permanent court position or a community secretary. Letter writing in the Medieval period was an art. Letters consisted of lengthy rhymed introductions and were accompanied by metered poetry.[7] This activity was centered in Cordoba,

---

[4]J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 238. This leads one to believe that they received early training.

[5]Teacher of Talmud - Isaac Abulafia; judge - Joseph Ibn Tsaddiq; physician - Judah Halevi; minister - Samuel Hanagid.

[6]Moses Ibn Ezra implied that the first professional poet was Ibn Khalfun.

[7]J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 240.

Lucena, Granada, Toledo, Saragossa, and Seville, termed by Moses Ibn Ezra as "the city of poetry."[8]

One frequently documented characteristic of the Hebrew poet in Spain was his status as a wanderer. Judah Halevi, Moses Ibn Ezra, Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Abraham Ibn Ezra, the four most renowned Medieval Hebrew poets, all had intervals in which they lived miserably and wandered in search of security and stability. "The classic wanderer was Judah Al-Harizi, but we do not know what prompted his peripatetic existence. His work, the Tahkemoni, is a lasting monument to the life of a traveler. 'About whom shall I sing my verse?' (i.e., who will be my patron?)"[9] A poet who lacked a patron would often dedicate a poem to someone in hoping to receive a commission. Poets did not want for candor in expressing their feelings for prospective patrons. "Before a poet praises a patron he should inquire about his generosity."[10] The poet even went as far as addressing the question of payment in the context of the poem. "Halevi wrote, 'Thy generosity and the waters of thy brooks surround me; thy shadow protected

---

[8] B.Z. Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 75.

[9] J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 241.

[10] Ibid., p. 243, from Yedaya Hapnini.

me and thy dewdrops quenched my thirst.' Solomon Ibn Gabirol was more to the point. 'The world is full of praise for you because you filled it with joy. My purse is full and praises you because with joy you filled it,' as if to say, without payment the poet would have claimed 'fraud'. "[11] Poetic superciliousness seemingly knew no bounds. "Marry my poems, but if you want a divorce, today write out a marriage contract and a bill of divorcement."[12]

A significant by-product of poetry was public relations. Without the Medieval poetry that has reached us, most of the patrons would simply have been washed away by the wave of history. "Yedaya Hapnini wrote, 'He who speaks well of the poet is wise, but he who picks a quarrel with him hates himself. Therefore, be careful when you speak to a poet for he is glad when you abuse him. Beware of the poet's hate, for his lies will sooner be believed than your truths . . . The poet enjoys the advantage that he may stay wherever he happens to be, but at the same time take revenge upon his enemies who live

---

[11] Ibid., pp. 243-244.

[12] Ibid., p. 244. As a divorced woman is paid, so the poet, Isaac Ibn Ezra, demands that if his patron should reject a poem he ought to pay for it nonetheless.

beyond the sea.'"[13] The power of the pen was rarely mightier than that of the sword, but that was not because poets failed to exploit the weaponry at their disposal. A poet may not have realized that his words "immortalized" the name of his patron, but that did not prevent some poets from using their poetry as a spade.[14] Regrettably, we do not possess any authentic authors' manuscripts of poems or copies by persons within their intimate circles. The manuscripts themselves were described in poetry - "beautiful parchment, perfumed, and with jet-black print."[15]

The science of poetry, poetics, grew to the extent that poets were asked to judge the relative merits of aspiring poets' works. Halevi was the first known to have functioned in this critical capacity.[16] Poetry brought poets together, both officially to share their poetic flourishes (rhodomontade), and unofficially to enduring friendships.[17] Poems were read publicly in order to give

---

[13] Ibid., p. 244.

[14] e.g., Judah Halevi's poem satirizing the wealthy Jews of Seville. cf. Diwan, vol. 2, no. 28.

[15] J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 245.

[16] Ibid., p. 247.

[17] The relationship between Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi ranks as the paragon of friendship between poets. Although this closeness has been addressed in both biographical chapters, further mention in terms of their poetic correspondence is to be found below.

exposure to their musicality. "Moses Ibn Ezra noted, 'Take care not to use similar words and not to begin a word with a letter that is kindred to the one with which the preceding word ends. For such things are ugly and are objected to by lovers of music.'"[18] Poems became known through tradents, men who were fully conversant with poetry and often knew poems by heart.[19]

An inner struggle common to several Medieval poets involved the ultimate worth of their art. Halevi and Ibn Ezra were not immune to this ambivalence. Ibn Farhun states that Halevi made a vow near the end of his life never again to write poetry.[20] Ostensibly, this resulted from an introspective examination of the relative worth of poetry as against something such as science. Moses Ibn Ezra, in the <u>ספר העיונים והדיונים</u> confessed that "I, too, when I was a boy and in my youth, considered poetry as something to be proud of, and it seemed to me that my poetry may immortalize my name. However, I gave

---

[18] J. Schirmann, "The Function," p. 248. Arabs wrote extensively on music theory. The very sound of girdle poems reveals that they were intended to be sung. Moses Ibn Ezra averred, "My heart trembles at the sound of the (ud) strings. While some of them move, others remain still."

[19] Ibid., p. 250. Moses Ibn Ezra wrote, "I did not compile an anthology of the best works of the most excellent writers because they are celebrated and they live on the mouth of the tradents."

[20] Ibid., p. 251.

it up later because I longed to fill my days with worthier things." That remark notwithstanding, "I did not quite give up writing poems, that is, when they were needed."[21] This conflict appears to have been unresolved, at least with respect to Halevi and Ibn Ezra, because they both continued to compose verse even after their statements to the contrary. That they could even have come to the point of making explicit their doubts about poetry indicates that each felt he paid a price for his devotion to poetry. The precise nature of that "price" remains impenetrable. What speaks plainly to the issue is the magnificent poetry which both Halevi and Ibn Ezra composed in the face of weighty personal vacillation. Whatever Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra perceived as obstacles to writing poetry, they arrived at the same conclusion, i.e., poetry was for them a sine qua non.

The respective Diwans of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi comprise multiple volumes.[22] To read all of their poetry, to say nothing of analyzing it would take most of a lifetime. The task here is much more modest. Halevi and

---

[21] Ibid., p. 251.

[22] H. Brody, "Moses Ibn Ezra -- Incidents in His life" (Jewish Quarterly Review, 1934) and Halevi - Die Schonen Versemass, 1930 Edition (Berlin).

Ibn Ezra both lived in גלות. They both wrote about their conceptions of life in exile. It is this theme which provides the focus of this endeavor. In what terms did they perceive גלות? Theological? Political? Who exiled them? From where? It may be presumptuous to elicit definitive responses to these questions from their poetic works, nevertheless, because both Halevi and Ibn Ezra wrote passionately about their sitz im leben, poetry is germane to the overarching inquiry into their experience of exile.

The initial contact Halevi had with Moses Ibn Ezra was by means of a poem.[23] The poem itself demonstrates Halevi's literary agility as well as his command of poetic form. It was via this poem that Ibn Ezra saw Halevi's potential and invited him to Granada. Thereafter, the two great poets of their time maintained personal and literary

---

[23]For a complete treatment of this poem see Shraga Abramson in Sefer Hayyim Schirmann, Schoken, Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 397-411. There Abramson reopens the discussion of Halevi's birthplace. The small city of Tudela, in Castille province, where Schirmann posits Halevi was born, does not comport with Abramson's reading of the available texts. Instead, Abramson notes that when Tudela is referred to in most literature of the Medieval period its context is the large city of Tudela in Navarre province. Abramson questions Schirmann's contention that Ibn Ezra's reference to the common provenance of Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra is the smaller Tudela. He recapitulates Schirmann's dilemma with respect to Ibn Ezra's poetic reference stating Halevi came from "Seir." Abramson demurs by claiming his article is not the proper setting for a detailed account of the "birthplace" controversy. cf. footnote #3, p. 398.

ties. The vastness of their poetry precludes a thorough survey here. The parameters of the following investigation are: 1) their respective poetic treatments of life in Spain, 2) examples of their thoughts on the land of Israel culled from both their liturgical and non-liturgical poetry. By confining this study to these areas, I attempt to address a poetic theme rather than a poetic style or genre. Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra did not write their verse according to thematic designs. Nevertheless, poetic anthologies such as the one edited by Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, permit, even suggest, a natural division along conceptual lines.

Judah Halevi

pp. 447-448, #181, lines 7-18

[בין יהודי סביליה]

התושביה כספם לעץ חיים-ועל
כן ייראו לנגש בעץ הדעת.
ההרשים, שמעו-ואשרי איש אשר
דובר עלי אזן והיא שומעה-
איך התשבו חכמה כגהלה? ולו
עלתה בידכם-היתה מבעה.
איך ישרפוה אוהביה לנום? ואל
ברא כפיריהם בלי מלחעה!
איכה חמורים רובצים יוכלו שאת
משא-והם נלאו שאת מרדעה?
חברת בהמות כורעה תמיד למול
הקיר-ולא יודעה למי כורעת.

Moses Ibn Ezra[24]

p. 379, #150

[הבריחה מגראנאדה]

אחר ימי השחרות פנו / כצל
וצרו צעדי שני,
קרא נדוד: השאנן קומה!
/ ולשאננו צללו אזני.
קמתי בלב רגז ויצאתי / תועה,
ולאל שוער בני.
היו מקור חיי-ואיך אחיה /
בלתם ואין אחי מאור עיני?
עם לעגי שפה ועמקי פה,
/ משור פניהם נפלו פני:
עד כי אלהים לי דרור יקרא /
מהם להמלט בעור עני.

---

[24] All poems from Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס. (Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1960), vol. 2.

(English Translation)
The Escape From Granada

After the days of youth
turned away like a shadow
and the pace of my years
slowed, wandering called:
Complacent one, Arise!
And at his uproar my ears
rang. I got up with
anguished heart, and I went
out (from Granada) a vaga-
bond, my children cried out
to God. They were the
source of my life - How can
I live without them, ~~my very~~
~~sight is gone~~.
Fortune led me to a land in
which my thought and my
ideas were upset: A people
with stammering lips and
unintelligible speech.
~~From seeing~~ their faces,
my face fell - until God set
me free to flee from them by
the skin of my teeth.

(English Translation)
Among the Jews of Seville

They who think of their
money to be the tree of
life -- and hence, are afraid
to touch the tree of knowl-
edge.
The deaf - Listen. And
happy is the man who speaks
to an ear that hears. Why
do you think of knowledge
as burning coal? Were it on
your hand, it would be a
ring. How can indolents
attain it (knowledge), if
their chief delight is sleep?
God created their cubs with-
out teeth! (with which to
digest knowledge) How can
crouching asses lift the
heavy burden of knowledge
while they cannot sustain a
normal load? A group of
wild animals continually
crouches before a wall -
and does not know to whom
it bows. (The wealthy Jews
of Seville are likewise
ignorant of before whom they
bow at prayer.)

Their views on the Jews in Christian Spain seemed to coincide. Both Halevi and Ibn Ezra felt out of their element among wealthy Jews, and therefore prospective patrons, who fail

to recognize the poetic brilliance that awaits them if only they would endeavor to understand the verse of Halevi and Ibn Ezra, respectively. Ibn Ezra implied that the intellectual climate in Christian Spain was decidedly inferior to that of Andalusia, whereas Halevi made no regional comparisons. Halevi's silence may speak as forcefully as Ibn Ezra's verse. Halevi stopped short of stating that Christian Spain was no worse than Moslem Spain, but he did not rule out that possibility. Ibn Ezra, by contrast, expressed disdain for Christian Spain and nostalgia for the years of his youth spent in Granada.

Moses Ibn Ezra

p. 381, #153א

יום הנדוד המר והנמהר / אותי
ביין התאוה השכיר,
אשב משומם בין פראים, אין
/ דורש לנפשי בם ולא מזכיר.
לשמאל אני קורא-ואין עונה,
/ אפנה עלי ימין-ואין מכיר!

(English Translation)
A wandering, bitter and impetuous day made me drunk with yearnings. I sit, appalled among barbarians, none of them seeks my welfare nor mentions it.
I call to the left - and no one answers me, I turn to the right - and no one recognizes me.

Judah Halevi

pp. 466-467, #191, lines 7-10

דחויה אלי שעיר, הדופה עדי
קדר,
בחונה בכור יון, מענה בעל מדי,
היש בלתך גואל, ובלתי-אסיר
תקוה?
הנה עזך לי, כי לך אחנה דודי!

(English Translation)
Repelled by Seir (the Christians), oppressed by Kedar (the Moslems), tested in the Greek crucible, tortured by the Persian yoke, Is there, beside You a redeemer, and besides me - a prisoner of hope? Give Your strength to me, because to You I give my love.

These poetic excerpts, however brief, poignantly address the poets' attitudes vis a vis their exile. Ibn Ezra longs for his friends and for the environment in which friendship flourished, i.e., Andalusia. Halevi, on the other hand, has turned his attention to God, seeking what he cannot find among men. Christians, Moslems, Persians and Greeks are lumped by Halevi into a collectivity whose common element is a disrespect for the Jews resulting in their subjugation. Ibn Ezra distinguished between the Christians and the Moslems, Halevi allowed for no such differentiation.[25] By grouping the Moslems with the Christians as oppressors of the Jewish people, Halevi insinuated that under both hegemonies he was in exile. That stood in contrast to Ibn Ezra's desire to be back in Granada among his friends and colleagues.

Moses Ibn Ezra

pp. 385-387, #155

[סבלו של גולה]

עד אן בגלות שלחו שלוח
/ רגלי, ועוד לא מצאו מנוח?
הריק זמן הרב פרידה אחרי
/ לרדף, ונרזן הנדוד-לנדה,

Judah Halevi

pp. 459-462, #185

[למשה אבן עזרא,
הגולה בספרד הנוצרית]
[א]

ידענוך, נדוד, מימי עולמים,
/ ונחל הבכי-נחל קדומים.
הרב עם הזמן על לא הטאה?

---

[25] cf. Daniel 7:3 and following to note the Biblical source for Halevi's categorization of the "four kingdoms."

/ ועם ימים? ואין ערך לימים!
פלכים הם בקו צדק ירוצון,
/ ואין נפתל ועקש במרומים-
הזה חדש? ואין חבל חדשה
/ וחקיה באצבע אל רשומים.
ואיך ישנו דבריה? וכלם
/ בטבעת ימין עליון חתומים,
וכל סבה מצואה במסבה
/ וכל חדש כבר היה פעמים!
ולא חבר אנוש כי אם לפרד,
/ להוציא מלאם אחד לאמים,
ולולא נפרדו מאז בני איש,
/ אזי לא מלאה ארץ עממים.
ויש דבר אשר ייטב וירע,
/ ובו שקוי ורקב לעצמים.
בהתקצף אנוש יומו יקלל
/ ויקב את רגעיו הזעומים-
והוא היום יברכוהו אחרים
/ אשר אותו יבלו בנעימים.
וכל מאכל בפי בריא כנפת-
/ והנפת בפי חולה רחמים,
ודואג יחשכו אורים בעיניו
/ ולא יראם והם לא נעלמים-
כעיני יום שכן ענן עליהם
/ לנו, משה, והם יורדוה זרמים!
מקור חכמה, אשר אמצא בפיהו
/ מקום הפז ומחצב הכחמים,
ידידות קשרה נפשי בנפשו,
/ בעוד רכבי נדוד אינם רחומים,
בעוד לא נסתה נפשי פרידה
/ ואתנו בני ימים שלמים.
ילדונו בנות ימים פרודים,
/ ובת אהבה ילדתנו תאומים,
אמונים על ערוגת הבשמים,

הפך ילדיו בי, לבלתי אעמד
/ תחתי וכצל יום ליום לברח.
פסחו עלי לבי ימי נער עדי
/ זקן-ועוד לא יגעו לפסח,
טהר בקירותיו יגונים, הלכו
/ הלוך והלום אחרי הטוח.
מופת היות תפת בצלעותי ומ-
/ עיני בפני עברו מי נח.
מנחלי נפריח דמעות ישאבו
/ כי את לבבי יזלו לקדח.
צפרו למרר בבכי בקר כמו
/ ערב בשועה פרצו לצרח-
ישענו על הדמעות-באבד
/ משען-ובהם יבטחו בטח.
הרפו, בני ימים, הכי דל מסבל
/גופי, ואט! כי אין בנפשי כח,
אמרו, היש אני ואם תניק ומ-
/ ילדי ענקים או כבן מנוחי?
העור הלא נכמר, וכלה השאר,
/ גם עששה עצם וסף המח.
או מה לבבי יהיה על הררי
/ קדם? כרגע נסחו נסח!
לו אהיה פוגש בגרותי אחי
/ שכל, חטאיו אאבה לטלח.
מעיר לעיר ארוץ-ואמצא אהלי
/ כסל ידי עם מתחו מתח.
ילאו מצא שערי תבונתי-והם
/ לא נסגרו עד ייגעו לפתח,
לנ יחזו כוכבי ההלהוי-והם
/ על הוג דברי יעלו לזרח,
אזנם להקשיב מאמרי כבדה-
/ יום חרשים בם נפקחו פקח!
למגנבי השיר אמר-יום שללו
/ מלי ולקחי לקחו מלקוח

/ ויונקי שד שדי בת הכרמים!
זכרתיך עלי הרי בתרים
/ -תמול היו בך הרי בשמים-
ועפעפי מגוללים בדמעה,
/ והדמעה מגוללה בדמים.
זכרתיך ונזכרתי לימים
/ עברנומו והיינו כחולמים.
המירך לי זמן בוגד בכל איש
/ אשר לבו קרב ובפיו שלומים,
אדבר בם, ואם אמצא בפיהם
/ תמורת מנך חציר ושומים.
המסי וחמתי על פתאים
/ אשר המה בעיניהם חכמים,
אשר קראו לשקריהם אמונות
/ וקראו שם אמונתי קסמים,
אשר זרעו וקצרו שבליהם
/ ושמחו בם, ואם המה צנומים.
וחיצוני דבר הכמה חרשים
/ לכסות הפנינים הפנימים,
ולי נרות אחפש בם הדריו
/ ואוציא מגנזיו הלשמים,
ולא אשקט עדי תשתחוין
/ בחכמה לאלמתי אלמים!
וסכל כי יבקש סוד עניתיו:
/ עלי אף החזיר מה לנזמים?
ואיך על לא מקום זרע אבקש
/ ענני לערף עליו גשמים?
וצרכי לזמן נקל, ונדמה
/ כמו צרך נשמה לנשמים,
אשר מדי יכילוה תחים,
/ ואם נלאו-עזבתם צלמים.

ב

איך אחריך אמצאה מרגוע?
/ הנע והלב עמך ינוע.

וימלאו אדם ואבני מהצב
/ ויטעו להם הדס עם הוח:
לא יוכלו בהם להתערב עדי
/ דמעי ברגל יוכלו לצלח-
איך תאנת אריה ידמה האנוש
/ אל קול כלבים חרצו לנבח?
עיר הירוץ אחרי הסוס, ואם
/ נשר יעופף אחריו אפרח?
ישתכחו שירי בעוד שמש עלי
/ מזחו-והם ישכחו שכח!
אחר אצילי מערב איך תערב
/ שנה ואיך ימצא לבבי נוח?
האחרי רוחו זמן הקשה-מעט
/ ידכה עשות הפצי ולי ישח?
העוד יכהלני להסתופף בצל
/ רעי ועלי יפסחו פסח?
או אחרי מוהי עצמי יחיו
/ ובמי פניהם יפרחו פרח?
מי ידעה אם זכרו האהבה
/ או אחרי גו שלחה שלח?
תשכח ימיני, אם שכחתימו ואם
/ בלהי פניהם אהאבה לשמח!
אם עוד ישיבני אלהים אל הדר
/ רמון, דרכי יצלחו צלה,
ובמי שניר ארזה, אשר צחו ביום
/ נחלי עדנים נדלחו דלח,
ארץ אשר בה נעמו חיי ובה
/ לחיי זמן לי נשטחו שטח.
אוחיל מעט לאל-ואין מעצור קרא
/ לדרור אסיר פרוד ולפקח קוח.

לולי לבבות יחלו יום שובך,
/ אז יום פרידה חמנו לגוע.
הן הררי בחר יעידון, כי מטר
/ שחק מאד כילי ודמעי-שוע.
נר מערבי! שוב למערבך, היה
/ חותם עלי כל לב וכל אזרוע.
שפה ברורה, מה לך אל עלגים
/ או מה לטל חרמון אלי גלבוע?

(English Translation)

His Suffering in Exile

Until when were my legs sent off into exile, they have not yet found repose? Fate unsheathed the sword of separation to pursue after me, and the axe of vagrancy - to thrust. It (fate) turned its progeny against me, in order that I not stand in one place, and like the shadow, flee. Youthful days and old age trod upon my heart and have not yet grown weary of trodding. Grief plastered its (my heart's) walls, bruising my heart continuously. The fire in my ribs was a sign, and from my eyes passed a deluge of tears on my face. From streams of brimstone my tears are drawn, for they

(English Translation)

To Moses Ibn Ezra, Exile in Christian Spain

We knew you, a wanderer, since youth, a stream of tears, an ancient stream (separates us). Would we argue with fate which has not sinned? Or with time? It is not time's crime! They are constellations moving in a pre-ordained path, nor is there something perverse or stubborn in the heavens. Is this new? There is no new world, and its laws are inscribed by the finger of God. How can its words change? All of them are sealed with the impress of the Supreme right hand, and every turn of event is found in a cycle, and everything new has already been many times! People are linked

flow through my heart to burn. The children of fate rise early to wail bitterly in the morning like evening, with a shout they beg to scream. They (the eyes) rely on the tears, when there is no support, and in them they trust. Leave off, children of fortune; indeed, my body is too weak to suffer - Go easy! For I have no strength. Say, "am I a sea, or a sea-monster, or descended from giants, or like Manoah's son"(Samson)? Is not the skin dried, and the flesh consumed, bone rotted and the brain perished? (i.e., its substance) How can my heart live on ancient mountains? In an instant they are moved! Were I to meet my brother, intellect, in my exile, I would be willing to forgive all its (i.e., fate's) sins. From city to city I run - and I find tents of stupidity with people's hands outstretched. They exhaust themselves in search of the portals of my understanding, although they were not closed until only to separation, to produce nations from one people. Were they not separated from the generation of the flood, then the land would not be full of peoples. There is something that can both ameliorate and harm, a drink that can both refresh and rot bones. The day on which a man becomes enraged, when he curses and blasphemes his miserable moments, it is the day on which others bless him - on which he enjoys a good time. Every food which is as honey in a healthy mouth, that honey, in a sick mouth is bitter herbs. The one who worries that the lights in his eyes will darken and that he will not see them, and they are not deceiving - (They are) as my eyes since the day when a cloud dwelled upon them because of Moses' (Ibn Ezra's) wandering, and they gushed tears! The source of knowledge, which I find in his mouth is the source of pure gold, a gold mine. Friendship linked my soul with his, as long as the chariots of wandering are unhitched,

they were wearied from being open. They do not perceive my starry virtues, (e.g., poetry) that rise to shine above the sphere of my words. They are too hard of hearing to listen to my words - even when the deaf can hear they cannot! To the plagarists of poetry I say, when they plundered my words and my insights, they took the spoil and filled in gems along with quarry stones, and they planted myrtle with thistle. They could not compete against them until they could cross my sea of tears by foot. How can man compare the roar of a lion to the sound of dogs ready to bark? Can a young donkey run after a horse? Or, a gozzling fly after an eagle? My poems will be found as long as the sun is in its orbit, and theirs will be utterly forgotten! After the nobles of the West (Moslems!), how will sleep be sweet, and how will my heart find rest? Perhaps after fate's spirit was cruel, it will relent as long as separation did not test me, and fortune was with us. Fate bore us separately, and love made us twins. Together we sat in the garden, and we drank wine! I remember you or the mountains of separation - when I lived with you they were mountains of spices. My eyelids are mingled with tears, and the tears mixed with blood. I remember you, and I am reminded of the days we spent together when we were dreamers. Fate changed you for me, betraying everyone with hate in his heart and well-wishes in his mouth. I am forced to speak with them, though I find in their mouths, instead of your manna, hay and garlic. My cruelty and my wrath against the fools, who in their eyes are sages, who call their lies doctrines and call my faith sorcery, who sowed and reaped their stalks and rejoiced about them, even though they were withered. The externals of knowledge are like a vessel that covers the pearls inside,

a bit, accede to me and do my wish? Will it again lead me to spend time in the shadow of my friends and have them drop in on me? Or, after my demise will my bones live and blossom from their tears? Who knows whether they remember the love or whether it was cast behind my back? Let my right hand forget, if I forget them (my friends), and if I assent to rejoice without their faces before me! If God again returns me to Granada (a macaronic pun), my ways will surely prosper, and I will quench my thirst at the waters of the Genil (which flows towards Granada), which are pure even when the streams of delights are turbid, a land in which my life was lovely and in which fortune's cheeks were spread for me (i.e., to kiss me). I ask little of God - and nothing prevents him from proclaiming liberty for a prisoner of separation and releasing him.

I search ~~among~~ its chambers for my (intellectual) light, and I ~~take out~~ gems from its treasures, and I will not be silent until the sheaves of fate bow in wisdom to my sheave! I respond to the fool ~~for seeking~~ what is secret: On the snout of a swine what (good) is a ring? On a place that is not sown, ~~I ask, what good are rains showered upon it?~~ My need is less than fortune's; it resembles the need of a soul for bodies, whenever they contain it, it quickens them. And if they tire (from the burden), it (the soul) leaves them (the bodies) ~~as dead~~ corpses.

How, after you left, am I to find rest? You move and the heart accompanies you. Were it not for hope of your return, I would have died on the day of your departure. Indeed, mountains of separation testify, that the rain of heaven is very miserly, but my tears are magnanimous. O Western candle (which contained as much oil as all the rest of

> the candles put together, cf. מנחות 86b) Return to your west (Andalusia). Be a seal upon every heart and every arm (of your friends). You of lucid language, what are you to stammerers (dwellers in Christian Spain)? What good is the dew of Hermon (your lovely speech) to Gilboa (where the curse of David crouches)?

These poems portray two differing, but equally penetrating, perceptions of exile. Moses Ibn Ezra mourned his exile to Christian Spain. Judah Halevi mourned his separation from his dear friend. Ibn Ezra made explicit that he was exiled from a place, Granada. Halevi left the spatial dimension of exile openended and elected to define exile in terms of personal relationships. Halevi's omission was trenchant. He was not tied to any particular place in Spain, and indeed, when he left Spain, his greatest pain was leaving friends behind, not a city. Both poets seemed to agree that intellectual life in Christian Spain left a great deal to be desired. They experienced a distinct lack of appreciation for their literary talents. Neither man minced words in deprecating those who were either ignorant of their poetic exploits or unwilling to underwrite their verse. Their invective presented a

remarkably monochromatic, intellectually barren, image of Jews in Christian Spain, for it was among these Jews that Halevi and Ibn Ezra felt in exile.

Halevi's and Ibn Ezra's radically differing perceptions of fate added a critical dimension to their experiences of exile. Ibn Ezra implored fate to alter its course after maintaining that fortune caused his plight. He addressed fate as an inexorable force seemingly dedicated to his "misfortune." Fate was the villain just as it could become the agent of Ibn Ezra's personal salvation, i.e., return to Granada. Ibn Ezra looked at his downcast state in Christian Spain and saw the hand of fortune at work. He believed that he was unable to effect a change in his destiny, and he died waiting for fate to show him a sign. Halevi declared fate innocent! He could not bring himself to accept Ibn Ezra's exile in terms of uncontestable fortune. Fate was to Halevi merely an agent active in God's universe, not the dominant power guiding human life. Halevi did not set himself up as fighting against fate, but rather against a person who was resigned to his fortune. Ibn Ezra's assumed pose of passivity contrasted sharply with Halevi's sense of personal accomplishment. Ibn Ezra blamed fate for his exile, whereas Halevi, since he regarded fate as an agent of God, offered a human solution to a human problem. Writing to Ibn Ezra in Christian Spain while he lived in Andalusia,

Halevi said that he was forced to deal with the people who betrayed Moses in Granada. If people caused Ibn Ezra's exile, then people could cause Ibn Ezra's return. Halevi's behavior bore out this contention. He did not wait for fate to effect his own feelings of exile. He took fate into his own hands, and left exile behind. As long as Ibn Ezra believed that fate had cast him into exile and fate would have to wrest him from exile, he was doomed. The political realities of the twelfth century in Spain did not allow for a Moslem victory over the Christian forces. If Ibn Ezra was going to get out of "Seir," he could not wait for Arabs to save him, or Jews for that matter, he had to leave of his own volition. Given his professed views on exile, Ibn Ezra left himself no real option to spending the rest of his life in "Edom." Ibn Ezra awaited God. Halevi awaited Ibn Ezra. Both waited in vain.

Two other points of note highlighted in these poems refer to Halevi's opinion of Ibn Ezra and Ibn Ezra's opinion of himself. Plagarism, owing to the lack of any governmental restraints and lack of legal recourse, plagued Medieval poetry in general. The principal means of confronting these poetic pirates was through verse. Ibn Ezra vociferously attacked those charlatans who stole his "gems" and clumsily transformed them into "worthless stones." Poetic humility was ostensibly a contradiction in terms.

Halevi seconds Ibn Ezra's motion by labeling as "fools" those people who call themselves "sages," and by contrasting Ibn Ezra's "manna" with others' "hay." Both Halevi and Ibn Ezra showed contempt for pretenders to the mantle of poetry. It was common to the character of their exiles that they were thrown into the same crucible with incondite poets and their products. Both Halevi and Ibn Ezra held their respective poetry in the highest esteem. This made their separation painful for both. Each lacked a poetic mate. Each believed that this state of affairs left him in exile.

That Halevi's poem brought here was addressed to Moses Ibn Ezra provides us with insight into the dynamics that were operative in that relationship. The first third of the poem is an introduction. Only when Halevi compared the one who worries about his eyes darkening with his feeling since Ibn Ezra's departure does the body of the poem take shape. Halevi's affection for his friend in exile was deep enough to risk the entire relationship by expressing his attitude about fate and his hope for Moses' return. Halevi affirmed the power of the individual to shape his destiny; he said so in this poem and he did so in his life. However, Ibn Ezra felt condemned to exile by uncontestable forces. Because their mutual respect cut through to the core of their beings, Ibn Ezra could cry out against his fate and Halevi could respond with heartfelt opposition. Although Halevi and Ibn Ezra engaged in

prolific correspondence, this one example fits a pattern borne out in their biographies. Moses Ibn Ezra died a melancholy death in exile. Judah Halevi died on the way to the Promised Land.[26] "Words that are fit before kings do not stand up before obscure ones (i.e., those that made up his environment in exile). Perhaps your light will shine as of old, and maybe peek a bit through the lattice."[27]

Halevi reserved the majority of his poetic passion for the land of Israel. Unlike Moses Ibn Ezra, he expressed no love for Moslem Spain. If Halevi was attached to any aspect of Spain, it was to people. When he lived outside of Spain, it was for his friends, not for his birthplace, that he pined. The place to which Judah Halevi was drawn was a place he had never seen, only read about, ארץ ישראל. Ibn Ezra, too, composed poetry about the people and the land of Israel. But the immediacy of Halevi's passion contrasts starkly with the abstract, eschatological concepts of which Ibn Ezra wrote.

---

[26]Ibn Ezra bemoaned his fate in other poetic settings. "In the end fate will conspire against me, so why should I complain about the death of my friends and my abject poverty?" (J. Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס, #153, p. 382, line 14.)

[27]Ibid., #156, p. 388, lines 12-13.

Moses Ibn Ezra
p. 405, #163b

[אהבות]

[ב]

מהרו נא אלי מעוני אהובים,
/ פזרם הזמן, ונותרו חרבים,
לעפרים אזי מעונים-והנם
/ לכפירים מעון וגם לזאבים!
אשמעה נאקת צביה, חילול
/ מכלואי אדום ומאסר ערבים:
על אהובה חבך ואלוף נעורים,
/ גם תענה במאמרים ערבים
"סמכוני כבאשישות ידידיה
/ רפדוני במגדני האהבים!"

(English Translation)
אהבה - (a liturgical poem introducing a prayer about the eternal character of God's love for Israel.)

Hasten to the dwellings of the beloved (land of Israel). Fate has scattered them, and ruins remain; they are the dwelling places of gazelles - and there dwell lions and wolves (enemies)! I hear the groaning of the heart (Israel), wailing from prisons of Edom and the Arab jail: On account of her beloved she cries over the prince of her youth, and God, and it

Judah Halevi
p. 466, #190

[אהבה]

יעלת חן, ממעונה רחקה,
/ אוהבה כועס-ולמה צחקה?
צחקה על בת אדום ובנות ערב
/ המבקשות לחשק דוד חשקה!
הן פראים הם-ואיך ידמו אלי
/ יעלה על הצבי התרפקה?
אי נבואה, אי מנורה, אי ארון
/ הברית, אי השכינה דבקה?
אל, משנאי, אל תכבו אהבה,
/ כי תכבוה-והיא אש נשקה!

(English Translation)
אהבה

(Israel), - Beautiful Doe, far from your dwelling place. Her lover (God) is angry - Why did you laugh? She laughed at the daughter of Edom and at Arabs who covet (the status of) desired friend (of God). They are wild asses - how can they be likened to Israel that leans upon God? (graceful girl leaning upon the handsome lad) Where is prophecy among the nations? Where is the light? Where is the Ark of the Covenant? Where is the Divine Indwelling cleaving? (to Israel in exile)

declares in sweet bidding,
"Sustain me with raisin
cakes, refresh me with
lovely confections!"

Do not, you who hate me,
do not extinguish love.
Lest you quench it and it
is a blazing fire.

Both poems betray a profound love for God and Israel. But Halevi's is a much more pointed, direct statement of burning passion than Ibn Ezra's wistful, yet anguished plea for salvation. Ibn Ezra depicted the Christians and Moslems as lions and wolves holding Israel captive, whereas Halevi characterized the enemies of the Jewish people as wild animals who aspire to displace Israel as God's beloved. Ibn Ezra's words allowed for the enemies to be classified as victorious, if only temporarily, over the Jews. Halevi's scenerio described the Christians and Moslems vying for what the Jews possessed. Ibn Ezra's love for Israel was fueled by supplication; Halevi's love was fueled by fiery passion.

Moses Ibn Ezra

p. 407, #165, lines 1-4

[סליחה]

יונת אלם רחוקים / מעל קנה
נחושה-
כאבה היה נצח / ומכתה אנושה.
כצפור בפח יוקשה / תהמה,
ונפשה יבשה
מקצר רוח ומעבודה קשה.

Judah Halevi

pp. 485-486, #208, lines 1-6

[תשוקה לציון]

[א]

ציון, הלא תשאלי לשלום אסיריך,
דורשי שלומך והם יתר עדריך?
מים ומזרח ומצפון ותימן שלום
רחוק וקרוב שאי מכל עבריך,
ושלום אסיר תאוה, נותן
דמעיו כטל
חרמון ונכסף לרדתם על הרריך!

(English Translation)
סליחה (a petitionary poem of forgiveness)

O silent dove, (Israel) far from her abandoned nest -
Her pain was everlasting and her wound mortal.
Like a bird rustling in the snare of its trapper and it wails while the soul is dry because of frustration and hard labor (exile).

(English Translation)
Passion for Zion

Zion, will you not ask about the well-being of your prisoners who seek after your welfare, those who are the remainder of your flocks? From west and east, from north and south, receive greeting from far and near, from all points - greetings from the captive of desire, who sheds his tears as the dew of Hermon and yearns to drop them on your mountains!

Here Moses Ibn Ezra addressed God while Judah Halevi addressed Zion. God was alive in the hearts and souls of both poets, but Zion was alive only in Halevi's consciousness. Moses Ibn Ezra dreamed about the day on which Israel would return to Israel, the people to the nation. Halevi dreamed about the day on which he would live within Jerusalem's confines. Halevi could taste the land of Israel, he could feel it so much that part of him was already there and all he needed to do was transport his body to Israel to become whole, to achieve שלום. Ibn Ezra conformed to convention in his liturgical poetry and hence, he mentioned the sorry plight of the Jewish people in exile. He prayed to return when God fated it. Halevi prayed that he had the strength to make his words of poetry into his

life's story. He did not abandon the traditional hope for the return of the Temple in the Messianic Era, but he augmented that belief with a personal desire to return home from exile. He made his point eminently lucid in a poem unparalleled in the voluminous works of Moses Ibn Ezra, and probably unparalleled, period.

p. 489

[ב]

לבי במזרח ואנכי בסוף מערב-
איך אטעמה את אשר אכל
ואיך יערב?
איכה אשלם נדרי ואסרי ,בעוד
ציון בחבל אדום ואני בכבל ערב?
יקל בעיני עיב כל טוב
ספרד, כמו
יקר בעיני ראות עפרות
דביר נחרב!

(English Translation)

My heart is in the east and I am at the end of the west. How can I taste what I eat and it be sweet? How can I fulfill my vows and pledges? (In another poem, the following line appeared, "If God is my help - I must seek you [according to] vows." [p. 490, #209, line 6]). As long as Zion is in Edom's rope and I am in Arab bond? It would be as easy for me to forsake all the good of Spain as it would be dear to me to see the dust of the ruined Holy of Holies.

This poem, however brief, told the story of Halevi's exile. He vowed to leave Spain, having made no distinction between its Moslem and Christian parts. This face of his poetry and his life separated Judah Halevi from Moses Ibn Ezra, and many others as well. Spain was all the same to him. He could no more yearn for the city of

Granada than for the city of Toledo. Jerusalem alone held that distinction. His tendency to lump Edom with Kedar, Christian Spain with Moslem Spain, sets Halevi apart from Ibn Ezra. The immanence of the land of Israel in Halevi's verse ought to be distinguished from the romantic vision of a redeemed Israel present in Ibn Ezra's liturgical poetry.[28] In both genre and content, this poem by Judah Halevi remains sui generis; it depicts a poet whose skill had few bounds and a Jew whose love for ארץ ישראל had none.

Other poems corroborate the view that Ibn Ezra's concept of גלות and Halevi's had different foci. Ibn Ezra's Israel awaited resurrection, but Halevi's Israel breathed.

Moses Ibn Ezra	Judah Halevi
p. 416, #170, lines 50-53	p. 476, #199, lines 5-11
קודרת בגלות ימי שביה,	הלעולמים יזנח / עם
הורידה לארץ עדיה,	נוקש בעוניו?
חנוד ודמעתה על להיה-	חלפו ימיו ושניו- / אך לא
בכו תבכה בלילה!	חלפו יגוניו.

---

[28] "liturgical poetry" should be underscored. Liturgical poetry had conventions, e.g., the presence of verses about hope for the end of Israel's exile were mandated by the פיוט. Halevi's passion for Zion crossed over into his non-liturgical poetry, i.e., where there was no convention regarding Israel. Since the content of Ibn Ezra's liturgical poetry was largely dictated by its form, it would be dubious to place great weight in it. But, Halevi's non-liturgical poetry leaves little or no doubt that his feelings about the land of Israel were visceral.

lines 56-57

נפשי עלי תשתוחח,
ועם לבבי אשיחה:
אזכרה נגינתי בלילה!

p. 417, lines 70-73

ההבערי, בחי, כי עוד
אנחילך חני
ולאט אנחך ואניחך במעוני,
כי אין גואל קרוב ממני-
ליני הלילה!

(English Translation)
My soul is gloomy in exile,
the days of its capitivity.
It casts down its ornaments
upon the land, it roams
with a tear on its cheek -
crying at night!

My soul is cast down upon me,
and with my heart, I will
meditate: At night I will
recall my song! (This
alludes to being in the
land of Israel.)

כנגוע גרשתו / ושמתו
מחוץ למחניו,
יוחיל מרפא בכל יום
/ ונגעו עומד בעיניו.
ונהגתו בכבדות / בים
גלות ושאוניו,
היום כמה שנים / אפפוהו
מי זדוניו-
ועד הנה לא נתקו
/ רגליו לחרבה!

p. 510 (at bottom of page)-511,
#215ב

אלהי, פלאך דור דור ירחש
/ ומפי אב לבנים לא יכחש.
וזה היאור לעד כי דם חפכתו
/ בלא להך ולא קסם ונחש,
אבל שמך ביד משה ואהרן
/ והמטה אשר נהפך לנחש.
היה עזר לעבד האמין בך
/ ולראות את מקומות פלאך חש!

(English Translation)
Has God forever forsaken a
people ensnared in its sins?
Days and years have passed -
but its griefs have not.
As one infected, you exiled
him and placed him outside
his camp. (like a leper)
Daily, he awaits a cure,
but his disease persists.
You drove him heavily into
the sea of exile and its
tumult. Today, how many
years of exile's insolent

(God to Israel)
Be glad, my daughter
(Israel), for I still
endow you with my grace,
and slowly I will guide
thee and place you in
my home, for there is
no nearer redeemer than
I. Stay for the night
(in exile)!

waters have surrounded him,
yet to this point, its feet
have not been torn away
from the dry land.

My God, every generation
Your miracle is told, and
from the mouths of fathers
to sons it shall not be
denied. And this Nile is
a witness that you changed
it into blood without
enchantment, or magic of
sorcery. But with the
help of Your name the staff
in the hand of Moses and
Aaron changed into a snake.
Help a servant that has
faith in you and speeds to
see the places of Your
miracle.

Halevi was in a hurry to live in the land where the Jewish people became a people. Ibn Ezra mourned his exile, but he was not restive about it. Ibn Ezra compared exile to a long night, and he prayed for God to bring back the day. Halevi claimed that part of Israel never left ארץ ישראל. Perhaps Halevi believed that he could hasten redemption. He lived in an era laden with apocalyptic sentiment. He himself engaged in such speculation.[29] Fascinatingly,

---

[29]Poem follows on page 94.

when Judah Halevi dreamed about an end to the titanic struggle between the Christians and the Moslems that the Moslems were defeated! We know about this dream because he provided a poetic narration in recollection of it.

p. 480, #202, lines 1-6

[חלום נבואי]

נמת ונרדמת וחרד קמת-
/ מה החלום הזה אשר חלמת?
אולי חלומך הראך שונאך
/ כי דל וכי שפל-ואתה רמת?
אמרו לבן-הגר: אסף יד גאוה
/ מבן גברתך אשר זעמת!
שפל ראיתיך ושומם בחלום-
/ אולי בהקיץ כן כבר שממת,
ושנת תת"ץ תתץ לך כל גאוה,
/ תבוש ותחפר מאשר זממת.
האח אשר נקרא שמך פרא אנוש
/ מה כבדה ידך ומה עצמת?

(English Translation)

A Prophetic Dream

You were drowsy and you fell asleep, then shaken, you arose - What was the dream you dreamed? Perhaps your dream showed you your enemy feeble and disgraced - but you were exalted? Say to Haggar's son: Take your haughty hands, your mistress' child (Israel) whom you chided! I saw you disgraced and desolate in the dream - maybe awake you are already destroyed, and in the year 1130 all your pride will be demolished, and you will be ashamed and confounded because you schemed. You who are called a wild ass of a man. How heavy was your strength and how mighty you are!

It is reasonable to infer from this poem that Halevi preferred a cataclysmic defeat of the Moslems to a Christian demise. However, it is more certain that Halevi did not share Ibn Ezra's predilection for life dominated by Arab-Moslem rule. In Ibn Ezra's terms, life under Christian domination was tantamount to exile, in contradistinction to life in Arab Andalusia which was idyllic. This poem offered another element of difference between Halevi and Ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra thought he could thrive in Moslem Spain, Halevi wished for an end to Moslem domination. An unanticipated buttress in support of Halevi's enmity towards Moslems comes from an historically unreliable source. According to a legend promulgated by Gedaliya in שלשלת הקבלה, Judah Halevi was killed, as he recited his "Ode to Zion," by the sword of an Arab. Why an Arab? In the twelfth century, Jerusalem was the capital of the Crusaders' kingdom. It was the font from which Christian life sprang until 1187, when Saladin's forces overpowered the occupying regime. Halevi died more than forty years before there was any significant Moslem contingent in the Holy City. An Arab in Jerusalem around 1140, the approximate time of Halevi's death, would have been a Christian subject. By itself, this proves little. Gedaliya may have intended to refer to a Christian Arab. But because the legend just mentions an Arab knight, a Moslem slayer is possible. Gedaliya was totally ignorant

of Jewish history, or maybe, he reasoned that a Moslem, and not a Christian was Halevi's more fitting murderer. This rather macabre conjecture comports with the thesis that Halevi considered Moslem Spain to be just as exilic as its Christian counterpart. Though historically fallacious, the legend pertaining to Halevi's death adds a footnote to his overarching perception of exile.

It was not enough for Halevi to state his wish to live in Zion. He offered his own legendary version of death in <u>ארץ ישראל</u>.

p. 486-487, #208, lines 19-26

מי יתנני משוטט במקומות אשר
נגלו אלהים לחוזיך וציריך!
מי יעשה לי כנפים וארחיק נדד,
אניד לבחרי לבבי בין בחריך!
אפל לאפי עלי ארצך וארצה אב-
ניך מאד ואחונן את עפריך,
אף כי בעמדי עלי קברות
אבותי ואש-
תומם בחברון עלי מבחר קבריך!

(English Translation)

If only I could roam
through those places where
God was revealed to your
prophets and heralds!
Who will give me wings,
so that I may wander far
away? I would carry the
pieces of my broken heart
over your rugged mountains.
I would bow down, my face
on your ground; I would
love your stones; your dust
would move me to pity.
I would weep, as I stood
by my ancestors' graves.
I would grieve in Hebron,
over the choicest of

burial places! (i.e., The burial cave of the patriarchs)[30]

p. 499, #212b, lines 39-52

אצפה לעברם / ואעטף בקברם,
ועיני לשברם / יפיצון נהרים,
וכל רעיוני / חרדים לסיני,
ולבי ועיני / להר העברים!
ואיך לא אבכה / ודמע אפכה-
ומשם אחכה / תחית פגרים,
ושם הכרובים / ולוחות כתובים
בעד הרגבים / ובמקום סתרים,
מקום הפלאות / ועין הנבואות,
ובכבוד צבאות / פניהם מאירים-
עפרו אחונן, / ואצלו אקונן,
ועליו אקונן / כעל הקברים,
וסוף מחשבותי, / היות משכנותי
בקברות אבותי / וברשות טהורים!

(English Translation)

I look forward to passing by them (the places where the Ark and Tablets are buried), and I will be overcome at their graves, and at my seeing them broken, rivers will scatter, and all my thoughts will be fearful before Sinai, my heart and my eyes at the Mountain of Avarim! How will I not wail and gush tears - And from there I will wait for the Resurrection, (of the dead) and there the cherubs and the Tablets were engraved under the clods of earth in secret places, the miraculous place of prophetic insight (Halevi maintained that prophecy could only occur in ארץ ישראל or its environs)

---

[30] Translation by T. Carmi The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse Penguin (New York: 1981), p. 348. This book, in scope and depth, may well become an indispensible tool for those who need to gain access to Hebrew poetry through English rendering.

> In honor of the Heavenly Hosts, whose faces light up - I will pity its dust and I will dwell in it. I will mourn over it as over graves. At the end of my thoughts, may my dwelling place be with the graves of my ancestors and in the domain of the pure!

Neither Judah Halevi nor Moses Ibn Ezra was granted his wish, both died in exile.[31] But both were able to express their dreams eloquently in poetry. Moses Ibn Ezra yearned for Granada. Judah Halevi longed for ארץ ישראל. It was their common poetic gift that brought them together, and ultimately, it was their dreams that separated them. Ibn Ezra waited for fate to return him to Moslem Spain. Halevi did not really wait at all, death apparently raced him to the land of Israel and won. Their lives may have shared a common tragedy, and their poetry a common genius, but Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi lived and died in different exiles. Ibn Ezra's personal exile resulted from political exigencies in Medieval Spain. Halevi's exile was collective more than individual, and theological more than political, having been decreed upon the Jews by Divine mandate in the year 70 C.E.

---

[31] cf. Chapter 2, note 95.

CHAPTER IV

Moses Ibn Ezra did not create Medieval Hebrew poetics ex nihilo. His work stood within the tradition of Arabic poetics, and he borrowed liberally from a rich tradition that Aristotle inaugurated. The post-Classical history of Aristotle's Poetics began in the Arabic Middle East. In the early part of the tenth century, the Poetics was translated into Arabic via Syriac.[1] Ibn Ezra would have had access to two commentaries on the Poetics, one by Al-Farabi, The Canons of Poetry, and the other by Avicenna.[2] Avicenna did not hesitate to differ with Aristotle. He even contrasted Greek poetics with Arabic poetics, so Moses Ibn Ezra had whatever precedent he needed in order to develop a theory of poetics independent of that adumbrated by Aristotle. What resulted was a composite made up of Aristotle filtered through an Arabic sieve.

---

[1]Ismail M. Dahiyat, Avicenna's Commentary on The Poetics of Aristotle, Leyden, The Netherlands, E.J. Brill, 1974, p. ix. Once again, later in the tenth century, the Poetics was translated into Arabic. Abu Bashir's translation, done in 932 C.E. was considered unreliable. Thus the need for a second translation.

[2]Al-Farabi's treatise may have been loosely based on Aristotle's Poetics together with Greek commentaries, such as the one authored by Themistius in the fourth century. However, Avicenna's commentary leaves no room for doubt; he translated and commented upon Aristotle's Poetics. cf. Ismail M. Dahiyat, p. 3ff. The author advances a theory that Avicenna used the later Arabic version as a basis for his work. Since Avicenna knew no Greek, Dahiyat concluded that he used a second translation which has subsequently been lost.

The Poetics was the last of Aristotle's works translated into Arabic, and there was a rationale behind the Arab translation priority list. The Poetics needed justification to be included among Aristotle's Organon. The Arab scientists were quite naturally preoccupied with science, and Poetics was, at best, a peripheral scientific discipline. "The purpose of Logic - to provide canons which guide the mind in systematic thinking in search of truth - was not clearly met by Poetics."[3] Avicenna argued that poetics was the lowest form of logic, incapable of leading to truth by itself, but that it led to a psychological assent primarily due to its form. He thought that poetry was best directed at those people with whom logic had no effect. "Because the Poetics contains canons, it is part of the Organon . . . The relation between poetics and poetry is like methodologic principles for science and metaphysics."[4] Poetry stood humbled next to science since it led not to certitude but to imaginative apprehension. "The poetic analogy was potential, unlike a logical analogy which was actual."[5] Al-Farabi and Avicenna paved the way for works such as that by Moses Ibn Ezra. It was only

---

[3]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 16.

[4]Ibid., p. 19. [5]Ibid., p. 20.

because poetics was a bonafide science by the time Ibn Ezra lived that he could have adapted Arabic thought to Hebrew poetry.

Al-Farabi's treatise, though it contained only fragments of the Poetics, profoundly influenced Avicenna's work. Al-Farabi divided his book into three parts: on the nature of poetic statements, i.e., poetry in the logical scheme, varieties of Greek poetry, and the character of the poetic analogy - statements that register in one's mind an imitation of the object are poetic.[6] The poet, or imitator caused the hearer to imagine a like proposition. Poetic statements are false in that they are reflections immune to scientific verification. "Poetic statements are not demonstrative (absolutely true), dialectical (mainly true), rhetorical (equally true and false), or sophistical (mainly false). They are wholly false, but they have the force of an analogy."[7] All this was an attempt to justify the study of poetics. Al-Farabi went on to discuss Aristotle's poetic genres, suggesting that there were twelve, each suited to a particular meter.[8] Aristotle himself grossly divided poetry into two genres, encomium and blame.[9]

---

[6]Ibid., p. 22. [7]Ibid., p. 23 quoting Al-Farabi.

[8]Ibid., p. 24. The twelve types included: Tragedy, Dithyramb, Comedy, Iambic, Dramata, Didactic, Anthus, Heroic Epic, Satyric, Paemata, Amphi Geneseos, and Acoustic.

[9]Ibid., p. 25.

Al-Farabi suggested that there were three types of poets: those with a natural gift and faculty for composing and reciting poetry but not acquainted with poetics, syllogists who combined natural endowment with poetic idioms and canons, and those who imitate either of the first two types without having any poetic dispositions.[10] These categories were all operative in Medieval Spain. Ibn Ezra wrote about poets who committed crimes against the canons of poetics, those who artfully composed verses according to formal specifications, and those who plagarized good poems and turned them into doggeral.[11]

One test of poetry, which may have started with Aristotle, was the poet's use of metaphor. "Metaphor is based on a comparison or analogy whose criterion of judgment is, 'Is the analogy close and suitable?'. Poets and painters resemble one another in that they both produce likenesses and both aim at impressing man's imaginations and senses with imitations."[12] Ibn Ezra had a great deal to say with respect to metaphor. He included it under a separate heading in his canons of Hebrew poetics, and

---

[10]Ibid., p. 26.

[11]I refer here to his history of Hebrew poetry in Spain in which he rates poets according to their poetic skills.

[12]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, pp. 26-27.

metaphor was present in many of the other canons to the extent that it acted as a thread running through the entire tapestry of Ibn Ezra's work.[13] My task, vis a vis Medieval poetics, is more humble and limited than Pagis'. To what extent was Moses Ibn Ezra's Hebrew poetics an adaptation of Arab poetics? Did Judah Halevi offer any alternative theories or notions about Hebrew poetics? How did their perspectives on poetics relate to their perceptions of exile?

In addition to the lack of a reliable Arabic translation of Aristotle's Poetics, Moses Ibn Ezra and any other Medieval scholar of poetics suffered from a dearth of illustrative material. Confronted with an excessively literal translation and few concrete examples illustrative of Aristotle's principles, Avicenna set out to interpret Greek poetics vis a vis Arabic poetics. He argued that poetry, or imitation, was valuable because most people are more amenable to imaginative representation than to logical demonstration.[14] What set Arabic poetry apart

---

[13] שירת החול והתורה השיר למשה אבן עזרא ובני דורו Mosad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1970 by Dan Pagis is the outstanding work in this area. In it, Pagis developed a comprehensive theory of poetics, elucidating Ibn Ezra's often abstruse and digressing prose. His analysis is both thematic and structural, and since it is based on fluency with both Ibn Ezra's poetry as well as his poetics, a remarkably thorough study emerges.

[14] Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 32.

was its emphasis upon rhyme. "Rhyme was essential to classic Arabic poetry."[15] Moses Ibn Ezra followed the Arabic school on this point, but at the same time, he tried to demonstrate that many of the Arabic ideas were expressed in an inchoate form in the Hebrew Bible. Halevi's poetry, too, exemplified a profound Arabic influence, frequently employing rhyme as one of many poetic devices. Another facet of the Arabic influence upon Hebrew poetics was manifest in agreement with the following statement. "Poetry achieves its end, i.e., psychological assent, in terms of its form more than its content."[16] Moses Ibn Ezra's obsession with poetic form bore the imprint of Arabic influence.

Classical poetics, interpreted through the Arabs, espoused the view that poetry could do something that science could not. "Imitation has an element of wonder that truth lacks. Truth is evident and devoid of novelty, but unknown truth is neglected poetry. It is for the multitude, for pleasure not for contemplation. Imaginative assent is a compliance due to wonder and the pleasures that are caused by the utterance itself; conviction is a compliance due to the realization that the thing is what it is said

---

[15] Ibid., p. 34. [16] Ibid., p. 35.

to be."[17] The language of poetry, according to Arab poetics and followed by Hebrew poetics, was figurative. Metaphor, simile, metonym, synecdoche and other linguistic devices played a prominent role in Arabic poetry, and therefore, Hebrew poetry as well.[18] Metaphor, in particular, strengthened Al-Farabi's and Avicenna's case positing that poetics was a type of logic, albeit logic in its crudest form. "A metaphoric syllogism, structurally speaking, has three terms, a stated conclusion and two omitted premises."[19] A metaphor such as "the evening of life," meaning old age, is intelligible, and therefore, effective on an emotional level. A metaphor "works" when the implicit relation of two ideas can be reconstructed in the mind of the listener or reader. "A skillful poet makes relations 'valid,' the metaphor being a constituent unit of poetic conception."[20]

---

[17]Ibid., pp. 35-36. "Poetry is then judged in terms of its being imaginatively palpable and persuasive. The message of poetry is hypothetical, not categorical."

[18]cf. translation of Moses Ibn Ezra's canons of Hebrew poetry and Pagis' שירת החול . . . pp. 34-55, wherein the suffusion of figurative language in Medieval poetry is vividly and cogently presented, e.g., the linguistic dissection of a poem yields a miniscule skeleton constructed by those words which ought to be understood in their "simple" meaning in contrast to the "fully clothed" persona made up of figurative terms.

[19]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 43.

[20]Ibid., p. 45.

The Arab school of classical poetics, as represented by Al-Farabi and Avicenna, subscribed to the notion that poetry appealed more to the heart than the mind, but that the mind is quite often reached through the heart. On that plank much of their poetic platform rested. Avicenna agreed with Aristotle by stating that the effectiveness of poetry could be measured in terms of its ability to advance social ideals. "In Greek poetry, a good poem induced or prevented action."[21] It is plausible to suggest that Ibn Ezra's and Halevi's poetry functioned as persuasive tracts. Halevi did not wish to make the harrowing trek to ארץ ישראל without his friends, nor did Ibn Ezra condone the actions of the "idiots" that enveloped him in his exile. Their poems on these respective topics suggested a persuasive tone.[22] It is more likely, however, that most Medieval Hebrew poetry operated within similar parameters to Arabic poetry, rather than conforming to the Greek ideal of poetry as persuasive communication. "The Greeks did not primarily occupy themselves with the imitation of persons as did the Arabs . . . (T)he Greeks intended, by means of speech, to induce or prevent action.

---

[21] Ibid., p. 48.

[22] Refer above to the chapter directly focused on their poetry, cf. pp. 63-98.

Greek poetry was more purposive than Arabic poetry."[23] Dihiyat believes that the principal purpose of Arabic poetry was to effect a sense of wonder in the reader.[24] Given the extremely high concentration of metaphor and allusions in both Arabic and Hebrew poetry in the Medieval period, it seems apparent that the poet addressed the reader's imagination, piqued the reader's sense of fantasy, and asked the reader to exercise his sense of wonder.

Out of this milieu came Moses Ibn Ezra's ספר העיונים והדיונים. The pretext for writing the book, eight questions asked by a neophyte poet, does not reveal the entire context in which the work was authored. Ibn Ezra wrote ספר העיונים והדיונים in בלות near the end of his life. That he chose to compose a treatise based on Arabic thought testified to his admiration for the Arabs and his disdain for the Christians. If Ibn Ezra had written his version of Halevi's "my heart is in the east," it may well have been entitled "my heart is in the west (among the Arabs) and I am in the extreme east (with the Christians). Certainly, Ibn Ezra's mind remained focused on Andalusia, and ספר העיונים והדיונים resulted from that concentration.

---

[23]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 49.

[24]Ibid., pp. 50ff.

The latest and most complete rendering of Ibn Ezra's text has been edited and annotated by Samuel Halkin.[25] Ibn Ezra's was not the first book on Hebrew poetics. Saadia Gaon wrote The Fundamentals of Hebrew Poetry.[26] Halkin and other scholars underscored a statement made by the format of Ibn Ezra's book. The last chapter, the eighth, comprises more than half the length of the volume. It includes the author's twenty canons of poetic embellishments, and it is unquestionably the preeminent chapter in the book.[27]

The first seven chapters of ספר העיונים והדיונים introduce the eighth. He discussed the naturally talented poet born in the propitious Arab peninsula, distinguished between poetry and rhetoric, offered a history of Medieval

---

[25]Nearly 250 years have elapsed since the first attempt to reconstruct ספר העינים והדיונים. J.L. Dukes in 1839, S. Munk in 1851, and Steinschneider in 1860 all produced flawed and fragmented editions. Prior to Halkin's tour de force, three people, Kokovtsov in Leningrad in 1895, B.Z. Halper and S. Baron, had proffered translations of Ibn Ezra's poetics. Halkin brought to the task the combined skills of Hebraist, Judeo-Arabist, and historian. In the short time his work has been available, six years, it has become the authoritative critical edition of the finest work extant on Medieval Hebrew poetics.

[26]Nehemiah Allony, עיונים ודיונים בספר העיונים והדיונים, חקרי מזרח, Hebrew University, 1979, p. 48.

[27]cf. Appendix A, pp. 154-214, in which all twenty canons are rendered into English accompanied by notes.

Hebrew poetry,[28] and addressed the issue of composing poetry in a dream. Merely listing the work's agenda items alludes to a tendency, already noted in both Ibn Ezra's biography and poetry, to endorse Arab concepts. "He accepted the special place of Arabic language and poetry, as well as climatology, ascribed to Hypocrates and Galenus."[29] Arabs went so far as to claim that only Arabs could be poets, and Moses Ibn Ezra equivocated. He cited Isaiah "מראש הרים יצוחו,"[30] and argued that יצוחו referred to צח, pure rhetoric, and not צורח, screaming. This supported the Arab claims to poetic supremacy. But on the other hand, Ibn Ezra sought to separate Job, Proverbs and Psalms from prose. This left the door open for Ibn Ezra to assert the primacy of Hebrew verse. Nevertheless, ספר העיונים והדיונים contained no chapter on rhyme and meter, and thus, Ibn Ezra failed to commit himself on a critical issue of Hebrew poetics. Was it a legitimate Hebrew enterprise, or was it a hybrid discipline responding to one facet of Arab culture? Scholars have noted that pages from the original manuscript of ספר העיונים והדיונים may be missing. Perhaps in those

---

[28] cf. Appendix B, pp. 215-251.

[29] Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 52.

[30] Isaiah 42:11.

pages Ibn Ezra did discuss meter and rhyme in Hebrew poetry in defense of the Arab claim that Hebrew poetry was an oxymoron since it did not have two requisite elements of verse, meter and rhyme.[31]

The Arabs, like the Greeks, perceived the native kinship of music and poetry. "But, according to the Greeks, every text composed with music was poetry. Whereas, according to the Arabs, all poetry was accompanied by music, but not all musical compositions constituted poetry."[32] Moses Ibn Ezra sided with the Arabs by proposing that in Medieval Hebrew poetry, a poem in combination with a melody had to be designed according to Arabic meters and rhymes. Halkin wrote, "Moses Ibn Ezra's intent was apparently that music with words is called a poem, but music without words is not poetry."[33] Halkin and Allony part company on this point. Halkin attributes Ibn Ezra's attitude to a keen sense of reality, i.e., the Arabs defined the science of poetics in the Medieval period. Allony believes that Ibn Ezra's feelings ought to be

---

[31]Allony hypothesized that such a discussion took place between pages 77-80 where Ibn Ezra talked about the senses and the poets who recognize that meter and rhyme were the bases of poetry as grammar is the basis of linguistics.

[32]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 55.

[33]Ibid.

ascribed to Arabiyya, i.e., an a priori acceptance of Arab preeminence. Both theories need to be fleshed out in order to choose between them. By claiming that Ibn Ezra was merely a realist, Halkin dissociates Ibn Ezra from any avowed philosophical position. In Halkin's scenario, Ibn Ezra may have changed his attitude had the political and intellectual exigencies of his day mandated such a change. By tying Ibn Ezra to an ideology, Allony makes Ibn Ezra's behavior volitional and independent of changes in his fate. If it is possible to construct a composite identity of Moses Ibn Ezra made up of his biography, his poetry and his poetics, then Allony's theory merits scrutiny.

The time-place frame in which Ibn Ezra wrote ספר העיונים והדיונים, in exile where he suffered and bewailed his fate in poetry, adds credence to Allony's Arabiyya concept. His choice to endorse Arab poets was anything but politically expedient and prudent. On the contrary, his poetic moaning coupled with his poetics that amounted to an encomium of Arab Spain, could only have had deleterious effects on his own welfare. By exalting the use of Arabic linguistics and poetics, Moses Ibn Ezra added yet another dimension to his predilection for Arab culture. He elected to subsume Hebrew poetry under its Arabic progenitor, with one rider. He believed that the Hebrew Bible (תנ"ך) exemplified, though in an incipient form, many of the

Arab poetic canons.[34]

Three Arabic books on poetics appear to have had a profound influence on ספר העיונים והדיונים. They were authored by Ibn Almu'taz in 908, Qadama Ibn Jefar, in 922, and Ibn Rashiq, in 1064.[35] Ibn Ezra followed the former two in fixing the number of embellishments at twenty. But the third, Ibn Rashiq, probably caused Ibn Ezra to add to his initial twenty. Ibn Ezra followed these Arab literary critics and divided poetry into three periods: Arabs prior to 622 C.E., i.e., before Islam, 650-750 C.E., the period surrounding the birth of Islam, and 750-1075 C.E. Paralleling this schema, Ibn Ezra devised a history of Hebrew poetry.[36] He posited that the Hebrew poets in Spain received their inspiration from a genealogy that stretched to Jerusalem. This ancestral linkage flies in the face of Ibn Ezra's putative Arabiyya,

---

[34]Refer here to Appendix A, p. 154, "Translation of Ibn Ezra's Canons" where he uses verses from Scripture to illustrate a particular poetic embellishment, thereby establishing the primacy of Hebrew poetry. It ought to be noted that nearly seventy books by the Arabs were devoted to poetics in contrast to Moses Ibn Ezra's single volume. He certainly fostered the development of Hebrew poetry and wanted to establish its credentials, but he did so in an Arab context, defined by Arab rules.

[35]Ismail M. Dihiyat, Avicenna's Commentary, p. 58, where Allony supplies a comparative table of the terms used by each author.

[36]cf. Appendix B., pp. 218ff.

but it fails to counterpoise the evidence in support of that theory. Although, according to Ibn Ezra, the Jews who produced poetry in Spain could trace their lineage back to Jerusalem, their cultivated poetic talent could be traced to Andalusia.

Ibn Ezra's historical outline of Hebrew poetry spans approximately 200 years, from 940 to 1140 in contrast to Arabic poetry that stretched over a millenium. Nevertheless, Ibn Ezra used three basic temporal divisions: the period of דונש בן לברת and מנחם בן סרוק, c.940 to 1020 C.E., the period of שמואל הנגיד, c.1012 (coincident with the Berber invasion) - 1060 C.E., and the period inaugurated by שלמה אבן גבירול and culminated by Judah Halevi, c.1060 - 1140(?) C.E.[37] Ibn Ezra's history has proved invaluable to scholars of the period.[38] The principal sources available to contemporary scholars on the history of Hebrew poetry in Spain are Ibn Ezra's ספר העיונים והדיונים and the Tahkemoni by Alharizi. Moses Ibn Ezra's work was superior in the following respects.

---

[37] cf. Appendix B., pp. 219-244 for the full rendering of this chapter in ספר העיונים והדיונים. Allony also lists the names of the Hebrew poets who belong to each period, p. 61.

[38] J. Schirmann, ידיעות המכון לחקר השירה העברית, vol. 2, Schocken, Berlin, 1936 משוררים בני דורם של משה אבן עזרא ויהודה הלוי, pp. 119ff. review the studies done between 1840 and the date of the article, 1936.

1. It was written nearer to the time period under study.
2. It drew upon reliable sources.
3. It included dates of birth and death.
4. It included biographical notes.
and 5. It evaluated the poets' work.[39]

Alharizi history was flawed by satire and banalities interspersed with historical inaccuracies.[40]

Political circumstances help to account for the paucity of sources that stem from the period. The battle waged by the Berbers and Christians inflicted scribal, as well as human casualties. "But due to the Arabs' excellence in collecting, we possess Diwans, chronicles and anthologies comprised of Arab poetry. Hebrew poetry fared worse. Only the famous works merited saving in Spain, Morocco and Egypt. The exiles only managed to take a small part of their manuscripts and more were lost in transit."[41] Of the material which survived, the

---

[40]Ibid., p. 120. Schirmann posits an historical schematization that differs from the one provided above. He subdivided the first period into two parts with Hasdai Ibn Shaprut defining the first and the second ending with the Berber invasion c.1012 C.E.

[41]Ibid., translated from p. 122 of Schirmann. The author traced the ill-fated route of Medieval Hebrew literature through Yemen and North Africa from whence the current Diwans principally came. The plight of Geniza fragments also receives an apt treatment, pp. 123ff. Medieval Hebrew poetry was clearly a popular art form. The period not only produced poets but a community interested in Hebrew literature. We can derive this from the copies of Halevi's, Ibn Ezra's and other poets' works found in the Egyptian Geniza.

history of Hebrew poetry in Spain written by Ibn Ezra remains the cornerstone document.

Ibn Ezra lists twenty-five poets in his account. But, he made explicit that in his text he was not trying to be exhaustive. He only chose to include famous poets whose work he wanted to endure. Rather than name exemplars of poor poetic style, Ibn Ezra preferred to allow them to die a natural death. Alharizi's list is shorter, but it includes seven or eight names not in Ibn Ezra's history. The Diwans of Halevi and Ibn Ezra mention a considerable number of additional poets. "We must know that not everyone who wrote poetry was a poet, since during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, poetry was a main topic of study in Spain. It is also reasonable to assume that learned people studied rhyme and meter."[42] This complicates any attempt to reconstruct the poetic history of the period, and makes Ibn Ezra's work all the more valuable.

Ibn Ezra described life in the cultural centers of Seville, Cordoba, Lucena, Merida, Granada, Malaga, Saragossa, and Toledo. He labeled Seville the "city of poetry," and hailed it as the center of both Hebrew and Arabic verse.[43] Hebrew poetry blossomed in reaction to

---

[42] Ibid., p. 128, esp. footnote #31.

[43] cf. Appendix B, p. 242.

Arabic verse, post-dating the efflorescence of Arabic poetry by close to three centuries. The cause for such a protracted delay remains unknown. The Jewish poets were typically weaned on Arabic language and culture. Ibn Ezra's familiarity with Arab poets was demonstrated in his being able to cite the works of ten by name.[44] He credited five works on Arabic poetics as having inspired his own text. "His use of the Bible reflected the method of Ibn Almu'taz' use of the Qor'an."[45] ספר העיונים והדיונים synthesized Arabic poetics and Hebrew poetry while, at the same time, Ibn Ezra sought to preserve the integrity of each.

To be a Hebrew poet in Medieval Spain one had to be a master of Torah, and even Talmud. The facility with which both Halevi and Ibn Ezra interwove sacred verses and images into their own poetry evinced complete command of Rabbinic sources. The פיוטים they each composed demonstrated their immersion in the rubrics of Jewish prayer and ritual. Certain types of liturgical poetry such as יוצר, קרובה, and עבודה had previously established forms which discouraged innovation.[46] But the influence of

---

[44] J. Schirmann, ידיעות המכון לחקר השירה העברית, vol. 2, Schocken, Berlin, 1936 משוררים בני דורם של משה אבן עזרא ויהודה הלוי, pp. 119ff. review the studies done between 1840 and the date of the article, 1936.

[45] Ibid. [46] Ibid., p. 130.

Arabic poetry upon other forms of liturgical Hebrew verse, e.g., גאולות, אהבות and רשויות expressed itself in poetic individualism. Ostensibly, if Hebrew poetic convention left room for the poet to innovate, he did so based on Arabic norms. A few Hebrew poets, Halevi being the most famous of them, blended the Arabic poetic genre with a renewal of Jewish national spirit. The Sages had transformed the Song of Songs into the paradigmatic love poem exchanged between God and Israel. Halevi added another dimension to this rabbinic theme by injecting Jewish nationhood into non-liturgical poetry. Ibn Ezra, however, stayed much closer than Halevi to the poetic course charted by his Arab predecessors.

The realm of non-liturgical Hebrew poetry grew to include panegyrics, dirges, celebratory poems, love poems, poems about wine, poetic expressions of anger and despair, satirical and mocking poems, epigrams and philosophical, meditative verse.[47] Halevi and Ibn Ezra both extended their poetic horizons to include the full range of non-liturgical options open to them. But it was Halevi alone who went beyond the defined range of the accepted non-liturgical poetic genres and composed two types of "unclassifiable" poetry, "Zion poetry" and "sea poetry."

---

[47] Pagis, שירת החול, pp. 151-309, painstakingly analyzes the structure, syntax, and thematic development of each aforementioned genre, e.g., the distinction between metaphor (majaz) and direct speech (haqiqa), cf. Pagis pp. 43ff.

Both were intimately connected to his exile. "Zion poetry" (see previous chapter for examples) focused on the overriding desire in Halevi's life, to merge his body in Spain with his heart in Jerusalem. Halevi's "sea poetry," much of which we assume to have been composed at sea because of its vivid character, told the story of risks he was willing to take in order to achieve his sacred goal. When Halevi broke with poetic convention, he only did so as a vehicle to express his deepest thoughts. His love for ארץ ישראל compelled Judah Halevi to cast aside poetic canons. When Moses Ibn Ezra admitted that he had not always followed the "rules" he articulated, he ascribed his actions to puerility and insouciance.[48] When Halevi plowed virgin poetic fields, he confessed nothing except unbridled love for the Promised Land.

By contemporary standards, the Hebrew poetry composed in Spain seems heavily laden with artifice and falls short in terms of its artfulness. But Medieval poetry followed the dictates of Medieval poetics, and it is the poetics, more than the poetry, that has changed in the last eight centuries. Schirmann and Pagis both implore the reader of Medieval Hebrew poetry not to judge it by our twentieth century standards. The lengthy introductions which had

---

[48] cf. Halper, שירת ישראל, pp. 156-157.

little or no relationship to the body of the poem were mandated by the prevailing poetics. The profusion of metaphors and rhodomontades in Halevi's and Ibn Ezra's verse demonstrated their consummate poetic skills which were appreciated and admired by the community of literary enthusiasts in twelfth century Spain.[49] Even Moses Ibn Ezra recognized that poetry depended on its artistic embellishments and not solely on a mastery of linguistic craftsmanship.[50] Despite the Medieval emphasis on poetic form, non-liturgical poetry often expressed profound emotional and spiritual insight.[51] Poetry was more than pure form. Schirmann noted that both Halevi and Ibn Ezra showed definite preferences for a few forms, e.g., mutzamat -aaaB, cccB and אזור (girdle poem) with a refrain, and

---

[49]Pagis, שירת החול, pp. 35-54, describes the panoply of figurative linguistic devices available to the Medieval poet. Schirmann, המשוררים, p. 131, lists some of the more common metaphorical uses in love poetry: dust is lust - "face of lust shines like sun and stars"; hair is night; empty of desire are apples and roses; her teeth are like bdellium; her lips or cheeks red with blood; lusty eyes - arrows or spears; "when I kiss her mouth I am drinking wine." What may be a hackneyed expression to us was poetry to Medieval poets.

[50]Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 119.

[51]This accounts for the content analysis done in the previous chapter, cf. pp. 63-98.

zagal.[52]

The Arabic influence upon Medieval Hebrew poetry manifested itself principally in the domain of non-liturgical verse. The פיוט, or liturgical poem, already had established conventions which guided the poet both formally and ideationally. Liturgical poetry was not the arena for experimentation, nor did it allow for statements of creative self-expression. That is why little can be inferred with respect to a poet's ideology on the basis of the liturgical poetry he composed. Both Ibn Ezra's and Halevi's liturgical poems conformed to the predetermined conventions laid down by precedent and tradition. But, in the province of non-liturgical poety, Halevi and Ibn Ezra charted different courses. Ibn Ezra's poetics focused necessarily upon non-liturgical poetry since its form and content were not yet "sacred," i.e., inviolate. That Halevi did not write a systematic treatise on poetics makes direct comparison impossible. On the other hand, that Halevi did not write a poetics is, in and of itself, noteworthy.[53] Ibn Ezra lent to Arabic poetics

---

[52]J. Schirmann, ידיעות המכון לחקר השירה העברית, vol. 2, Schocken, Berlin, 1936 משוררים בני דורם של משה אבן עזרא ויהודה הלוי, pp. 119ff. review the studies done between 1840 and the date of the article, 1936.

[53]cf. Brody, Diwan 1930 edition, introduction pp. 5-10.

a formal legitimacy vis a vis Hebrew poetry. He codified what had been "oral tradition" among Jewish poets. Halevi retained the autonomy of Hebrew poetry by creating types of poems that were unprecedented in both Arabic and Hebrew annals. He, unlike Ibn Ezra, was not confined to Arabic parameters. Ibn Ezra's ספר העיונים והדיונים testified to his respect for Arabic language and poetry. Halevi's relative silence on the issue of poetics may best be interpreted as a statement of his priorities. He undoubtedly understood various systems of poetics, but he left the enterprise of formulating them to the Arabs and to his friend in exile, Moses Ibn Ezra.

In ספר הכוזרי, Halevi temporarily directed the dialogue to a discussion about the relative merits of the Hebrew language. Though it did not constitute a definitive statement on poetics, the dialogue developed along lines that naturally lead to a conclusion very different from that articulated in ספר הכוזרי.

> The Khazar King: Is Hebrew superior to other languages? Are there not those among them that are richer and fuller than it?
>
> The חבר: What happened to its bearers happened to it, weakening as they weakened and degenerating as they degenerated. But essentially, it is the noblest of the languages, as is known to us through tradition and logic. According to tradition, it is the language in which God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve, and in which both (mortals) conversed. Proof of the matter is that the name אדם is derived from אדמה, אישה from איש, חוה from חי, קין from קניתי, שת from שת, and נח from ינחמו. Aside from this, we have proof from the Torah that from person to person

it was received by Eber (Eber from Noah and Noah from Adam) after whom the Hebrew language is named, because he preserved it in the generation of confused speech. (And Abraham preserved it after Eber.) Indeed, in the land of Ur of the Caldeans, Abraham spoke Aramaic because Aramaic was the Chaldean language. But Hebrew was for him a special, superior language. It was the Holy Language and Aramaic was everyday language. But Ishmael his son carried it to the Arab lands. Thus three languages, Aramaic, Arabic and Hebrew resemble one another in their vocabulary, their grammatical conjugations and in their usages.

The superiority of the Hebrew language is manifest logically. Was it not from the perspective of the people who discoursed in it exalted speech? In particular, when prophecy was widespread among this people? This people loved the preaching, the songs and the psalms; Its kings were Moses and Joshua and David and Solomon! Is it conceivable that they lacked the words to express what they wished, as we lack them since the language has been lost? See how the Torah when forced to name things which are uncommon, for example, in its description of the Tabernacle, Ephod and breastplate, and more - finds the most complete expression. How lovely is the story ordered! It is the same with regard to the names of the nations, the types of birds, and the kinds of stones. Examine further the Psalms of David, the claims of Job in his argument with his friends, the rebukes of Isaiah, and in his promises of reward and punishment, etc.

The Khazar King: With this and with like reasoning you can prove, at most, that the Hebrew language is equal to other languages. But where is its superiority that you mentioned? On the contrary, other languages surpass it in metrical poetry suited to melodies, with which they are arranged.

The חבר: It is already obvious that melodies are not needed for the beauty of metered rhetoric, because in the tune it is possible to arrange for the short rhyme: "הודו ליי כי טוב," and also for the long rhyme (syllable): "לעושה נפלאות גדולות לבדו". This is the case for melodies that are designed to act upon the individual soul, but for poems that are designed for public recitation, in which there is a lovely metered prose, the

Jews did not consider important, because they strove for a more lofty goal than this, and one more useful.

The Khazar King: And what is this advantage?

The חבר: This is the intent of language - to cause a thought that arose in the mind of the speaker to enter into the mind of the hearer, and this intent can only be fully attained face to face. For words spoken face to face are superior to words expressed in writing. As in the famous statement: "From the mouth of authors and not from the mouth of books." For in oral communication - the speaker is aided by pausing in his speech when concluding a subject and by continuing to speak when necessary in order to link subjects: The same is true with respect to the softness or force of his speech, and with gesticulations and other allusions to express surprise or questioning, narrative, seducing, threat or request, which plain speech cannot essentially express. Sometimes, the speaker is helped by eye movements, head movements or hand movements to express anger or pleasure, supplication or superciliousness, in the manner desired. In the small remnant of our language, that is preserved in writing, which is the creation and act of God, there are subtleties and profundities that are used to explain fully the intent of the speaker, and they come in place of the common movements in speech which is face to face, about which we have spoken. They are the accents with which the Scripture is read. They indicate the place in which the speaker intended to pause between subjects and the place in which he intended to continue with an idea. They distinguish between a question and an answer, between subject and object, and between a command and a request - on each of these matters it is possible to write entire essays. A man who aspires to all of these must omit metered verse, because metered poetry is read in only one way, It is common that its reader connects many words between which there should be a separation and pauses in a place where he ought to continue, It is only possible to avoid this with great effort.

> The Khazar King: It is proper that sonic superiority should defer to substantive superiority. For meter is pleasing only to the ear of the listener, and if the tradition of accents includes the meaning of words, then I perceive that you, the congregation of Jews in our generation, chooses nevertheless metrical superiority and you imitate the other nations and impose upon the Hebrew language the yoke of their meters.
>
> The חבר: This is only because of our straying and our recalcitrance. Indeed, it is not sufficient that we have forsaken that superiority we have mentioned, but we have also caused a corruption of our language's structure, which was designed for the unity of mankind, while we make it a language that separated mankind.
>
> The Khazar King: How so?
>
> The חבר: Haven't you seen a hundred men read from the Torah as if they were one person, pausing in their reading at one moment and continuing in another?
>
> The Khazar King: Yes, I have looked into this and I have seen nothing like it among Persians or Arabs, and this is improbable in the recitation of poems. Show me then how you arrived at this superiority in your language and how meter spoils it.[54]

A lengthy excursus on Hebrew grammar ensues with the חבר analyzing particular grammatical forms in terms of their lucidity and fluency. He concluded that in matters of poetry the Jews fell prey to a syndrome expressed in the Book of Psalms. "They mingled among the gentiles and learned their works."[55]

---

[54]Translated from Ibn Shmuel, Sefer הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי, Book 2, pars. 67-77, דביר, Jerusalem, 1972.

[55]Ps. 126:35.

Although it would be presumptuous to assume that the חבר and Judah Halevi were identical, it is reasonable to assume that in the above dialogue, the חבר espoused Halevi's perspective on the Hebrew language. The Khazar king became convinced that a priori Hebrew is the supreme language and only because of contact with other peoples did Hebrew fall prey to foreign whims and become subject to alien standards. Hebrew, according to Halevi's חבר was the Holy Language, and therefore, ipso facto the finest of all languages.

Ibn Ezra's introduction to his twenty canons of poetic embellishment betrays a very different perception from that attributed to Halevi.

> Since I have come to the end of the survey and have nearly reached its goal, I will complete it by proposing twenty axioms on the rhetoric of poetic embellishment. They are a small portion of what the distinguished men, textual commentators and princes of poetry and speech in Islam have collected, This is the goal towards which I set out in this work. All that I have written to this point is only to arouse (interest) and to ease the process (into the principal topic). The chapters which I am about to list closely resemble, in their form, those that are found in Arabic. The totality of their (Arab) expression on this subject encompasses what is unattainable in our realm nor is to be found in our language. In each axiom (derived) from the (Arabic), I will cite one example from Arabic verse and I will set up opposite it what I find from the superior Holy Scriptures as a statement, lest those that exist (in Arabic) are thought to be unparalleled and it be said that also in this area we are completely incapable and that the Arab language is unique in these linguistic adornments and it is totally different from others and that our language is devoid of them. Even if they do

> not substantively exist in a portion of Scripture, there are instructive allusions that serve as an example for most of them. I will also allude to some of the proverbs and riddles, which are for them incisive compositions and types of scientific genres, and I will also point out some of the relevant stanzas (in each chapter) so that they can be guides for you in what you seek to do in this area. Furthermore, I will adduce works from our nation's poets, from my memory, within the framework of these chapters, whether I cite them through the Arabic system which was preceded by Scriptural usage, or occurred through chance and by accident.[56]

Ibn Ezra used Arab criteria to analyze Hebrew poetry. Even though he asserted the Hebrew origins, though in an inchoate form, of the canons of poetry, he acknowledged the superiority of Arabic in the discipline of poetics. Ibn Ezra's standard of poetic excellence came in part from Job, Proverbs and Psalms and in part from the Arabs who were his teachers in poetics. His respect for the Arab poets and for the Arabic language provided the impetus, if not the inspiration for ספר העיונים והדיונים. The formal and contextual bases for ספר העיונים והדיונים were rooted in Arabic. Ibn Ezra's volume was in part an apologetic work "lest it be thought that the Arabic language is unique . . . and that our language is devoid of them." Ibn Ezra defended the legitimacy of Hebrew poetry, and he did so admirably in ספר העיונים והדיונים.

---

[56] cf. Appendix A, p.154.

Halevi, on the other hand, did not accept the premise that Arabic poetry was superior to Hebrew poetry. He did not even allow for that possibility. Hebrew had to be the superior language because it was God's language. Q.E.D. Halevi's argument was a priori, Ibn Ezra's was a posteriori, claiming that anything Arabic could do, Hebrew could do, too. This fundamental difference between Halevi and Ibn Ezra points out another facet in their respective exile experiences. Although Halevi had never seen ארץ ישראל with his eyes, he had seen it with his mind's eye, and he knew that it had to be the loveliest of lands just as he knew that Hebrew had to be the loveliest of languages, since both were holy gifts from God to the Jewish people. Ibn Ezra lived in a different exile, separated from Granada, from Arab culture, and from poetry unsurpassed in its quality. This impelled him to write the only book of its kind, a Medieval Hebrew poetics based on Arabic canons. Judah Halevi's exile experience caused him to write ספר הכוזרי. It was in these expressions of greatness, that Judah Halevi and Moses Ibn Ezra strove to overcome their tragic destinies.

CHAPTER V

Neither Moses Ibn Ezra nor Judah Halevi was a philosopher. Ibn Ezra's most enduring work was done in the discipline of poetics and Halevi reached the summit of Hebrew poetry. Nevertheless, both men had more than a casual interest in philosophy which manifested itself in other aspects of their lives. Halevi's Kuzari has been characterized as, in great part, a frontal attack on philosophy.[1] Ibn Ezra's foray into the field of philosophy has not stood up to the test of time.[2] Although Halevi and Ibn Ezra may not have originated philosophical insights, their placement in Jewish history forced them into a cultural context deeply affected by philosophical undercurrents. Halevi and Ibn Ezra did react to the prevailing philosophical climate, that

---

[1] cf. Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing, The Free Press (Glencoe: 1952), p. 98. The book is devoted to the defense of the Jewish religion against its most important adversaries in general, and the philosophers in particular. Since it is directed against the philosophers, the Muslims, and so on, it is as impossible to call it a philosophic book, as it is to call it an Islamic book, provided one is not willing to use the term "philosophic" in a sense totally alien to the thought of the author, i.e., to transgress one of the most elementary rules of historical exactness.

[2] Isaac Husik, A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy, Atheneum, (N.Y.: 1976), p. 184. All that is accessible of Moses Ibn Ezra's philosophical treatise is a Hebrew translation of extracts under the title ערוגת הבושם. "If we may judge the rest of the work by these Hebrew fragments, we should say that philosophy was not Ibn Ezra's forte."

dominated by the Arabs. Rather than focus on the second-rate Neoplatonism espoused by Ibn Ezra or on Halevi's anti-philosophical tract, we shall instead ask, "How did Halevi and Ibn Ezra respond to Arabiyya?," the doctrine that propagated Arab supremacy.

When Medieval Arabs conquered a territory they did more than arrogate the captured land to themselves. They aimed at imposing Islamic religious ideals and cultural, moral, linguistic and literary values upon the conquered peoples. A brief formulation listing major points in the Arab program would have included:[3]

1. The Arab peninsula is the best of all countries since it lies in the best clime, viz., the fourth; there being seven in all, it forms the fourth, and therefore is the most temperate.

2. The Arabs are the best of all nations, since the Arabian peninsula lies in the best clime.

3. The best of all Arab tribes is that of the Qurayish, since the Apostle of God sprang from it.

4. The best individual among the Qurayish is Muhammad, the Apostle of God, he being the last and greatest of the prophets.

5. The best of all scriptures ever sent down from heaven is the Qor'an.

---

[3]Nehemiah Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra to Arabiyya" in the Bulletin of The Institute of Jewish Studies, Vol. 3, (London: 1975), p. 20.

6. The best of all languages is the Arabic language, in which God spoke to His people.

7. The best poetry is Arabic poetry, in which the angels render praise to God in heaven.

For a Jew to accept all these premises would have been blasphemous. But in Ibn Ezra's ספר העיונים והדיונים, some of them were tacitly or otherwise supported. "The superiority of the Arabs comes to them on account of the nature of their climate, the air of their country and their exiguous water supply (which was believed to have had a salutary effect on the intellect)."[4] Ibn Ezra acknowledged more than the excellence of Arabic poetry and poetics. He assented to an essential tenet of Arabiyya, the ameliorative effect of the Arab climate on the Arab intellect. He went so far as to compare Tiberias with the Arabian peninsula.

> Even though the city of Tiberias is of the land of Syria, yet its air and its lake, from which gifted men drink, have a special virtue in regard to eloquent speech and polished, classical language and rhetoric.[5]

Subtly, Ibn Ezra portrayed the Jews as faithful imitators of Arab creativity.

---

[4]Ibid., p. 21. cf. Halkin, ספר העיונים והדיונים, p. 33. Halper, p. 49. The text continues with a quotation attributed to Galen, "if you examine that matter, you will usually find that there is a correlation between the physical characteristics of a people, their character and their customs on the one hand, and the nature of the country in which they live on the other."

[5]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 22.

Judah Halevi also subscribed to the intimate relation of climate to intellect, and to prophecy as well. But he accorded ארץ ישראל center stage.

> Abraham was the "treasure" of Shem, who was the "treasure" of Noah - since he inherited the lands of temperate climate, in the middle of which is found the lovely land, the land of Canaan, which is the land of prophecy.[6]

A fundament of Halevi's method was the concept that the lands and their inhabitants were differentiated by climatic influence.[7] Halevi's perception vis a vis the effects of geography upon the intellect were apparently distilled from the writings of Hypocrates.[8] The doctrine positing a correlation between climate and intelligence received widespread acclaim in the Medieval period. What made Halevi's version of this theory unique was his conclusion that ארץ ישראל lay at the optimum location for climate, intellect and prophecy.[9] Halevi made prophecy

---

[6]Translated from Ibn Shmuel, ספר הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי, p. 32.

[7]Alexander Altmann, "תורה האקלימים לרבי יהודה הלוי." in מלילה, vol. 1 (London: 1944), p. 2.

[8]Ibid., p. 2ff. where Altmann asserts that just as Halevi's medical knowledge was bound up with that of Hypocrates, so was his philosophy. Also, I Heinemann, הגונה ההסטוריה של יהודה הלוי, Zion, vol. 9, 1943, pp. 161ff.

[9]Altmann, "תורת האקלימים לרבי יהודה הלוי.," where Altmann contrasted Halevi's thoughts with those of Maimonides on this point. Halevi asserted the superiority of the climate of ארץ ישראל. Maimonides implied that it may even have a detrimental effect upon prophecy!, p. 17.

dependent upon geography.

> Whoever prophesied only did so in ארץ ישראל or on account of it, for thusly Abraham merited his first prophecy when he was commanded to go to this land; and Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied on account of it. Indeed, the two of them yet saw the First Temple and the glory of the Divine Indwelling, through which, as long as it was resting in that Temple, everyone who was prepared for it from the perspective of election attained prophecy.[10]

Halevi restricted prophecy to the people of Israel in the land of Israel.[11] This move lay at the very core of Halevi's person. The climate of Israel, just like the people of Israel, was the chosen of God, and therefore, a priori the finest on earth.

> Rightly then, Adonai is called the God of Israel, because this vision was not given to any other people. And indeed, He is also called God of the Land, because the land of Israel, on account of its air, its land and its heavens, was set apart specially to assist in attaining prophecy, in combination with this special quality were conditions that helped working the land to succeed in growing species of plants.[12]

That Ibn Ezra and Halevi differed philosophically on the issue of climatic effects on Jews vis a vis the Arabs, and ארץ ישראל vis a vis the Arabian peninsula was fitting, even predictable given their biographies, their poetry

---

[10] Ibn Shmuel, ספר הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי, 2:14, p. 53.

[11] cf. Ibid., 4:10. The Khazar King, following the Haver's lead, posited conditions under which Judaism would be universally accepted. Among them: "And if the other religions admit that prophecy only appears among the children of Israel . . ."

[12] Ibid., 4:17, p. 175.

and their thoughts about poetics. Ibn Ezra harbored a profound admiration for Arabic culture in general, and philosophy was no exception. His thoughts and his actions appear to have been predicated upon his feelings of exile from Moslem Spain. Halevi also demonstrated remarkable consistency in his philosophical perspective. He believed wholeheartedly in the superiority of all aspects of ארץ ישראל, being that it was from Israel, and Israel alone, that he felt exiled. The climate Ibn Ezra sought was a Jewish version of the Arabian peninsula. Halevi sought the climate of the walled city of Jerusalem. Neither man lived in his ideal climate because both dwelled in גלות.

Ibn Ezra countered the claims of Arabiyya when he had recourse to rabbinic literature, even though he retained a literary reverence for the Qor'an. "The more recent descendants of these tribes (viz. the Ishmaelites and the Qaḥtanids) speak the pure language of the Qor'an, which is unrivalled in the purity of its language, even the most celebrated of their masters of rhetoric being unable to imitate it."[13] But, in ספר העיונים והדיונים, he included a vignette about an encounter with an Arab master rhetorician.

---

[13]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 24, from Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 52.

> Once in the days of my youth, in the country where I was born, one of the great Moslem sages, well versed in their laws, a good friend of mine, asked me to read him the Ten Commandments in Arabic. I realized that it was his intention to disparage their eloquence, so I asked him to read me the first Sura of the Qor'an in Latin. (He could speak this language, and knew its elements.) But when he tried to translate it into the tongue he started to speak incoherently and inelegantly. Then he understood what I meant, and did not repeat his request.[14]

Moses Ibn Ezra was rooted in Jewish tradition. His loyalty to the Jewish people and Judaism was beyond question.

> Our holy people lacks nothing . . . because its Divine principles and knowledge derive from the Torah and the prophets, as it is written, "There is no augury in Jacob."[15] That is to say, it needs no augury or magic, rather all its knowledge comes to the people through exalted Divine revelation mediated through the prophets who make known what will transpire before it happens, as it is written at the end of the same verse, "Jacob is told at once, Yea Israel, what God has planned."[16]. . . and when, on account of the multitude of our sins, we were scattered among the nations . . . He strengthened us by means of His servants who handed down the Torah and the words of the prophets from generation to generation, and from whom we received our religion and its statutes.[17]

He also made explicit his intentions concerning the twenty canons of poetic embellishments that he chose to include examples from Hebrew Scripture to demonstrate its

---

[14]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 25, from Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 56. Noteworthy, in a parenthetical sense, is the recognition made of the obstacles standing in the way of a translator.

[15]Numbers 23:23. [16]Ibid.

[17]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 25, and Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 51.

poetic legitimacy.

> In each axiom derived from Arabic canons, I will cite one example from Arabic verse and I will set up opposite it what I find from the superior Scriptures as a statement, lest those that exist in Arabic are thought to be unparalleled, and it be said also that we are completely incapable in this area and that the Arabic language is unique in these linguistic adornments and it is totally different from others and that our language is devoid of them.[18]

Ibn Ezra's defense of the Hebrew language was vehement and unyielding, but it was a defense, a secondary movement in response to the acknowledged virtues of Arabic. He stopped far short of Halevi's primary assertion that Hebrew, the language of God and Israel, was in a class by itself.

Ibn Ezra's characterization of the Arabs conceded to them an unmatched literary aptitude.

> As for the Ishmaelite tribes, God has not favored them with wisdom other than the knowledge of rhetoric, nor did He make them by nature suited to occupy themselves with any branch of learning other than rhetoric and fine speech. They have not excelled other nations and tribes except in the superiority of their language and in their various poetic compositions.[19]

---

[18] Appendix A, p. 154.

[19] Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 27, from Halper, שירת ישראל, pp. 47-48. Ibn Ezra went on to quote a remark falsely attributed by the Arabs to Aristotle in support of Arab linguistic preeminence. The coup de grace, however, comes with Ibn Ezra's use of a quotation from an Arab source. "The Arabic tongue is among tongues even as the season of spring is among the seasons."

Such an encomium could only come from someone who deferred to Arab authority in matters of poetics. Ibn Ezra's concept of Judaism accommodated a limited form of Arab supremacy.

> For God has favored them with a rich language and rhetorical superiority, and they have the capacity to prove anything as well as its opposite, to make what is ugly seem beautiful and the beautiful seem ugly . . . because they are so gifted in rhetoric.[20]

In his excursus on poetic embellishments, Ibn Ezra praised unstintingly the virtues of Arabic poetry, quoting from the Qor'an and later Arab literary works with facility and conviction.

Ibn Ezra had to have been aware of the political factors that aided the development of Arabic. For centuries, the Arabs had been an imperialist power, swallowing territory and cultures as a giant fish would devour plankton. But, he tended to disregard the causes and concentrated on the effect, i.e., the richness of the Arabic language.

> And because these tribes surpassed all other peoples in their eloquence and their way of speech, they overcame (the speakers of) many other languages and conquered many other peoples, compelling them to accept their dominion . . . Their borders grew ever wider, and their cities and provinces were filled with wisdom. They translated all the ancient and modern works of learning, and having mastered them added their own explanations and commentaries. Everything

---

[20] Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 27, from Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 53.

> that has been written or translated in all branches of knowledge has been written or translated into Arabic, because God has favored the Arabs with a rich language and with superior eloquence.[21]

By linking the Arab's linguistic acumen with Divine providence, Moses Ibn Ezra ascribed to the Arab people a hallowed status, one which he appreciated, and perhaps even envied. He divorced his personal religious beliefs from his perceptions of superior poetry. He saw no inconsistency in ascribing limited preeminence to a people other than the Jewish people, and that alone constituted an irreconcilable difference from Judah Halevi's beliefs. I believe that is why, in part, when Moses Ibn Ezra lived among the Arabs he did not really perceive that he was living in exile, while Judah Halevi thought of both Christian and Moslem Spain as places of exile.

Moses Ibn Ezra accepted the prevailing medieval definition of poetry as having two sine qua non attributes, rhyme and meter. This left him high and dry when he felt compelled to speak about Biblical poetry, or lack thereof.

> We have nothing (in Scripture) that is not prose other than the three books of Psalms, Job and Proverbs; and even these books, as one may see, have neither rhyme nor meter in the manner of the Arabs. In their external form they somewhat resemble verses of poems in the Arabic meter of rajaz.[22]

---

[21] Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 28, from Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 53.

[22] Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra, p. 29, from Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 57.

Rajaz represented incipient poetry, verse in its lowest form.

> Indeed, one who composed a piece in the rajaz form was not considered a poet who really understood the art of poetry, since even magicians and sorcerers employed for their utterances either rhymed prose or the rajaz meter.[23]

He found no evidence in the Bible of qasidas, or poetry classified at the pinnacle of Medieval form. He confessed his ignorance as to the origin of Hebrew poetry.[24] That notwithstanding, Ibn Ezra remarked that the ancestors of the Spanish Jews had come from Jerusalem, and that they possessed outstanding literary talent.[25] He traced the history of Hebrew poetry and mentioned with pride the Jews' ability to emulate the Arabs.[26] Ibn Ezra and Halevi agreed that the Hebrew language had become impoverished since the Biblical era, but they accounted for that fact differently. Ibn Ezra subscribed to the school headed by Saadia Gaon in this matter, attributing the degeneration of the Hebrew language to its disuse. Halevi sought to explain the decline of Hebrew as a concomitant to "mingling with

---

[23]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 30.

[24]cf. Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 58. Dunash ben Labrat is currently thought to have been the first to introduce the medieval style of poetry to Spain. cf. Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 30, footnote #1.

[25]cf. Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 62.

[26]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 31.

the Gentiles," which resulted from exile.[27]

It was only in reference to the Arabic language that Ibn Ezra held the Arabs in high esteem. He omitted the Arabs in his cataloging of peoples that had made significant contributions to culture.

> Know that the famous peoples and illustrious nations that have devoted themselves to the acquisition of knowledge and have directed their energies to the sciences, such as the Hindus, the Persians, the Greeks, the Turks and the Copts . . . (The Arabs do not belong to the groups that have devoted themselves to learning or to the sciences, nor has God favored them with understanding.)[28]

Allony brings up a trenchant point with respect to Ibn Ezra's poetry. "Moses Ibn Ezra's voluminous poetical output (there are approximately two thousand pieces) contain but few references to Biblical place names. Their paucity is the more striking if we compare the frequency of occurrence of such names in the poetry of Ibn Gabirol, Samuel Hanagid

---

[27]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 32 (With respect to Moses Ibn Ezra) "It therefore emerges that in the work here being considered, when it comes to language and literature we encounter apologetics rather than any spirit of combativeness, and a submissive acceptance rather than any embittered sense of resentment."

[28]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 33 and Halper, שירת ישראל, p. 47. Allony here mentions this piece of information in the context of shu'ubiyya, the doctrine espoused by those who wished to establish parity between the conquered Arab peoples and the natives of the Arabian peninsula.

and Judah Halevi."[29] This phenomenon supports the contention that Halevi and Ibn Ezra did not live in the same exile. Ibn Ezra was not preoccupied with the landscape of ארץ ישראל because he did not realistically contemplate being in ארץ ישראל. But, about Granada, Moses Ibn Ezra sang praises. The Arabs' deficiency in the sciences, according to Ibn Ezra, did not detract from their linguistic preeminence.

Ibn Ezra's attitude towards Arabiyya received rebuttal in later generations.[30] Jewish poets feared that Hebrew poetry would be subsumed under an Arabic umbrella. Judah Halevi entered the polemic on the side opposite the one represented by his friend, Moses Ibn Ezra. "We know that the great Judah Halevi repeated the assertions of Menahem Ibn Saruq's followers; it therefore appears that the initial controversy continued to rumble through the Jewish culture of Spain during the two hundred years that separate Halevi from his predecessors in this respect, and that it went on

---

[29]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 33.

[30]Joseph ben Elazar's criticism is treated by Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra, pp. 35-38. "Indeed, an anti-Arabiyya motif had characterized Spanish Hebrew poetry from its very beginning. A major component of the controversy between Menahem Ibn Saruq's disciples and Dunash ben Labrat involved not only the introduction of Arabic meters into Hebrew poetry but the importance to Menahem's school of prosecuting the war against Arabiyya."

right to the end of the Spanish period of Hebrew poetry."[31] Arabiyya then, was a plaguing issue for Medieval Spanish Jewry, one that was important enough to have caused two lifelong friends to disagree ardently. "Moses Ibn Ezra's enthusiasm for Arabiyya provoked a vigorous reaction in the Kuzari even though Judah Halevi was a close friend of Moses Ibn Ezra throughout their joint lives."[32]

Although Ibn Ezra assented to an essential tenet of Arabiyya, the unsurpassed excellence of the Arabic language, we know of no poem that he composed in Arabic. If he venerated a language, why did he not use it to express his own verse?[33] Undoubtedly, his personal piety contributed to his choice of a linguistic vehicle. In theory, Ibn Ezra appreciated Arabic, but in practice, he believed only in Hebrew. The Bible, according to Ibn Ezra, contained unpolished diamonds, in a literary sense, gems which encased all the types of rhetoric and poetry manifest in Arabic poetics. He endeavored to act as a link in the chain of traditional Hebrew poetry, but he sought to bring Hebrew poetry to the level attained by Arabic verse.

---

[31] Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 36.

[32] Ibid.

[33] This argument from silence leaves open the possibility that Ibn Ezra did compose Arabic poetry.

Another factor which contributed to Ibn Ezra's perspective on Arabiyya was intimately related to his state of exile. "The circumstance of his residence in a land felt by him to be alien, and his leaving his own birthplace to reside, as an exile, far from the center of Moorish culture" . . . accounted in part, for his behavior.[34] Ibn Ezra believed that the Spanish school of Hebrew poets was descended from the tribe of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem.[35] It was somehow sufficient, in his judgment, to be descended from ארץ ישראל. For Halevi, descent was not enough, ascent עליה was necessary.

In ספר הכוזרי, the Khazar king visited a Christian scholar and a Moslem sage before he entered into a dialogue with the חבר. He went to all three in search of a solution to a recurring dream that had puzzled him. "Your intention pleases the Lord, but your deed is not pleasing."[36] Being a pious man, the king sought to rectify the revealed inconsistency of his thought and action. Figuring that the solution had to reside among those who claimed to possess the truth, he confronted a philosopher, a Christian and a Moslem in turn. He ended up rejecting all three, but for

---

[34]Allony, "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra," p. 39.

[35]cf. Appendix B, "History of Hebrew Poetry in Spain," p. 215.

[36]Kuzari, 1:1, p. 1., Ibn Shmuel.

different reasons.[37] His dialogue with the Islamic representative shed some light on the advantages Halevi saw to Judaism over Islam.

> The Khazar king called to one of the wise sages of Islam and asked him about his teaching and his observance.
> The Moslem sage said: We believe in the unity and eternity of God, in the creation of the universe, and in the relation of all people to Adam and to Noah. However, we reject an anthropomorphic God totally, and if a word of it is found in the language of the Qor'an, we interpret it and say that it is allegorical in order to be close to human understanding. Aside from this, we claim that our scripture is the word of God: This book is a miraculous thing, which compels us to accept it by its very essence, because no one in the universe can compose a book like it, not even one of its verses. Our prophet is the seal of the prophets, and he abrogates every teaching that preceded him, and he calls upon all peoples to accept Islam. The reward of the believer - the return of his spirit to his body in the Garden of Eden, where he will be sated with pleasantries, lacking nothing for food, drink and bodily delights, to the extent of his desire; and the punishment of the heretic - his descent to an unextinguishable fire, his sufferings will never cease.
>
> The Khazar king: Whoever wants to be guided towards faith in the Divine Word, and to verify for himself that God speaks to man, though he considers it remote, must prove it via well established facts that are incontrovertible, and even then it would be very difficult for him to verify that, indeed God spoke to man. Even though your book may be a miracle, it is written in Arabic, so a foreigner like me cannot know to distinguish this book as being miraculous and unique, and even if you were

---

[37] cf. Kuzari 1:2-9.

> to read it to me, I would not know to differentiate it from another book in the Arabic language.[38]

The Khazar king's rationale, claiming that since he could not understand Arabic, the miraculous character of the Qor'an was inaccessible to him, seems curious. Would not the same argument apply to Hebrew? It would if the Khazar king were simply an objective inquirer into the essence of the religious practice. He was anything by impartial in the Kuzari. Since Halevi's name does not appear in the book, it is frequently difficult to discern his influence. Here is one case in which Halevi could not have identified with the חבר, who was not yet part of the dialogue, but rather with the Khazar king. Halevi was the motivating force behind the Khazar's expressed opinion on Arabic. Halevi did not accept any notion of Arabic qua holy language. He reserved that title for Hebrew alone. More than a logical argument, the Khazar's confessed ignorance of Arabic was a nicely couched attack on Arabiyya. Not only was the Khazar king ignorant of Arabic, he claimed that he would be unable to detect its miraculous nature even if it were read to him. The doctrine of Arabiyya propounded the sui generis linguistic character of the Qor'an in maintaining that no other Arabic could imitate even one of the Qor'anic

---

[38] Ibn Shmuel, ספר הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי, 1:5-6, pp. 7-8.

verses! The Khazar king was not an illiterate boor; he just did not understand Arabic. That was what Halevi wanted a reader to accept. But implicit in that assent was the acceptance of a concept with far-reaching implications.

Arabic, to the Khazar king, was just like any other language, and so it was to Judah Halevi. The Khazar king became the mouthpiece for Judah Halevi to express his opposition to the claims of Arabiyya. The Khazar king never questioned the חבר about the Hebrew language. He only asked the חבר to explain its beauty. This subtlety was not really very subtle at all. Halevi rejected Arabiyya out of hand just as he accepted the holiness of Hebrew a priori. What was masterful in the Kuzari was the way in which, through both the חבר and the Khazar king, he countered the tenets of Arabiyya. The king rejected the Qor'an on the basis that its sanctity was indeterminate. He approached the חבר and eventually came to accept the Torah as a reliable transmission of revelation even though it was written in Hebrew! All this, of course, took place in the Arabic text of the Kuzari. On Halevi's agenda in his defense of a despised religion was a vehement attack on Arabiyya and an equally forceful advocacy of Jewish superiority.

The Khazar king did eventually touch on the linguistic aspect of the Torah, but only after carefully listening to and responding to the experiential line of reasoning by

the חבר. Any inquiry by the Khazar king into the Hebrew language was an afterthought. He had already come over to the side of the חבר when the Khazar king showed an interest in the literary character of the תכ"ך.

> The Khazar king: The mind can doubtlessly and boundlessly accept commandments such as these. For a prophet came to subjugated and oppressed slaves and promised them that they would go out from their slavery - and they went out by a way that he designed for them and at the appointed time which he fixed without delay; and this prophet guided them to the land of Canaan, which was then in the hands of seven nations, each one of which was more powerful than they, and he assigned to each one of their tribes its inheritance in that land before he brought them there, and all this in a short time with signs and miracles, and through this the exalted status of the Sender was verified as well as the greatness of the Messenger, and also the importance of the congregation to whom alone he was sent. If that prophet had said: I was sent to lead the whole world, and his word only reached half of it, then his mission would be in doubt, since the Divine Intent would not have been fulfilled by it. And among the things that prevent this fulfillment was that the Holy Book which the prophet brought with him was written in Hebrew and the nations of Sheba, India and Khazar would find it difficult to understand this book and to do what was written in it - at least for centuries until they would accept its faith. And had it been imposed upon them by their defeat in a war with practitioners of this religion, or willingly through a close alliance without them having seen the prophet himself or even another prophet who would testify to the faithfulness of the first shed light on his teaching.
>
> The חבר: Moses called only his people to his teaching (Torah), people of his language, and God promised the entrusted his people to return and command them about His Torah at fixed times through prophets. He fulfilled His word as

long as He favored the children of Israel and caused His presence to dwell among them.[39]

The Khazar king acknowledged the truth of the Hebrew Scriptures and then asked about Hebrew. The process occurred in the reverse fashion in his earlier dialogue with the Moslem sage. In that case, he first insisted on understanding the language of the sacred text before he would agree to any of its commands and beliefs. But, with respect to the תנ"ך, the Khazar king was willing to accept the content of the book without being able to comprehend its language. What made the criteria apply differently? I submit that the correct way to explain this logical antinomy is not logical at all. Through the חבר overtly and through the Khazar king covertly, Halevi opined that Arabic was simply not holy and that Hebrew simply was holy. Halevi could not afford to grant any linguistic equivalent to Hebrew without losing a fundament of his defense of Judaism. Unlike Moses Ibn Ezra, Halevi did not concede to Arabiyya even on one point, namely the linguistic preeminence of Arabic. According to Halevi, Hebrew, as the language of biblical transmission, was as holy as the transmission itself. To have conceded to Arabic linguistic superiority would have seemed to Halevi as conceding to the Moslems religious superiority.

---

[39] ספר הכוזרי Ibn Shmuel edition, 1:100-101, p. 38.

The חבר took pride in the particularity of the Jewish people and the Hebrew language. It was to the Jews and the Jews alone that God gave His Torah through His prophet. Subsequently, the Jews bore the responsibility of transmitting the Torah to the other nations. The חבר did precisely that by sharing the Torah with the Khazar king and, in turn, with the readers of ספר הכוזרי. Part of Halevi's literary brilliance in the Kuzari inhered in the harmony he was able to achieve between its form and content.[40] The חבר constantly exemplified the argument he was advancing. The incident regarding the Hebrew language would not have been as convincing had his own actions not followed from the theory he expounded. Ultimately, however, the persona who lived according to the theories he professed was Halevi, who wrote the Kuzari not only as a defense for his people, but as a personal statement of faith fulfilled only by his action, his עליה. The dream attributed to the Khazar king which set him out to find religious truth claimed that "His intent was pleasing to the Lord, but his deed was not pleasing." Maybe this was the dream of Halevi himself who, after reflecting upon his people's experience, realized that the only way to bring his deed into harmony with his intent was to go to ארץ ישראל. In the course of arriving

---

[40] Strauss makes this point cogently in Persecution and the Art of Writing, pp. 98-112.

at that conclusion, Halevi confronted Arabiyya, and summarily dismissed it as folly.

Just as political factors influenced the spread of Arabiyya, Halevi had to account for the servile role the Jews played in the Medieval world. The Arabs could seek to justify Arabiyya on the basis of its increasing power. How could the Jews, whose influence had been on the wane since the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., lay claim to ultimate truth? The Khazar king asked the חבר to account for Jewish political subservience.

> The חבר: For Israel among the nations is as the heart among the organs; it is sicker than all of them, yet healthier than all of them.
>
> The Khazar king: Please add an explanation to your words.
>
> The חבר: Many are the pains that afflict the heart frequently alternating. Are they not: worries, sorrows, grudges, love, hate, and fears; the quality of the heart's temperament changes constantly, even inhaling and exhaling, how much the more so because of poor food or inferior drink. All movements act upon it: types of exertion, and wakefulness and sleep - even if the other organs are unafflicted from all of them.
>
> The Khazar king: You clarified for me then that the heart is sicker than the other organs, but in what manner is it also healthier than them?
>
> The חבר: Is it possible that pus would dwell in the heart, which would cause inflammation, or cancer, or atrophy, or injury, or paralysis, or flaccidity when they occur in the rest of the organs?
>
> The Khazar king: Something like this is impossible, because from less than this death would result. And also this: the heart, because of its clear

> sensibility, brought about by the purity of its blood and the increased air in it, senses the slightest thing that could afflict it and expels it as long as its ability to do so remains. Every other organ lacks the heart's sensibility, and therefore pus can dwell in it until the sickness becomes a reality.
>
> The חבר: If so, the sensibilities of the heart cause it many ills, but yet they are the cause of their expulsion from their very penetration, before they take root.
>
> The Khazar king: Yes indeed.
>
> The חבר: The Divine presence to us is as the relation of the soul to the heart . . . Just as the heart is afflicted by the ills that develop in the rest of the organs, i.e., the lusts of the liver and the stomach on account of the evil disposition of the testicles, so does Israel develop the ills on account of their imitation of the nations. As it is said: "They mingled among the nations and learned their ways." (Ps. 106:35) . . .[41]

Israel, being the heart of the nations according to the חבר, has fallen prey to the disease of the other organs. That accounted for its humbled status. If Israel had responded more to the Divine influence and less to the gentile influence, then presumably, Israel would have been the healthiest of the nations on earth. The חבר did not suggest that the Jews lacked responsibility for their degeneration, yet he accused the nations of fostering a disease that led to Jewish subjugation. The verbal sword of the חבר cut both ways, but it cut the gentiles deeper

---

[41] Ibn Shmuel, ספר הכוזרי, 2:39-44, pp. 71-73.

than it did the Jews. The significance of this dialogue is magnified in light of Halevi's perception of exile. He claimed to have been alienated not only from Christian and Moslem Spain but from the Jews who lived there and accepted the prevailing values. Halevi had contempt for Arabiyya regardless of its proponent. He empathized with the heart that was susceptible to the disease of the other organs, but he longed for the heart that responded more to the soul, to the Divine influence, than to the body. Halevi understood the reasons why Jews stayed in Spain, but he did not agree with their decision. He knew about the perils of travel by sea, but he was willing to accept the risk, because he was like a heart searching for a soul. Halevi believed that for the people of Israel to regain its rightful status, it had to live in ארץ ישראל.

About the land of Israel Moses prayed. When God denied him entrance he grieved. Judah Halevi cited this event as evidence for the uniqueness of Israel, then he went on to plead his case before the Khazar king, the Jews of twelfth century Spain, and ultimately, all Jews.

> The חבר: After these things this is what they said: Everyone ascends to ארץ ישראל, and no one descends. (Ketubot 13:11) Concerning this they decided: A woman who does not want to go to ארץ ישראל with her husband forfeits her marriage contract and is divorced. On the other hand, if the husband does not want to accompany his wife to ארץ ישראל, he must divorce her and pay her according to the marriage contract. (Ketubot 110b) Moreover, they said, it is better to dwell

> in ארץ ישראל in a city whose inhabitants are mostly gentiles than to dwell outside the land of Israel in a city whose inhabitants are mostly Jewish, for he who lives in ארץ ישראל resembles he who has a God, while he who lives outside the land is likened to he who has no God. (Ketubot 110b) . . . They also said: Burial in ארץ ישראל is like being buried beneath the altar. (Ketubot 111a)[42]

Halevi had no sympathy for Arabiyya, and in the Kuzari, he made it a point to deny every one of its premises. "The air in ארץ ישראל makes one wise."[43] Ibn Ezra offered a limited endorsement of Arabiyya in his thought. This difference of opinion highlighted another facet of the gulf that separated Halevi from Ibn Ezra. The two men shared a common experience, that of exile. The theme of galut cut across every aspect of their lives. In ספר הכוזרי, Judah Halevi, most often through the חבר, sought to convince others as he had become convinced, that the only real state of exile for a Jew was from ארץ ישראל.

Halevi and Ibn Ezra may not have confronted one another's exile directly, but through their lives, their poetry, their poetics and their philosophical attitudes, two venerable stories emerge. Moses Ibn Ezra found a home in his youth, the city of Granada, that offered him

---

[42] Ibn Shmuel, trans., ספר הכוזרי, 2:22, pp. 61-62.

[43] Ibn Shmuel, trans., ספר הכוזרי, 2:22, p. 62 from Baba Batra 158b.

the intellectual inspiration he sought so desperately in his exile. The course he charted in his poetry and in ספר העיונים והדיונים strove to bring him back to the loveliest of places," Granada, or to the "city of poetry," Seville. Judah Halevi in his poetry and in ספר הכוזרי, outlined his response to exile. He felt exiled from the "land of milk and honey," ארץ ישראל, and from the "city of David," Jerusalem. What united Halevi and Ibn Ezra in their exiles was a bond of friendship. What divided them in exile was a difference in their perceived ability to master their fate and return home. Moses Ibn Ezra was exiled from his intellectual home which he thought awaited him in Granada. Judah Halevi was exiled from his spiritual home, which he believed awaited him in Jerusalem. Ironically, their perceptions of exile account for both their personal affinity and their physical separation. Their exile united them in yearning to be home, but their exile separated them because they did not agree where home was located. Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi lived as they wrote, saddened by their exile and buoyed by different visions of return.

APPENDIX A*

Since I have come to the end of the survey and have nearly reached its goal, I will complete it by proposing twenty axioms on the rhetoric of poetic embellishment. They are a small portion of what the distinguished men, textual commentators and princes of poetry and speech in Islam have collected. This is the goal towards which I set out in this work. All that I have written to this point is only to arouse (interest) and to ease the process (into the principal topic). The chapters which I am about to list closely resemble, in their form, those that are found in Arabic. The totality of their (Arab) expression on this subject encompasses what is unattainable in our realm nor is to be found in our language. In each axiom (derived) from the (Arabic), I will cite one example from Arabic verse and I will set up opposite it what I find from the superior Holy scriptures as a statement, lest those that exist (in Arabic) are thought to be unparalleled and it be said that also in this area we are completely incapable and that the Arabic language is unique

---

*Although with the generous aid of Dr. Ezra Spicehandler, I have worked assiduously on the translation of Moses Ibn Ezra's 20 sections on Medieval Hebrew Poetics, I have failed to grasp many nuances and subtleties in the text. I offer this translation, then, as an aid to be used with care.

Halkin in ספר העיונים והדיונים includes an extensive scholarly apparatus. Here, I have cited only Biblical and Rabbinic sources. Halkin's work should be consulted for additional annotations.

in these linguistic adornments and it is totally different from others and that our language is devoid of them. Even if they do not substantively exist in a portion of Scripture, there are instructive allusions that serve as an example for most of them. I will also allude to some of the proverbs and riddles, which are for them incisive compositions and types of scientific genres, and I will also point out some of the relevant stanzas (in each chapter) so that they can be guides for you in what you seek to do in this area. Furthermore, I will adduce works from our nation's poets, from my memory, within the framework of these chapters, whether I cite them through the Arabic system which was preceded by Scriptural usage, or occurred through chance and by accident. Whatever form I did not find under the rubric of a chapter among those which once existed but no longer exist, if it occurs to you or you come across it or it chances upon you with God's help, create it with His goodness and His kindness, because He is the Lord who renders aid in instruction and in walking straight in the path of honesty, in His goodness and with His blessing. There is no God but He and no goodness but His.

These are the names of the lessons (sections) prior to your (seeing) their explanations, if the singularly exalted God wills it.

(Chapter) Lesson 1 - On Metaphor

Lesson 2 - On the Apparent and the Hinted

Lesson 3 - On Parallel Opposites

Lesson 4 - On Homonymy

Lesson 5 - On Particularization

Lesson 6 - On Parallelism

Lesson 7 - On Notation

Lesson 8 - On Repetition

Lesson 9 - On Synonymity

Lesson 10 - On Hyperbole

Lesson 11 - On Completion

Lesson 12 - On the Crowding of a Stanza to Include a Subject

Lesson 13 - On the Qualification (reversal)

Lesson 14 - On the Simile

Lesson 15 - On the Ellipsis (assimilation)

Lesson 16 - On the Exaggeration and the Fabrication

Lesson 17 - On the Opening

Lesson 18 - On the Beauty of the Beginning

Lesson 19 - On the Transition

Lesson 20 - On the Digression

Since I have said previously that Poetry is the Arabic science, and that the Jews follow in their footsteps in this art, therefore, I will not pay attention to the words of one who denies these (inter) related axioms of the science of Rhetoric and who minimizes the need to act in accord with

them, in concordance with reality and capacity, since the Arabs agreed upon them and also made them tools for their creation and means for their rhyming to the extent that by their (ornaments) presence, in their (Arab) poetry. The latter (poems) are made graceful in their estimation, and by their absence were made tasteless and ugly, even though these things are not proved but are a convention. It is incumbent upon us to agree with them regarding these matters as they exist and in accord with our ability, since it would not be right for us to follow in their footsteps in part and not in the rest. Porphoryous of Tyre, author of the introduction to the "Art of Logic," wrote that, the arts are not possible without their equipment and tools. The masters recognize the names of the tools and the equipment, and when the ignorant ones see them they become (objects) of mockery and derision for them. These sections that are listed and those similar to them which I did not list because they are missing in Hebrew, are the equipment of poetry and its tools, its aids to elegance and its means to euphony of creation, as will be revealed to those of discernment. Now, I must stop and begin with an explanation of the elements and a clarification of their purpose with His support and His help.

The First Section on Poetic Embellishments: Metaphor

This section is among the superior theorems of creation and among the most desirable of the good qualities of prose

and poetry, because poetry is built upon a rhyming letter and upon a meter which are a sine qua non, and upon its syllables, some short and others more weighted (i.e., longer). The poet cannot place the syllable in its place, because of the difference in meter, and must put in its place that which relates to it, and by which the structure which he chose for it, will be preserved.

Know that aside from this explanation which the poetic creator is bound by and by which the work of an author of prose will be improved, the metaphor is one of the best suited for the purpose of both types mentioned (prose and poetry) despite the fact that explicit reference is fundamentally more reliable. While the metaphor is ancillary, it is imbued with majesty. The literary work which is clothed in metaphor and embellished with sobriquet and allusion - its embroidered silk is decorated and its enamel beautified. The difference between adorned and naked speech is like the difference between clarification and silence (muteness), despite the fact that a few of the poets from both nations purged what they considered to be loathsome and whose ugliness was great, and this is the reason for exaggeration (in its use). Every learned one of our age, who rejects this (use of) metaphor and disparages it, preferring certainty or the objects which he sees, forsakes his primary path, since metaphor abounds in the Prophets and its use is not

easily counted. There is no evil in it and furthermore, one cannot act without it. Because of understanding this and due to great knowledge, Arab poets then, imitated it after it was found in the Prophets. I have cited for you a little from much (literature) and particular instances of a general rule, since the goal is to advance through comments and prolixity would abrogate the goals. These are:

Ez. 21:26	אם הדרך	Crossroads (mother of the road)
Pr. 7:9	אישון לילה	Blackness of night (the pupil of the night)
Lam. 3:13	בני אשפחו	The arrows of his quiver (sons of his quiver)
Pr. 9:3	גפי מרומי קרת	The highest places of the city (high wings of the city)
Is. 48:4	גיד ברזל ערפך	Your neck is an iron sinew (your neck is like an iron sinew)
Job 41:6	דלתי פניו	The doors of his face (portals of his face)
Ps. 78:24	דגן שמים	The corn of heaven (manna)
Ez. 7:7	הד הרים	Joyful shouting upon the mountains (echo of the mountains)
Is. 63:15	המון מעיך	The yearning of your heart (yearning of your innards)
Is. 66:11	זיז כבודה	The abundance of her glory
Lam. 5:10	זלעפות רעב	The raging of famine (burning heat of famine)
Gen. 45:18	חלב הארץ	Best part of the land (fat of the land)

Ps. 110:3	טל ילדותך	Dew of your youth
Ju. 9:37	טבור הארץ	Middle of the land (Tabbur-erez)
Pr. 27:1	ילד יום	The day may bring forth (day gave birth)
Pr. 4:17	יין חמסים	The wine of violence
Is. 59:17	כובע ישועה	A helmet of triumph (helmet of salvation)
Ps. 139:9	כנפי שחר	The frontiers of the morning (wings of the morning)
Pr. 31:27	לחם עצלות	Bread of idleness
Josh. 7:24	לשון זהב	The wedge of gold (tongue of gold)
Is. 61:10	מעיל צדקה	The robe of victory (coat of righteousness)
Lev. 26:26	מטה לחם	Staff of bread (rod of bread)
Job 38:32	נבלי שמים	Ordinances of heaven (bottles of heaven)
Is. 21:4	נשף חשקי	My night of pleasure (twilight that I longed for)
Ps. 51:14	ששון ישעך	Rejoice in your help (joy of your salvation)
Ex. 26:4	שפה היריעה	Edge of the curtain (lip of the curtain)
Job 3:9	עפעפי שחר	Dawn of the morning (eyelids of the morning)
Hos. 11:4	עבותות אהבה	Bonds of Love (ropes of love)
Jer. 6:19	פרי מחשבותם	Outcome of their thoughts (fruits of their thoughts)
2 Sam. 10:9	פני המלחמה	The Battle (faces of the battle)
Jer. 17:1	צפורן שמיר	Adamant point (point of a diamond)
Job 18:7	צעדי אונו	In his iniquity his steps (steps of his strength)

1 Sam. 2:10	קרן משיחו	Triumph to His anointed one (raise the horn of his anointed one)
Is. 59:5	קורי עכביש	Spider's webs
Num. 5:14	רוח קנאה	Fit of jealousy (spirit of jealousy)
Ps. 76:4	רשפי קשת	Fiery arrows of the bow (fiery shafts of the bow)
Is. 10:5	שבט אפי	The rod of my anger (rod of my nose)
Mal. 3:20	שמש צדקה	The sun of victory (sun of righteousness)
Pr. 31:26	תורת חסד על לשונה	Kindness is her teaching (the law of kindness is on her tongue)
Joel 3:3	תמרות עשן	Pillars of smoke

The Arabs spoke lucidly about the benefit of this linguistic device and openly proclaimed its virtues, and considered it the glory of elegant rhetoricians, and urged that one honor those who adopt it in their own poetry, as cited in the Qor'an. For example - "It is the mother of books," and bring down the modest wing of mercy upon them, "the night is an indication to them that we will remove the day from them the head turned white," and many like them - (and if I were to list all of them, the number would not suffice. -) i.e., which I have cited here, in view of what was said. And after I cited the Arabic Qor'an, I paid no attention to the growing hatred which the contemporary rationalists among the Halachic scholars of our nation (levied against them). Since I

have seen that the chief Halachists and Mutkatalimun greats, Rabbi Saadia and Rabbi Ḥai and others among the Mutakalimun sought support in the fact by means of resolving the unclear parts in the prophecies, even in the Christian commentaries with all their weakness. But the people of the aforementioned group in our time open their ears and focus their eyes to examine the details of human actions, while the former covered their eyes from seeing their own serious deficiencies. And concerning a failure of this type Our Sages said[1] "Remove the beam from between your eyes," and they said "Everyone who utters something wise even a gentile is called 'wise' since what is preserved of their words is the essence of wisdom not the shell of sin."

Let's return to our subject. Metaphor is a word for something unknown through something known. If you only examine it in depth and weigh it upon the scales of inquiry, then its excellence will be revealed to you. There is apparent metaphor and there is latent metaphor. The apparent metaphor is that about which I have written. The latent is for example "The heavens tell the Glory of God."[2], etc. It is clear that it is figurative language and not literal, by saying "There is no speech,

---

[1] Baba Batra 15b. [2] Ps. 19:2.

there are no words,"[3] and all that is associated with it. Some of the scholars believe that "speech" refers to speech in general and that words refer to nouns and words in their absolute state. "Day unto day utters speech"[4] is metaphorical language and it wants to say: The impression that He makes by causing the sun to shine every twenty-four hours, after it completes its cycle. "And His going forth is from the end of heaven"[5] refers to its special movement from east to west in the heavenly sphere, and through this (revolution) the duration of the four seasons is set. Gather for yourself verses of Scripture. This will increase your desire and (your) urge for them. When you carefully read the poetry of the renowned of both nations and discern the breadth of their striving you will also gain a sense of well-being and joy from them. As for me - in each exposition that I have drawn up, each epistle that I have written and each poem that I have composed I have proceeded only after finding it in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, I have not brought in my own works here, because it is abundantly found in (Scripture), unless I did not find its path and it was not actually evident to me. (Then I used my own examples). Regarding the metaphors of the Arabs, about standing a long while next to tents, or weeping

---

[3]Ps. 19:3. [4]Ps. 19:3. [5]Ps. 19:7.

about marks that were erased (and the waves). "I stood there until the tree decayed in the wet earth and the dawn its cloak drives away the Pleides." He compares a cloak to the dawn, but it has no cloak, in this verse. There is also hyperbole in this stanza which is one of the elements of rhetoric, as you will see in the appropriate section. And this is its meaning - "The tree decays in the wet earth." - The earth will not decay, that is to say, it will not decompose. It means that the standing is endless. And similarly, in exaggeration the Hebrew (poet) said in his description of the length of the visibility of the signal fires, since he says in the Qasida* "Until the rocks of their hiding places sprout grass - I shall mourn and they shall be watered by the flow of tears." This is also endless since he ties it to the watering of the rock from his tears. Know that even more types of rhetoric than this are collected in a single stanza. There are examples in Scripture, which will be made known in its proper place. Metaphorically, Ibn Gabirol wrote: "Night wore the armour of darkness, which pierced it with a spear of lightning." He compares the darkness of night to armour and the light of lightning to a spear; he described it as having pierced it. All of these are from the realm of war, and indeed that is close to the truth.

*cf. note 28, Appendix B.

Section Two of the Poetic Embellishments Which is "The Apparent and the Allusion"

The Allusion is that which is alluded to but not expressed. Indeed it is said "The allusion and the word are partners." The allusion, in a few words casts light on a broad subject. One of their poets wrote "I cried in the stream and I made its waters forbidden to me. How then can water that is mostly blood be permitted?" And the expression "I made its waters forbidden to me" implies that the tear was blood and that the drinking of blood is forbidden. Furthermore, he added a beautiful touch by saying "mostly blood," indicating that the blood which he cried was greater than the water in the aforementioned stream. The allusion in Hebrew appears in a great variety of types, such as "Awake, O North and come, O South."[6] This is to say the North wind and the South wind. Afterward, it specified the action of each wind and said "Blow upon my Garden," and mentions the cause, i.e., "and its perfumes shall flow." Afterwards, he delineates the cause of the cause, "My beloved comes and eats its precious fruits." One of the great commentators treated this verse thusly "I will say to the North 'Give up.'[7] And to the South wind 'Do not desist.'." He said[8] "He

---

[6]Song of Songs 5:16. [7]Is. 43:6. [8]Rashi, ad locum.

addressed a request to both winds." But this is an error, North is Al-Iraq (Babylon) and south is Byzantium, i.e., that every region of each of them will cause the exiles found in their midst to return. And he felt that pointing out the way without mentioning the winds was sufficient. So, it is written "He chases the east,"[9] that is to say the east wind, as for example "the east wind carried the locusts."[10] A second method of allusion is when one says "And they stand as a garment,"[11] which can only refer to a body and therefore means that neither one exists. And similar to this, "And I escaped by the skin of my teeth."[12] (Teeth) have no skin, and therefore he escaped with nothing. In a similar category is "He shall be buried like one buries an ass."[13] An ass has no grave but it is dragged and cast away (beyond the gates of Jerusalem). However, all who list under this category "(And a man shall be) as in a hiding place from the wind"[14] and "He has the lofty horns of the wild-ox"[15] is mistaken. If you look carefully at their context, this mistake will not be overlooked. The Arabs use expressions like these. When they want to praise

---

[9]Hos. 12:2. [10]Ex. 12:13. [11]Job 38:14.

[12]Job 19:20. [13]Jer. 22:19. [14]Is. 32:2

[15]Num. 23:22.

someone who is healthy they say about him "sick like a gazelle," since a gazelle has no sickness. Among their sayings regarding good health are: "Healthier than the gazelle," healthier than the bird which is the fledgling of the ostrich.

Among the Biblical uses of allusion are "Before Ephraim, and Manasseh your might arose."[16] It alludes to the ark of the covenant which travelled in this place according to what you would see in the order of the tribes. Our ancient Sages used allusions that were secretive like, "He sent forth his trained men,"[17] which in gematria is equal to Eliezer (318).[18] The allusion then is to Eliezer alone and no one else. And like "Go down there"[19] (Egypt) which is equal to the number of years the people dwelt in Egypt, (210 years)[20] "We will worship and come back to you"[21] hints that they would return in peace. "For the good things of Egypt are yours"[22] alludes to "And they despoiled the Egyptians."[23] The

---

[16] Ps. 80:3. [17] Gen. 14:14.

[18] אליעזר = 1+30+10+70+7+200 = 318.

[19] Gen. 42:2.

[20] רדו = 200+4+6 = 210.

[21] Gen. 22:5. [22] Gen. 45:20. [23] Ex. 12:36.

later ones followed in their footsteps Rabbi Samuel Gaon mentioned[24] (in his commentary) on the section "These are the words"[25] that Moses, may great peace be upon him, alluded to approximately the length of sovereignty (for Israel) from the number equal to (בזאות) "and you shall grow ancient in the land."[26] And someone found an allusion to the extent of the duration of the second Temple in the gematria of (בזות יבוא אהרון).[27] There are those who reasoned that (רחם) "in wrath you shall remember compassion,"[28] refers to Abraham, may peace be upon him. About all of this, it is said "It is foolishness that does no harm and wisdom that has no benefit." Idle folly is their effort to learn the time of the awaited eschaton (may God hasten it) from such reckonings like those found in the Book of Daniel - may peace be upon him - and others, none of which is correct despite their many obscurities. The latter commentators did not learn a lesson from their previous inaccuracy, rather they all followed the nonsensical path without basis. It is unlikely that God would transmit this secret and afterwards reveal it to one many steps lower than he in these meager ways.

---

[24] Gittin 88a, Sanhedrin 38a.

[25] Deut. 1:1. [26] Deut. 4:25. [27] Lev. 16:3

[28] Hab. 3:2.

"There is no doubt that He will reveal it, before it comes through the superior scholars," as it is written "And they who are the teachers will cause them to understand."[29] Metonyms combine with allusions, being from the same type or related to it. There are those that are honorable! "Let no man's heart fail within him,"[30] which means to say, "let your heart not fail within you," "if only the young men have kept themselves from women,"[31] which is to say he himself referring to him as young men and the answer was in kind "the clothes of the young men were holy."[32] Ibn Gabirol focused on this metonym saying "How can you cast your spears in front of me, and the shields of our youth are strong," meaning "our shields." Similarly, "you have greatly blasphemed the enemies of the Lord,"[33] and also "The Lord requires it at the hand of David's enemies,"[34] which is Jonathan's saintly manner and is an allusion to his father. In this mode, in my opinion is "Seek the Lord, while He may be found, call upon Him while he is near."[35] He is saying "Seek the Lord as long as He is present and call upon Him as long as He is near," But He who is exalted never ceased and never will cease

---

[29]Dan. 11:33. [30]1 Sam. 17:32. [31]1 Sam. 21:5.

[32]1 Sam. 21:6. [33]2 Sam. 12:14 [34]2 Sam. 20:16.

[35]Is. 55:6.

from being present and near, even if He neither goes near to something nor goes far from something, He does not join a thing or separate from it. Seeking and calling are then continuous. Similarly "They shall fear you with the sun and before the moon for generation after generation."[36] As long as the moon illumines and the sun shines, their fear of (God) continues. And like it "May His name be continued as long as the sun."[37] His name will increase and will not diminish as long as the sun exists, that is to say, as long as there is a heaven, as it is written, "I returned and saw under the sun meaning: forever,"[38] and similar to it "And the abundance of peace till the moon be no more" until there is no moon, and it then persists and continues. The poet metonymized the color of the fingers' ends with sorrel or brownish or other reddish hues when he says: "from corpses' blood the end of her hand is reddened, therefore half of it is red and half of it is crystalline. Another said "My reward is in my giving my blood of circumcision the days of my life are like the law of Persia and Medea," which alludes to a hand which is for signing a covenant. He also said "My brother, live forever, if evil occurs, I will be Uzzah and (you) Ahio," alluding to his being an expiatory sacrifice for him.

---

[36]Ps. 72:5. [37]Ps. 72:17. [38]Ecc. 9:11.

Among the more beautiful allusions is "You crown the year with Your goodness,"[39] meaning its beginning and its end, that is to say, the first rains and the latter rains, metaphorically connecting Rosh Hashana "of the crocon- the first rains and metaphorically connecting the end of the year, with the latter rains, the site of the base (foot). And your footpaths drip fatness."[40] "You crown" is a transitive verb with three root letters. "Your crowning city (Tyre)"[41] is intransitive, that is to say the one crowned. "You encompass him with favor" - is transitive; the past tense of an intransitive and a transitive verb are one (and the same), (תעטיר) (crowned) like (הצביק) overtook and (הדרין) (bent)[42] they overtook them in the battle and they bend their tongues like bows."[43]

The Third Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is Parallel Opposites (A Thing and Its Opposite):

This is a contrasting pairing in the composition as their poet spoke: "Time will turn their black hair white and turn their white faces black." In Hebrew it is abundant, for example "Those who pursue intrigue draw near, they are far from your Torah."[44] "Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill shall be made low."[45]

---

[39] Ps. 65:12. [40] Ps. 65:12. [41] Is. 23:8. [42] 1 Sam 14:22.

[43] Jer. 9:2. [44] Ps. 119:150. [45] Is. 40:4.

"He who is enthroned on high looks down low,"[46] its meaning being "to be enthroned in heaven to see the earth." Among the beautiful contrasting pairs is: "A wrathful man stirs up discord, but he that is slow to anger appeases strife."[47] Another of the contrasting pairs is "when vileness is exalted among men."[48] And in poetry, the Nagid (Samuel) - may God favor him - spoke: "I will ride upon the battlefield towards eternal life and I will walk to Paradise upon Hell." Ibn Gabirol - may God favor him (wrote): "Were it not for the prince who washed you with his cloud-hands (his generosity) we would have burned you (meaning him) in the fire of our anger." Another said: "Their wandering bleached black hair and darkened the light of their countenance and changed our beauty and our form." He also said "The heat of day was like snow for my cold and the chill of night was like an ember for my heat." Each word in the first (hemistich) is parallel to each word in the second and in contrast to it. Similarly, in the חנ"ך, "In the morning it flourishes and grows, in the evening it is cut down and withers."[49]

The Fourth Section on Poetic Embellishments and it is Homonymy:

The subject of this section is the juxtaposition of

---

[46] Ps. 113:5-6. [47] Pr. 15:18. [48] Ps. 12:9.

[49] Ps. 90:6.

words that have different meanings; among the logicians it is called elision, and it is accepted favorably by the majority of rhetoricians because it is one of the means of rhetoric. In Hebrew there are numerous (examples) of this type. For example, "At Bet l'afrah roll yourself in the dust"[50] (עפר). "The houses of Achziv shall be a deceitful thing"[51] (אכזב). "O inhabitant of Mareshah, I will yet bring to you him that will possess you"[52] (ירש). "You shall gutter yourself in troops, O daughter of troops."[53] "But the city shall descend into the valley"[54] (שפל). "And Ekron shall be uprooted"[55] (עקר). "In Heshbon they have devised evil against her"[56] (חשב). "And Tyre built herself a stronghold"[57] (צור). "You Also, O Madmen, shall be brought to silence"[58] (דמה). Aside from this parallelism is "As for the avaricious, his tools are evil"[59] (כל). "They are more numerous than the locusts"[60] (רב). "My kidneys are consumed within me"[61] (כלו). "He who walks with the wise men shall be wise" (חכם). "But he who associates with fools shall suffer

---

[50]Micah 1:10. [51]Micah 1:14. [52]Micah 1:15.

[53]Micah 4:14. [54]Is. 32:19. [55]Zeph. 2:4.

[56]Jer. 48:2. [57]Zech. 9:3. [58]Jer. 48:2.

[59]Is. 32:7. [60]Jer. 46:23. [61]Job 19:27.

evil."[62] (רוע). "You have not brought me sweet cane with money"[63] (קנה). "God act beautifully toward Japeth"[64] (יפת). "You will be missed, because your seat will be empty"[65] (פקד). "You have counted my wanderings, You put my tears into your bottle, Are they not in your book?"[66] (ספר וזד). The verbs that are derived from nouns resemble this (rhetorical) division. A few of them are connected to the structure of the human body. Nose - "compassed me (about)"[67] (אף); Eye (Saul) - "eyed David"[68] (עין); Palate - "Train a child"[69] (חך); Ear - "Give ear O my people"[70] (אזן); Tongue - "Do not slander a servant"[71] (לשון); Throat - "my words are broken"[72] (לוע); Heart (לב) - "You have ravished my heart."[73]; Hand (יד) - "And they have cast lots"[74] (יד); Leg - "And I taught Ephraim how to walk"[75] (רגל); Foot - "to move him"[76] (פעם). But not from this sphere is (i.e., not from parts of the body), "and of all of your cattle you shall sanctify the males"[77]; "and she daubed it with

---

[62] Pr. 13:20. [63] Is. 43:24. [64] Gen. 9:27.

[65] 1 Sam. 20:18. [66] Ps. 56:9. [67] 2 Sam. 22:6.

[68] 1 Sam. 18:9. [69] Pr. 22:6. [70] Ps. 78:1.

[71] Pr. 30:10. [72] Job 6:3. [73] Song of Songs 4:9.

[74] Job 14:3. [75] Hos. 11:3. [76] Ju. 13:25.

[77] Ex. 34:9.

slime (חמר) and with pitch"[78]; "and you shall cover it within and without with pitch"[79] (כפר); "Do not glean the boughs (again)"[80] (פאר); "do not glean the young grapes"[81] (עולל); "and they despoil the vineyard of the wicked"[82] (לקש), and there are many like them. From the category of numbers, there is: 1 - "Go one way"[83] (אחד); 2 -"Do it a second time, and he said do it a 3 - third time"[84] (שנים שלוש); 4 - "They went toward their four sides"[85] (ארבעה); 5 - "and take up a fifth part of the land of Egypt"[86] (חמש); 6 - "and you shall give him a sixth part of an ephah"[87] (ששה); 7 - "weeks upon weeks"[88] (שבוע); 10 - "You shall surely title"[89] (עשר); 1,000 and 10,000 - "by thousands and ten thousands"[90] (אלף רבבה). The myriad is 10,000 as it is written. "For thus says the Lord God: The city that went forth a hundred shall have ten left."[91] 10 is the basis of everything, as it is said, "The whole congregation together was 40,000 (+2360) . . .[92] "the word (רבותיים)[93]

---

[78]Ex. 2:3. [79]Gen. 6:14. [80]Deut. 24:20.

[81]Deut. 24:21. [82]Job 24:6. [83]Ez. 21:21.

[84]1 Kings 18:34. [85]Ez. 1:17. [86]Gen. 41:34.

[87]Ez. 45:13. [88]Ez. 21:28. [89]Deut. 14:22.

[90]Ps. 144:13. [91]Amos 5:3, cf. Ju. 20:10

[92]Ezra 2:64. [93]Ps. 68:18.

is not a dual (i.e., 20,000); it is a multiple "myriads" again and again"[94]; (רשנאן) is like (do it a second time - see above Ez. 21:21. The (א) alef is exchanged for the (י) yud and it means repeating thousands. All of this is fine writing and concision. The only digits missing are 8 and 9, which are not built into the verbal construction. Those that do exist conjugate them like their Hebrew paradigm but do not draw analogies from them for forms that are not found do not exist. On the subject of these word forms (מלירה) (name of book on subject) - that are derived from nouns, there is a work by Abu Zachariah ben Bilam[95] who gathered a large collection of them, yet did not exhaust the subject. Among the logicians, these nouns are called "the conjugated." They are also very common in the Arab Qor'an like "I made peace with Solomon and God" (שלם); "Direct yourself to the straightforward in religion" (ישר); and "Those who look to their Lord look inside" (נבט) and their poet said: "If you build walls on it, they will be only restraints not fortifications" (עקל) (צור). Our poet said something that resembles it: "They split trees of folly

---

[94] Ps. 68:18.

[95] Abu Zachariah ben Bilam, cf. Halkin, ספר העירונים והדירונים, p. 241, note 49.

and acted foolishly, (סכל) indeed they were not useful, but in danger." (סכר) Ibn Gabirol - may the Lord have mercy upon him - said, "Its taste is so bitter that I decreed and said it is because it is long since the time of Yemen and Omar."

In this style of homonymy I have a composition in which, of these "paralleling" words there are more than 1200 stanzas that have homonymous word endings, divided up into 10 rubrics on different subjects. I composed it when I was a youth at leisure, and it is known (widespread) by people which call it "Anak."[96] In it I exempted myself from bringing in evidence, on my part about this group.

The Fifth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Particularization:

The intent of this section is that the poet makes explicit whatever he began with and shall not omit from it anything that the subject demands, but adumbrates it, "Sleeplessness for the eyelids, a sun for him who looks, sickness for the bodies, myrrh for him who smells." In our Holy Scriptures it is very common. For example, "Its chiefs render judgment according to the bribe.

---

[96]"Anak" - This name is taken from the first line of the book more commonly known as תרשיש. It was first published by David Ginzburg in Berlin in 1881.

And its priests make edicts for a price. And its prophets divine for money."[97] And similar to it is "to a people whose speech is distorted, whose tongue is thick, and whose forehead is brazen,"[98] and also, "The priests did not say 'Where is the Lord?'[99] And they who are steeped in Torah did not know me."[100] The poet said: "Honey for the mouth that tastes, the light of the sun for the eye that sees, and myrrh passes over the nose that breathes, a nightingale for every ear, a pedestal for every kindness, a pillar for respect, a board for the tabernacle of truth and a bolt."

The section on symmetry is very close to this; for example, their poets' words in his describing the horse. Not one extra letter entered between his description and its metaphors. "He has the waist of a gazelle and the legs of an ostrich, the quickness of a wolf and the speed of a young fox." And in Hebrew, the poet said: "He has the grace of young deers, and the splendor of luminaries, the roar of young lions, and the generosity of clouds."

---

[97] Micah 3:11. [98] Ez. 3:5. [99] Ez. 3:5.

[100] Jer. 2:8.

The Sixth Section on Poetic Embellishments

Which is on Parallelism:

The intent of this lesson is parallel opposites in composition. Their poet said "A man with integrity possesses what makes his friends happy but does harm to his enemies." In the Bible there are many of this type, for example, "Smoother than cream were the speeches of his mouth, But his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were keen edged swords."[101] And, it is like Hafez Alkuti sang in his translation of this verse in the collection of psalms, despite his many errors in the rest (of the work). "Softer than oil are the kidneys (conscience) of a fool, and all in his heart is war, his words exceed the softness of oil, but they are sharp like the arrow of death." He combined similar and contrasting pairing. "Among the parallelism in Bible is: "Seedtime, and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night."[102] Each parallels its opposite. Wherever there is spring there is summer, because it is parallel to winter which is autumn. It is called by this name, I mean winter, because in it the sun deviates from its province, like "My heart shall not turn wintery as long as I live,"[103] which is to say, my heart will not deviate according to

---

[101]Ps. 55:22. [102]Gen. 8:22. [103]Job 27:6.

the opinion of a few (commentators). They are also parallel in the construction of verbs: "And the hawks shall summer upon them, And the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them."[104] It is possible that it is called "summer" because it is linked with the (sunny days) which are "the summer," and if this is so it is not a name for spring, except by proximity. Know that the Song of Songs does not refer to it as such, but by one of its descriptions, as it is written, "The time of pruning (singing) has come."[105] Yet in the case of "a basket of summer fruit"[106] there is no alternative but to call it summer. Summer then is an appositive (substitute by proximity), and also the rainy days are called winter by proximity as it is written, "And I will smite the winter house with the summer house."[107] In summer, they are saved by its coolness in one, and inside the latter they warm up in the rainy season.

Among the parallel opposites is: "or who makes a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind?"[108] The word "seeing" is opposed to both defects and he wrote it between them, or he is afflicted with both of them. I saw this explanation in the (old) work by (the scholar)

---

[104] Is. 18:6. [105] Song of Songs 2:12. [106] Amos 8:1.

[107] Amos 3:15. [108] Ex. 4:11.

Abu Alfraj from Jerusalem - May God have mercy upon him - who became an apostate.[109] The poet happened to confirm this explanation by saying in a drinking song "A drink (liquor), I stared at its splendor, and to my ears it called on its behalf, and they were opened." And the expression "they were opened" alludes to both organs, the one that sees and the one that hears. Regarding the embellishment of poetic parallelism, - the Nagid (Samuel) - may God favor him - said, "I ask for mercy and he is harsh, I love and he hates, I testify truly and he bears false witness against me." Ibn Jeqtila - may God have mercy upon him -said "I love and they hate, I make peace and they make war, I kiss the hand and they smite the cheek." "I marvelled at united friends - how could they die - and at separated lovers - how could they live." Among the parallels in the תנ"ך is "You have sown much but reaped little, you eat but not to satisfaction, you drink but not to inebriation, you are clothed but are not warm."[110] At the end of the verse, the completion (of the idea) as it is written, "the laborer earns his wages in vain."[111] It is as (though) in Arabic the poet spoke "Those they married were taken captive, those they bore were killed, that which they collected was

---

[109]Karaite. [110]Haggai 1:6. [111]Ibid.

despoiled, and that which they sowed was burned."

The Seventh Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Notation (תלפר - Itemization):

The meaning of this section is close to the preceding one, but the difference between them will not escape the sharp eye. Their poet said "You were his sun by day, and in the darkness of night you were the (his) moon." Hebrew uses this notation, for example, "Dull this people's mind, deafen its ears and deceive its eyes."[112] It associated with each organ the suitable circumstances that would prevent them from acting as they were created. Afterward, he singled out the heart by saying "and its mind will understand so that it will be healed once more."[113] And similarly, "the sick you have not cured, the hurt you have not bandaged."[114] And like it, "I have seen that the race is not to the swift . . ."[115] And in the sense of the aforementioned Arabic stanza the Hebrew would say "To the vagabond at night his moon is dark, and to the one who marches in the day, the chill is his sun."

The Eighth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Repetition:

The meaning of this lession is that the poet inserts the word in the first hemistich and afterwards he returns

---

[112]Is. 6:10. [113]Ibid. [114]Ez. 34:4. [115]Ecc. 9:11.

to it in the closing hemistich, as it was (before), and he does not spoil it. On the contrary, he adds beauty to it. Their poet said: "Whoever meets the exalted at sometime in all its circumstances will find nobility and generosity are his characteristics." The תנ"ך is full of examples. For instance, "Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power, Your right hand, O Lord, crushes the enemy."[116] "Ascribe to the Lord, O divine beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength."[117] "O majestic mountain, Mount Bashan, O jagged mountain, Mount Bashan."[118] "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me unto Edom?"[119] "It shall devour the members of his body. Death's first born shall devour his members."[120] "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name."[121] In this verse there is repetition and transition after it came out with a man of war, it crossed over and said, the Lord is his name. In the realm of poetry, Ibn Gabirol said: "Wake up, my mind, why are you sleeping; Wake up and rouse your imagination (thoughts)." And another: "Stop wandering because it is not within our power, Stop and we will see our friends." Also: "My portion is from the most beautiful parts of my gifts.

---

[116]Ex. 15:6. [117]Ps. 29:1. [118]Ps. 68:16.

[119]Ps. 60:11. [120]Job 18:13. [121]Ex. 15:3

My portion is that which my evening gives me in my sleep." Also, "His friends whom he satiated with the nectar of love, his friends after death, they fed with wormwood."

The Ninth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on the Opening:

The meaning of this lesson is that the poet opens with a word at the beginning of the stanza and that exact word is at its end, and by it the stanza is embellished. It is similar to the previous section, the difference between them is the repetition of the word in the closing hemistich or at the ends. Their poet said mockingly: "(He is) quick to insult the honor of his relative, but to offer generosity he is not quick." And from the תנ"ך: "Fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear Him lack nothing."[122] (ירא) Even if the first is an imperative and the second is an adjective. The word "for" here is a conjunctive indicating the reason. And similar to it is: "Let me see your face, let me hear your voice, For your voice is sweet, and your face is beauteous."[123] The Masoretes listed the verses whose opening word and closing word are the same, and they are, according to what he said, 38. For example, "All of us like sheep went astray. We turned every one to his own way."[124]

---

[122]Ps. 34:10. [123]Song of Songs 2:14. [124]Is. 53:6.

(We all) "Now Jepthah the Gileadite"[125] (Jepthah). "Vanity of vanities." (all is vanity)[126] "To their mothers they say (into the bosom of their mothers)."[127] The poet said, "Fortunate is the man who saw my brother Avun, and how he will benefit by saying, 'Blessed (is he).'" Another one: "He imagines that fate will fulfill his wish according to his desire - but it is not as he imagines."

The Tenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Hyperbole (Surplus):

The meaning of this section is that the poet develops the idea fully before he comes to the rhyming word. He then resorts to the rhyme, in order that it be a poem, and by doing so he adds distinction. Their poet said: "I think that your question will issue forth tears that are like scattering the separate pearls." The stanza was completed already in its comparison with the word pearls, and then came the word separate to enhance it. In the תנ"ך there is, for example, "as a man is tender toward a son who ministers to him."[128] What is needed is completed by saying "toward a son" and "who ministers to him" becomes a wonderful addition and a beautiful enhancement. Similar to it is: "like the shade of a

---

[125]Ju. 11:1. [126]Ecc. 1:2. [127]Lam. 2:2.

[128]Mal. 3:17.

massive rock in a languishing land."[129] Here what is needed is completed in praise of the benefit of shade and its coolness, and the enhancement is in his saying "in a languishing land." Similarly: "Behold the name of the Lord (Lord Himself) comes from afar in blazing wrath, with a heavy burden - His lips full of fury, His tongue like devouring fire and His breath like a raging torrent . . ."[130] All of this comes in the lesson on particularization, and the addition of "reaching halfway up to the neck"[131] is a wonderful hyperbole. "Up to the neck" -- He means that he divides the neck in half (severs). There is a division into two halves, like, "and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms."[132] And there is (division) not into halves, "it shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven."[133] "They shall not live out half their days."[134] That does not mean half precisely, it means rather they will perish. Similarly, "to shoot from the darkness at the upright."[135] At the upright from the darkness, since the arrow will strike in darkness he who has not sinned, as it is written - "at the upright." Indeed, one of the

---

[129] Is. 32:2. [130] Is. 30:27-28. [131] Is. 30:28.

[132] Ez. 37:22. [133] Dan. 11:4. [134] Ps. 55:24.

[135] Ps. 11:2.

great ones said: "A certain poem about so and so is more severe than the arrow's falling in deep darkness." With hyperbolic rhetoric the poet said "like the chill of water on a tired person, also the shadow of a rock, but the shadow of the myrtles." His words "the shadow of the myrtles" are a hyperbole, and in it there is a marvelous transition. And in Hebrew (Scripture) is: "I will cause the rain to come down in its season, rains that are a blessing."[136] - "rains that are a blessing" - this is a hyperbole (surplus).

The Eleventh Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on the Ellipsis:

The meaning of this lesson is that the poet is working on a subject and he chances upon something which causes him to deviate from what he was working on and later he returns to it and completes it. Their poet said mockingly: "If the misers saw you - and you are one of them - they would learn procrastination from you." His words - "and you are one of them" - are an ellipsis. In the Bible there are many examples; some are long ones, some medium ones and some short. I will provide you with one example of each type. The lengthy insert that comes in the תנ"ך is: "that he bless himself in his heart saying, I shall

---

[136] Ez. 34:26.

have peace . . ."[137] This heretic says: "because death will befall the righteous as well as the wicked" - and he designated them as: "the watered will be swept away with the dry."[138] - two hints that allude to the worshipper and to the disobedient and he blesses himself in his heart that there is neither reward nor punishment. On the contrary he says, "I will have peace." The answer to this fancier was "The secret things are not ours (to know)."[139] The intellectual arguments do not apply to the Supreme God unless they deny him. He said - and great is he who said it - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts."[140] On this subject the Sages said: "What is beyond you do not seek, and what is hidden from you do not investigate to the end." And those not of our nation said "The secret things belong to the Lord - Our God must fulfill the commandment and its consequence, as it is written 'to do all the words of this Torah.'"[141] His words - "the secret things" are in response to "He blessed himself in his heart saying," and the rest of the words and the curses are ellipses between the two expressions. I mean to say, the statement and the reply. The medium length insert that Abu Alwalid - may God have mercy - mentioned in his "Riqma"[142](embroidery)

---

[137]Deut. 29:18. [138]Deut. 29:18. [139]Deut. 29:28.

[140]Is. 55:8. [141]Deut. 29:28.

[142]"Riqma" - cf. Halkin, ספר העירנים והדירנים, p. 257, note 94.

"I appeared unto Abraham,"[143] it should continue to "and I have also established my covenant with them," but between the two verses was inserted, "but I did not make myself known to them by my name יהוה." The brief ellipsis is "Arise Barak and take your captives, O son of Abinoam"[144] - inserted the phrase "take your captives" between the name Barak and the name of his father Abinoam. Among the ellipses of the poets is: "Their eye is bleary, their ear too heavy to hear their bereavement and their hearts are fat" - is an ellipsis. And his words "their bereavement" is an ellipsis. "People of wickedness and trouble acquiesced and - without compassion - punished me severely." "Without compassion" is an ellipsis. Also, "Be ashamed of the vagaries of fate and speak softly to him before - sinless - they become angry" - "sinless" is an ellipsis. "Fate will repeat its favors to me and remember if I have not sinned - my sins." And the expression - "if I have not sinned" is a lovely ellipsis.

The Thirteenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on the Simile:

This technique in the works of meticulous poets is almost infinite, and since the simile is always prudent of thought, it is widespread in most poems. No stanza

---

[143] Ex. 6:3-4. [144] Ju. 5:12.

is more apt than another for citation as an example. The conduct of the Jews in their poetry according to this device, is a measure of their connection to the art. The Bible is full of it with the Kaf of similitude and also without it; for example, "As the cold of snow in the harvest time,"[145] "As a lion that is eager to devour,"[146] "Like grapes in the wilderness,"[147] "As the first ripe fig before the summer,"[148] and without the Kaf. "A lion's whelp is Judah,"[149] "A large boned ass is Issachar,"[150] "A ring of gold in a swine's snout,"[151] "A city broken down and without a wall,"[152] "A bear lying in wait he is to me."[153] The power of similitude is in them and in those that resemble them. There are cases wherein both the object of comparison and that to which it is compared begin with a Kaf. "The darkness is even as the light."[154] "As with the buyer, so with the seller."[155] There is the Kaf that comes as an approximation: "About midnight."[156] There is the Kaf that comes falsely (in vain), that is not a part of the syntax, "as shifters of the boundary,"[157]

---

[145]Pr. 25:13. [146]Ps. 17:12. [147]Hos. 9:10.

[148]Is. 28:4. [149]Gen. 49:9. [150]Gen. 49:14.

[151]Pr. 11:22. [152]Pr. 25:28. [153]Lam. 3:10.

[154]Ps. 139:12. [155]Is. 24:22. [156]Ex. 11:4.

[157]Hos. 5:10.

"that strive with the priest,"[158] "a faithful man."[159] The verse "Your lips are like a thread of scarlet"[160] combines three similes for language - softness, color, and thinness. Among the marvelous Hebrew similes is: "Her Nazerites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk."[161] Purer (זכו) is among the designations of purity, and from it, glass (זכוכית) derives its name. Because the eulogizer exaggerated in praise of whiteness until he likened them to snow and to milk, he feared lest instead of beauty its opposite came across, he crossed over and likened them to gems including the red jacinth as it is written: "They were more ruddy in body than rubies - their polishing was as sapphire."[162] There are, then, four types of rhetorical (elegance) in this verse: particularization, exaggeration, similitude and the transition. And if the Song of Songs were to claim superiority over Ecclesiastes on the basis of this verse the judgment would be in its favor. In the book of Job there are similes. If you examine them their superfluity will be revealed to you. Among them, "and it comes under the section of the apparent and the hidden" - "If I have made gold my hope, and have said, to the fine gold you

---

[158] Hos. 4:4. [159] Neh. 7:2. [160] Song of Songs 4:3.

[161] 1 Sam 4:7. [162] Lam. 4:7.

are my confidence." "Fine gold," although it is one of the designations for gold like "בצר, חרוץ, and פז gold," here it is a substitute for money, proof of which is in its object to which it is compared. Substitution in the Bible that brings in a noun in place of a noun is not unknown, and also with respect to contexts and vowels, Abu Alwalid - may God have mercy upon him - has a special chapter on this subject, called "What is said in a word and what was desired by it is different." He waxed on this subject until he arrived at what was somewhat (unfounded) strange. Even if all of what he wrote were true, the whole story wouldn't be trustworthy and every order wouldn't stand up; it also contains matters from which I do not derive pleasure speaking about, and he who praises everything it contains is not correct. The (Hebrew) language inverted the matter, when it says "The day is yours and also the night." It alluded to the two luminaries, for the day and for the night, and it says "You have established the luminary and the sun," and the luminary is, then, the moon here. Let us return to our subject. Since Job said: "If I beheld the light when it shined" - which is the sun, light is an apt attribute for the sun because of its brightness; it is a noun to which the apt adjective attests, and it is aided by "or the moon walking in brightness,"[163] which is connected

---

[163] Job 31:26.

to it and he intended sun and moon as references for gold and silver, this is a nice allusion and wonderful comparison. He said boastingly that he would not be deceived by them nor rely upon them. Indeed, one of the philosophers said in his will "do not worship the sun and the moon," wanting to say "gold and silver." The poet said "I did not say to the moon - you are silver, nor did I say to the sun - you are gold." Another said: "The silver of the morning or the סגור of the evening" - סגור is one of the names for gold. One of the Jewish poets said: "How much will a man be a trader by giving the sun's gold for the moon's silver?" He also said in connection with what he saw of it but did not name it: "We drank it until we hastened to substitute the tin of darkness for the silver of evenings."

The Fourteenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is of the Packing of a Stanza Out of Metrical Necessity:

The subject of this lesson is the extra word which the poet brings in out of metrical necessity in order that the poem be a poem, and this word adds originality to the stanza. Their poet said: "The headdress swore truly that it would not befriend them until the hair befriended the inside of the palm." The word "truly" is said for metrical necessity and it adds strength to the idea and beauty to the stanza. And in the Holy Scriptures something which approximates it, for example, "and I will give you

shepherds according to My heart who shall feed you knowledge and understanding."[164] Since he said - "shepherds according to My heart" - His intent was expressed and "who shall feed you knowledge and understanding" is a marvelous addition. The method of the commentators on this verse is that the ב of instrument was dropped and that the desired intent was - with knowledge and understanding. Similar to it is - "she shall go out freely without money."[165] Including poetry, - Ibn Gabirol - may God have mercy upon him - said, "Have you destroyed us, though you have no power, or is the hand of Yekutiel upon our necks?" The words "You have no power" are superfluous, adding beauty to the stanza. Another said: "If above the clefts of the rocks, the hot days extended its palms in supplication, then they would sprout." The words "the hot days" are extraneous, adding strength to the idea. And it is written "As the cold of snow in the time of the harvest."[166]

The Fifteenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on the Qualification:

The intent of this section is that the poem begins with praise, and then inserts a qualifying word as it dissociates itself from the praise because of a defect, but really inserts a word of praise which is superior to

---

[164] Jer. 3:15. [165] Ex. 21:11. [166] Pr. 25:13.

the initial, or the converse. There are those (critics) who call it "reinforcing the praise" in that it appears as a deprecation. Their poet said: "A man whose qualities were complete except that he was over-generous, consequently, did not leave behind a remnant of his wealth."

The word "except" in the opinion of the logicians, is among the words of deprecation. And in many places the word "אבל" in Hebrew is the same. "But (אבל) she has no son"[167]; "but (אבל) the people is numerous and it is the rainy season."[168] "Indeed," is explained by some; (as) certainly (the thing is so). The qualification comes also without the word of deprecation. Rather, it is from the context; for example, "The Lord is near to all those who call upon them (but) to all that call upon Him in truth."[169] "That He may set him with princes. But with the princes of His people."[170] "Set them" means in general, "their nobles" means in particular.[171] Sometimes this embellishment is called attaching the explanation, and resulting from it is "His heart is as firm as a stone. Yes as firm as the bottom millstone."[172] After he described this animal's heart as being as firm

---

[167] 2 Kings 4:14. [168] Ez. 10:13. [169] Ps. 145:18.

[170] Ps. 113:8. [171] Ps. 83:12. [172] Job 41:16.

as a stone, he qualified it (by saying) that it was (as) the lower millstones, which are more capable of bearing weight, and the bearer is stronger than that which is borne, and it is a part of the whole, and the parts do not act upon the whole, rather, the whole acts upon the parts, like a horse, his legs do not walk him. He walks with his legs, and language, does not speak, rather, a person speaks it.

Let us return to our subject. Someone said that qualification is the departure of the speaker from the second person to the third person, or from the third person to the second person. And in Hebrew: "she goes up upon every high mountain and under every leafy tree, and there you played the harlot."[173] "Because you are exalted in stature and he has set his top among the thick boughs."[174] "O Lord be gracious to us. We have waited for You. Be their help every morning. Also be our salvation in time of trouble."[175] Sometimes the speaker is confused with what is being spoken about, for example, "He also fed him with the fat of wheat and with honey from the Rock would I satisfy you."[176] The transition is a type of qualification. Sometimes a few of the

---

[173]Jer. 3:6. [174]Ez. 31:10 [175]Is. 33:2.

[176]Ps. 81:17.

dependent words act as the qualification. As it is written, "You have satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened Me with your sins. You have wearied me with your iniquities."[177] With the word of negation Ibn Gabirol, of blessed memory, said: "Sun is of our eyes and every eye, but the honey of our tongues and myrrh of our noses is our own." Another said in his description of ruins: "The world's troubles devastate their dwelling, but they pressed greatly to the corners of their dwellers. Among wild men they love ruination, but for the blood of righteous and honest people they lay in ambush." Also Ibn Gabirol - may God have mercy upon him - said: "The sea of Solomon (in the Temple) was considered a great sea, but it would not stand up on the oxen." And also, "indeed, you are not a goat as they say, but a soft rain on my grass and my herbs,"[178] and in it (the bud) has the scent of the positive and the negative.

The Sixteenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Hyperbole:

I earlier introduced in a part of my work matters on the subject of additional words and hyperbole that are not at all permissable. This thing is common in the Prophetic

---

[177] Is. 43:24. [178] Deut. 32:2.

books, since the nature of speech leads from them to the hyperbole, were it not so they would not achieve their aim, even though it does not stand up to examination, as I have said earlier. The (early) sages called it "exaggerated language;(examples) of it in the Holy Scriptures are: "great cities are fortified up to heaven,"[179] and "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers."[180] They are hyperbole. "And so were we in their sight" is a total lie since only He knows the "hidden things." "For the mountains will move and the hills be shaken"[181] - Its meaning is that even if the mountains trembled and the hills shook, My kindness will not move from you. And from the category of hyperbole: "for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke."[182] The word "for" does not mean "until" nor is it a confirmation of the fact, since all the scholars and philosophers agree that this sublime substance, meaning heaven, is indestructable just as it is indefatigable and perfect. And Rabbi Saadia Gaon, of blessed memory, and other leaders of our people, agree on this. However, if the Blessed and Supreme One willed this, they would shake in the blink of an eye, but the intellect would not assume this unless the Supreme One

---

[179]Deut. 9:1. [180]Num. 13:33. [181]Is. 54:10.

[182]Is. 51:6.

would will it. Also of this type of hyperbole: "All the host of heaven shall moulder"[183] alludes to the overturning of authority. Another type of hyperbole is "And the mountains shall be melted with their blood."[184] "(And their land shall be drunk with blood.) And their soil saturated with their fat."[185] "For the stone shall cry out of the wall,"[186] "and iron will be considered as straw"[187] and innumerable examples such as these. "I shall melt away my bed with my tears"[188] has an explanation and it is that it "states" that the tears are warm and that the water does not melt as quickly as does fire, and this is eloquence. One of the keen hyperboles is: "And the rock poured me out rivers of oil,"[189] which deepens the glory of happiness, and makes a wonderful metaphor for an abundance of good fortune and the functioning of blessing. And similar to it, in my opinion, is, "My glory shall be new to me, and my bow shall be renewed in my hand."[190] Most of the great commentators tend to interpret this as wanting to say that the power of the bow renews itself with every shot as if no one shot with it. However, these are the words of a man to whom others did not occur, and what is

---

[183] Is. 34:4. [184] Is. 34:3. [185] Is. 34:7.

[186] Hab. 2:11. [187] Job 41:9. [188] Ps. 6:7.

[189] Job 29:6. [190] Job 29:20.

correct is that is a hyperbolic description of blessing, which says that the dry wood from which came the bow is as though it were a new sprout in his hand, because "it shall be new since it will grow (וְיִחְלִיף) like in the expression "(in the morning) it flourishes and grows up," but it is from the causative conjugation which has five letters* like - "If it is cut down, it will sprout again with such a meaning in mind."[191] Indeed the Sages of blessed memory frequently used this same conjugation: "A tree that was planted originally for the purpose of idolatry may not be enjoyed;"** i.e. its shade or fruit may not be used. As it is said, "Burn their Asherim (sacred trees) with fire" - "if it sprouted he may take what had sprouted afresh."[192] An Arab poet saw the expression "and my bow shall be renewed in my hand" or heard of it, and said in his description of happiness: "If you hear that one who is lucky had held a tree (in his hands), and it blossoms, it is true." This is approximately what was meant. One of their poets said: "My hand is almost full of dew. When you touch it, green leaves shall sprout at its edges." And Ibn Gabirol said on the contrary: "If they came near, from the heat of my ribs (by it), Meshakh and Shadrah would have been burned."

---

[191] Job 14:7. [192] Deut. 12:3.

*יחליף. **Avodah Zarah 3:4.

And Ben Khalfun said in praise of Ben Hassan: "Indeed if you were not, there would be no creatures, nor would their father and their grandfather have been created with them." "It is thus because of mean hatred and ugly madness," Another said, and he used more hyperbole in poetry: "I wondered about his 'writings' which did not sprout from the broken wellsprings of his hands."

And what is found in the Bible in consonance with this category concerning the hoped-for kingdom, may God bring it near. Its way is not (stated) by means of parable or riddles in writings, since all the miracles are "literal," not riddles or allusions. Their past testifies as to their future. But this elucidation is not one of the tasks of this work and anyone who studies them may be compared to one who disparages them, and he who explains them scientifically does not believe in the Jewish Torah. Abu Zechariah ben Balaam - may God have mercy upon him - had a work that collected in it most of the miracles in the Torah and Prophets, whether public or private, and they instruct us about the future, with God's will. Refer to it. These venerable promises, if they need an article that would support them and an opinion that would confirm them, the wise authors, not from our nation, have spoken lucidly upon them. The philosopher Aristotle pointed to the hoped-for kingdom and affirmed its existence and spoke about it clearly

in his epistle to his disciple Alexander, which is called the "True Epistle." And its main point is his saying that: "In this world would occur a new happiness and a coming together into a single agreement, to which men would agree upon one command and one King, and they would desist from wars and battles, and will take upon themselves that which repairs their cities and their lands. And security and tranquility will surround them to the point that the day will be divided into parts, a little of it for rest and for improving the body and a little for moral deeds and for attending to an honorable profession which is Science, and they will study what (can) be attained from it and seek what has not been attained. Would only, Alexander, that I lived to behold that day, and if not all of it, at least a little of it. And if I have no hope for this because most of my years and days have already passed, I wish that it would be for my loved ones and brothers, and if it is not for them, let it be for those who are like them and follow in their footsteps." And the words of this extraordinary man who excelled in his wisdom, even if he did not speak them to our nation, were you to examine them you would no doubt find that all of them together are included in the hoped for promises of the Prophets - peace be with them. How easy it would have been to elucidate this matter were it not for its length. Those who depart from our community

and the group that assumes that this situation would only occur when the world order would be obliterated and this honored matter would be destroyed, I mean the revolving heaven, as it is written: "For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,"[193] and also, "For behold I will create new heavens"[194] (and a new earth). The verse which says "But my salvation shall be forever,"[195] invalidates their words, because the redemption will only be for those redeemed, and this faction, that is to say the redeemed, will only be the center in relation to the circumference (the people in relation to the heavens). And the philosopher Ishaq ben Saluman, Israeli,[196] already responded to this forcefully and clearly in his work called "The Water Teemed."[197]

The Seventeenth Section on Poetic Embellishments Which is on Synonymity:

The intent of this lesson is that the poet composes a stanza and does not write the word that directly refers to it but a synonym, and because the synonym directs (the

---

[193] Is. 51:6. [194] Is. 65:17. [195] Is. 51:6.

[196] Israeli - Isaac ben Solomon (c.855 - c.955) "The Father of Jewish Neoplatonism." Israeli was also a respected physician. cf. A. Altman and S.M. Stern, Isaac Israeli, a Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century, 1958.

[197] "The Water Teemed" - only available in Hebrew. Published by M. Steinschneider in הכרמל, 1871, pp. 400-405. Also cf. Halkin, ספר העיונים והדיונים, p. 271, note 54.

reader), it reveals the intended noun. Their poet said: "She, the highest of the places of jewelry, is indeed exalted. Navpal or Abd Shams and (or) Hashim is her father." He wanted to praise the length of her lineage and he explained that her fathers were the place of jewelry, and another called them "the place of jewelry game." Their poet said: "She who owns the swaying belt is among them as if she were a cow with a turban with her necklace long." It means the place of necklaces which is the neck. In Hebrew the use of a word in place of another word is very common, embellishing the adjective and abbreviating that which is described, since it is derived from it, and all that is required is mentioned previously. And what occurs in this manner, are the words "Moab has been set at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees,"[198] and similar to it is: "(Put) A ram's horn to your mouth."[199] It means Put a ram's horn to your mouth as an eagle, that is to say (. . .)* or that which resembles it. Similar to it are the words of Job: "I have made a covenant with my eyes: How then shall I look at a young maiden?"[200] and after it, "For what would be the portion of God from above, and the heritage of the

---

[198]Jer. 48:11. [199]Hos. 8:1. [200]Job 31:1.

*words lost.

Almighty from on high?"[201] He says, in praise of his modesty that he does not pay attention to a youthful maiden who is within the realm of possibility of being permitted to him in marriage, all the more to a married woman whom God has given to her husband and permitted him to live with her. It is possible to bring this into the section on allusion too, but synonymity is more fitting. And the word מה is in place of the word איך, like "מה we must serve the Lord"[202] which means, how must we serve the Lord until we arrive there. This lapsis is customary also in Arabic works, for example, "your loins (to) die," meaning "gird your loins to die."

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Sections On Poetic Embellishments Which are the Sections On the Beauty of the Beginning and the Beauty of Transition:

Because of their kinship, I combined these two sections into one. Because the Holy Scriptures are magnificent and holy to the extent that they didn't allow for bringing in metered poetry into them, and since every opening and closing of them (verse) is honored and respected, also the transition from subject to subject is lacking in them according to the manner of Arabic composition, so I will

---

[201] Job 31:2. [202] Ex. 10:26.

seek them only in the poets' presentation. I claim: There are (poets) who consent to begin the qasidas with matters of love that go outside the limit of their (poems') purpose. And then, after they have expatiated on the matter, they make a transition to that purpose, whether praise or condemnation, or any other subject. There are those among them that are against the love opening, who believe that these methods do not lead to praise the esteemed one before the sweetness of the poem is lost and its ordered verse endings would be for naught, truly they are sensible and practical. Among those who begin without the love opening or introduction is he who says: "I was secure from fate and its affliction when I was suspended on the princes cords (of love)." Another one said: "Every man has as his assigned fate that which he is accustomed to and Saif Aldwalah is accustomed to stab his enemies." This is widespread such that it could not be counted quickly. Among them is he who begins and does not mention the one being praised, and he is satisfied with using the second person. "Your enemy is condemned by all people, even if the sun and the moon were among your enemies. Among the Jewish poets, Ibn Gabirol was the man who began immediately in praise without the love opening, in his saying: "Forsake song in praise of all prefects and do not compete against grumblers and sinners, and praise only Rav Yekutiel, son of Hasaan,

the Master of Masters." Another said: "Among the myrtle our breath blew, or brought the greeting of our brothers to us or it passed in front of Joseph and Avun because after death our breath was restored." He also said in his praise "Honey to the lips and wine to the teeth or a blossom to cheeks and myrrh to the nostrils, or the winds of youth blew because of Solomon's epistle which is a delight to behold." Ibn Sahal began in the second person and said "Your loving acts are like huge waves, and your charity is wider than the depths." But the plural of "depth" is only in the feminine in Hebrew. He also said in his opening: "It is true that you are in this age a sign for the Torah because incomprehensible things have not confounded you." And another: "Intensify your love constantly to make your servants free men." The opening of the Arab poet is accepted; in his saying: "O Soul, even in impatience behave nicely, what you have feared has already happened." See that at the opening his work is directed to where he will make his way. It is as if it stood before Ibn Gabirol when he said: "In the days of Yekutiel which were finished, (was) a sign that the heavens were created to pass away." Had he said נמרו it would have been more correct since the נפעל form of this Hebrew root is not found.[203] Yet

---

[203] cf. Ps. 12:10.

another opened with lines which indicate an elegy using the embellishments of repetition and homonymy. "O every intellectual and scholar. O the suffering of my people and to heretical scholar." And also: "Trouble is to corrupt without a mouth, telling a secret to every ear though deaf." It is like an opening by the Arab poet: "He who portends your death deafens although he announces." The love and passion with which the poets of our people opened (their poetry) are not disgraceful and how could it be otherwise since this is found in the Holy Scriptures even if an understanding of the contents of their words is not revealed in the simple meaning of the word. Love, according to the Muskatalimun doctrine, is of two types: Either of the type that has no carnal lust, and this is laudable, (agape), or that which would be the opposite, which is indecent. Sometimes he who does not love will write a love poem, while he who loves will desist, and if he speaks about this because of passion it causes no harm, because desire of the despicable, according to the Muskatalimun, is not despicable since it does not cross over to deed. But the despicable passion, in their opinion, is what is despicable. On a similar subject someone else said: "The one who sees sin and does not desire it is as if he did not see it." These words are true and faithful: When he does not contemplate sin he does not cross over to deed, since the contemplation

precedes the deed and when he contemplates it, nothing remains except for the use of limbs. The pious one - peace be upon him - says "He who has clean hands and a pure heart."[204] The Sages of Blessed Memory[205] say that the one who contemplates a sin and does not cross over (in)to deed is not punished on account of it, and they adduce proof for this statement from the verse "If I thought of iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not hear it."[206] It means, he who contemplates sin without completing it is not punished on account of it. In contrast they said[207]: "Even if he thinks of performing a commandment but because of forced circumstances did not do it, Scripture credits him as if he did it." The philosopher says, "My son, do not withhold the soul's love for souls, but not body's love for bodies." And he said: "Whatever is not fitting that you do, be careful that it does not occur to you." All these are proper admonitions, but the crux of the matter is the intent and this the Sages of Blessed Memory said: "God requires the heart"[208] (intent is the essence).

The second section is the transition from one matter to another, a lovely opinion and eloquent view to which the more recent Arab poets were attracted, and they so

---

[204] Ps. 24:4. [205] Tanhuma Emor 16. [206] Ps. 66:18.

[207] Kedushin 40a. [208] Sanhedrin 106b.

frequently pursued that there is no point of bringing proof of its prevalence. But it is common only to a few of the Jewish poets. And among them is the wonderful transition after a lengthy love panegyric, the words of the Nagid (Samuel) - may God favor him - "Ask wisdom and if it is beyond you, ask Rabbi Joseph whose sister is wisdom." Indeed, Ibn Gabirol - may God have mercy upon him - did well in his saying: "Science is at the head of God's ways, and God conceived it by God's power and placed it like a king over all, and wrote the name of Yekutiel on its banner." And he said, and he packed his stanza because of metrical needs, "I will anger the vicissitudes of fortune, and I will laugh in their face, because they cry out 'who is it that compels us, have you repelled us, but you have no strength, or is the hand of Yekutiel on our necks?'" With whatever this poet praised Ibn Hassan (Yekutiel) - may God have mercy upon him - he aimed at the truth and he achieved his aim, and justly (so) when he found (someone) choking, he hastened and cured (him)/(found material and executed his skill). It is as the Arab poet said: "You have already found extensive room for speech, and therefore, if you have found apt language, then please say it (in poetry)." He also created a lovely transition by describing a dark night and a cold cloud and to condemn a poem, saying: "It was as cold as the snow of Senir or like the poetry of Samuel

the Kehatite. That was the poem about which he apologized and excessively repented having written it in a qasida which he composed about the great and laborious journey. It begins: "Rise, fortune and don your delights." In it is the stanza: "Sacrifice for them a goat as a sin offering; perhaps your sin will be pardoned through it." He did not succeed in bringing the irascible soul to attaining what it sought in the aforementioned stanza, since he led an honored soul to such false piety and abject servility which are only fitting when one addresses God, may He be exalted, although there is a quality of deprecation in this.

The Twentieth Section on Poetic Embellishments
In Which There is an Excursus on Digression,
On the Mixing of the Doubtful and the Certain,
And on the Affirmation and the Negation According to
The Method of Poets, Not According to Logical Truth:

The digression according to the method of the Arab poets is an embellishment that I did not find in the תנ"ך, nor have I seen it in any of the Jewish poets. It is according to the Arabs that he (the poet) deviates from praise to condemnation, as if it were a means of transition, but more delicate and subtle (than it). The poet said in his praise and in his condemnation: "A man whose possessions are destroyed because of his generosity, like the sons of

Qis by the spears of Taghleb."[209] It is true that in Hebrew there are subtle allusions that combine both the verse and the listener in condemnation: "to cause My people to forget My name,"[210] and this is a message which is unlikely (to come) from other than those who cause forgetting and those who forget. And similarly, "by your lying to My people who pay heed to lies."[211] It described them as being lying and inciting which parallels their own capacity to receive a lie because of their weakness of perception and a minimum of natural aptitude. And the mixing of the doubtful with the certain is also minimal. And in Scriptural language, "Before I was aware my soul set me (upon the Chariots of the princely)."[212] The implication of this style, which resembles words of doubt, whether he himself had learned this lofty quality, or whether his soul had led itself to it by its own nature, to the extent that he became "subordinate to the exalted and a chariot for the princes." This embellishment is abundantly common among the Arabs. Their poet said: "I do not know whether the vessel will carry him or if he will bear his vessels." And he said, "I do not know whether it will be long or short and how does a mortal who bears

---

[209] Taghleb - cf. הרבץ 14, p. 196, note 67.

[210] Jer. 23:27. [211] Ez. 13:19. [212] Song of Songs 6:12.

illness know that he will endure suffering. Affirmation and negation in the manner of the Arab poets are also rare in Scripture, but the Jews received them from them. Ibn Gabirol - may God have mercy upon him - said: "How foolish are they who say, 'the world is a dream,' How did they forget something and not remember? Indeed, it is like your words, but it is because they (the dreams) tell man meaningless things that are not resolved." This contains affirmation and qualification. Ibn Hasdai - may God have mercy on him - (said): "Indeed Samuel is the Samuel who was summoned inside God's Temple, and if he is not, is he not in his justice, and his integrity, and in his honest manner."

From the Section on Parables and Riddles
As Poetic Embellishments:

All the nations composed parables and looked favorably upon them, and the Arabs appreciate them and transmit their derivations. In their Qor'an it is written: "We compose these parables for people but they won't understand them unless they are knowledgeable." It is said that the parables include three qualities - brevity, aptness in its contents, and the elegance of the comparison. It is said: "Parables are the jewel of speech and its examples are wonders of composition. Some of our peoples' sages said that the parable is the bare sentence, but it is not so. The parable is only a sobriquet, not overt speech, and

the parable has its referent meaning. Ambiguities and riddles together with parables are of the same stream. They are proximate to one another.[213] Alahaji are riddles and they have an inner meaning which differs from their words' plain meaning. As I have said, the תנ"ך combines the riddle and the parable in most places as it is written: "I will open my mouth with a parable, I will utter (riddles) concerning days of old."[214] Sometimes there are those (verses) that are associated with wisdom, for example, "To understand a proverb, and rhetoric, the words of the wise and their riddles."[215] Truly, Scripture speaks clearly in praise of the wisdom of Solomon - peace be upon him - in general, and then it did so in detail, saying: "And he uttered three thousand proverbs"[216] - this is prose. "And his poems were a thousand and five" - that is poetry as I just said - and again it concludes, "For he was wiser than all men."[217] Sometimes the parable applies to the ambiguous expression, like, "Therefore it became a proverb: (Is Saul also among the prophets?)"[218]

---

[213] cf. Moses Ibn Ezra on Ez. 17:1. - "Parable is the resemblance of one thing to another."

[214] Ps. 78:2. [215] Pr. 1:6. [216] 1 Kings 5:12.

[217] 1 Kings 5:11. [218] 1 Sam. 10:12.

APPENDIX B

The response to the fifth query: On the superiority of Spanish Jews over others in the creation of poetry and in the elegance of Hebrew orations and writings: For various reasons it is so. First among them, their being the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as Scripture explained in the verse "Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred (to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem)."[1] And as it is further written: "These are the children of the province that went up out of captivity of those that had been carried away, and that returned unto Jerusalem and to Judah, everyone unto his own city."[2] These communities described are the people of the holy exalted place, Jerusalem, the holy city - may it speedily be rebuilt and reestablished and its suburbs. They are the exiles who returned from Babylon, and who were exiled lastly to Rome and Al-Andalus as Scripture explained "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 Sefarad (Spain)!!"[3] (shall possess the cities

---

[1]Ezra 1:5. [2]Ezra 2:1; Nehemiah 7:6.

[3]Obadiah 1:20.

of the south). Our nation follows a tradition that Tsarfat is France and Sepharad is Al-Andalus in Arabic. The name is ascribed to a man whose name was "Andalsan" in the days of Alazdhaq the ancient king; and in the Roman language it is "Espania," the name also attributed to a man who was its master in the days of Roman hegemony before the Visagoths, whose name was "Espan." The capital of his kingdom was "Seville," and after him it was called by this name; and according to the ancients "Espamia." Undoubtedly, the people of Jerusalem, of whom the people of our community (exile) are the descendants, were more knowledgeable in rhetoric and in the tradition of Torah study than those from the rest of the cities and villages according to what is written in the Book of Books, "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment. (Whether homicide or civil law or assault even matters of controversy within your gates) then you shall arise (and go to a place chosen by God)."[4] The text is clear and precise, although it is one of the unrealized promises, "For from Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[5] When the Arabs conquered the Andalusian peninsula, mentioned above, from the Visagoths who had overcome its Roman rulers about 300

---

[4]Deut. 17:8. [5]Is. 2:3; Micah 4:2.

years before the Arabs conquered it - This was in the days of Alwalid B'nu Abdu Almalik B'nu Marwan of the Ommayad kings of Damascus, in the year 92 A.H.[6] since the beginning of their faith, called among them Hagira (the flight). - After a while our communities could understand their purposes, and after effort they learned their language, and mastered their speech, and plumbed in detail the depth of their aspirations. They became accustomed to the bases of their inclinations, and observed the mellifluity of their poetry until God revealed to them the secret of the Hebrew language, and its grammar, the non-plosive letters, metathesis, the vowels, the sh'va apposition, ellipsis and the rest of the grammatical forms which were proved true and which were upheld by logical reason by means of the work of Abu Zacharyah Yahyai ben Daud Alfasi, called Hayuj,[7] and his group. May God have mercy upon their souls. They accepted the insights immediately and understood through them what they did not know previously. Also in a few of them the desire was roused to study the theoretical science and to acquire intellectual discernment. Their brilliance in their essays was not impressive and they did not become

---

[6](714 C.E.), cf. Halkin, p. 55, note 1.

[7]Hayuj - (970 - 100?), outstanding Hebrew grammarian and philologist, called "The Father of Hebrew Grammar."

accustomed to the art of poetry nor understood its sweetness nor were aroused by its preciousness until the end of the 7th century in the 4th millenium. That marked the advent of Abu Joseph Hasdai ben Isaac ben Shaprut,[8] originally from Yaen, who achieved prominence in Cordoba - May God have mercy upon his soul. Then, opinions were no longer careless and discernment awakened from slumber through the honored way of life revealed by the magnificent leader, and his lofty wisdom and the majesty of his superior soul, and the excellence of his balanced nature, as if he brought forth milk from the wood of Eastern wisdom and insights from all ends of the earth. With his help teachers arose. He gathered men from Babylon and Syria, and renowned people who yearned to spread the knowledge which God had deposited in them, and the insight which He gave to them. They produced sublime works, and composed glorious literary compositions, they delighted his heart with wonderful poems and marvelous, elegant words. As a result, their status rose in his estimation and he granted them the full extent of their request and the limit of their desire.

---

[8]Hasdai Ibn Shaprut - (c.910 - 970), scholar, court physician in Cordoba, leading diplomat, alleged author of letter to "Khazars," appointed by the Caliph as the leader of the Jewish community in Moslem Spain, patron of poets Menahem ben Saruq and Durash Ibn Labrat, cf. Ashtor, Jews of Moslem Spain, Jewish Publication Society of America: 1973, pp. 155-245.

First of the works of Abu Zacharia Yahai ben Daud Alfasi(from Fez), later Al-Qortabi (the Cordoban), is his book on the rules of Hebrew grammar which takes his name Hayuj. Indeed, the works of the Al-Fayumi (Saadia Gaon)[9] of blessed memory and others preceded him (Alfasi) on this subject, but missing from all of them was the matter of weak letters and metathesis. Also a Jerusalemite* discussed them in his book called Al-Mishtamal (Compendium), in which indeed he included all sorts of useful matters, but followed theories of those who preceded him in the matter of bi-literal verbs and ignores the non-plosives. Among the scholars, poets and authors there was also Dunash ben Labrat,[10] the Levite, a native of Baghdad who was educated in Fez and was the disciple of Ibn Sheshet, and Menahem ben Saruq[11] (of Cordoba) [ostensibly from their compositions according to their ability]. However, not

---

*or someone named Mugdasi - Halkin, note #24.

[9]Saadia Gaon - (882 - 942), philosopher, premier grammarian, halakhist, and exegete par excellence, authored Arabic translation of Bible, also a composer of liturgical poetry, cf. Rabbi Saadia Gaon, Studies in his Honor, ed., L. Finkelstein, 1944.

[10]Dunash ben Labrat - (920? - 965?), philologist, the poet who introduced Arabic meter into Hebrew poetry, studied under Saadia Gaon in Irak, cf. Ashtor, pp. 252-263 for discussion of controversy between Labrat and Menahem ben Saruq.

[11]Menahem ben Saruq - (tenth century), author, lexicographer, poet, cf. Ashtor, pp. 252-263, as in footnote 10.

one of them led to "the habitation of utility."

With them and in their wake a second generation sprang up, more resourceful and floridly creative than they, like Rabbi Joseph ben Santas,[12] called Ibn Abi Tor from Merida and later Cordova, and Rabbi Isaac Jeqtilah[13] and Rabbi Isaac ben Levi ben Mar Saul,[14] both from Lucena, and possessors of similar talents, but Jeqtilah surpassed the other (him) because of his greater richness in Arabic culture. And among them was Mr. Isaac Ibn Qafrun and the Cohen ben Almidhram, the two of whom lived in Cordova. After them, Ibn Omar ben Yakwa[15] and Abu Zacharyah ben Haniga,[16] both from Cordoba. And in Lucena, the leader at that time was Abu Alwalid Hasdai, and Abu Sulyiman ben Rashlah and Abu Ibrahim ben Barun. Inferior

---

[12]Joseph ben Santas or Santanas - (1075? - 1130?), also Joseph Ibn Abitur - talmudist, poet (paytan), studied under Moses ben Hanokh, cf. Ashtur, pp. 356-369.

[13]Ibn Jeqtila - (930 - 1005?), disciple of Manahem ben Saruq whose defense he helped to write (cf. footnote 11, p. 219), renowned scholar of Hebrew grammar and Biblical exegesis, cf. Ashtor, pp. 393-394.

[14]Isaac ben Levi ben Mar Saul - (middle tenth - early eleventh), philologist and poet, also an expert in Bible, composed liturgical and non-liturgical verse, cf. Ashtor, pp. 395-396.

[15]ben Yakwa - (late tenth - early eleventh), one of many who claimed the mantle of poet without warrant, cf. Ashtor, p. 396.

[16]ben Haniga - mentioned in Ibn Janah's definitive work on Hebrew grammar as a skilled philologist, cf. Halkin, p. 59.

to them was Ibn Avi Yiqu called the prophet (ecstatic). And among those born at the end of the aforementioned period was Abu Ibrahim ben Halfun,[17] The Poet whose father not long before had come from Morocco to Al-Andalus. None among the Jewish poets was like him, a man who held poetry as a craft for himself, and made religious poetry as a source of income. He wanted to receive a reward for it, he roamed the world because of it, and he obtained benefit from patrons as was his desire.

Among those who will be mentioned after them, some composed much of their works in unmetered works to be said in public on the day of the exalted fast (Yom Kippur) and on other fast days, appointed seasons, holidays, and festivals. They used pure unadorned Hebrew. I intend by unadorned, void of all the types of embellishment which will be mentioned, with God's help. They didn't labor and most of them did not follow the course of the grammarians. Some of the poets who did take it up in small measure and paid attention to meter and wrote rhymes (rhyming letter). Their works were like those of the Arab poets in the days of the Jahilia,[18] without

---

[17]Abu Ibrahim ben Halfun (late 10th century), born either in Spain or North Africa, He developed a friendship with Rabbi Samuel Ha-Nagid who supported him. cf. Schirmann, J. in Sefarad, vol. 1, 1954, pp. 66-73; vol. 2, 1956, p. 667. Ibn Halfun's extant poetry has been published with introduction and commentary by A. Mirsky in 1961.

[18]Pre-Islamic poets.

alteration. Among them and those who followed them - and they were the majority - were those who transferred a great amount of the exact sciences, and in particular from astrology, to these prayers. They imposed upon the Hebrew language what was not in its power to endure, until we passed from the status of prayer and supplications to arguments and debates. He who is content with a minimum of this and beautifies his speech with it and adorns his work a little approaches the right and the definition of the right, according to the mutazela, as that which befits the truth.

Afterwards, the universal war, unlike any other, broke out, called the Berber War, at the end of the century mentioned above, troubles multiplied and the worlds' suffering grew. Prices rose on land and sea and desertion became widespread among men, and awful afflictions beset the seat of government and the city of cities, Cordoba, which was destroyed or nearly destroyed. The sciences waned because of the loss of scholars, people were troubled by the events of the world, until the distress was eased and there was relief. Another group enjoyed these favors, whose words were refined and whose goals, and aspirations were sweet. Their leader and hero was the (נגיד), governor Rabbi Samuel Halevi,[19] may God favor him, born in Merida,

---

[19] Samuel Ha-Nagid (993 - 1055), statesman, superior poet, military commander, halakhist, cf. Schirmann in Sefarad, vol. 1., 1954, pp. 79-168.

educated in Cordoba, chief of Granada. His poetry was unique in its quality, abounding in creativity, powerful in its content, florid in its language, beautiful in its composition, original in its devices (inventions), excellent in its structure, grand in explicitness and in its implications. His poetic compositions testify to this: "Ben Tihilim," "Ben Mishlay," "Ben Kohelet," which is the most wonderful, finely written and precise of them, which he composed after he attained maturity. Even so it is said: Seeing is its own proof. The petitionary prayers (בקשות) and the chanted prayers which (Ben Tihilim) includes, their meter is that of poetry. It is a method he employed which no one besides him had employed previously or since. He devoted himself to it fully and exerted his maximal effort because he examined a great collection of Arab and Persian proverbs (sayings), and philosophical sayings, the "blossoms" of nations that have passed, and the rich words of wisdom by our pious ones written in beautiful words and lucid syllables. And everyone of this generation who followed him and walked in his path may be compared to the Al-makhathamin among the Arabs who functioned between the period of ignorance and the birth of Islam. His war poems and his long poems, his orations and his epistles surely span the farthest reaches of east and west and fill the ends of land and seas reaching the leaders in Babylon,

the scholars in the land of Israel, the great men of Egypt, the African princes, the eminent men of the Maghreb (Morocco) and the distinguished ones in Spain. Indeed, in all of them he reached the excellence of expression and the sources of truth. He cloaked many of their words and ideas in the royal splendor, and dressed them in the majestic grandeur, wrapped them in the coat of wisdom, and adorned them with the brilliance of craftsmanship. In his lifetime, the reign of the sciences rose after they had ebbed, the luminaries of knowledge shone instead of being dim, through the power of thought which God gave him which pierces the heavens and presses against the high heavens, with his love of wisdom and its masters and the honor of Torah and its bearers. He behaved equally towards the native and the foreigner, the skillful and the retarded. Since in this article, I intend to refer to the subject of poetry about which you asked me, I have refrained from the slightest praise of his splendor and majesty in ideas and his perfection, although there is no need to provide demonstrative proof nor substantiation and confirmation because of his fame in various lands and praise of him on the lips of countless people. This may be compared to the words of Job:[20] "When the ear heard

---

[20]Job 29:11.

me, it blessed me, (and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me)." He - may God favor him - was summoned for that which he created (he died), at the age of 63, in the 8th Century according to our reckoning (exactly 4815, 1055 C.E.). Those jealous of him and detractors of his generation and those which followed assailed him because of deficiencies in a few stanzas and slight mistakes in his grammatical conjugations and Hebrew prepositions, and because of his analogies from a few of the aural nouns.[21] They pounced on him like cats upon mice and the vulture upon carcasses. They denegrated him because of this in their essays and reproved him because of this in their books. They stole from him when he was in a grave, and they gluttonized on his flesh when he was but sinew and bone. Jewish law did not raise them to this nor did manliness or integrity bring them to it. Enough of this slander that appeared between him and his rivals - may God favor them. This group will no longer return to declare this and to condemn again. The rivals have already been gathered to God and the strong and the weak alike await his forgiveness. He is the Forgiver and the Merciful One. See this wonder: This group did not choose to concede to him on the strength of the enormity

---

[21] i.e., "nouns whose character is only apprehended aurally," cf. Halkin, p. 64, footnote 42.

of what he undertook and the importance of what he labored for, with his multifarious capabilities in halakha and his linguistic compositions and his many acts of statesmanship in affairs of state and of war. It did not occur to them that the swift-footed horse will stumble, and that the sharp sword will fall and the cautious one will collapse: We are but feeble mortals and weak creatures, we are remembered and we are forgotten, we hit and we miss, we hurry and we tarry, weakness will seize us and negligence and failure will catch us. Forgetfullness comes upon us and errors and mistakes will emanate from us. Who is truly the perfect person? Indeed, Plato said: "Weighty is the mistake of the intelligent, because the knowledge of the fool is close to the senses, and therefore his error is small, whereas the knowledge of the wise man is close to the intellect, and therefore his error is great." The pearls of wisdom of this man, in his compositions and his delightful statements in his works, were not invalidated by the people, not even one of them. They are more famous than the flags on the hills and brighter than the sun in the deserts. Whoever recites one of them without quoting his name, whether he attributes it to himself or leaves it unspecified, is like the fly that crawls on the fresh wound and avoids the healthy (flesh). The Lord will forgive us and them and will cause our sins and theirs to pass away. May the Special One be praised in every expression of

uniqueness. There is none besides Him and no God other than He.

After him, his son the Prince (נגיד) Abu Alhasan Rabbi Yehosef[22] was appointed to rulership - May God have mercy upon him. The deceased was missed only for himself.* In his lifetime, the riches of knowledge, and scholars and the power of poetry and poets grew "seventy-fold." (immeasurably) His gifts opened the mouths of mutes and his presents taught the stammering tongues to speak eloquently. Second to Jewish law, very great was his knowledge in Arabic studies, its languages, its poetry, its important and great personalities, its history and its antiquities, for the purposes of his governmental service and matters of authority delegated to him. The Hebrew poetry that he produced secured his place and proved his superiority. But his compositions in this area, as they say, were ripened first fruits (choice) but few in number. He was killed together with the Jewish community of Granada on Shabbat, the 9th of Tebet 4827, 1067 C.E. in our reckoning (counting). "The demise of Qis was not a singular

---

[22]Yehosef Ha-Nagid (1035 - 1066), father Samuel supervised his education, appointed by Badis as chief vizier in 1056 after Samuel's death, poet and teacher, collected his father's poems, killed in Granada in an Arab purge, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 97-98 ff.

*Yehosef did as good a job as his father.

death but the structure of a people destroyed." The ancient proverb says "He whose time was fixed at a specific season would be finished at his end." Because of them the splendor of the nation and a favorable period lasted for 34 or 35 years. Afterwards the years ended and they and their compatriots were like a fleeting dream. He left his son Abu Nazar behind him, the youth whose mustache had yet to sprout. Rabbi Isaac ben Giyyat,[23] of blessed memory, raised him and took him for a son, and he heard in his voice and from his mouth that he was a man whom God had blessed and had no rival. He excelled in Hebrew studies, poetry abounded from him, and he created rhymed and metered poems that flowed on the tongue like the flowing of perfume. But his days were not long, for he died in the prime of his life when he passed in his twentieth year, and he was buried in Lucena. May God favor him. And among the poets of that generation and the masters of songs of praise for this leading group and others - their praises recur - were Rabbi Levi ben Mar Saul[24] of Cordoba and later of Tartus, and Mar Joseph

---

[23]Isaac ben Judah Ibn Giyyat (1038 - 1089), halakhist, Talmudic exegete, poet - friend of both Samuel and Yehosef Ha-Nagid, wrote responsa, foremost scholar of period in Lucena, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 144-149.

[24]Levi ben Mar Saul (first half of eleventh century), a poet who wrote liturgical poems and panegyrics of both Samuel and Yehosef Ha-Nagid, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 287-288.

ben Kaprol[25] of Cordoba and later of Granada, and Mar Abun ben Shrara[26] of Lucena and later of Seville - may peace be upon them. And Rabbi Moses ben Jeqtilah of Cordoba and later of Saragossa was among the leading scholars and masters of the language and among the great savants and famous authors, and one of the first expositors and poets in both languages, despite his lack of judgment which robbed him of his lofty place in the stratum of the great, and Abu Ishaq Hajaj and Abu Ibrahim ben Leib, both from Granada, and Abu Alravia ben Baruk from Lucena.

In eastern Andalusa was at this exalted time Abu Amar ben Hasdai.[28] His work is scanty but outstanding. As the saying goes, "A little that satisfies is better than a lot which provides no pleasure." He authored the

---

[25]Mar Joseph ben Kaprol (middle eleventh century), He was counted among those who perhaps enjoyed the patronage of Samuel Ha-Nagid, cf. Halkin, p. 67, note 18.

[26]Abun ben Shrara (middle 11th century), poet who wrote panegyrics of Samuel Ha-Nagid, cf. Ashtor, vol 2, pp. 198-199.

[27]Moses ben Jeqtilah (latter half of 11th century), philologist, grammarian who translated Arabic treatises on grammar into Hebrew, unique exegete who approached the text critically from an historical perspective, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 259-262.

[28]Abu Amar Joseph Ibn Hasdai (middle 11th century), renowned Arabic style, philologist, exegete, poet - most famous for poem thanking Samuel Ha-Nagid for patronage (The Orphan Poem), cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 257-258.

special qasida[29] called by the Jews היתומה, The Orphan Poem. In it he turned to Samuel (הנגיד) of blessed memory. He responded to it and composed a panegyric, but as was the way of Hanagid, in rhetorical style and with eloquent words. Abu Amar refined the opening verses of love and beautified the imaginative praise, and many of the stanzas included several types of adornment, such as homonymy, (צמוד), metapnor, negation and affirmation, the transition and additional modes, and he did not withhold from it Biblical subjects. His son Abu Alfazl was strong in scientific apparatus, accomplished in the art of philosophy and a master of poetic creations and expositions in Hebrew and Arabic. Abu Alhasan Musa ben Altaqna called the "vagabond," of good family, well educated, and expert in panegyric and a master in mockery, was killed under a collapsed wall on the way to Toledo before he reached the age of thirty.

Abu Ayub Suliman ben Yahya ben Gabirol[30] of Cordoba, a native of Malaga and educated in Saragossa, guided

---

[29]Qasida - name given to formal ode in Eastern literature. It originated in pre-Islamic Arabia during the sixth century. The theme may be panegyric, satire, warlike boasting, or elegiac. The Qasida may extend to upward of a hundred couplets, all upon the same rhyme.

[30]Suliman ben Yahya ben Gabirol (c1020 - c.1057), brilliant poet and seminal philosopher, many biographical details supplied by Moses Ibn Ezra here, cf. A.M. Haberman in Sinai, vol. 25, 1943, pp. 53-63 and J. Schlanger, La Philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol, 1968.

his character and suppressed his desires, eschewed earthliness and prepared (trained) his soul for higher things, after he cleansed it from the disease of desire, and it acquired the delights of philosophy and the exact sciences which he impressed upon it. As the ancient philosopher* said (i.e., Ethics אינרת מוסר),"Wisdom is the color of soul, and the color of a thing cannot be recognized unless it is cleansed of its impurity (dirt)." Plato said: "One whose qualities of character are not proper cannot approach any learning." And Abukrat says about naturalness, "Unclean bodies - the more you nourish them the more you add evil to them." He was younger than the poets of his generation, but superior to them in his (poetic) creation, despite that all of them had worthy objectives and pleasant demeanors. Also, even though they were of different positions they resembled one another in their beautiful expressions and their refined allusions (he was superior). However, Abu Ayub was a wonderful artist and a perfect author. He grasped the goal of poetry and "hit the target" and he aimed at the bull's-eye. His method of creation was intelligent, and it resembled the later Moslem poets, to the extent that he was known as "the Chief of Speech" and "the expert of composition" in

---

*Aristotle

fluency of speech, freshness of words and sweetness of ideas. Eyes inclined towards him and fingers pointed at him. He was the first among Hebrew poets to "open the gate of embellishment," and those who came after him walked in his light and wove on his weaver's loom, as will be made clear in what will be said immediately, and as will be revealed in his poetry to all who probe it deeply to understand it and take an interest to experience it and examine it, since he was expert in the written Torah and had a command of the oral Torah. As the philosopher Plato said: "The law will teach us to recognize the reasons for actions." Socrates said "the law compels us to keep away from sin and philosophy teaches us the logic of things." What is the difference between Torah and political philosophy? Political activities are partial, incomplete, and depend upon Torah, and the Torah commandments are complete, perfect, and independent of politics.

Let us return to our subject. This youth, may peace be upon him, praised but exaggerated, mourned but overstated, adored but exaggerated, loved but was enslaved, was abstemious but aggrandized, apologized but flattered, derided but astounded. Despite that he was a philosopher in his nature and his knowledge, his irascible soul had control over his intellect that was not decisive and a foe that he did not subdue. It was easy for him to condemn the mighty, and he did much to denounce them and he

piled up their disgrace. Plato said: "He whose anger compels him and whose pleasure directs him to deny what the intellect decreed upon him a priori, his soul is very weak, it has neither power nor courage." A principle of philosophy is that the inferior part accepts the sovereignty of the superior part, that is to say that, his intellect rules over his nature. Perfection belongs solely to the glorious and holy Lord. The youth died in Valencia at the beginning of the 8th century and there is his grave. He was a little over thirty. Hypercritical ones examined his work and picked out obvious mistakes in it. But the wise one would suggest youthful innocence and childhood blindness as the reason. I have no substantive need to collect this (material) and no pressing necessity to write about it, I did not set for myself as a goal in this article to reduce the value of my predecessors and to mock their words and to expose their errors nor to distinguish between their good and bad poetry. My aim is only to tell of their merits and ignore their mistakes, unless the instruction is necessary and unavoidable in the course of discussion. I will not mention the name of the author - in order to warn (you) about the pitfalls, etc. There is no benefit in preserving the delusions that are transmitted from them, even if literary criticism is one of the principles of poetics and among the best uses of logic. It has already

been said, Criticism of things (דברים) is greater than their creation. I found it necessary to put together a few of these examples and their manifestations in an article called ערוגת הבושם. (Bed of Spices)

At the end of this groups' cycle arose a second group that walked in its paths and behaved according to its teachings, and rose above it in casting poetry, power of language, force of ideas and lucidity of speech. The senior and honored one of the group, its pillar and chief was Rabbi Isaac Ibn Giyyat,[31] of blessed memory, a man of Lucena; city of poetry. He was its "shepherd" (caretaker), a fountain of rhetoric and a source of eloquence, a restrained ruler of Hebrew creation - and the knight of the Aramaic linguistic system. He spoke eloquently and wrote lucidly. He loved to praise the great men of his time and to eulogize the honored ones of his day. He wrote drafts of many compositions on (הלכה) law and language and did not rest until he clarified them, except for a small portion of them. He was superior to his predecessors in matters of piety and prayers and lamentation and dirges. But inferior to them in metered poetry, because his knowledge of Arabic sciences was weak. His style was clean and his subjects were straightforward.

---

[31]Isaac Ibn Giyyat (late eleventh century), friend of both Ibn Ezra and Halevi with whom he exchanged poems. cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 190-193.

I studied under him and I received from him, and the tidbit that is my possession is a droplet from his lake and what little is in my power is by a spark of his sun. He died in Cordoba in 849 (לפ"ק) (1089 C.E.) according to our reckoning and he was buried in Lucena.

Among his contemporaries was Rabbi Samuel ben Hananyah,[32] of blessed memory, a noble man and prince and a master of piety and saintliness, and a Halakhist in his expositions and responsa. He was greater than (Giyyat) in metered poetry, a treasury of learning and wisdom. Rabbi Isaac ben Barukh[33] from Cordoba, of blessed memory, was moral and mannerly, an expert in the studies of law and Rabbinic authorities, a poet and expositor. He served the Abadian governor (עבאדיה) with his fine "tools" in the exact sciences and astrology. His honor grew in the eyes of the ruler and his fame preceded him. He died in Granada in (4)854 (1094 C.E.) and he was buried in Cordoba. Rabbi Isaac ben Reuben of Barcelona, of blessed memory, was one of the chief Halachic experts

---

[32]Samuel ben Hananyah (second half of eleventh century), admirer of Samuel Ha-Nagid, poet and Talmudic scholar, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, p. 144.

[33]Isaac ben Barukh (1035 - late eleventh century), lived through riots of 1066 in Granada, astrologer, Talmudist, student of exact sciences, cf. Ashtor, vol. 2, pp. 216-217.

and scholars. His ability was great in choosing the choicest parts of the Prophets and using them in his sacred poetry. And the gifted Rabbi Isaac Fasi[34] - may God grant his resting place peace and refresh his "dust" - possessor of a solid and matchless faith, intellect, wisdom and a prolific pen. He did not excel in anything related to the field of poetry, and therefore I did not mention him together with those Halakhists who were poets. Among their contemporaries were Abu Suliman ben Mahajir[35] and Abu Alfatah ben Azhar,[36] both from Seville, poets and experts in various branches of science, heirs to nobility and fame.

Among those who created less was the retentive teacher. He was quick-minded and possessor of an excellent memory. As a master of Halakha in his later years, Abu Zachariah Yahya ben Balam,[37] was a Sevillian born in Toledo.

---

[34]Isaac Fasi (1013 - 1103), author of the most important code prior to the Mishneb Torah by Maimonides, Talmudic exegete, cf. Shalom Shefer, הר"ף ומשנתו (Ha-Rif u-Mishnato), 1967.

[35]Suliman ben Mahajir, from noble lineage, friendly with Ibn Ezra and Halevi, cf. חיים שירמן in ידיעות המכון ב p. 144.

[36]Abu Alfatah ben Azhar, Ibid.

[37]Abu Zachariah Yahya ben Balam (last half of eleventh century), linguistics expert, only two known poems, Ibid., p. 145.

He was a master of beautiful summaries and excellent popular synopses. He removed their faults, deleted their weaknesses, cleansed their contents and purified their essence until prolixity changed into concise statements. His was the work of a man possessed of a fanaticism that defied his philosophical nature and his temperance. No one was safe from his trap nor from attack in places that he thought. Indeed he adumbrated them in unsightly explanations as will be revealed to one who reads his works. I called him conservative and retentive only because retention is such that what is learned through hearing will be preserved in the soul permanently and will not be susceptible to forgetting. As it is written in the Torah, "Conserve and do them"[38] (for this is your wisdom and understanding . . .) When they hear all these statutes, they will say, "Surely this is a wise and understanding nation." And recollection is knowledge that comes unconsciously, therefore, it is dependent upon something else. As it is written: "(And it shall be to you for a fringe), that you may look upon it, and remember (all the commandments of the Lord)."[39] Surely, it is said: he whose power of retention is good can comprehend the

---

[38]Deuteronomy 4:6.

[39]Numbers 15:39.

designation of a thing and its substance, and he who has a good memory can comprehend the completeness of the depicted form. If he is good in both of them, he can comprehend all that he looked for from the forms (of things). It is said that recollection is the remembrance of those things that are in the soul with seeking and searching. Furthermore, it is said that retentiveness applies to the form and shape. This man mentioned above - may God have mercy upon his soul - possessed a majority of these characteristics.

Among the poets from Toledo was Abu Haron Ibn Avi Al-aish,[40] and after a gap, Abu Ishaq ben Alharizi.[41] Among the poets of Seville was Abu Joseph ben Migash[42] who was born in Granada and lived in Ashbilia, and Abu Zachariah ben Mar Abun.[43] Among the last of that generation in Granada was Abu Joseph ben Almara.[44]

---

[40]Abu Haron Ibn Avi Al-aish, only mentioned here, cf. Ibid., p. 144.

[41]Abu Ishaq ben Alharizi, Ibid.

[42]Abu Joseph ben Migash (1077 - 1141), greatest Talmudic scholar in his generation, studied under Isaac Albalia and Alfasi whom he succeeded as head of the Yeshiva in Lucena, cf. A.L. Grajevsky רבינו יוסף הלוי אבן מיגש, 1963.

[43]Abu Zachariah ben Mar Abun, cf. חיים שירמן in ידיעות המכון ב, p. 146.

[44]Abu Joseph ben Almara, only mentioned here, Ibid., p. 147.

Among the masters of flawless work and lucid poetry was my older brother Abu Ibrahim (Isaac)[45] - may God have mercy upon him - he found help in refining expression and in sweetening his verse (poetry) through the breadth of his command of Arabic culture. He died in Lucena in (4) 881 (1121 C.E.). At that time in Eastern Andalus was Abu Amru Ibn Aldayan,[46] the foundation of faith, a hill of excellence and glory, a wonderful creator of ascetic works (פרישות), both poetry and prose and a master of various sciences. Then, there were Abu Ishaq ben Pakuda[47] and Abu Suliman ben Amah[48] - may God have mercy upon their souls. Among the poets was Abu Alhasan Ezra ben Elazar.[49] Abu Amr Ibn Sahal[50] from Cordoba was one of the leading disciples of ben Giyyat at that time. Indeed, he was

---

[45]Abu Ibrahim (Isaac) Ibn Ezra, oldest brother of Moses, cf. Chapter I of this work.

[46]Abu Amru Ibn Aldayan, only mentioned here, cf. חיים שירמן in ידיעות המכון ב, p. 147.

[47]Abu Ishaq ben Pakuda, cf. Halkin, ספר העיונים והדיונים, footnote 16.

[48]Abu Suliman ben Amah, perhaps David ben Elazar Ibn Pakuda, a famous poet in the early 12th century, cf. חיים שירמן in ידיעות המכון ב, vol. 4, pp. 282ff.

[49]Abu Alhasan Ezra ben Elazar, apparently the author of ספר תגניס, a collection of poetry, cf. Schirmann, vol. 2, p. 148.

[50]Abu Amr Ibn Sahal, died in 1123 or 1124 in Cordoba, disciple of Isaac Ibn Giyyat, cf. Ibid.

among the distinguished of Al-Andalus, of noble lineage, eloquent in poetry, learned in Halakha, a master interpreter and linguist. As in the ancient saying: the essence of manliness is truth and the essence of knowledge is interpretation. Anyone who lacks the quality of truth is deficient in the most honored of qualities. His poetry combined the extremes of strength and sweetness, power and grace, he saw and he considered, he scanned and he remembered, he praised and he caused joy, he mocked and he caused sorrow. He did not control his spirit and mocked. Indeed he loosed his reins at will. Most of his scorn (he directed) at the band who attacked poetry, those who dared to invade poetic ranks. He made people laugh by describing their methods and delighted them by unveiling their deceit. If he washed his hands of this he would have been of the first rank. But, every man possesses what he chooses for himself. Indeed, someone who agreed with this opinion said, "An evil man will succeed where the good one is wearied." He was - may God have mercy upon his soul - the last of the honored greats mentioned above. Woe is the loneliness of the world without them, and alas its darkness because of their loss. Indeed, it has been said "The death of the righteous is a privilege for them and a loss for the world."[51] Our sages anticipated them in their saying

---

[51]Sanhedrin 113b.

"The death of the righteous is good for them and bad for the world." This man died in Cordoba in (4)883, (1123 C.E.).

Their younger contemporaries and those who came after them and followed them were a glorious group and a marvelous assemblage. They understood the object of poetry and reached it in every forum and in every way. They attended to both the sublime and the trivial, and beautiful poetry emerged, indeed enhancing verse and imagery. This despite the fact that there were exponents of different systems and the standards of work were not uniform. (monovalent) It has been said, "People are like rungs of a ladder, there are the superior ones, the lowly ones and the average ones." But all of them in whatever city they lived, were in the orbit of success, precision and excellence. Among their chiefs were Abu Amr Joseph ben Tsaddiq[52] from Cordoba, congenial and kind to all, erudite beyond imagination in Halacha, and Abu Zachariah ben Giyyat,[53] born in Lucena who lived in Granada, original in his poetry and richly cultured.

---

[52]Abu Amr Joseph Ibn Tsaddiq (1080 - 1149), poet, some of whose poems have survived., cf. Schirmann, vol. 2, pp. 163 ff.

[53]Abu Zachariah ben Giyyat, friend of Judah Halevi's, son of the poet Isaac Ibn Giyyat, cf. Ibid., p. 186 ff.

Among the principal masters of Halacha were Abu Ayub ben Almalam[54] from Seville, the city of poetry. His charming glory shone and his personality glittered in two languages as the light of day, and in both he swept the depths. May God defend his value! Abu Alhasan ben Halevi,[55] who dove to draw up pearls, master of sharp wit, and Abu Ishaq ben Ezra[56] (Abraham) among the eloquent and florid Mutakalimun,[57] were both born in Toledo (Tudela!) and afterwards lived in Cordoba. In the uppermost province in the extreme west was Abu Alhasan ben Betat,[58] one of those famed in Halacha, and one of the Mutakalimun and poets, from a renowned home and righteous lineage, and the famous teacher and exalted scholar. Abu Alfaham ben

---

[54]Abu Ayub ben Almalam, physician, halakhist, moved to Morocco, friend of Judah Halevi with whom he corresponded, cf. Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 249-250.

[55]Abu Alhasan ben Halevi, Judah Halevi, cf. Chapter II of this work.

[56]Ishaq ben Ezra (Abraham) (1089 - 1164), poet, grammarian, exegete, philosopher, astronomer and physician - exceptionally prolific in all phases, probably mentioned so briefly because he was Moses Ibn Ezra's brother and younger contemporary, cf. I. Lewin, אברהם אבן עזרא: חייו ושירתו, 1969.

[57]Mutakalimun - practitioner of Kalam, i.e., Arabic scholastic theology. Among Jews, most noted was Saadia Gaon, whose theory of creation was derived from that of the Mutakalimun.

[58]Abu Alhasan ben Betat, Mutakalimun poet, friend of Moses Ibn Ezra, cf. Schirmann, vol. 4, p. 151.

Altaban[59] was one of the authors and poets and expositors and the honorable Abu Ibrahim ben Barun[60] was his disciple; of prominent stock and master of the decisive proof and one of the Mutakalimun, fluent in both languages. Abu Alhasan ben Elazar[61] was one of the skilled ones, the creators and the poets. Among the men of poetry and good taste and meticulousness was Abu Ibrahim ben Meshkaran.[62] Among the great writers and innovative thinkers and translators of Hebrew works into Arabic was Abu Said ben Faraq Ibn Hasdai,[63] of blessed memory, pleasant in his virtues and noble in his character.

I met many of these artists, and I assembled the famous ones and the ordinary ones, except for a few of them. Since the poet says "A group whose culture is close to mine are my neighbors even if they live all over the world."

Included among those that were mentioned there is a group that loved "embellishment and covering," and strove

---

[59]Abu Alfaham Ibn Altaban, poet and rhetorician in early twelfth century, cf. Schirmann, vol. 4, pp. 252 ff.

[60]Abu Ibrahim ben Barun, expert in linguistics, only one of his poems is known to us, friend of Moses Ibn Ezra, cf. Schirmann, vol. 4, pp. 251-252.

[61]Abu Alhasan ben Elazar, Ibid., pp. 276-277.

[62]Abu Ibrahim ben Meshkaran, Ibid., p. 277.

[63]Abu Said Faraq Ibn Hasdai, Ibid.

for excellence and beauty, loveliness emanated from them. They excelled in serious works. Every one of them hoped to do well and succeed, but water first comes down in droplets and only later does it pour forth, as it is with sand. Every generation has its people (of renown).

In the cities mentioned there were a few who were unequalled in birth and greatness, munificence and sublimity, and praiseworthy conduct. They were superior to the expositors and poets, because they and those aforementioned acquired all types of science, the best of each generation - besides the writing of poetry of those mentioned above. They acquired shares of dogmatic (scholastic) and Halachic sciences, of the ethics and of the Arabs and the Jews, philosophical knowledge, logic, astrology, geometry and medicine, everyone according to his ability, every group according to its lot. I did not take upon myself the task of elucidating this, you asked me only about poetry and exposition. In my work on the significance of the moralists I included this subject and its explanation.

There was not any generation among those mentioned past and present that was void of inferior men whose names I will not recall because of their inferiority. They were a motley crew of pretenders in the art of poetry, masters of ignorance and drunk with haughtiness, swayed by their lust from balanced thought. They ignored,

because of their evil ways, the recognized advantage of acquiring knowledge. They lacked the judgment that comes from patience and deliberation that comes from intelligence. Frivolousness got the better of them, they had no experience with metered speech and no training in the writing of poetry and composition. They passed judgment on matters by means of baseless opinions. They dared to write poetry and they were unrestrained in composing articles (works). They destroyed "the rhyme," like the ancient saying, "The only ones who dare to speak are the wizard and the dullard," for they are on one path and the poets are on another. Critics do not frighten them and sharp tongues do not scare them, because of their view that poetry is nothing other than the observance of meter and being concerned with rhyming letters and with unmetered rhyme. Their poet (Arab) says, "The beauteous reveals its beauty in two ways - through a stanza of poetry or through a lock of hair." But their style is disgraceful, their thought is ugly and their words come out poorly structured, misaligned sentences and unsuitable division. Among them is that which irritates the listener and annoys him, that neither causes him to laugh nor "moves" him, but which punishes the soul and pains the heart. Their writing may be compared to making love to one who cannot (love).
The question was asked, "Who is the greatest poet?"

The answer was: "He whose falsehood is accepted willingly and whose wickedness causes laughter." As it is said: "The worst poetry is the mediocre." The matter may be compared to intense heat or intense cold, the former astounds and the latter excites, but the mean between them is unacceptable. Among them was a median group that earned money from slander and from forbidden reason. The length of their tongue brought them clearly to the limit of disrespect. They made noise with tasteless expressions and detestible words, exhausting the listener. They are crude by nature; with empty words, and unripe figures, foolish rhetoric, cold demeanors and mindless idiocy. It is said: "the worst of men is he whose tongue is bigger than his intellect." Another said, "It is better for one's intellect to appear superior to one's tongue than for one's tongue to appear superior to one's intellect." It is said, "The length of the tongue is (equal to one's) stupidity." One of the emminent ones was asked, "When would wisdom be worse than its absence?" He responded, "When the knowledge is great but the mind is spoiled." It is said, "If the intellect is superior to the speech - that is magnificent, but if the speech is superior to the intellect - that is a defect." The Sage said, "In many words there is no lack of transgression, (but he that refrains his lips is wise)."[64]

---

[64]Proverbs 10:19.

He said, "(Just as dreams come with much brooding) so does foolish utterance come with much speech."[65] And he also said, "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool will swallow him."[66] That is to say, the wise man finds favor among people because of the wisdom that flows on his tongue. The way of the fool, to the contrary, is that he loses favor through the corruption and the villainy which he proclaims. This impulsive group only circulated its counterfeit coin and transmitted its worthless currency among the masses. One who boasts expertise in handicrafts like weaving and sewing or talents in drawing but does not do it well will surely be scorned by the masses, because a mistake in crafts or in drawing is apparent. But in academic (theoretical) work like medicine, astrology, poetry, and writing, it is possible for the ignoramus to exalt himself greatly with the little talent he possesses, to boast among the masses unjustifiably because of their lack of knowledge in these fields. For the masses do not differentiate between truth and falsehood and they do not distinguish between vulgar and the acceptable. If you happen to chance upon something precious that is from this foolhardy gang, or an extraordinary word or a verse

---

[65]Ecclesiastes 5:2. [66]Ecclesiastes 10:12.

laden (with aphorisms), do not be charmed by its author, and do not be mollified by his actions, for he does not recognize the truth and hold it dear, nor does he comprehend the invalid and keep far from it. It is only something that happened by chance. Indeed, the liar does tell the truth (sometimes) and the incompetent archer sometimes hits the target. The right action of the fool is like the error of the wise. The distinguished Abukrat* said in the Natura: "Do not be misled by things that occur illogically." From the pearls of our sages - may the Lord favor them: "The punishment of the liar is such that even when he tells the truth they will not listen to him."[67]

This includes the false words of the Sophists, I mean the forgers. The Sages attributed this name to a Greek man whose name was Sophista. He used to approach the invalid with guile attempting to validate it and to deal with the truth, attempting to invalidate it. But Abu Nazar Alfarabi rejected this and said, "this Greek word is composed of Sophia which is knowledge and "Istes" which in Greek means that which is forged. Its meaning is then "the forged science," and whoever has within him the qualities of counterfeit and deception is called by this

---

[67] Sanhedrin 89b.

*Hippocrates.

name. Everything that is hammered out and coated with gold or silver is called counterfeit, and among us "(Burning lips and a wicked heart) are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross,"[68] which is stronger than each of the substances separately.

Be careful then of the guile of this wretched band and if you see cultured individuals, people and teachers from among the artisans polemicizing in vain with people from this group (Sophists) or acting santimoniously with them in falsehood. Do not let this matter rouse doubt in your heart, and do not loosen the reins of your discernment concerning them. Indeed it is said, "The worst person is the one who people respect because they fear his tongue." Another said, "The search for what is good is the fear of what is evil." One of the superior commentators said, "We welcome people warmly and in our hearts we curse them." Anyone who joins this group honestly and praises it sincerely shares their loathsome character (nature) and their corrupt form. Concerning their ilk, the Sage said, "They that forsake the Torah praise the wicked, but those who keep the law contend with them."[69]

---

[68] Proverbs 26:23. [69] Proverbs 28:4.

There was also an ignorant, insolent group whose words were doggeral and whose discernment was more feeble than the aforementioned. They profaned the Holy Book of the Lord with their abuse of people. In revealing their shame, i.e., their "wisdom," they besmirched its noble verses with their accusing the innocent and in their considering their thoughts to be theirs. These things must not be uttered. No, for it is a duty to be cleansed of them. Once a distinguished man heard an insolent man insult an honest one, and he said, "Go and immerse (yourself) again because whatever was in you was more impure than excrement." The philosopher said, "The nakedness (shame) of people is between their legs but the nakedness (shame) of the insolent one is between his cheeks." The works of the significant men which we have mentioned are alive though their bones decay in their graves, but the idle chatter of this irresponsible group is (emphatically) dead, while their eyes yet see. Because of people like them said the poet, "The bad poem dies before its author, but the excellent one lives on even after its author dies."

To the choicest poetry by this superior group I have not attached a pearl and of their precious sayings I have not written an elegant word, since they are well-known and on the lips of the tradents. Morning light does not need candles! How much the more so the suns have no need of candles! Thus, I was content with

mentioning the leaders of the people I enumerated, and I left aside the weaker ones who were their contemporaries. This I say and I will seek the aid of God. Next is the response to the sixth question.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Abramson, S. and Mirsky, A. ספר חיים שירמן: שוקן: ירושלים. 1970.

Allan, D.J. The Philosophy of Aristotle. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Allony, N. עיונים ודיונים ב"ספר העיונים והדיונים." ירושלים: הוצאת ספרים ע"שי" למאנגס, האוניברסיטה העברית.

_____. "The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra to Arabiyya," London: reprinted from "Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies," Volume 3, 1975, pp. 19-40.

Altmann, A. :vol. 1 תורת האקלימים לר' יהודה הלוי. מלילה לונדון, 1944, pp. 1-17.

Aristotle's Poetics, Demetrius on Style, Longinus on the Sublime. Introduction by John Warrington. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1963.

Ashtor, Eliyahu. The Jews of Moslem Spain. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973. (two volumes).

Baer, I. המצב הפוליטי של יהודי ספרד בדורו של ר' יהודה הלוי. צירן :vol. 1, ירושלים, 1935, pp. 6-23.

Baer, Yitzhak. A History of the Jews in Christian Spain. Trans., Louis Schoffman, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966. (two volumes).

Brody, H. :חיים בראדי, ed. דיואן של יהודה בן שמואל הלוי. Berlin: 1909.

Carmi, T. editor and translator. The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.

Dahiyat, Ismail. Avicenna's Commentary On The Poetics Of Aristotle. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974.

Fenton, Paul. "Gleanings from Moshe ibn Ezra's Maqalat al-Hadiqa" in Sefarad, Madrid, Barcelona: 1976, pp. 285-298.

Fleisher, E. שירת - הקודש העברית בימי - הביניים. ירושלים: ביה הוצאה כתר, 1975.

Glick, Thomas. Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Guttmann, Julius. Philosophies of Judaism. Translated by D. Silverman, New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

Halevi, Judah. The Kuzari. Translated by H. Hirschfeld, New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

_____. Translation with commentary by I. Heinemann in Three Jewish Philosophers. New York: Atheneum, 1977.

_____. Selected Poems of Judah Halevi. Translated by Nina Salaman, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1928.

_____. Ibn Shmuel, J., trans. ספר הכוזרי לרבי יהודה הלוי. הוצאת דביר: תל אביב, 1972

Halper, B.Z. :, שירת ישראל, הוצאת אברהם יוסף שטיבל, ירושלים, 1966

Heinemann, I. .תמונת ההיסטוריה של ר' יהודה הלוי. ציון vol. 9: ירושלים, 1943, pp. 147-177

Husik, Isaac. A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

Ibn Ezra, Moses. Selected Poems of Moses Ibn Ezra. Translated by H. Brody and S. Solis-Cohen. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1934.

_____. Halkin, A.S., trans. .ספר העיונים והדיונים לרמב"ע הי'צאה מקמי: נרדמים: ירושלים, 1975

Jacobs, Joseph. "Judah Halevi, Poet and Pilgrim" in Jews' College Literary Society, 1886-1887 Session. Reprinted from the "Jewish Chronicle," London: 1887.

Levi-Provencal, E. "Les Memoires Du Roi Zeride Abd Allah," Al-Andalus, Les Escueles de Estudios Arabes de Madrid y Granada, Volume 3, 1936, pp. 233-344; Volume 4, 1939, pp. 29-145.

O'Callaghan, Joseph. A History of Medieval Spain. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

Pagis, D. .שירת החול ותורת השיר למשה אבן - עזרא ובני דורו מוסד ביאליק: ירושלים, 1970

_____..שירי החול של משה אבן עזרא Hebrew University: Ph.D. Thesis, ירושלים, 1966.

_____. חידוש ומסורת בשירת - החול. ביה הוצאה כתר,: ירושלים, 1976

Preminger, Alex, ed. Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Schirmann, J. "The Function of the Poet in Medieval Spain," in Jewish Social Studies, New York: 1954, pp. 235-252.

_____. "איפה נולד יהודה הלוי?" תרביץ Vol. 10, ירושלים 1939, pp. 237-239.

_____. חיי יהודה הלוי: תרביץ 9: א., pp. 35-54, 1937 ב., pp. 219-240, ד-ג., pp. 284-305.

_____. השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובאנס. מוסד ביאליק: ירושלים 1945.

_____. המשוררים בני דורם של משה אבן עזרא ויהודה הלוי. ידיעות המכון לחקר השירה העברית, Berlin: Vol. 2, 1936, pp. 117-212; vol. 4, 1938, pp. 247-304; vol. 6, 1945: pp. 249-356.

Strauss, Leo. Persecution and the Art of Writing. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952.