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RABBI ABRAHAM IBN EZRA: STUDIES IN THE WRITINGS OF A TWELFTH-CENTURY JEWISH POLYMATH

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Abraham Ibn Ezra as an Exegete

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It can hardly be contested that in the entire star-studded galaxy of medieval Jewish Bible commentators not one can compare with Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1092-1167) in respect of vast erudition, broad range of disciplines, subtle sophistication, intellectual daring, and sensitivity to linguistic and stylistic phenomena in all their manifestations. Grammar, syntax, lexicography, literary strategies, elements of style, sparkling witticisms, and felicitous use of the Hebrew language—mastery of all these accord him a unique place in the history of Jewish exegesis.

We may pay whole-hearted tribute to his undoubted copious natural talents; yet it is quite uncertain that they would have germinated and flourished had not several external factors converged to cultivate and develop them to maturity, and to direct them upon the path they finally took. On account of the adversity which dogged his way through life, and the poverty which was his perpetual lot, by dint of his restless temperament and extensive wanderings, and because of the particularly tragic times in which he lived, he was able to leave an indelible mark on the history of Jewish literature, and to gain lasting fame as an unusual scholar of first rank, an ironic twist of fate which Ibn Ezra himself would have appreciated.

His ill-fortune is registered in a short poem which he composed. In it he concludes that the moment of his birth happened to coincide with a deviation of the celestial bodies from their fixed paths. As a result, however much he struggles, he can never succeed. Were he perchance

a candle maker, the sun would never set; if he dealt in shrouds, no one would die as long as he lives.[1] In another poem, he laments with sardonic humor his tattered, threadbare cloak.[2]

One major consequence of this ne'er-do-well's unvarying state of penury was that he perforce became directly dependent for economic support and facilities upon individual sponsors. There is much evidence to show that many of his grammatical and exegetical works were commissioned by his patrons or were produced for the benefit of his students who were often their sons. These circumstances help to explain certain peculiar features which his works exhibit. The system of patronage in the Middle Ages was notoriously unreliable, just like the government support of the arts and humanities in our own day. Ibn Ezra vividly illustrates his predicament in another poem in which he reports that whatever the time he calls upon his patron it proves to be inopportune, and he laments, "woe to the poor man, born to ill fortune."[3]

The uncertainties and limitations inherent in patronage, and the frustrations which it generated, meant that periodically Ibn Ezra needed to be in search of fresh sponsors. This, in turn, led him to find them wherever he could, a reality which spurred his peregrinations. The incidental beneficial effect was the exposure to diverse cultures, the enrichment of his life's experiences, and encounters with scholars and their works in many fields of human endeavor. All this added immeasurably to his store of knowledge and enhanced his versatility. The results are abundantly evident in his biblical commentaries. To cap it all, his wanderings took him from Moslem Spain to Christian countries, so that instead of Arabic he was forced to employ Hebrew as his linguistic medium. His works were therefore largely saved from oblivion, a fate which overtook much of Jewish literature written in Arabic. On the other hand, the life of an itinerant left its mark on his work. It frequently meant lack of access to book collections, even to his own compositions.

He often had to rely on his memory, and his citations are not always dependable. Also, his work is characterized by a certain lack of ordered arrangement and by much duplication, and often gives the impression of having been hastily written.

Nothing is known for certain of any attempt by Ibn Ezra to write works on Hebrew grammar or to compose commentaries to the books of the Bible during the first fifty years of his life, which were spent in Spain. At age fifty, he abandoned his native land, never to return, and he made his way to Rome where he arrived in 1140. This traumatic episode apparently stimulated introspection and self-judgment. A poem by Ibn Ezra on the ages of man may well carry an autobiographical echo of his state of mind at this time of life, for he writes:

> At fifty, one takes note of one's days of futility, grieves that the days of mourning approach, scorns the precious things of this world, fearful that one's time has come.[4]

It was only in the course of his last twenty-four years that he undertook the serious pursuit of systematic biblical exegesis, on which his reputation and claim to lasting fame have rested. Surprisingly, it took another crisis in his life to stimulate his commenting systematically on the five books of the Torah. An oath taken during a severe illness proved to be the incentive experience. The author twice refers to this critical stimulus, once in a poem, and again in his introduction to Genesis. In the former, entitled "May the Lord be Blessed," which was dedicated to a patron, Rabbi Moses ben Meir, he states, "In my illness, I made a vow to God to expound the Law given on Mount Sinai";[5] in the latter, he promises to explain some of the mysteries of the text "if God will help me pay my vow."[6]

Why Ibn Ezra delayed so long—until age sixty-four—to compose his commentary to the Torah, is unclear. Whether he first wished to hone his exegetical skills by expounding other biblical books before tackling the

Pentateuch, or whether he underwent some psychological restraint in applying his gifted though somewhat spirited pen to the exposition of the Torah, can no longer be determined. Possibly, accusations of heresy, which had been hurled against him in Rome, were a contributory factor.[7] At any rate, his dire sickness alerted him to the peril of further procrastination.

Ibn Ezra did not manage to complete commentaries to the entire Bible. What are extant are those to the Torah, Isaiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Psalms, Job, the Five Megillot, and Daniel. This corpus in itself would be an astonishing scholarly achievement within a span of just twenty-five years. In addition, we have the author's own testimony to having compiled commentaries to many other books. He mentions Joshua,[8] Judges,[9] Samuel,[10] Kings,[11] Jeremiah,[12] Ezekiel,[13] Proverbs,[14] Ezra-Nehemiah,[15] and Chronicles.[16] None of these has survived, and they must have disappeared quite early, for the supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's works do not mention them.

In attempting to evaluate Ibn Ezra's exegetical work, the loss of so many of his productions must be taken into account. So must another factor in dealing with the commentaries, namely, the often problematical state of their texts. No autograph exists. Apart from corruptions in medieval manuscripts, and later in the printed editions, not to mention tampering by Church censors, there are clear indications of copyist initiatives. In some cases, the scribe openly inserted into his manuscript what he claimed to be oral interpretations from Ibn Ezra himself.[17] Thus, at one point, the fragmentary commentary to Genesis carries this preliminary note:

> I, Joseph son of Jacob of Moreil,[18] heard this interpretation of the section in London, and I recorded it in my own language.[19]

Another note by this same scribe appears at the end of a manuscript of Ibn Ezra's commentary to the Twelve Minor Prophets:

> I, Joseph son of Jacob of Moreil, copied from the author's manuscript; I also added a brief explanation to his text (just) as he had explained [it] to me while he was composing.[20]

He adds that he had indicated such glosses by means of colons. These, however, have long disappeared in the printed editions. There are also clear indications of unacknowledged scribal interpolations of explanatory glosses on the part of later scribes.[21]

There can be no doubt that Ibn Ezra knew exactly what he was about when he undertook to compose systematic commentaries to the biblical books. In his introduction to the Torah he critically surveyed four different approaches which characterized previous exegetical endeavors.[22] The first is that pursued by the Geonim; their commentaries, he says, are diffuse and contain an excess of extraneous matter drawn from the secular sciences. The second approach is that of the heretical Karaites who reject the tradition and authority of the oral law and arbitrarily interpret the Torah. The third is the "benighted way" of the Christians to whom the biblical text is wholly esoteric and who interpret it subjectively and allegorically. Here Ibn Ezra observes that "the Torah was not given to the unintelligent; the intellect must be the intermediary between man and his God." The fourth type of commentary is that of the Jewish exegetes in the lands of Christendom. They erroneously take literally the homiletics of the Sages of the Talmud, who themselves had had no such intentions, and they pay no heed to the requirements of grammar. This review is capped by Ibn Ezra's own system. To him, the plain, straightforward meaning of the text, as determined by grammatical, philological, and contextual research, is decisive. However, in regard to the legal portions of the Torah, the expositions of the Rabbis are authoritative.

How seriously Ibn Ezra viewed his mission may be seen from the prefatory poem to the introduction to Genesis in which he effectively, if succinctly, epitomizes his basic approach. It rests, he explains, on the

twin foundations of grammatical analysis and intellectual acceptability. It is no wonder then that one of the most unusual features of the commentaries, unmatched by any other in the field, is the attention to grammatical detail. Our author had a passion for the Hebrew language, which he calls, "the sacred tongue" or even "our language," although Arabic was his native tongue. He was the first Spanish Jewish Bible commentator to compose his works solely in Hebrew, forced to do so, as we have pointed out, by his sojourning in the lands of Christendom, where the Jews were ignorant of Arabic. It is not easy to gauge the extent of their Hebrew learning, for the sources are contradictory. The chronicler, Abraham ibn Daud (1110-1180), goes so far as to say that Hebrew had become forgotten throughout the Diaspora,[23] but Solomon ibn Parhon (c.1160) asserts that the diversity of tongues characteristic of Christian lands stimulated Jews to use Hebrew as the one common language of communication.[24] At any rate, Abraham ibn Ezra's pioneering role in the transmission of the Jewish scholarship of Moslem Spain to Christian lands cannot be gainsaid. This was recognized by Judah ibn Tibbon (c.1120-c.1190), the great translator, who testified that "the exiles in France and throughout Christian lands do not know Arabic so that these [Arabic] works were a sealed book to them, inaccessible, unless translated into the sacred tongue... until the sage Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra arrived in their lands and aided them with short compositions."[25] What Ibn Tibbon is referring to is that Ibn Ezra influenced the intellectual lives of the Jewish communities of both the Moslem and Christian worlds. He personally translated from Arabic into Hebrew the three basic grammatical works of Judah ben David Hayyuj (c.950-c.1000), the real founder of the scientific study of biblical Hebrew whose researches inaugurated a new era in Hebrew scholarship.

Ibn Ezra also compiled his own grammar books in Hebrew. It may be true, as Prophiat Duran (d.1414) noted, that these contributed little new to the accumulated store of Hebrew grammatical knowledge;[26]

nevertheless, this does not diminish his achievement in educating generations of Jews in Christian lands in the basics of scientific Hebrew grammar and philology and in sensitizing them to the importance of these studies for the proper understanding of the biblical text, and for the advancement of the Hebrew language in general.

The agenda of Ibn Ezra is quite clear. As noted above, the prefatory short poem to the introduction to the commentary on Genesis clearly states that his work "is bound with cords of grammar." In the body of the introduction, in which he classifies the different approaches to biblical exegesis, his own system, he says, is first to explain the grammatical form of each difficult word before expounding the text as a whole. He kept to his plan for Genesis, but abandoned it for Exodus, perhaps because it was too innovative and not favorably received. He still injected a considerable amount of grammatical information into his verse by verse commentary, but integrated it into the broader exposition. His reliance on the productions of his predecessors, and his thorough familiarity with the field, are illustrated by the authorities he cites. In the historical preface to his *Sefer Mo'znayim*[27] he listed the "doyens of the holy tongue" from Saadiah (882-942) to his own day, sixteen in all.[28] Of these, all but one are cited,[29] with varying frequency, in his commentaries, whether favorably or critically. This meticulous regard for the correct understanding of the rules of Hebrew grammar led him, occasionally, to use his commentaries for wider instructional purposes. Thus, in his exposition of Ecclesiastes 5:1, he takes the opportunity to excoriate the liturgical poetry of the *paytanim*. The most prominent target of his verbal arrows is the renowned Eleazer Kallir (7th cent.?) whom he accuses of introducing egregious errors into Hebrew.[30]

It is clear that grammatical and philological research must rest upon manuscripts of undoubted accuracy, and Spanish Bible texts and Talmud editions early acquired enviable reputations for exactitude. By the tenth century, scholars could refer to the "accurate and ancient Spanish-

Tiberian Bibles."[31] In the thirteenth century, the German-Jewish talmudist, Meir Ha-Kohen, in his commentary on the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, spoke of the "excellent and exact books of Spain."[32] Jews would travel from Germany to Toledo just to acquire model Torah codices.[33] The great grammarian and masoretic scholar, Elijah Levita (1468-1549), at the very close of Spanish Jewish history, attested to the pre-eminence of Spanish Bibles,[34] and Jedidiah Solomon Norzi (1560-1626) used the Toledo Bible manuscript of 1277 for his great critical masoretic commentary.

The foregoing quotations illustrate the tradition in which Ibn Ezra was reared—the meticulous attention to every detail of the revered Hebrew text of Scripture. An excellent example is his note to Exodus 25:31:

> I have seen copies which the scholars of Tiberias examined, and fifteen of their elders swore that they thrice inspected every word and dot, every *plene* and defective [spelling], and lo, the word *tey'aseh* is written with a *yodh*; but I have not found the like in the books of Spain, France, and England (lit. "beyond the sea.").

Despite such careful precautions, it must be stated that, on account of his wanderings, Ibn Ezra did not always appear to have had access to the best codices since his commentaries contain erroneous spellings and vowels in biblical quotations.[35] Nevertheless, to him it was axiomatic that the masoretic vocalization and cantillation notes constituted the authoritative guide to the understanding of the text. In one of his early grammars, he admonishes the reader to follow the accentuation signs and to reject any interpretation not in accord with them.[36] This principle is reiterated several times, although he, himself, occasionally departs from it.[37] Surprisingly, he attaches no exegetical significance to the *plene* and defective spellings, even though the orthography plays an important role in both halakhic and midrashic interpretation. At the same time, he daringly asserts that there is a scribal error in the text of 1 Chronicles 28:17.[38] On the other hand, in taking note of such variants as *Dodanim* and *Rodanim* in Genesis 10:4 and I Chronicles 1:7, and of *Deuel* and *Reuel* in Numbers 1:14 and 2:4, Ibn Ezra rejects out of hand the suggestion that the graphic similarity of the consonants *resh* and *daleth* was a cause of confusion.[39] He prefers a midrashic harmonization that each of the individuals concerned possessed two names. On contextual grounds, he also prefers the masoretic text of Lamentations 4:18 over a proposed emendation based on assumed scribal inaccuracy in respect of the same two letters, and apparently supported by Proverbs 4:12.[40] His reverence for the received Hebrew text is so great that he even dismisses the notion of "scribal corrections" (*tiqqunei soferim*) mentioned in several rabbinic sources.[41]

In this connection, Ibn Ezra's reaction to the "substitution theory" of Jonah ibn Janaḥ (Abul Walid ibn Merwan, c.985-c.1040) is most instructive. This scholar had emphasized that the meaning of a given text must be established by the larger context in which it is set, and not simply by the import of the individual words. Barring textual emendation, contradictions between text and context could be resolved by the presumption that the biblical writers "had in mind one thing but wrote another," not mistakenly, but deliberately.[42] This "substitution theory" could take care of a large number of textual difficulties. Ibn Ezra refers to this theory, derogatively, several times: "Take special care not to believe the words of the grammarian who, in his book, mentions more than one hundred[43] terms, all of which, he says, are in need of substitution—perish the thought! This would not be correct in secular speech, let alone regarding the words of the living God. His book deserves to be burnt."[44] Again, in another of his grammatical works, he cites several examples of Ibn Janaḥ's substitutions, and concludes, "It is not as the blabberer says, and his book deserves to be burnt."[45] In his comment on Psalm 77:3, once more referring to Ibn Janaḥ's substitution to explain this verse, Ibn Ezra writes, "A great scholar authored an important book, but it contains errors," and he goes on to observe, "No

intelligent person speaks in this manner even in everyday speech let alone in the sacred books."

What is intriguing about these responses is that Ibn Ezra attacks the substitution theory on rational, not dogmatic grounds. He does not explain why Ibn Janaḥ's book should be consigned to the flames. After all, no emendations of the text were suggested, nor does he accuse that author of heresy. But he must have sensed that the theory, precisely on account of its implausibility, would be interpreted as camouflage for recognition of textual corruption and the need for emendation. And Ibn Ezra would have no part of it.[46]

No other commentator on the Bible pays as much attention to matters of usage, style and rhetoric as does Abraham ibn Ezra, and in this too he was far ahead of his time. His favorite hermeneutical tool is ellipsis.[47] He advises: "Know that there are places in the Bible which lack a word; I cannot count them because they are more numerous than locusts." By this he does not mean that the text is in need of correction, but that it is a characteristic of Hebrew style to use an economy of words, that is, to omit a word or a phrase when such can easily be inferred by the reader. One example is in Exodus 6:3: "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them [by] My name YHVH." Another is the extension of the negative particle in the first clause of a compound sentence to the second clause without needing to repeat it, as in Deuteronomy 33:6: "May Reuben live and not die, and may his numbers [not] be few." This type of stylistic concision may cause an entire word or phrase to be left to the imagination of the reader. For instance, Ibn Ezra understands Genesis 24:67 to be, "Isaac brought her to the tent, [the tent of] Sarah his mother." He applies this rule of ellipsis to explain many varieties of textual difficulties.[48]

Another feature of biblical style, according to Ibn Ezra, is transposition, whether of the natural or rational order of words, verses or even of pericopes. He cites the talmudic rule that "there is neither

anteriority nor posteriority in the Torah,"[49] and he repeats it verbatim[50] and in his own variant formulations, such as, "There are many verses in the Torah which more fittingly belong earlier,"[51] or "This is the way of the Torah—to pre-position or to postpone."[52] By these observations he means that the present sequence is not necessarily a governing factor in the interpretation of a passage. On other occasions he uses the term "inverted" or "invert!" in regard to the present word order.[53] He also notes that chronologically Genesis 11:29 and 12:1 are in reverse order, and similarly, that the report of the arrival of Jethro at the "mountain of God," as told in Exodus 18:1-12, is not in its proper time sequence within the larger pericope.

Notwithstanding the foregoing rule, Ibn Ezra also, selectively, adheres to the idea that the juxtaposition of verses or pericopes is meaningful and exegetically significant. Here, again, he could fall back on talmudic precedent.[54] Yet he is cautious in its application. He writes, "Before I begin to expound, I will articulate a rule: each norm and each commandment stands on its own; but if we can find a reason as to why this norm is juxtaposed to that, and this commandment to that, we shall [explain] the association as best we can. However, should we be unable to do so, we shall reckon that the deficiency is due to our own intellectual shortcoming."[55] This would seem to mean that Ibn Ezra fully accepts the notion that there is always an underlying reason for the immediate interconnections of the biblical passages and, indeed, he employs this principle as an exegetical tool many times.[56] In Deuteronomy 16:18 he goes as far as to say that even though each commandment stands by itself, their juxtaposition is meaningful even if the explanation is redolent of homiletics. Quite inconsistently, however, he vehemently attacks the Karaites for using the same interpretive device,[57] and he rejects Saadiah's attempt to explain the sequence of the psalms by means of the same principle.[58]

Chiasmus is another rhetorical figure which Ibn Ezra often highlights.

This devise was implicitly recognized in the Talmud in a passage explaining the structure of a mishnah.[59] Our author observes that "it is a rule in Hebrew that when two items are mentioned, the second is mentioned first," when repeated.[60] Ingeniously, he also applies this principle to explain the reversal of sequence in the repetition of an entire pericope.[61]

Resumptive repetition following an interval or interruption, the importance of which has only recently been properly recognized in biblical scholarship, is also a literary feature to which Ibn Ezra draws attention. For instance, Exodus 14:8 tells that Pharaoh gave chase to the Israelites, but verse 9 repeats that the Egyptians gave chase to them. Ibn Ezra comments that such is "the habit of the language." To reinforce this assertion, he cites Exodus 20:15 that "the people stood at a distance" and the repetition of the phrase in verse 18. Similarly, when the Gaddites and Reubenites petitioned Moses for land beyond the Jordan, the text in Numbers 32:2 and 5 twice has "they said." Ibn Ezra observes that this is due to the length of the intervening data.[62]

In light of Ibn Ezra's independence of mind and intellectual integrity, his attitude to rabbinic exegesis is of particular interest. As we saw, in the introduction to his commentary on Genesis, he sets forth his position quite unambiguously. He excoriates the Karaites and other sectarians "who do not believe in the words of the transmitters [of the tradition]" and who arbitrarily interpret the biblical text.[63] He tries to show the absurdity of attempting to understand and fulfill numerous biblical commandments without the oral tradition.[64] In describing his own approach, he admits that the Torah can bear multiple levels of meaning, but with regard to the halakhic material he plainly states, "If we determine two possible explanations [of a biblical passage], one of them being as the Rabbis expounded, we shall firmly rely on their true [understanding]... for our ancestors were true, and all their words are the truth..."[65] In the introduction to his shorter commentary on Genesis he

states, "with regard to the commandments and laws, I shall rely on our ancient [Sages]."

Ibn Ezra repeats these convictions many times in the course of his commentaries which are laced with statements such as these: "Unless one relies on the words of the oral law, a cultured person is powerless properly to understand one commandment in the Torah... All the commandments require the traditional explanation of our ancestors;"[66] "We cannot fully explain a commandment in the Torah unless we rely on the words of our Sages, for when we received the Torah from our ancestors we similarly received the oral law; there is no difference between them;"[67] "In a matter about which we find no tradition there is no point to our theorizing;"[68] "We shall rely on the received tradition and not depend on our deficient intellect;"[69] "The truth is as our Sages handed down;"[70] "We rely on the received tradition of our ancestors;"[71] "We believe solely in the words of our ancient [Sages]."[72] A particularly instructive observation is to be found in Ibn Ezra's comment to Exodus 21:20-21. This passage legislates that the slave who has been irreparably injured by his master must go free. The ethnic identity of the slave is not specified, and Ibn Ezra notes that the Karaites apply the law to an Israelite slave, contrary to rabbinic interpretation. He then comments, "If two interpretations are equally possible, the received tradition will determine the truth."

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Ibn Ezra in expressing these sentiments even though they often occur in the context of anti-Karaite polemic. There is abundant, independent evidence to show that he was a deeply religious man, thoroughly committed to the binding authority of rabbinic halakhah. His works on theological subjects, his *Igeret ha-Shabbat* in defense of the traditional rabbinic interpretation of when the day begins, not to mention his religious poetry,[73] all eloquently confirm this judgment.

At the same time, Ibn Ezra's reverential attitude to the rabbinic Sages

does not lead him to accept their interpretations uncritically when matters of halakhah are not involved, and sometimes even when they are. He makes a distinction between transmitted tradition (*qabbalah*) and what the Sages derived from the text by means of the exercise of logic and argumentation (*sevarah*).[74] In the fourth exegetical approach, as set forth in his introduction to Genesis, he deals at length with midrashic interpretations of various kinds which are mistakenly taken literally. In his theological work *Yesod Mora'* he states, "He who has a mind is able to recognize when they (the Rabbis) speak homiletically and when they say the straightforward meaning."[75] Thus, in reference to rabbinic interpretations, he notes that their citations of biblical passages may merely be to find scriptural support (*'asmakhta*)[76] and is not the real source of their exegesis.

Revealingly, he may imply that a traditional interpretation cannot be reconciled with the *sensus literalis* as he sees it. Thus, on Exodus 12:24 he comments that "were it not for the decisive, authentic tradition," reason would indicate that the daubing of the blood on the doorpost on the eve of Passover was intended to be an annual rite. Similarly, on Exodus 15:22 he states, "In my opinion," which he then conveys, such is the case, but if what the rabbinic sages understood is tradition then "we shall abandon our own logical conclusion and rely on tradition." In presenting his own views in contrast to that of the Sages, it is difficult to avoid the inference that he is critical of the latter, and that in passages such as these his acknowledgment of tradition is more a matter of form than conviction.[77]

There are instances of outright rejection of a well known rabbinic interpretation, but with no mention of its source. An example of this is the midrashic rendering of Genesis 28:11 which tells that when Jacob fled before his brother Esau, "he came upon a certain place." The Rabbis reinterpreted this phrase to mean, "he entreated the Omnipresent,"[78] based upon a varying signification of the verb[79] and a rabbinic epithet for

God.[80] Ibn Ezra dismisses this midrash on the ground that "place" as designation for God is never found in the Bible. Another instance is his denial that "house" is ever used as a figurative for a "wife" although this is explicitly stated in Mishnah *Yoma* 1:1, citing Leviticus 16:6 in support.[81] In connection with Exodus 33:18-23, which tells that Moses asked to see God's Presence, and God replied, "You shall see My back but My face must not be seen," the Sages interpreted the "back" to refer to "the knot of the *tephillin*."[82] On this midrash, our commentator observes, "Their words are correct, but not literally, as contemporary scholars [take it], for it is a deep mystery."

Ibn Ezra's clearest statement on his attitude to rabbinic homiletical exegesis is to be found in the *Safah Berurah*.[83] He writes as follows:

> You, my son, be mindful that our ancient [Sages], transmitters of the commandments, by themselves expounded pericopes, verses, even words and consonants by the method of homiletics, whether in the Mishnah, the Talmud or the *baraithot*. Without doubt, they knew the straightforward path as it is. Hence, they framed the rule that 'the scriptural verse may not depart from its straightforward meaning.'[84] The homiletical explanation imparts an additional meaning. But subsequent generations made the homiletical paramount...

In sharp contrast to his deferential respect for the classical Sages, Ibn Ezra often exhibits irreverent detachment from the post-talmudic exegetes. In his introduction to Genesis he asserted, "The Lord alone do I fear, and I show no partiality in [interpreting] the Torah."[85] It was precisely this mettlesome quality that appealed to the author of the apparently spurious letter supposedly sent by Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) to his son, recommending that he concentrate exclusively on the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, among the virtues of which he cited the latter's dauntless independence: "For the aforementioned scholar fears no man and shows no partiality to anyone."[86]

This bold stance of our exegete expresses itself in diverse ways, not least in caustic comments about those with whom he disagrees. This is immediately apparent in his introduction to Genesis where he casts a scornful eye upon the modes of scriptural interpretation pursued by his predecessors. He had familiarized himself with the works of a vast array of earlier scholars in the field, had subjected them to critical scrutiny and had formed very definite opinions about them. No previous or subsequent commentator on the Bible throughout the Middle Ages cited the works of so many authorities.[87] Often he does so without mentioning a name, simply referring to the views of "a scholar" or "scholars," to "a great Spanish scholar"[88] or "one of the scholars of Spain,"[89] to "a scholar in Rome,"[90] or "one of the scholars in Egypt,"[91] to "the scholars of Israel in the land of Greece"[92] or "the books of the scholars in France."[93] More often, he cites them by name, about forty authorities in all, including several Karaites.[94] The entire roster covers an astonishingly wide range of geographic origins: Persia, Iraq, Tiberias, Egypt, Kairouan, France, Italy and Spain.

The interpretations of such luminaries as Saadiah,[95] Jonah ibn Janaḥ[96] and Samuel b. Ḥofni,[97] although greatly admired, are rejected at times. The illustrious Rashi is mercilessly criticized: "He expounded the Torah homiletically believing such to be the literal meaning, whereas his books do not contain it except once in a thousand [instances]."[98] About other prominent French exegetes, like Samuel ben Meir[99] (RaShBaM 1085-1160) and Joseph ben Simon Kara (b. c.1160-70), both of whom belonged to the school of literal exegesis (*peshat*), Ibn Ezra has nothing to say although it is certain that his *Iggeret ha-Shabbat*[100] was composed in response to RaShBam's interpretation of Genesis 1:5,8. Apparently he did not value their exegetical contributions.

Throughout his commentaries, and even in his grammars, he habitually injects derisive epithets about other exegetes, describing them as "intellectually deficient,"[101] "mindless,"[102] "lacking in faith,"[103] "purblind,"[104] "empty-headed."[105] This polemical strain finds particularly harsh expression in his dismissal of heterodox and Karaite interpretations. He cites "a certain heretic, may his bones be ground to dust."[106] The same malediction is attached to the notorious freethinker, Hiwi Al-Balkhi (9th cent.), who is referred to by word-play as *ha-kalbi*, "the dog," with the additional imprecation "may his name rot."[107] A certain Yitsḥaqi is ridiculed with the question, "Was he given the name Yitsḥaqi so that all who hear [his comment] will laugh at him?"[108] He is also given the epithet "the blabberer."[109] Karaites are called "Sadducees" and also "the deniers."[110]

It may be asked why Ibn Ezra wanted to circulate, through his polemics and gibes, the names of commentators and their—in his opinion—misguided views and interpretations rather than consign them to oblivion by disregarding them. It may be supposed that he had in mind when citing them the educated elite segment of his readership among whom those writings had presumably gained currency. As a pedagogue, he felt it his duty to combat them. One may also speculate whether an additional motivation was not at work. He had to endure hostility and charges of heresy while in Italy, so that his overdrawn demurrers and overstated criticisms of others may have served as a device for deflecting such accusations.

This brings us to the matter of Ibn Ezra's involvement in historical criticism, an issue made prominent through Spinoza's interpretations, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*[111] (1670), of some of his comments on passages that give the appearance of being anachronisms in the Torah, and so later interpolations. On Deuteronomy 1:2 Ibn Ezra cryptically comments, "If you understand the deep meaning of the twelve, and also 'That day Moses wrote down this poem,' 'The Canaanites were then in the land,' 'In the mountain of the Lord it will be seen,' 'His bedstead is an iron bedstead,' you will recognize the truth."

"The twelve" refers to the closing chapter of Deuteronomy; unlike the

body of the book, which is couched in autobiographical style, these twelve verses speak of Moses in the third person, indicating that they were not written by him. In fact, on Deuteronomy 34:1 our commentator explicitly says, "In my opinion, Joshua wrote from this verse on, for once Moses ascended the summit of Pisgah, (where he died), he wrote no more; or he wrote prophetically (about himself)."[112]

Having stated his own considered opinion about the last chapter of the Torah, Ibn Ezra gives a list of the other passages he must also have taken to be later interpolations. He includes Deuteronomy 31:22, which also refers to Moses in the third person, and Genesis 12:6 (cf. 13:7) which verse implies that the Canaanites were no longer in the land at the time of the writer. On this last verse, Ibn Ezra comments, "Possibly, Canaan (grandson of Noah) seized the land of Canaan from someone else, but if it is not so, then I have a deep meaning, and the prudent one will keep silent." Genesis 22:14 records that in consequence of Abraham's naming the site of the binding of Isaac, Adonai-yireh, there arose a saying, "on the mountain of the Lord there is vision." But such an appellation would be applicable only subsequent to Solomon's Temple building. The reference to the iron casket of the king of Bashan, Deuteronomy 3:11, mentions that the relic survived in Rabbah of the Ammonites. The Israelites would not have placed it there after defeating the monarch. Hence the archaeological note suggests that it was written from the perspective of a later age, and is an interpolation.

In the light of his acceptance of the existence of anachronisms within the Torah, albeit an admission expressed cautiously and allusively, it is surprising that Ibn Ezra preferred a forced interpretation for another crux. Numbers 21:1-3 mentions the "king of Arad" who waged war on Israel, was soundly defeated, and his city utterly destroyed. Ibn Ezra points out that the "king of Arad" is included in the list of Joshua's captive kings given in Joshua 12:14, and he comments, "Many have said that this section (in Numbers) was written by Joshua... but the truth is

that there were two sites (bearing the same name)." In another comment, this one to Genesis 36:31-39, which lists "the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites," he severely condemns the unidentified Yitshaqi. He writes, "There are those who maintain that this section was written prophetically. Yitshaqi said in his book that this section was written in the days of (king) Jehoshaphat (of Judah)... Perish the thought... His book deserves to be burnt."

It is hard to establish the criterion by which Ibn Ezra differentiated acceptable from inadmissible anachronisms unless it be that his own esoteric mode of expression was directed to the cognoscenti who would know to separate matters of faith from matters of scholarship, whereas the explicit, unrestrained formulations of others who lacked the same sensitivity were felt to pose a threat to the common reader who would surely confuse the two.

Ibn Ezra engages in historical criticism in commenting on the Book of Isaiah. Here he was obviously influenced by Moses ha-Kohen ibn Chiquitilla (d. c.1080) in attributing the second part of the book, chapter 40 on, not to the eighth century B.C.E. prophet Isaiah, but to an anonymous prophet who lived centuries later, at the end of the period of the Babylonian exile when Cyrus of Persia was overthrowing the Babylonian empire and would soon liberate the Jewish captives and allow them to return to their homeland.[113]

The influence of Ibn Chiquitilla[114] also shows itself in Ibn Ezra's commentary to the Book of Psalms.[115] That scholar had assigned several of the compositions to the exilic period, and although Ibn Ezra does not accept all his interpretations, he, himself, cautiously explains Psalms 69 (verse 10), 85, 120, 137 as pertaining to the Babylonian exile.

It must be pointed out that Ibn Ezra is not always consistent in keeping to the strict limitations that he set for himself. He is often guilty of the very things which he regards as defects in the works of others. For instance, in his comment to Genesis 14:14 he rejects outright as

homiletical the notion expressed in Talmud and Midrash, that the "318 retainers" of Abram were really one individual, his servant Eliezer, the 'proof' of which is that the numerical value of the Hebrew consonants of that name add up to 318.[116] He explicitly maintains that "Scripture does not speak in (terms of) *gematria*." A remark of a similar kind is made in his comment to Exodus (short commentary). Yet in a long excursus to Exodus 33:21, the same author utilizes this very device in connection with the tetragrammaton, and again in his comments to Isaiah 21:8 and Zechariah 3:8. As to his criticism of the Geonim for introducing extraneous information from the secular sciences, he does the same thing by inserting digressions on such subjects as the Hebrew calendar,[117] the sacred divine names,[118] mathematics,[119] astronomy,[120] and astrology,[121] as well as some personal reminiscences.[122] Nevertheless, these discursive comments testify to a conviction that the Bible cannot be properly understood without recourse to a wide spectrum of varied branches of human knowledge. In this, too, he was quite ahead of his time. Furthermore, as was customary among the medievals, he made use of his commentaries as vehicles for the expression of his philosophic ideas. He did not author any systematic work on philosophy. He did compose a few booklets of minor significance on some specific theological matters.[123] However, numerous observations of a philosophic nature are scattered throughout his commentaries. When collected and collated,[124] these discursions demonstrate that he was essentially a Neoplatonist much influenced by Solomon ibn Gabirol whose allegorical expositions he cites,[125] even though in his introduction he discounts allegorical and symbolic interpretations. Apart from this, Ibn Ezra designates a biblical passage by the Hebrew term *sod* which conveys that it carries an esoteric meaning.[126] What that may be is generally unexplained, and the language that he uses is so veiled and succinct as to leave in doubt any interpretation placed upon it.

Of course, all this makes Ibn Ezra's commentaries that much more

intriguing. He left plenty of room for supercommentary.[127] Abraham ibn Ezra died in 1167. By mid-fourteenth century Judah Leon ben Moses Moskoni from Ocrida, Bulgaria, was able to report having inspected about thirty such supercommentaries, and in the first half of the seventeenth century Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591-1655) testified that he had seen twenty-four in Constantinople. The most important of all is the *Safenat Pa'neaḥ* authored by Joseph ben Eliezer Bonfils in Damascus (second half of the fourteenth century).[128]

NOTES

1. The text of this poem has been published several times: D. Kahana, *Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra* [Hebrew], Warsaw, 1894, vol. I, no. 2, pp. 9f.; H. Schirman, *Ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit bi-Sefarad u-vi-Provence*, Jerusalem, 1961, vol. I, 2, pp. 575-576; T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, New York, 1981, p. 353 [with English translation]; I. Levin, *Yalkut Abraham ibn Ezra*, New York-Tel Aviv, 1986, Nos. 39-40, p. 108, and notes, pp. 199-200.

2. Kahana, *op. cit.*, No. 4, pp. 10-11; Schirman, *op. cit.*, p. 576; Carmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-354; Levin, *op. cit.*, No. 44, p. 111, and notes, p. 209.

3. Kahana, *op. cit.*, No. 3, p. 10; Schirman, *op. cit.*, p. 575; Carmi, *op. cit.*, p. 353; Levin, *op. cit.*, No. 41, p. 109, and notes, pp. 201-202.

4. Schirman, *op. cit.*, p. 589.

5. Levin, *op. cit.*, No. 46, pp. 69-70.

6. See Ibn Ezra's "third approach," ed. A. Weiser, *Ibn Ezra's Commentary to the Torah* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1976, p. 139.

7. See the poem *Nedod hesir 'oni* in D. Rosin, *Reime und Gedichte des Abraham Ibn Esras*, Breslau, 1885-1894, I, No. 58, pp. 87-98, esp. lines 117-120; Kahana, *op. cit.*, No. 14, p. 26. See U. Simon in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Bible and Ancient Near East*, Jerusalem, 1985 [Hebrew section], p. 25.

8. Deut. 32:4.

9. Deut. 29:19; cf. Naḥmanides' comment on Lev. 27:24.

10. Exod. 27:21; Ps. 51:2, and David Kimḥi's comment to I Sam. 27:10.

11. Deut. 21:17.

12. Lev. 20:20.

13. See short commentary to Exod. 28:41.

14. Exod. 31:3. S.R. Driver, *A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs Attributed to Abraham ibn Ezra*, [reprint] Jerusalem, 1962, who notes that this was really authored by Moses Kimḥi.

15. Deut. 23:2

16. Lev. 26:34; cf. David Kimḥi to 2 Chron. 30:18.

17. E.g. on Ps. 69:19; 80:16; 116:16; 119:103; Mal. 1:11. See U. Simon, *Abraham Ibn Ezra's Two Commentaries on the Minor Prophets* [Hebrew], Ramat-Gan, 1989, I, p. 30, n. 48 (on Hos. 1:6); p. 36, n. 34 (on Hos. 2:9); p. 38, n. 46 (on Hos. 2:13); p. 46, n. 10 (on Hos. 3:2); p. 52, n. 12 (on Hos. 4:6); p. 59, n. 50 (on Hos. 4:15).

18. The printed texts read here Modvil, which has been variously interpreted as Monteville in Normandy, and Marvil or Morvil in England; see E. Z. Melammed, *Bible Commentators* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1975, p. 520, n. 9. However, C. Roth, *The History of the Jews in England*, Oxford, 1941, p. 126, identifies this glossator as Joseph de Moreil.

19. Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

20. Melammed, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

21. E.g. Exod. 12:9; Mal. 1:11.

22. See Weiser, *op. cit.*, I, p. 1 of text. The order of the four approaches differs somewhat in the second introduction, ibid., pp. 137-146; see U. Simon, *op. cit.*, n. 7, pp. 23-42.

23. *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah*, ed. G. Cohen, Philadelphia, 1967, p. 73 [Hebrew], pp. 101-102 [English].

24. *Maḥberet He-'Arukh*, ed. S. G. Stern, Pressburg, 1844, p. 75.

25. See *Sefer Ha-Riqmah*, ed. M. Wilensky (Introduction of Ibn Tibbon), Jerusalem, 1964, pp. 4-5.

26. *Ma'aseh Efod*, eds. J. Friedlaender and J. Kohn, Vienna, 1865, p. 44.

27. Ed. W. Heidenheim, Offenbach, 1791, introduction.

28. See W. Bacher, *Abraham ibn Esra als Grammatiker*, Budapest, 1891, pp. 173-187; Hebrew translation by A. Z. Rabinovitz, [reprint] Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 127-140.

29. The sole exception is David ibn Hajjar of Granada (12th century).

30. A. M. Haberman, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut Ve-ha-Shirah*, Ramat-Gan, 1970, I, pp. 47, 48, 74, 198, points out that in his criticism of Kallir, Ibn Ezra speaks as a grammarian and lexicographer, not as a *paytan*, for in his own religious poetry he perpetrated the same offenses that he criticized.

31. *Teshubot Talmidei Menaḥem Le-Dunash*, ed. S. G. Stern, Vienna, 1870, pp. 67-68.

32. *Hagahot Maimoniyot to Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Sefer Torah 8(2).

33. H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*, London, 1958, p. 13.

34. Ibid.

35. Friedlaender, *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra,* London, 1877, pp. 140-141.

36. Cited by Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 17. See Ibn Ezra to Gen. 3:22; Isa. 1:9; Ps. 20:10; contrast, e.g., RaShBaM to Gen. 49:9, Kimḥi to Hos. 12:12; Friedlaender, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

37. E.g. Eccl. 10:6. Friedlaender, *op. cit.*, p. 129, n. 1, posits that Ibn Ezra's copy of the Bible may have contained different accentuation.

38. So in his comment on Exod. 25:29, on which see Naḥmanides' commentary *ad. loc.*

39. On this problem, see Fr. Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament*, Berlin, 1920, section 104 a-c, pp. 105-107.

40. Cf. the masoretic note to Lam. 4:18 and Kuzari III, 27.

41. See Ibn Ezra's introduction to Genesis, "fifth approach," his *Sefer Saḥot*, ed. G. Lippmann, Fürth, 1827, p.74, and his comments to Num. 11:15; 12:12; Job 7:20; 32:3. He mostly ignores the traditions about "corrections of the scribes" (I Sam. 3:13; I Kings 12:15; Jer. 2:11; Ezek. 8:17; Hab. 1:12; Zech.

2:12; Mal. 1:13; Psalms 106:20). On the "corrections," see S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, New York, 1962, pp. 28-37.

42. *Sefer Ha-Riqmah*, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-335; see N. M. Sarna, "Hebrew and Biblical Studies in Medieval Spain," *The Sephardi Heritage*, ed. R. D. Barnett, London, 1971, pp. 338-339, 344-349.

43. M. Soloveitchik and Z. Rubashov, *Toledot Biqqoret Ha-Miqra'*, Berlin, 1925, p. 33, estimate that Ibn Janaḥ's "substitutions" encompassed about two-hundred emendations.

44. *Sefer Saḥot*, *op. cit.*, p. 72a.

45. *Safah Berurah*, ed. G. Lippmann, Fürth, 1839, pp. 9a-b.

46. On Ibn Ezra's attitude to the biblical Hebrew text, see U. Simon, *Bar Ilan* 6 (1968), pp. 191-236.

47. See Friedlaender, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134; Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 568-572.

48. Exod. 9:30; 18:25; 24:10; Lev. 5:1; Num. 23:7; Deut. 20:19; 31:16; Amos 9:13; Ob. 13; Ps. 15:2; 80:5; 84:9; see Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 561-568.

49. On this rule, see *Talmudic Encyclopedia* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1948, I, cols. 302-303. This rule is the last of the "Thirty-Two Rules" of aggadic exegesis attributed to R. Yose ha-Galilee, but actually authored by the Gaon Samuel ben Ḥofni who based himself on Saadiah's commentaries; see M. Zucker, *PAAJR* 23 (1950), pp. 1-39.

50. Gen 6:3; Exod. 16:15; Lev. 25:1.

51. Exod. 19:19; cf. 16:32.

52. Eccl. 12:2.

53. Gen. 51:57; Lev. 4:22; Hos. 7:4; Amos 9:12; Ps. 112:5.

54. *Ber.* 23a; *Sotah* 2a; *Yev.* 4a; *Taan.* 26b; *MQ* 28a; *Zev.* 88b; *Arakh.* 16a.

55. Exod.21:2.

56. Exod. 22:4,5,6,14; Lev. 19:27-28; Num. 15:1; Isa. 40:1; see Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 538-539.

57. Deut. 24:6.

58. U. Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms*, Ramat-Gan, 1982, pp. 197, 241.

59. *Ber.* 2a.

60. See his comment to Exod. 17:7 where he cites, in addition, Josh. 24:4; Joel 3:3; Ps. 74:16; Ruth 1:3.

61. Exod. 25:22 and 35:11.

62. He makes the same remark to Lev. 16:11 and Deut. 29:22.

63. Introduction to Genesis, the "second approach."

64. *Yesod Mora'*, Jerusalem, 1955, p. 1, third paragraph.

65. Introduction to Genesis, "third approach."

66. *Yesod Mora'*, *op. cit.*

67. Exod. 21:24.

68. Exod. 32:15.

69. Lev. 22:22.

70. Num. 6:21.

71. Deut. 14:28.

72. Deut. 22:12.

73. I. Levin, *The Sacred Poetry of Abraham Ibn Ezra* [Hebrew], vols. I-II, Jerusalem, 1976-1980.

74. Gen. 22:4; Exod. 9:10; 25:5; cf. the question of Abbaye to R. Joseph in *Eruv.* 60a (cf. 3a), but contrast Ibn Ezra's comments to Exod. 12:24; 15:22; Amos 5:25.

75. *Yesod Mora'*, *op. cit.*, section 6, p. 9.

76. Gen. 1:26; 16:3; 18:28; Exod. 20:21; 21:7; Lev. 19:20; 22:7.

77. Gen. 3:23; 25:1; 37:15; Exod. 1:8; 9:10.

78. *Ber.* 26a; *Gen. R.* 68,9. Ibn Ezra reiterates this in his introduction to Esth. 4:14.

79. Gen. 23:8; Isa. 47:3; Jer. 7:16; 27:18; Ruth 1:16.

80. See A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, London, 1927, I, pp. 92-93.

81. Cf. *Shab.* 118b; *Git.* 52a.

82. *Ber.* 7a.

83. *Op. cit.*, pp. 4b-5a.

84. *Shab.* 63a; *Yev.* 11b, 24a.

85. "Fifth approach," ed. Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 142, second introduction.

86. Kahana, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 82-86 maintains the authenticity of this letter, but see now I. Shailat, *Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides* [Hebrew], Maaleh Adumim, 1988, II, pp. 697-698. I owe this reference to Professor Marvin Fox. For an English rendering, see L. D. Stitskin, *Letters of Maimonides*, New York, 1977, p. 156.

87. See Weiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-71; Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 669- 678.

88. Gen. 1:14.

89. Ps. 51:20.

90. Lev. 23:11.

91. Ps. 106:47.

92. Jonah 1:2.

93. Introduction to Zechariah.

94. Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 676-678.

95. Introduction to Genesis, "first approach"; Gen. 1:2; Exod. 2:9; Lev. 23:11.

96. Gen. 20:2; Exod. 19:12. On Dan. 1:1 Ibn Ezra cites several examples of supposed substitutions, and says of him, "Who says thus may be reckoned among the crazies."

97. Introduction to Genesis, "first approach"; cf. Gen. 28:11.

98. *Safah Berurah*, *op. cit.*, p. 5a; cf. Gen. 32:9; Exod. 9:30; 12:6; 15:2; 16:15; 18:26; 19:2; 23:19; 26:18,31; 28:6,36. Ibn Ezra did not always cite Rashi accurately; see Melammed, *op. cit.*, pp. 672-673. His authorship of the poem in praise of Rashi (Kahana, No. 34, p. 59) is discounted entirely by Simon, *op. cit.*, (above, n. 7), p. 41, nn. 62, 63.

99. See, however, A. Margaliot, "The Relationship Between Rashbam's Commentary and Ibn Ezra's Commentary" [Hebrew], *Sefer Asaf*, Jerusalem, 1953, pp. 357-369.

100. On this issue, see U. Simon, *Bar Ilan* 3 (1965), pp. 130-138.

101. Gen. 32:33.

102. Gen. 15:13; cf. 20:19.

103. Deut. 33:2. On the identity of the "mindless," see Simon, *Bar Ilan* 3, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-111.

104. Gen. 25:34.

105. Gen. 31:18.

106. Exod. 20:21.

107. Exod. 14:27; 16:13; 34:29.

108. A play on Gen. 21:6.

109. Heb. *ha-mahabil*; cf. Gen. 36:31-32; Job 42:16.

110. Introduction to Genesis, "second approach"; cf. Lev. 7:20; 19:20.

111. Chapter 8.

112. Here, Ibn Ezra has circumspectly combined two different views given in *BB* 15a, *Men.* 30a, *Sifre Deut.* 34, para. 357, 15, ed. Horovitz-Finkelstein, p.427.

113. See to Isa. 40:1; 41:4,23; 42:1,8; 49:7; 55:6; U. Simon, "Ibn Ezra Between Medievalism and Modernism: The case of Isa. 40-66," *VTS* 36 (1985), pp. 257-271.

114. On Ibn Chiquitilla's commentary on Psalms, see U. Simon, *op. cit.*, (*supra*, in n. 58), pp. 96-119.

115. Ibid., pp 121-248.

116. *Ned.* 32a; *Gen. R.* 43:2.

117. Ibn Ezra authored *Sefer Ha-'Ibbur*, ed. S. H. Halberstam, Lyck, 1874, on intercalation. See his lengthy comments to Exod. 12:2; Lev. 23:3. See also N. Ben-Menahem, *Tarbiz* 27 (1958), p. 103; A. A. Akavia, "Sefer Ha-'Ibbur Le'R. Abraham ibn Ezra," *Tarbiz* 26 (1957), pp. 304-316.

118. Ibn Ezra authored *Sefer Ha-Shem*, ed. G. H. Lippmann, Fürth, 1834; see Weiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-36.

119. Ibn Ezra composed *Sefer Ha-'Eḥad* (on the numbers 1-9), eds. S. Pinsker and M. A. Goldhart, Odessa, 1867, and *Sefer Ha-Mispar* (on arithmetic), ed. M. Silberberg, Frankfurt A.M., 1895.

120. See I. M. Millas, "The Work of Abraham ibn Ezra in Astronomy" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 9 (1938), pp. 306-322. He also published a work on the subject entitled, *Ta'amei Ha-Luḥot*, and another on the astrolabe, called *Kli Neḥoshet*, Koenigsberg, 1845. Ibn Ezra includes astronomical notes in his comments to Gen. 1:14; Lev. 25:9; Isa. 14:12; Amos 5:8; Job 9:9; 38:31; Eccl. 1:3,5. He refers to the Alexandrian astronomer and mathematician Ptolemaeus and his system in Lev. 25:9 *et al.*

121. See R. Levy, *The Astrological Works of Abraham Ibn Ezra*, Baltimore, 1927.

122. E.g. Exod. 1:7; 10:22; 15:13; Ruth 2:17.

123. *Sefer Ha-Shem*, *op. cit.*, *Yesod Mora'*, *op. cit.*

124. This was done by N. Krochmal, in *The Writings of Nachman Krochmal* [Hebrew], ed. S. Rawidowicz, second enlarged edition, London-Waltham, 1961, pp. 285-394; D. Rosin, "Die Religionsphilosophie Abraham ibn Esra's," MGWJ 42 (1898); 43 (1899); I. Husik, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, Philadelphia, 1944, pp. 187-196; J. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, transl. D. W. Silverman, Philadelphia, 1964, pp. 118-120. See also R. Jospe, *Bible Exegesis as a Philosophic Literary Genre: Abraham ibn Ezra and Moses Mendelssohn*, [prepublication copy] Jerusalem, 1991.

125. E.g. Gen. 3:1; 28:12; Num. 22:28; Isa. 43:7; Ps. 16:2; 143:10; 150:6. The source of these citations is unknown.

126. Gen. 3:24; Exod. 15:2; 16:28; Lev. 19:19; Ps. 11:7; Job 23:13.

127. See N. Ben Menahem, *'Areshet* 3 (1961), pp. 71-92.

128. Ed. D. Herzog, Cracow-Heidelberg-Berlin, 1912-1930.