lays great stress, is expressed in the rule that every form of the verb implies a verbal noun.[1] The strangest and most irregular instances of ellipsis are those in which one of two co-ordinate phrases are supposed to be omitted.[2] Instances of the ordinary form of ellipsis are of course not wanting, as, *e.g.*, the omission of the relative pronoun,[3] of verbs easily understood,[4] of nouns in the subjective[5] or objective case.[6]

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[1] This rule is frequently repeated by Ibn Ezra in the words כל פועל אם לא נזכר השם הוא בכח הדבור. In cases of disagreement between the subject and the verb of a phrase as regards gender or number, an agreement is effected by means of this rule. Comp. Is. v. 3; vii. 7. The standard example for this rule is וב׳ יו׳ תקום עצה = וברב יועצים תקום (Prov. xv. 22). By the same rule he explains the use of the singular in the word וַתְּצַפְּנוּ (Jos. ii. 4), following the phrase ותקח האשה את האנשים "and the woman took the two men." According to Ibn Ezra it is not to be translated "and she hid him," or "them," but "and she concealed it," namely, the taking of the two men. The irregularity of the subject and the predicate disagreeing with regard to the number is generally explained by supplying before the subject the words כל אחד מ or כל אחת מ "each of." Comp. Is. ii. 11; iii. 12; xiii. 22, etc.

[2] In the shorter recension of the Comm. on Exodus he explains תקראנה מלחמה = תקראנה מלחמה וצרה (Exod. i. 10); in the other recension he says that תקראנה מלחמה is the same as תקראנה קורות מלחמה, according to the rule mentioned, note 1, ותשב תמר אבלה = ותשב תמר ושוממה ושוממה (2 Sam. xiii. 20).

[3] *E.g.* אשר מרחוק ברחו=מרחוק ברחו (Is. xxii. 3); כמים לים מכסים=כמים אשר לים מכסים (*ib.* xi. 9) etc.

[4] *E.g.* באזני אמר יי = באזני יי (Is. v. 9).

[5] Whenever the third person, singular or plural, is used in the sense of the indefinite "they" or "one," Ibn Ezra supplies the participle of the verb, *e.g.* אשר עשו לו העושים = אשר עשו לו (Is. ii. 20); ישא את חיל דמשק=ישא הנושא את ח׳ ד׳ (*ib.* viii. 4), etc. Comp. note 1. This is sometimes also the case when a definite subject is to be inferred from the context; *e.g.* ושפט בין הגוים = ושפט השופט בין הגוים (Is. ii. 4); the instance frequently quoted is אשר ילדה היולדת אותה = אשר ילדה אותה (Num. xxvi. 59). Comp. Is. iii. 10.

[6] *E.g.* ישאו קול = ישאו (Is. xlii. 11). When Hiphil forms of transitive verbs are used in an intransitive sense, an objective case is generally supplied as נפש or a similar expression; *e.g.* והשקט נפשך = והשקט (Is. vii. 4); ימיש את עצמו = ימיש (*ib.* xlvi. 7).

He rarely finds a letter[1] or a word[2] to be quite superfluous (נוסף ללא ענין or נוסף לְלֹא צורך); for phrases apparently redundant are frequently explained to be epexegetical additions (תוספת ביאור).[3]

The prominent part given to the figure of the ellipsis in the exegesis, harmonises well with the elliptical style chosen by Ibn Ezra in all his works, especially in the Commentaries; mere allusions being frequently met with instead of explanations. The ways of arguments and researches are shown to the reader, who is expected to complete what the author had but commenced, and to find the problem (סוד), indicated in the well-known phrase "he who is wise will understand it" (והמשכיל יבין).[4]

This abruptness in style, and the frequent exhortation that the reader should think and search, had the effect that the Commentaries were held to be mysterious. Sometimes it seems that the author, instead of enunciating his ideas in a direct way, had preferred to let them be discovered by the reader; then again, as if from fear of giving offence,

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[1] Comp. Comm. on Is. xiii. 9; xxxii. 1; Translation of Commentary, etc., page 66, note 10; page 148, note 1.

[2] See Ibn Ezra on Is. xxx. 13; xxxiii. 23. מצאנו בל׳ הקודש מלות שהם מענין אחד שניהם נחברים והאחד יספיק "We sometimes find in Hebrew two synonyms, although one would suffice" (Comm. on Exod. xiv. 11).

[3] *E.g.* ותראהו את הילד "And she saw him, viz., the child" (Exod. ii. 6); יביאה את תרומת יי "He shall bring it, viz., the offering of the Lord" (*ib.* xxxv. 5); שבעתים כאור שבעת הימים "sevenfold, *i.e.*, like the light of seven days together" (Is. xxx. 26). Comp. also the remarks of Ibn Ezra on Exod. iii. 14, where the relative אשר is explained to indicate the epexegesis which follows, and to have the meaning of "that is."

[4] והמשכיל יבין Gen. v. 24; Is. xl. 1. והמבין סוד השם יאמין "He who understands the meaning of the name of God will believe" (Gen. xvii. 1); והמשכיל ידום "he who is wise will silently meditate" (Gen. xii. 6); ואם תבין סוד וגו׳ תכיר האמת "and if you understand the true meaning of . . . you will find the truth" (Deut. i. 1). Sometimes he declares plainly, ולא אוכל לפרש למה זה כי סוד מופלא הוא "I cannot explain why this is so, for it is too difficult" (Gen. xxviii. 14; xxxi. 19); ואנשי מדות יבינו זאת "Mathematicians will understand this" (Gen. i. 1).

hesitated to divulge his new theories, and withheld them for another occasion, stating "I shall explain this when we come to," etc., but when we refer to the passage thus pointed out, we are not unfrequently disappointed in finding a mere allusion of the same character, instead of the expected full explanation.[1] Hence the charges of dissimulation frequently brought against Ibn Ezra. It cannot be denied that he established new theories in opposition to the religious principles of his contemporaries; but he certainly had boldness enough to teach and to spread them.[2] He

[1] The following examples may serve as an illustration:—לפנות ערב (Gen. xxiv. 63) is explained in loco clearly enough; but the remark is added ובפי כי תצא אבארנו באר היטב "and in the portion כי תצא I shall explain it well"; but in the Comm. on Deuteronomy (xxiii. 12), no additional light is thrown on the phrase לפנות ערב. The meaning of משמרתי חקותי ותורותי (Gen. xxvi. 5) is fully given in loco; but the author promises ובפסוק התורה והמצוה אבארם היטב "and in Exod. xxiv. 11, I shall fully explain these terms." Neither in the larger nor in the shorter recension of the Comm. on Exodus (xxiv. 11) an explanation of חקותי is found. In the Comm. on Leviticus (xix. 19), however, the very laconic remark is made והנה ארמוז לך סוד, דע כי השלם שלם מאוד על כן כתוב באברהם וישמור משמרתי חקותי ותורותי "I shall now make mention of an important principle. Know that he who has attained to a high degree of intellectual distinction, is also morally perfect; therefore it is said concerning Abraham (who lived long before the Law was revealed on Mount Sinai), 'And he kept My charge, My statutes, and My laws.'" The reason why the priest is commanded to sprinkle the blood of certain sacrifices seven times is, in the Comm. on Lev. iv. 6, promised to be given in the Comm. on Num. xxiii. 1; but in the latter passage nothing is explained, and the mystery is again only alluded to in the phrase יש סודות עמוקים וגו' והמשכיל יבין "deep mysteries are hidden in these words, etc., the wise men will understand them." The prohibition of certain marriages is, in the Comm. on Leviticus, reasonably connected with the general duty of man to keep himself holy; the author, not contented with that explanation, adds ובפי כי תצא אגלה לך סוד סתום וחתום "and in כי תצא I shall reveal unto thee a very difficult problem." In the passage referred to, the promised revelation, though not entirely withheld, is not made in the manner which might be expected. There are other instances of references which appear to be incorrect; perhaps the author changed his mind, and withheld from the reader what he previously intended to disclose, or the copyist made some mistake with regard to the reference. Comp. Kerem Chemed, iv., page 103. Geiger, Zeitschrift, i., 310, *sqq.*

[2] Compare p. 121, note 3.—In the Introduction to the Pentateuch, the author

knew well the difficulty of making his theories properly understood,[1] and the extent of danger to which he exposed the faith of his brethren if they misunderstood him. The readers of his works, and the audience of his expositions were composed of two classes, the general public[2] and the privileged few who enjoyed a higher education.[3] His teachings were, therefore, of two kinds, exoteric and esoteric. Thus, *e.g.*, we find the plural in the noun אלהים first explained in a popular way as pluralis majestatis, and then philosophically, as

declares ולא אשא פנים בתורה, "I will show no partiality in the exposition of the Law." However sporadic the allusions are from which we gather information concerning his philosophical system, they are sufficient to show clearly his opposition to many of the views and opinions of his co-religionists, and especially of the Rabbinical authorities in France and Italy. He is not equally reserved in all points; his theory of the name of God, although called סוד השם is clearly explained, frequently referred to, and made the basis for many parenetic remarks. His opinion of the general composition of the Universe, and of the subordination of the various parts to each other, is not less frequently met with, and is given in a language sufficiently clear. On other points, however, on the significance of the Tabernacle as a place appointed for communion between man and his Creator; on the power of the Seraphim; on the meaning of אֱלֹהֵי נֵכָר "strange gods," and on similar questions, our author is more reticent, and avows "I cannot be explicit." The line of demarcation between the service in the Tabernacle, as conceived by Ibn Ezra, and idolatry, seems to have been very faint, and he was constantly afraid lest he should be misunderstood by his disciples or hearers.

[1] The well known test, that anything which we do not know how to express clearly to others is not clear to ourselves, may be considered as correct so long as we converse with our equals; and Ibn Ezra was perhaps sufficiently explicit and clear when he conferred with men of his calibre, or with his advanced pupils. But it is difficult to solve metaphysical problems scientifically, and yet in a popular, intelligible style. The Bible is a popular book, open to all who wish to derive benefit from it. Public exposition of the Bible was introduced amongst the Jews at a very early period, and Jews always found delight in listening to the expounders of the Bible. It was, therefore, natural that Ibn Ezra expected to be heard or read by all alike, by the learned as well as by the laity.

[2] המון עם (Gen. i. 1). For the public at large, he retains, as long as he conscientiously can do it, the received explanations.

[3] חכמים, משכילים, אנשי תושיה etc. To them he entrusts his new suggestions and views.

denoting "angels," but also "God" by way of metonymy;[1] the Ten Commandments are first explained according to the decision which is generally accepted, and then his peculiar view is introduced by saying "I have hitherto explained them according to the old theory; my opinion, however, is, that 'I am the Lord,' etc., is not part of the Ten Commandments; but that it is rather the source from which the Ten Commandments emanated." The educated understood such hints, and were encouraged by them to proceed further in their researches, while the laymen took no notice of them, because they were for them in form and substance a *terra incognita*. The double method of exposition is not consistently maintained; it is only employed in the explanation of the more difficult passages of the Bible,[2] while,

[1] אחר שמצאנו אלוה ידענו כי אלהים לי רבים ושרש זה מדרך הלשון, כי כל לשון יש לו דרך כבוד וגו׳ ומדרך התושיה ידענו כי הדבורים יקראו שפה בעבור שיראו שממנו יצאו וגו׳ ובעבור היות כל מעשה יי ביד המלאכים עושי רצונו נקרא כן "Knowing that the singular form אלוה occurs, we are satisfied that אלהים is the plural. The use of the plural can be explained grammatically to indicate distinction. Every language has its peculiar way of expressing distinction, etc. Philosophically it may be explained in the following way:—we call speech שפה, lit. "lip," because it appears to come from the lips, etc. Thus God is called אלהים "angels," because all His work appears to be done through the angels, His ministers."

[2] The usual division of the Decalogue is given, and the Commandments are explained in accordance with that division; but at the same time he indicates how he would divide them according to his own opinion.—Similarly he treats the verses, Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. He first attempts to enumerate the so-called thirteen attributes of God, and even to rectify the method of others in that respect; but he also adds, that in reality those verses do not contain thirteen attributes—that he himself could only count six different attributes.—After giving a literal explanation of Gen. ii. and iii., he alludes to the allegorical interpretation of these chapters, as containing the history of man in general, or the principles of psychology. He is more explicit on this subject in the second recension of the Commentary on Genesis. Compare והנה גם התורה ביארה למשכיל דבר עץ החיים והנה יש כח לנצח הכרובים והאוכל מעץ החיים וחי לעולם כמלאכי השרת "the meaning of 'the tree of life' is clearly indicated to him who understands it. Man has the power to conquer the cherubim, and he who eats of the tree of life can live for ever, like the ministering angels" (On Deut. xxxii. 39). See page 46, note 3.

in general, only one of the methods is offered. In a great many cases Ibn Ezra may thus be acquitted of the charge of inconsistency. In some points, however, he doubtlessly altered his opinion; at one time he adopted a view which another time he most emphatically rejected.[1] Such changes of opinion are only found with regard to subjects of minor importance; but in the chief features of his theological and philosophical theories he betrays no inconsistency.[2]

The restlessness of Ibn Ezra, his wanderings from place to place, and the consequent haste with which he composed his works, left their traces, especially in the inaccuracy of biblical quotations. At first sight the inaccuracies seem to be interesting instances of readings at variance with the received Masoretic text of the Bible. Seven quotations[3] of this kind are contained in the list of *variæ lectiones* culled from the Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah, and affixed to the English translation of that Commentary.[4] The question, however, arises, are all these different readings

[1] Compare the explanation of the vav in והארץ as given in the Commentary on Gen. i. 2, and as advocated in Iggereth hashshabbath; also the application of the ellipsis to the words ותכל דוד (=ותכל נפש דוד) in Mosnaïm, and the rejection of this explanation in the Commentary on Deut. xxviii. 32, with the satirical remark ואינו חסר נפש כאשר פירש חסר דעת.

[2] His opposition to proposed emendations in the text of the Pentateuch, his adherence to tradition, combined with an advocacy of freedom of thought and research, his view concerning angels, concerning the immortality of man's soul, etc., are the same in the earlier Commentaries on Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, as in the Commentaries on the Pentateuch, on Daniel, the Prophets, etc., which were written later; the same in his grammatical works as in his theological discourses.

[3] In the Comm. on Is. xxv. 12, שכב נפל instead of נפל שכב (Jud. v. 27); vi. 10, הַקְטֵר instead of קַטֵּר (1 Sam. ii. 16); vi. 2, עומדים instead of עמד, (1 Ki. xxii. 19); xxiv. 14 and xlii. 11, וַתַּעֲבוֹר instead of וַיַּעֲבוֹר, (1 Ki. xxii. 36); xxxi. 5, רצות ושבות instead of רצוא ושוב, (Ez. i. 14); lx. 14, ובחמתך instead of ואל בחמתך, (Ps. vi. 1); xlv. 4, אֶקְרָא instead of קְרָאתִי, (Is. xliii. 1.)

[4] To that list one instance must be added, viz., וְאַחֲרִיתֵךְ instead of וּשְׁאֵרִיתֵךְ, (xiv. 30).

really based on the authority of an authentic copy of the Bible. A closer examination of the above-mentioned list shows that they have very little critical value or none at all. For one of those seven instances is quoted correctly by our author in another work;[1] the rest of them not forming an essential part of the explanation, may well be considered as a *lapsus calami.*[2] True to his principle, that the Hebrew retains in memory only the sense of the words, but does not trouble himself much about the words themselves,[3] he appears to have contented himself with remembering the meaning of a phrase which he knew more *ad sensum* than *verbatim.* Thus it may have happened that in some quotations the expression by which the text was explained, was employed in lieu of the original words.[4]

As regards the *variæ lectiones* on which Ibn Ezra establishes his exegetical remarks *in loco*, some are not distinctly mentioned in the Commentary, and though well supported by argument, are still doubtful.[5] Others may be referred to such mistakes in Ibn Ezra's copy of the Bible, as

1 הַקְּטֹר, Tsachoth, ed. Lipm., p. 63 b.

2 Such are שכב נפל, עמדים, etc. Even in citing in loco the words which are to be explained, mistakes may have been made, as יגיד v. יאזין; שלומך v. שלמי.

3 Comp. p. 112, note 1.

4 Thus he wrote הַקְּטֹר, because in the phrase קַטֵּר יַקְטִרוּן he explained the inf. piel to be used in lieu of the inf. hiphil; ותעבור because in the phrase ויעבור הרנה the masc. is irregularly used for the fem., etc. In some instances Ibn Ezra appears to have hastily added further remarks when he revised his Commentary, without consulting the text. He had first explained כבוד (lxvi. 12) by חיל, and then he cites Deut. viii. 17, as a parallel to חיל; וישאריתך (xiv. 30) he had first explained by ואחריתך, and then he illustrates the meaning of the latter by citing Daniel xi. 4.

5 מִתִּי v. מְרִי (Is. v. 13); וַיִּסְרֵנִי v. וְיִפְרֵנִי (ib. viii. 11); אַנְחָתָהּ v. אֲנָחָה (xxi. 2); סְעִיפָיָה v. סְעִפָּה (xxvii. 10); תִּרְגַּזְנָה v. רגזה (xxxii. 10); אַדְּרָה v. אַדְּרָה (xxxviii. 15); גֵּיא v. גֵּיא (xl. 4); דָּעֲכוּ v. דְּעֲכוּ (xliii. 17); לַחְמָכֶם v. לַחְמֵכֶם (xlvii. 14); וְתָאֳרוֹ v. וְתוֹאָרוֹ (lii. 14); תִּרְאִי v. תִּרְאִי (lx. 5); תִּשְׁעַשְׁעוּ v. תִּשְׁעֲשָׁעוּ (lxvi. 12). See translation of Comm. and notes thereto.

are frequently found in MSS. written by copyists who read kamets like patach, tsere like segol, etc.[1] Ibn Ezra, who seems to have pronounced the Hebrew vowels in the same way, had no occasion to consult other copies concerning them, as, *e.g.*, he did, when he entertained a doubt with regard to the correctness of the additional yod in the word תיעשה (Exod. xxv. 31). Only eight[2] out of twenty-five instances of *variæ lectiones* are supported by the authority of other MSS., and even in these cases signs of carelessness on the part of Ibn Ezra may be discernible, in as much as he in his Commentary wholly ignored the other readings.

The favour which Ibn Ezra's Commentaries received in spite—or perhaps because—of their obscure and elliptical style, is less due to a general satisfaction given by his comments, since, on the contrary, they frequently disappoint the reader, than to his severe and satirical criticisms; for Ibn Ezra employs them unsparingly, even against men like Ibn Ganach,[3] of whom he elsewhere speaks in the highest terms of praise and respect; and against Saadiah,[4] in whose defence he wrote an entire work (שפת יתר). The numerous super-commentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries offer the best evidence of the place assigned to the works of our author by the learned men of the succeeding generations.

1 Ibn Ezra therefore read כְּאָבָק like כַּאֲבַק, אֶדֶדָה like אֶדְרָה, גֵּיא like גֵּיא, דָּעֲכוּ like דְּעֲכוּ, לַחְמָם like לַחְמֵם, תִּשְׁעָשְׁעוּ like תִּשְׁעַשְׁעוּ.

2 These are: מִתִּי (v. 13); וְאֶת מְרָמָיו (x. 15); וּמִכַּפֵּךְ (xiv. 11); אָבְלָה (xxiv. 6); נִנַּשׁ (xxix. 13); יַגִּיד (xlii. 23); שִׁלַּחְתִּי (xliii. 14); חֵיל (lxvi. 12).

3 Comp. אם כסיל א׳ וגו׳ Comm. on Amos iii. 15. See above, p. 125, note 2.

4 Criticising Saadiah's explanation of proper nouns he says אולי בחלום ראם וגו׳ "perhaps he saw them in a dream" (Comm. on Gen. ii. 11), אל תשים את לבך אל דברי הגאון בשמות "do not take any notice of what the Gaon says concerning proper nouns" (On Gen. iv. 16). Phrases like ואין טעם לשאלתו "his question is senseless" (On Ex. xxxi. 1), or ואלה דברי רוח "and these words are without sense" (On Gen. ix. 14), are used in rejecting Saadiah's views. Saadiah is of opinion that the second tables of the Ten Commandments were better than the first; this Ibn Ezra rejects, saying

pointed out to him. Elihu found fault with the three friends because they presumed to know why the Almighty had afflicted Job; and the latter was blamed for his want of humility in his arguments and complaints. Job, though not confessing his guilt to Elihu, expressed his contrition in the presence of the Almighty, who impressed upon the mind of the sufferer the very same ideas which had been enunciated by Elihu. The hidden plans of the Almighty were then revealed, and Job was comforted and bountifully compensated for his past sufferings.

This plan of the book is indicated in the Introduction, and illustrated in the פירוש המעמים in a concise and lucid manner. The system whereby Ibn Ezra here reconciles his belief in a limited form of predestination with his belief in divine justice, is the same in his earliest as in his latest works;[1] nay, it appears to be the mainstay and the key-note for the interpretation of most of the enigmatic sayings found in his works.

Besides the recension of this Commentary which exists both in MS. and in print, another recension appears to have been made by Ibn Ezra, parts of which are contained in the Introduction and in the פירוש המעמים.[2]

The Commentary on the Song of Solomon is divided into three parts. The first part contains the etymological and grammatical explanation of difficult words and phrases; in the second part the text is interpreted according to the literal meaning of the words; the third part is devoted to the allegorical expositions of the book. In the first part, the author frequently refers to the Chaldee of the Targum,[3] the Talmud (לשון רז"ל or דברי רז"ל),[4] and the Arabic lan-

[1] Comp. page 105.

[2] See p. 175, note 1, and p. 177, note 1.

[3] Comp. ii. 8, 14; vii. 3.

[4] Comp. i. 17; v. 3; vi. 11; vii. 3. In i. 17, the Italian recension has, instead of דברי רז"ל of the French recension, the words מלי משנה; this is incorrect; the quotation is not from the Mishnah. (See Ibn Ezra's Com-

guage.[1] As to the latter, he says apologetically, "The reader will perhaps be surprised that I refer to the Arabic; but I am compelled to do so, owing to the insufficiency of our knowledge. For we know of the Hebrew language no more words than occur in the Sacred Writings; but we do not know the Hebrew names of things that are not mentioned in those writings. Since the affinity between the Hebrew and the Arabic is very great—compare the conjugations, the properties of the quiescent letters אהוי, the servile letters, the construct state, the numerals, and roots—we explain Biblical hapax legomena by similar words in Arabic, although the analogy may leave the question in doubt."[2] The explanations of the words are given in a most concise manner, without any discussion. The opinions of others are frequently mentioned, but without name; mostly they are introduced by the general terms מדקדקים, אחרים or יש אומרים ("some grammarians," "others," or "some say"),[3] and without the addition of any criticism. In a few instances, the author gives a translation: the Italian "giglio" for שושנה (ii. 1), the Spanish "canfora" for כופר (i. 14), the Arabic "milhafat" for רדיד (v. 7).[4] The subject-matter

mentary on the Canticles, by Mathews, p. 3, note 5). The reading קורות in our edition of the Babylonian Talmud seems to be the explanation of the original רחיטי. Comp. Aruch, *sub voce*, רחט.

[1] Comp. i. 14; ii. 13, 14; iv. 13; v. 7: vii. 3; vi. 8, 5.

[2] והעומר על זה החבור אולי יתמה למה אומר כאן בלשון ישמעאל בעבור קוצר דעתנו כי לא נדע מלשון הקודש כי אם הכתוב במקרא שהוצרכו הנביאים לדבר ומה שלא הוצרכו לא נדע שמו ובעבור היות לשון ישמעאל קרוב מאוד ללשון הקודש כי בגיניו ואותיות יהו"א והמשרתים ונפעל והתפעל והסמיכות דרך אחת לשתיהן וכן בחשבון, ויותר מחצי הלשון ימצא כמוהו בלשון הקודש על כן כל מלה שלא נמצא לה חבר במקרא ויש דומה בלשון ישמעאל נאמר אולי פירושה כן, אע"פי שהדבר בספק:

[3] Comp. i. 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, 17, etc. With R. Saadiah haggaon Ibn Ezra made an exception; his name is mentioned in the Introduction and in the Commentary i. 2.

[4] It is easily intelligible why Ibn Ezra should explain the necessity of an expression by an Italian word in Italy, or by a French word in France; but it

of the book, according to the literal sense, is as follows:—

The scene being laid in a solitary place, outside the town, between the vineyards, a shepherdess bestows her love on a shepherd, whom she prefers to a king with all his riches. Her words of affection find an echo in the heart of the shepherd. The days of enjoying the pleasures of the vineyard having drawn to a close, their meetings are interrupted by the inclemency of the winter, but are renewed on the return of the spring. She dreams of him; goes out in search of him, unattended by companions—while the king's wife must always be guarded by armed men. The shepherd and the shepherdess meet, praise each other, and part in the hope of soon returning to each other. The time has come; her loved one arrives, but she had lingered behind, and when she opens the door he is already gone. In her trouble, she asks her companions to tell him how much she suffers, and with a heart full of longing she describes his beauty. At last they find each other: he is happy that she remained faithful to him, praises her charms, and both express their ardent desire that they may never again be separated.

In the third part, Ibn Ezra explains how the Song of Solomon depicts the whole history of Israel, from the days of Abraham to those of the Messiah: the trials of Abraham, the exile of the Israelites in Egypt, their deliverance, the giving of the Law on Sinai, the conquest of Canaan, the building of the Temple, the secession of the Ten Tribes, the Babylonian exile, the return of the captives from Babylon to Palestine, the oppression of the Jews by the Syrians, the successes of the Maccabees, the Roman exile, and the future Restoration.

is less intelligible why the Commentator should use in Italy an Arabic word in order to be better understood by the reader. The kind of dress described in Hebrew, according to Ibn Ezra, by רדידים, was then perhaps known in Italy by its Arabic name. In his Commentary on Isaiah he explains the word כרמות טלית בלי ישמעאל, and Saadiah renders it by "ardiatun."

Of this Commentary there exist two recensions, the one (A) which is printed in the Rabbinical Bibles, and another (B) published by Mr. H. J. Mathews (London, 1874.) They do not essentially differ from each other, the variations as regards the Commentary itself, are in fact so insignificant, that from them alone it is impossible to infer which of the two recensions is the earlier one. But seeing that one recension (A) contains a reference to the Commentary on Daniel,[1] which is not found in the other (B); that two quotations from this Commentary recurring in the Commentary on the Minor Prophets,[2] agree with the text in recension A, while two quotations in the Commentary on the Pentateuch[3] agree with the text in recension B, and lastly an Italian word introduced in recension B,[4] is omitted in recension A, there is fair ground for assuming, with some degree of certainty, that the recension B is of an earlier date, and was composed in Italy; and that

[1] On vi. 5. "Prophecy was discontinued during the time of the second temple, as Daniel predicted in the words ולחתום חזון ונביא (ix. 24), as I have explained in the Commentary on Daniel." In the shorter Commentary on Daniel this explanation is introduced by the phrase ויש אומרים, in opposition to Ibn Ezra's own view that the words refer to the fulfilment of the larger portion of the prophecies during the period of the second temple. In the larger Commentary, written in France, he is uncertain about the correctness of the second interpretation, and adopts the former as his own. This discrepancy confirms the opinion that the one recension of the Commentary on the Song of Solomon was composed in France.

[2] On Joel iii. 12: על כן פירשתי כי שלמה בשה״ש שהוא חול (Comp. Introduction to the Commentary פעם שלישית). In commenting on the words ושכנתי בתוכך "and I shall dwell in thy midst," Zech. ii. 10, Ibn Ezra maintains, that this prophecy was given on condition that all Israelites should return to Jerusalem; the condition was not fulfilled, and therefore the spirit of prophecy was discontinued. (Compare Commentary on the Song of Solomon v. 5.)

[3] On Gen. iv. 10: צעקים agrees with דמי, not with קול, as I explained in the Commentary on the Song of Solomon, ii. 8, קול דודי הנה זה בא. (Compare Commentary on v. 2). In his Commentary on Num. xiv. 32, he refers for the explanation of the word דבה to the Commentary on the Song of Solomon (vii. 10); the connection of דובב with דבה is asserted as a positive fact in the Italian recension, and is put forth doubtfully in the French recension,

[4] גינליין "giglio," ii. 1.

the other recension was written at a later period in France. Although the Italian preceded the French recension, it is by no means the first draft of the Commentary; for if this were the case, the short Introduction to the second part[1] would have been prefixed to the Commentary, as, indeed, was done in the French recension. The author either added it subsequently, to meet the objections against the literal explanations of the book, or, what is more probable, transposed it when he dedicated to a certain Benjamin the Commentary which at that time was already written, and when he replaced that Introduction by a few lines in praise of his new patron.

The French recension is preceded by a double Introduction, that is to say, by a combination of two Introductions to two different recensions of the Commentary. Both Introductions seem to be of an apologetic character. In the first he asserts that the Song of Solomon, one of the most holy books of the Bible, could not be a mere erotic composition, and that it must be interpreted figuratively, like other similar portions of the Scriptures; and his words imply that he was justified in adding the literal to the figurative explanation. In the other Introduction he defends his departure from the Midrashim, notwithstanding the high estimation in which he held that ancient literature. In both Introductions Ibn Ezra states his intention to write a threefold Commentary. The subdivision of each part of the Commentary into smaller paragraphs is not the work of our author, but of some copyist, and is incorrect in several instances.[2]

[1] Compare especially the beginning: זה ספר נחמד מכל השירים אשר חבר שלמה וכו׳. The corresponding part of the Introduction to the French recension seems to be the original, an abridgment of which we have in the Italian recension, as may be seen in the words ולולי היותה במעלה גדולה שנאמרה ברוח הקדוש לא היה מטמא הידים. This sentence undoubtedly is contracted from ולולי גודל מעלתו לא נכתב בסוד כתבי קודש ואין עליו מחלוקת כי הוא מטמא את הידים.

[2] Comp. ii. 6, 9; iii. 9; vi. 7; etc. In a manuscript of the British Museum (Add. 24,896) the three parts are not subdivided.

The Commentary on Lamentations is similar in style. It is divided into דקדוק "grammatical analysis," and פירוש המעמים "explanation of the context." This division extends only to the first four chapters; in the fifth chapter those two subjects are blended together. The grammatical notes are as concise and as free from digressions as in his Commentary on the Song of Solomon. The exposition of the book as given in the *Perush* is more like a paraphrase than a Commentary. A rhymed Introduction precedes the book. Midrashic explanations, Ibn Ezra there says, though sometimes presented in what would seem a common garb, are always as pure as silver, and as gold refined seven times. The literal explanations, however, are the principal elements for rendering the text intelligible. Such explanations are to be found in this Commentary.[1] He refutes an opinion of the Midrash that the book of Lamentations was written in Jeremiah's scroll, which was burnt by King Jehoiakim (Jerem. xxxvi. 23),[2] because the Lamentations do not contain the identical phrases, which, according to Jeremiah xxxvi. 29, were inscribed in that scroll. This Commentary appears to be one of the earlier works of Ibn Ezra, for it contains no reference to any of his other writings, while it is three times quoted in the Commentary on the Pentateuch.[3]

[1] Comp. page 96, note 1; page 104, note 3; ואני אברהם בן מאיר מארץ מרחקים הוצאתני מארץ ספרד המת המציקים וספרי אלו בגלותי היו בידי מחזיקים ויורוני לבאר ספרים בטעמים מנופת מתוקים וכן אפרש זאת המגלה אחרי הדקדוקים:

[2] Comp. Rashi on Lam. i. 1: ירמיה כתב ספר קינות היא המגלה אשר שרף יהויקים על האח אשר על האש והיו בה שלש אל״ף בי״תות איכה ישבה, איכה יעיב, איכה יועם שוב הוסיף עליו אני הגבר שהוא שלוש אל״ף בית״ות שני ירמי׳ ל״ו ועוד נוסף עליהם דברים רבים כהמה שלש כנגד שלש: Midrash Rabboth on Lam i. 1: ואימתי נאמרה מגלת קינות ר׳ יהודה אומר בימי יהויקים נאמרה אמר לו ר׳ נחמיה וכי בוכין על המת עד שלא ימות אלא אימתי נאמרה אחר חורבן הבית "When was the book of Lamentations composed? R. Jehudah says in the days of King Jehoiakim. R. Nehemiah says we do not mourn for a person before his death; the book was composed after the destruction of the temple."

[3] On Levit. xiii. 46; xxvi. 39; Deuter. xxviii. 46.