

be glad in Thee, and celebrate Thy love and the expressions of Thy affection above any banquet of wine and beverages; for all the world loves Thee with upright love. This refers to the congregation of Israel, who sighs and makes supplication before the Holy One, to bring her out from her captivity, as He had formerly brought her out of Egypt, and led her into His chambers, *i.e.*, the tabernacle, where they served Him continually.

5. *I am swarthy, &c.*—Oh, my companions, virgin daughters of Ishmael, do not disdain and deride me on account of my blackness, saying, Because I am black, therefore my Beloved left me; for, although I am black as regards the appearance of my face, like the tents of Kedar, yet I am comely and graceful in body and stature, like the curtains of King Solomon, which are becoming and suitable to royalty. Thus the congregation of Israel, whom the nations reproach on account of her sins and transgressions which she committed, answers: True, I have sinned; and woe to me, for I am wandering in captivity for it; yet I am comely, I am of royal blood, and have the merits of my fathers; and the Holy One, in the latter days, will restore me to my former state, and liberate me from the iron furnace of captivity. The *daughters of Jerusalem* are the heathen. Compare "I will give them to thee to be thy daughters." Ezek. xvi. 61. *The tents of Kedar* are black, because the sons of Kedar sojourn in deserts and dwell in tents, and not in houses.

1093—1168. While Rashi and Rashbam, by means of this allegorical interpretation, assuaged the sufferings of their brethren in France and Germany, the celebrated Abraham Ibn-Ezra ben Meier, also called *Ibn-Ezra* and *Raba*, who was born in Toledo in 1093, and died in 1168,¹ administered consolation through the same medium to his suffering brethren in Spain, shewing them that this Song recounts the past wonderful dealings of God with his beloved people from the very call of Abraham, and the blessings reserved for them at the coming of the Messiah, who shall gather them from among all nations, and bring them back to the land flowing with milk and honey.

Thus Ibn Ezra maintains that "*This book is allegorical, and describes the history of Israel; commencing with the days of our Father, Abraham, and coming down to the days of the Messiah; just as the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.) begins with the dispersion of the human family, and finishes with the final ingathering of Israel, after the battle of Gog and Magog. Do not wonder that*

¹ See Reland, *Analecra Rabbinica*, Vitæ celeberrimorum Rabinorum p. 69—80. Fürst, *Biblioth. Judaica*, i. p. 251—257. Herzog, *Real, encyklopädie*, art. Aben Ezra.

the Congregation of Israel is here compared to a bride, and the Lord to a bridegroom; for this is the manner of the prophets. (Comp. Isa. v. 1, lxii. 5, Ezek. xvi. 7, Hos. iii. 1, Psa. xlv. 10.)

The allegory, according to this distinguished Rabbi, is developed in the suppositious attachment contracted between a damsel who kept a vineyard, and a shepherd. The representation of the love of these parties "*is suppositious, because such an actual manifestation, in so public a manner as here recorded, would be regarded as highly improper.*"¹

"The beloved" represents God; with the exception of viii. 12, where *the Messiah* is meant; "the loved one" is *the Congregation of Israel*; "the companions of the beloved" are *the pious ancestors*; "the daughters of Jerusalem" are *the thoughts of the loved one*; "the little sister," in viii. 8, is *the two tribes and a half*; "the speaker," in viii. 13, *the shechinah*; "the companions," in the same verse, are *the angels*.

The commentary consists of three different glosses: in the first, the words are explained; in the second, the suppositious history of the attachment of the shepherd and shepherdess is developed; and in the third gloss, the allegory is evolved from that history. The following is a specimen of the gloss where the allegory is propounded.

2. *Let him kiss me.*—He (*i.e.* Solomon) begins with Abraham, for he is the root of the Jewish nation. By "the kisses of his mouth" are meant the law and the commandments, as it is written, "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." (Gen. xxvi. 5.) Do not wonder that the future (שקני) is used instead of the past; this is the idiom of the sacred Scriptures, compare אָמַר, *then he sang* (Exod. xv. 1, and Psa. cvi. 19); just as we find the contrary, the past used for the future (Psa. lxxix. 1).—*For thy love, &c. i.e.* to be loved by thee; as the Scriptures testify of God's love to his people. Compare "the seed of Abraham whom I love" (Isa. xli. 8); for there is a difference between אָהַב, *loving*, and אָהַבָה, *loved*.

3. *Thy perfumes, &c.*—Abraham proclaimed the works of God, and instructed his generation; and wherever he went he called on the name of the Lord; this is the meaning of "thy name is poured forth like oil." *Therefore do the damsels love thee.*—עַלְמֵיהֶן are such as have no husbands, and denote the heathen who had no God, and were brought by

¹ Introduction to the Second Gloss.

Abraham into union with God; as it is written, "The souls which they had begotten in Haran" (Gen. xii. 5).

4. *Draw me.*—Abraham was drawn after God, and therefore left his native place (Gen. xii. 1). *The king has brought me, &c.*—God has brought Abraham into the land of Canaan; or it may mean, God has made him wise in his secrets, and the words, *we will praise thy love*, denote the altars and groves which Abraham erected and planted wherever he came.

5. *I am swarthy.*—This refers to the Egyptian bondage. Although I (*i.e.* Israel) am swarthy because of some evil deeds committed there; yet I am comely because of my adhesion to the covenant and to the belief in the unity of God.

It has generally been overlooked that Ibn Ezra distinctly states in the second gloss, in which he professes to give the literal meaning of the narrative, that the lovers are a *shepherd* and a *shepherdess*, and that *the king* is a *separate and distinct* person from the beloved shepherd.

Thus he explains Ch. i. 4, "*I rejoice in THEE (the shepherd) more than if THE KING had brought me into his apartments.*" Again, verse 12, the shepherdess says to the shepherd, "*Though my fragrance is so sweet that THE KING, whilst reclining, desires to smell my nard, yet MY BELOVED (the shepherd), who is a bundle of myrrh, diffuses a still sweeter fragrance.*" Compare also Ch. iii. 6—11, Ch. vi. 8, Ch. viii. 11, 12. This is an important step to the right understanding of the Book.

Ibn Ezra also mentions that "*The philosophers explain this book to refer to the mysterious harmony of the universe, and to the union of the divine soul with the earthly body; and that others, again, explain it literally.*"¹ In reference to the last mentioned mode of interpretation, he exclaimed, "*Far be it! far be it! to think that the Song of Songs is an amatory composition.*"²

1200—1250. The frequent mention made by the preceding commentators of the different views entertained respecting this Song, will have prepared the reader for the philosophical interpretation which has been adopted and defended by a large and influential portion of the Jewish community.

Joseph Ibn Caspe, a learned author, who lived in the begin-

¹ Introduction to the First Gloss. ² Preface to the Commentary.

ning of the thirteenth century, and who wrote expositions on several portions of the Scriptures, maintains that "*this book represents the union between the ACTIVE INTELLECT (intellectus agens) and the RECEPTIVE MATERIAL INTELLECT (intellectus materialis)*," typified by the beloved and loved one.

As Caspe's commentary is short and exceedingly rare, we give a translation of it, and subjoin the original in the footnote:—

THE COMMENTARY OF IBN CASPE.¹

Joseph Caspe saith: Having commented on Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, which Solomon of blessed memory has in wisdom composed, it behoves us also to write a few words on the Song of Songs, which is likewise the composition of Solomon of blessed memory. I need not, however, explain the words, since they have been explained long before me. I shall, therefore, confine my remarks to the *design* of the book in general, and now and then make some observations in particular. The general design of this book, however, is not my discovery; the luminary (Maimonides) that shone upon the earth has enlightened our eyes also upon this subject when treating upon it, especially in part iii. c. 51 (of the More Nebochim); and his hint there is sufficient for us and for such as ourselves.

I therefore submit that this book undoubtedly belongs to the second kind of parables which the teacher of blessed memory (Maimonides) mentions in the beginning of his book, in which all the words used in the comparison must not be applied to the thing compared, just as in the case there quoted, which treats on the subject of a beloved and loved one, like the book before us, with the only difference that the instance there adduced refers to the union of matter and mind, and this book represents the union between the *active intellect* and the *receptive, material intellect*, which latter is divided into four parts, the highest of which is the *imparted intellect*. With all the particulars of this book, Solomon merely designed to hint at the subject in general. It is most certain that he calls here the *highest order of the human intellect* "the fairest of women," and the *active intellect* "the graceful lover;" frequently the *whole intellectual mind* is meant by the latter phrase, for this is the meaning demanded in several places of this Book.

It is well known that the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) stirs up or brings the receptive intellect (*intellectus materialis*) from a possibility into activity, as it is known to the philosophers; and that the receptive intel-

1 פירוש י' כספ"י אמר ויסין כספ"י אחר שקדם לו פ' קהלת ומשלי שדובר שלמה ע"ה בחכמתו ראוי לנו שנכתוב דברים כמה בפ"י שיר השירים שחבר גם כן שלמה ע"ה. ואין אני צריך לפרש המלות כי כבר פירשם לפני לכן לא ארבר רק על כונת הספר הזה בכלל. וארמו רמזים בפרשים, וגם זאת הכוונה לא מלבי, כי המאור המאיר לארץ דאור ענינו בזה כשהודיעו זה ובפרש פרק נ"א משלש, ודי בו באורו רמו לנו ולדומ' לנו. ולכן אמר שאין ספק אצלי שזה הספר הוא מן ממין השני מן המשלים שזכר המורה ד"ל בהדלת ספרו שאין כל מלה יש במשל לענין הנמשל כמו שהוא הענין באותה הפרשה שזכר שגם הוא מעניני החשוק והדשוקה כמו שהוא ענין זה הספר רק שאין הענינים שוים בזה. כי אותו הספר הוא משל לדבוק החמרי והצורה השכלית. וזה הספר הוא משל לדבוק השכל הפועל עם שכל האדם שהוא חלק ל' מינים. והנחמד שגם הוא השכל הנמצא. ולכן כונן שלמה ע"ה להרמו בבל זה הספר בפרש ואם הענין נאות לכלל, ולכן הוחר מדרוקה הוא שקרא היפה בנשים זה הדב היותר יקר. וקרא הרוד הענין השכל הפעיל. אבל ג"כ כונן לרמוז על כלל הנפש המדברת. כי זה צריך במשלנו נכמה מקומות בזה הספר. וידוע כי זה השכל הפועל הוא