reader and in order to make the commentary a more usable reference tool. The manuscript is a continuous text covering fourteen doubled-columned pages. The manuscript contains no chapter or verse numbers and only a minimum amount of punctuation. Lemmata are marked off by a dot. The same sign is used to indicate major pauses within the text. Supralinear symbols are also used to indicate omissions that are corrected in the margin.

In the current edition chapter and verse numbers have been provided and punctuation has been added in those cases in which the units are obvious. Certain passages seem better left unpunctuated, thus allowing the reader greater freedom to read the text.

In those passages in which either the lemma or a Biblical citation differ with the MT the Hebrew text has not been corrected but the misquotation has been noted. When appropriate, the question of misquotation or variant text has been addressed.

Introduction To The Commentary

Let the one who understands use his powers of discernment and set his heart to understanding the poetic language of the book, to study and explain its meaning according to the context just as it is established on the basis of its order and language. [The author] wrote his book and formulated his verse only after culling wisdom from all the ancients prior to his composing. His wisdom in worldly matters was admirable and marvellous and [is expressed as though written by] a beautiful young woman who complains that her loved one has departed from her and traveled to a distant place. She recalls him and her great love for him, singing and saying,

1. While it was not the general rule among medieval exeges to preface a commentary with an introduction, it seems that many exegetes felt the need to state the general objectives of their commentaries on the Song of Songs. Although beyond the scope of this study, there is much that could be learned from a detailed comparison between the introductions of Rashi, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra. For the purposes of this study we will only note, in passing, general points of similarity or disagreement in the commentaries.

2. On the use of the word יֶעָפָר in the sense of "context" cf. Rashbam's comments on Deut. 11:7 and Proverbs 1:3.
"My beloved showed me a strong love when he was with me."
She speaks to her friends and her maids [saying], "Such and
such did my beloved say to me and thus did I answer him."

Chapter One

1. THE SONG OF SONGS: the most praiseworthy of songs
grammatically this phrase is like "God of gods, Lord of
Lords"³, meaning the God that is most great and awesome
among all the deities and great Lord over all the others.

BY SOLOMON: King Solomon composed this book when, by the
Holy Spirit, he was destined to complain from exile to God who had become remote from them like a
bridegroom who has separated from his bride. Solomon sang
this song on behalf of the Assembly of Israel who is like a
bride vis-à-vis Him.

BY SOLOMON: This phrase is like "A prayer of Moses"⁴, "A
praise of David"⁵.

³ Deut. 10:17
⁴ Psalms 90:1.
⁵ Psalms 145:1.
2. **Kisses**: Oh, if only my loved one would come and kiss me on the mouth out of his abundant love as he did in olden times! His words of affection were better, more pleasant, and sweeter to me than all drinks and sweet things.\(^6\)

**Your Love**: At times the bride sings as if she were speaking with her loved one, at other times she relates to her friends that he is not with her.\(^7\)

**[More Delightful] Than Wine**: Sweeter than all sweet drinks that are called wine. This allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Torah which was given to Israel "mouth to mouth" (i.e. directly).\(^8\)

3. **Your Ointments Yield a Sweet Fragrance**: Because of your fine balsam oils whose scent spreads to the farthest ends of the earth when they are poured from one vessel to another,\(^9\) you are called "oil," as in the phrase "A good name is better than fine oil."\(^10\) Likewise, you are called "oil" because the maidens who love you are "spread abroad." The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the miracles that the Holy One performed for the Assembly of Israel in Egypt. Because of those miracles God's name and greatness was made known to the nations of the world as it is said, "Jethro, priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done,"\(^12\) and of Rachab the prostitute "We have heard how the Lord dried the waters,"\(^13\) and similarly, "the peoples heard and they trembled."\(^14\)

4. **Draw Me [After You]**: Draw me towards you and I and my cohort will run after you as we did in olden times when the king, my beloved, brought me to his chambers. When we run after you we will rejoice and be happy because of you. We shall savor your love and your words of affection more than wine and sweet drinks because everyone loves you sincerely. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who beseeches and pleads with the Holy One to bring her out of exile just as He brought her

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\(^6\) This comment is based upon that of Rashi but Rashbam has condensed the material.

\(^7\) This observation is paralleled in Ibn Ezra who also notes that at times she seems to be speaking to herself, recalling past events, but at other times she speaks as if talking to him directly.

\(^8\) The word "kiss" is the springboard for this comment. Rashbam intends to refer to the entire verse not just the word "wine".

\(^9\) Ibn Ezra, ad loc., offers a similar comment but notes other explanations. Rashbam seems to be using Rashi's comment but in a shorter version.

\(^10\) Eccl. 7:1.

\(^11\) This allegory is found in Rashi and other commentaries and is based upon rabbinic exegesis.

\(^12\) Exod. 18:1

\(^13\) Josh. 2:10.

\(^14\) Exod. 15:14.
out of the Egyptian exile and brought her to his "chambers" to build for Him the Tabernacle in which she would worship Him always.

5. I AM DARK, BUT COMELY: You, my companions, the young daughters of Ishmael, don't despise or harrass me because I am dark or say that my loved one has deserted me because I am dark. Even if I (lit. my face) appear as dark as the tents of Kedar, my body is lovely and tall like pavilions of Solomon which are beautiful and worthy of a king's glory. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel. The nations insult her because of her sins and transgressions, but she answers them, "If I have done evil, woe to me, for it has caused me to wander in exile. But, even so, I am still lovely, the daughter of kings. I have the merit of my ancestors and, in a time to come, the Holy One will return me to my former glory, bringing me out of exile, out of the furnace of iron.

5. DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM: These are the other nations as it is said, "I will give them to you as daughters" and "While Israel had been occupying Heshbon and its dependencies (lit.. daughters)." The word "daughter" can mean village (i.e. satellite towns).

TENTS OF KEDAR: Which are black because the people of Kedar dwell in tents in the desert rather than in houses.

6. DON'T STARE AT ME: Once more she speaks to her companions and says, "Don't look at me in order to belittle me for I was not born swarthy. I am now dark because of the heat of the sun, and because of the tiredness and weariness that has overtaken me since the day my loved one went away from me. My brothers, the sons of my mother, were angry with me and despised me because of my loved one who left me so they placed me as a watchman over the vineyards in the heat of the sun. I did not want to guard it nor was I able to, but they forced me to watch over it in the heat of the sun. Because of that I have become dark. Since I am only

15. In the Hebrew text these words begin a new passage. The English translation is continuous because Rashbam paraphrased the text creating a running explanation of the words. As is common in the commentary, Rashbam combines quotation and commentary in order to demonstrate both the meanings of verses and their relationship to each other.

16. This comment is paralleled in Rashi although the allegorical element has been condensed. Ibn Ezra notes an alternative explanation but agrees that the reference to "darkness" is meant as an unattractive feature for a woman.


18. Ezek. 16:61. This is an inexact quote of the verse probably done from memory. Cf. Rashi ad loc. who also misquotes the verse. It is clear that this comment has been taken from Rashi but supplemented by the following quotation which is closer to Rashbam's intent.


20. Rashi's comment, ad loc., is clearly the basis of this comment although Rashi states that the tents are black because of rains.
tan, [my skin] will quickly become light again when my love returns to me."21

G. SWARTH: The word does not mean completely black but is like the word "pink"22 (i.e. light red), but not completely red for it is mixed with white.23

GAZED: The word implies looking24 as in the verse "The falcon's eye has not gazed."25

SUN: The word is treated as feminine here as in the verse "If the sun has risen upon him."26 For this reason the feminine form of the verb appears in this verse.

MY OWN VINEYARD: The usual meaning of the word is implied.

The allegorical meaning of the verse27 refers to the nations who belittle this Assembly (i.e., Israel) in this exile who answers, "Don't despise me because of the oppression to which you subject me. My Beloved will return to me unannounced and, the God of my salvation will not abandon me."

8. TELL ME: Now she speaks as if she is talking to her lover and says, "Thus I said to him and thus he answered me: 'If you don't know [I] will tell you.' 28 Now she likens herself to an animal of the flock and says to him, "You, whom my soul loves, tell me where you will pasture me, where I may rest at noon when the sun is hot that I might graze there. Why must I be as one of the flock, exiled and wandering among the flocks of your companions, the shepherds? I do not desire to go anywhere but to the place in which you shall pasture [your flock]." The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who prays before the Holy One saying: "Tell me your laws and commandments that I might cleave to your service. Why must I wander in exile among the nations and serve these peoples?"

STRAYS: The word implies motion29 as in the verse "The Lord is about to shake you."30

8. IF YOU DO NOT KNOW: You, the fairest among women, [if you do not know] which path they took go and look for the tracks of the flocks and pasture your sheep there with those flocks by the dwelling places of the shepherds. The

This comment integrates the meanings of verses 7 and 8.

29 According to Rashi the word means "covered." Rashbam's explanation is the correct one.

allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One when He answers the people of Israel saying, "Walk in the ways of your ancestors the shepherds— the prophets who prophesied concerning you. Then you will be saved from the yoke of exile."  

TRACKS OF THE SHEEP: These words are like "your tracks could not be seen."  

9. [I HAVE LIKENED YOU TO A] MARE: Now he praises her and says: "At the time that horses were gathered for Pharaoh's chariots I likened you thus and singled you out. You were my fair one, my loved one, and I gave you all the adornments and jewels of a royal steed made of gold, silver, and precious stones. Your face and neck looked lovely in chains and beads, necklaces of gold and gems. My cohort and I made you chains and necklaces of gold with studs of and designs of silver. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the spoil of Egypt which the Assembly of Israel took at the time of the crossing of the Reed Sea. With the precious stones and gold they made necklaces for their necks. The allegorical interpretation follows Rashi but the material has been condensed.

32. Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra offer the same proof text.


34. While there are few parallels between the allegorical interpretations offered by Rashbam and those of Ibn Ezra, concerning this verse both authors mention the spoil taken from Egypt.

and strings covered with pierced stones to hang about the neck.

10. PLAIED WREATHS: The word wreaths connotes the idea of arrangement [i.e. order] as in the verse "we will add wreaths of gold."  

It is the custom of princesses to wear chains of gold and jewels around their necks.

9. A MARE: The letter ב in the word "mare" (משיח) is not superfluous as in the words "great (mighty) with people" or "enthroned (זוחב) in heaven.

[I HAVE] LIKENED YOU: The word connotes an expression of comparison.

36. This lexical note is, as are others, out of order. There does not seem to be a pattern or a discernible reason for this. The problem may have been scribal but, if so, it did not originate with the scribe of the current manuscript since he is careful to correct omission and, presumably, would not have confused the order of the comments.

37. Rashbam's intention is to indicate that the word is in feminine form, and that the ב is not otiose as in the other cases. This comment disagrees with Rashi who understands the ב as an indication of a plural form. Rashbam's comment disagrees with that of Ibn Ezra who states that the ב is otiose here as in other words.

38. Lam. 1:1.


40. This comment counters that of Rashi but agrees with a similar explanation by Ibn Ezra.
12. WHILE THE KING WAS ON HIS COUCH: While the king, my beloved, was still on his couch at his banquet, the fragrant nard which I wore lost its scent and, therefore, he saw fit to leave me sitting alone. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel which accepts its fate (lit., sentence) of subjugation for the sin of the [golden] calf through which she sinned.

GAVE FORTH: That is, left [its scent] behind. This use of the word "give forth" is like "Sihon did not give".

13. MY BELOVED TO ME IS A BAG OF MYRRH: Now both of them lie upon their bed and speak together, [with] words of desire and appeasement they praise each other [with words] sweet and pleasant: "My dear one is mine as he lies with me and rests his head between my breasts like a bundle of perfume or spice which smells fragrant and perfumes me. My beloved is pleasant and praiseworthy to me like a cluster of spices that grew in the vineyards of Ein Gedi."

14. HENNA BLOOMS: Spice as in the verse "of henna and of nard."

THE VINEYARDS: The term can also indicate a tree that grows (tall) as in the verse "stacked grain, standing grain, and olive trees."

EIN GEDI: The name of a place. Hazazon-Tamar, which is translated as Ein Gedi.

15. AH, YOU ARE FAIR, MY DARLING: He tells her: "You are beautiful my love, your eyes are 'doves of love', that is, like the eyes of doves."

16. YOU MY BELOVED ARE HANSOME: She answers him saying: "You are handsome and pleasing." Even...

OUR COUCH IS PLEASANT: and very lovely. The beams of our house among which we lie, are constructed and made of

41. Rashbam's comment is based upon that of Rashi but does not draw upon the allegorical element of Rashi's comment. Such a selective process is typical of the commentary. Rashbam will often accept the peshat within Rashi's commentary but offer a different (and usually much shorter) allegorical interpretation or none at all.

42. See Exod. 32.

43. See Num. 21:23. This is a very problematic example of the use of the word. It is possible that Rashbam offers this commentary to reject the one found in Rashi, see ad. loc.

44. See Judg. 15:5. Rashbam renders this text according to MT which yields "olive trees" as opposed to the Targum which, as followed by JPS, yields "vine and olive tree". In any event the point of Rashbam's comment remains: the term "vine" can also be applied to a larger plant i.e., a tree.

45. This comment is an expansion of that offered by Rashi and agrees with the explanation offered by Ibn Ezra.

46. See 2 Chr. 20:2. Rashbam was aware that this verse indicates that this location was known by two names.

47. This comment is found in Rashi but Rashbam has not cited the allegorical explanation found in Rashi's comment.

48. JPS reads "Our couch is a bower" with which Rashbam disagrees.
fine cedar and the rafters of our home are cypress. I am perfumed and radiate a scent like the rose that grows on the plain and the lily of the valley therefore your should turn your attention to me as to a beautiful woman, a beautiful lover, with beautiful garments for you are worthy of all this!

PLEASANT: The word connotes "soft" and "good".

COUCH: The word is feminine and therefore the adjective (pleasant) is in the feminine form. As it is written "His bedstead ... nine cubits is its [feminine] length."49

17. RAFTERS: According to the context this word refers to a part of the house's construction.

CYPRESS: A kind of tree.

Chapter Two

1. ROSE OF SHARON: A fragrant flower. The term is synonymous with "lily of the valleys."50

2. LIKE A LILY AMONG THORNS: He answers her and says: "Like a lovely lily among thorns is my beloved, comely and beautiful among the maidens, fairer than any of them."

3. LIKE AN APPLE TREE AMONG TREES OF THE FOREST: She answers him saying: "Like a good and fragrant apple tree among trees that are barren, so is my beloved—more handsome than any of the other young men. For that reason I long to sit in his shade, that his fruit might be sweet in my mouth." This is the way the rhetoric is appropriate: he calls her "a rose," a feminine word, and she calls him "an apple," a masculine word.51

49. Deut. 3:11. The verse is misquoted in the commentary. As we noted above, this reflects the citation of Biblical verses from memory (see note 11).

50. This comment agrees with that of Rashi but Rashbam is more explicit concerning the issue of parallelism. Ibn's Ezra's note on the verse focuses on a description of the flower itself.

51. Rashbam's interest in and exposition of the rhetorical flow of the book is unparalleled. While Ibn Ezra often paraphrases the text in a narrative (or perhaps we should
THORNS: The word connotes thistles. The allegorical meaning of the verse refers to the Holy One and the Assembly of Israel who were endeared to each other through the giving of the Torah. It was then that God caused His Presence to dwell in the Tabernacle between the two cherubim. It was then that He loved Israel with a true love like the love between a man and a woman. Israel built the Tabernacle with choice cedars called "shittim trees" so that God would rest His Presence within it. There God and Israel were endeared to each other as if they laid embracing upon the bed of youthful love.52

4. HE BROUGHT ME TO THE BANQUET ROOM: Now she tells her friends: "My lover brought me to the banquet hall and placed me under the wedding canopy among his friends who had gathered there with him to make the canopy joyous. They were loveable to me for I loved them. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who complains from exile and recalls the giving of the Torah by which God demonstrated His great love for her [by bringing] His "troops" (i.e., the heavenly hosts) with Him.

say "prose"), manner, he does not explore more general questions of style and rhetoric, i.e., poetics.

52. The allegorical interpretation refers to the entire verse not solely to the word "thorns."

53. JPS renders "sustain me with raisin cakes" which is not how Rashbam understood the verse. See the commentary below on מְלַשֵׁכָה.

54. Rashbam, as did Rashi, takes this word to be from the root רְפָד meaning "to arrange a bed." The root can also mean to "refresh" which is the better understanding of the verse and hence, JPS renders the verse "refresh me with apples." an understanding that was already known in the Middle Ages, cf. Ibn Ezra, ad loc.
5. חָמֵס: From its context this word connotes goblets of wine. This is the way that Menahem explained the term. 55

7. I ADJURE YOU: (After she confesses that she is faint because of love) her companions offer advice to console her: "Don't think about him and set your heart on him for he will not return to you. Endear yourself to one of our young lovers and attach yourself to him." She answers them saying: "I adjure you, my companions, young women of Jerusalem, if you awaken my love [remember that] I will [not] be free like the gazelles or the hinds of the field as long as the love that I feel for him remains within me. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the nations who say to the Assembly of Israel: "Put aside the love for your God and cling to our faith for God will not return [to you] to be merciful as He was to you in the beginning." The Assembly of Israel curses them and adjures them not to say such things any more. 56

7. חָמֵס: The word means gazelle.

55. This understanding of the word is also found in the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra and originates from the work of Menahem ben Suruk in which the explanation is offered under the root חָמֵס. Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra offer similar interpretations of the word.

56. Both Rashbam and Ibn Ezra indicate that this verse concludes a poetic unit. Rashbam indicates this implicitly by returning to earlier verses to consider lexical problems. Ibn Ezra explicitly indicates the conclusion of a unit by stating "This (verse) concludes the section." While beyond the concerns of this comparison, Ibn Ezra's concept of poetic units within the book deserves a detailed study.

8. HARK! MY BELOVED! THERE HE COMES: He is coming to me happily and eagerly, leaping and bounding upon the mountains as if running through valleys and across plains. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to God's revelation [of power] when he brought the Assembly of Israel out of Egypt.

9. MY BELOVED IS LIKE A GAZELLE: or a young stag in regard to the swiftness of his feet when he hurries down to my father's house to take me out from there. But when he arrives he stands outside gazing, peering, and looking at me through the windows and the lattice work of the house to see me. But he cannot see me clearly, and he is embarrassed to enter the house to speak to me and to see me because it's my father's house.

10. MY LOVE SPOKE THUS TO ME: He called me to go to him and to flee with him for the winter and its rains have passed and the blossoms are seen in the land and on the trees. The time of pruning has arrived. The cooing (lit., voice) of the doves and the birds are heard in our land

57. This comment implicitly rejects Rashi's explanation of these words. Rashbam has based his comment on the concept of parallelism.
because the days of summer have arrived. The fig trees are blossoming with tender figs and the vines give forth their buds and fragrance. "For that reason I call to you, Rise and flee with me." The subject of the passage is the lover who waits for the days of summer when his beloved will go with him—when the days of Nisan arrive and the apples are on the trees, and all the creatures are in love, he returns to her so that she will run away with him. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to God's hastening the end of the exile from distress and hurrying to bring redemption and deliverance to the Assembly of Israel in the month of Nisan. [Nisan] is the end of winter and the beginning of the summer when the trees blossom. The sound of birds cooing, and (shepherds) singing to the flocks are heard. The blossoms of the fig trees have ripened and the vines have blossomed and released their fragrance. [Nisan] is the month beloved, cherished, and sweet to all creatures.

10. MY BELOVED SPOKE THUS TO ME: The word "spoke" connotes "raising the voice" (i.e., to "speak up") as in the verse "The Levites shall then proclaim." 58

9. PEERING THROUGH THE LATTICE: The word peering is synonymous with gazing. מִשְׁקָרָה means windows, just as in the phrase "Looking out the window," which is translated in Aramaic as "םִיקְרָה". 60

12. THE TIME OF PRUNING: The word pruning connotes plucking or trimming as in the phrase "You shall not prune your vineyards." According to the context this has to do with the budding (of plants). 62

11. WINTER: The word used here, יָדוֹ, means winter (i.e. the same as the word רוֹדֵף). 63

12. BLOSSOM: The word connotes flowering and budding.

14. O MY DOVE, IN THE CRANNY IN THE ROCKS: Now the lover speaks to his beloved from outside of her father's house as mentioned above he looks and gazes through the window. 59 Gen. 26:8.

60. See Targum Onkelos, ad loc. Ibn Ezra also cites this verse.

61. Lev. 25:5. The verse is misquoted in the commentary, cf. Hebrew text.

62. Ibn Ezra is aware of the explanation that Rashbam offers but rejects it in favor of "the time of singing" (the Hebrew can be interpreted either way.) Rashi's commentary agrees with that of Ibn Ezra.

63. The same explanation is found in the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra.

64. 2:9.
lattice and windows. For that reason he says to her: "My love, hidden and concealed like a princess who, because of her glory, remains indoors, let me see your face, let me hear your voice singing a song of your love so that I might hear it here on the other side of the walls of the house. Your voice is sweet and your face is lovely." She fled outside to him and did as her love wished. They went, the two of them, to walk in the orchards to embrace each other there because of their affection for each other. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One - He remembered the Assembly of Israel and brought them up from the oppression of Egypt.

IN THE CRANNY OF THE ROCKS: The term is synonymous with "clefts of the rocks".65

CLIFF: Like the phrase "cliffs shall topple,"66 the word connotes heights.67

15. CATCH US THE FOXES: Now she recounts these events and says: "When we, my beloved and I, were in the orchard we saw the little foxes that ruin the vines that had flowered for they were soft and easily destroyed. Then our companions came and killed [the foxes] and took them away. When we saw

65. Isa. 7:19.


67. Rashbam's comment is based upon Rashi's but the material has been condensed. Ibn Ezra agrees with the explanation found in Rashbam's commentary.

all these things we rejoiced both in our walk together and because of our love. It was then that my beloved chose me and I chose him, for he is the one who strolls about and pastures his horses among the lilies. It was then that I said to him: 'Before the hot winds of the day blow, before the shadows flee in the mid-Gay sun when it stands and shines overhead, "set out my love, swift as a gazelle"68 or a stag for they are swift when they run back and forth over hills and mountains. (Thus did I liken you when I said) "leaping over mountains"."69 The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the fact that the Egyptians were drowned in the sea after "spoiling" the Assembly of Israel.70 For that reason the Holy One was endeared to her and caused His Presence to dwell among her until she sinned by making the golden calf - it was then that God withdrew from her and returned by the way which He had come.

68. In the Hebrew these words mark a new passage. The English is rendered without a stop in order to express the continuity between the verses that Rashbam intended by paraphrasing the text within the commentary.

69. 2:8.

70. That is, the Egyptians were killed as were the foxes - the foxes destroyed the vines, the Egyptians would have destroyed Israel, the vineyard of God. The allegorical comment on this verse follows that found in Rashi's commentary.
15. CATCH: The word יְנַח is in the perfect aspect\(^71\) like the word יְנַח, in the phrase "why is his chariot so long in coming?"\(^72\)
OUR VINEYARD IS IN BLOSSOM: This phrase refers to "the vines in blossom."\(^73\)

17. WHEN THE DAY BLOWS GENTLY: The word connotes blowing as in the phrase "He blew into his nostrils".\(^74\)
WHEN: the word means "while" as in the phrase "while the king was at his banquet."\(^75\)
HILLS OF BETHER: The word Bether is the name of a hill. It may be interpreted as division or separation\(^76\) as in the phrase "he divided them into two."\(^77\)

\(^71\) According to the commentary of Ibn Ezra the word is an imperative form.
\(^72\) Judg. 5:28.
\(^73\) 2:13.
\(^74\) Gen. 2:7.
\(^75\) 1:13.
\(^76\) Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra agree with this explanation. Ibn Ezra cites the same prooftext.
\(^77\) Gen. 15:10. Both Rashbam and Ibn Ezra note that this concludes a poetic unit. See above, n. 63.

1—4. UPON MY COUCH: When my beloved had gone far off from me I lay upon my couch at night and regretted my wrongdoing and longed for him. I arose and searched for him, walking through the city, the streets and squares but I could not find him. The watchmen of the city found me and I asked them, Whether they had seen the one I love? They told me that he had just passed on certain spot on a certain street. [They said.] "You will find him there because we saw him and he has just passed by us." Shortly after I took leave of the watchman I kept walking until I found my dear one. I embraced him tightly. I did not let go of him or allow him to leave until I had brought him to my mother's house and there, within the rooms, we embraced each other with the love of youth, I and he.

1—4 CONT' T: The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel which was shamed before the Holy One because of the golden calf\(^78\) and because of the spies\(^79\) until the war with Sihon and ' Og\(^80\) and the war of

\(^78\) See Exod. 32.
\(^79\) See Num. 13, 14.
Joshua during which He gave them aid and victory so that her enemies could offer no resistance before her.

5. I ADJURE YOU: She once again speaks to her companions, the maidens. I as explained above. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the current exile of the nations try to turn the heart of the Assembly of Israel away from worshipping the Holy One in order to worship their gods.

5. CON'T: The way that the song flows is that she sings and recalls each passage about her love for him. After she has recounted a little about her love to her companions saying, "With a love like this did my dear one love me and such a love did I show him." Then they [her companions] rebuke her, replying, "Let your heart be turned away from him for he despises you and will never return to you, so take one of our lovers." She then makes them promise not to speak to her about this anymore for she will never forget his love. The text itself demonstrates that she recounts all of her discourses and all her lover's discourses by the fact that the text reads "He answered and said to me," and not "My [female] dear one answered and said to me." Likewise in the phrase "I was asleep but my heart was wakeful. Mark, my beloved knocks!" the verb "sleep" is in the feminine form. Also [the verses mentioning] the oaths that she imposes upon her companions, the maidens, [are spoken by her]. Even today it is the custom of bards to compose love songs that tell a love story concerning both of the characters.

80. See Num. 21:21-35.

81. See Josh. 6 ff. What Rashbam no doubt intends by this allusion is the entire conquest narrative.

82. See comment above on verse 2:7.

83. Rashbam seems to be referring to his own time and, thus, portraying the lives of himself and his countrymen.

84. One should note that this allegorical aside breaks the train of thought that joins the comment on the "night search" with the longer structural observation that follows. It is impossible to arrive at a definitive conclusion concerning the placement of allegorical comments in relation to the rest of the commentary.

85. In the Hebrew text this section is a continuation of the preceding comment.

86. In this comment Rashbam is making two distinct points. First that the Song of Songs is love poetry and follows the conventions of that genre and, second, that the speaker is the female character of the book. As noted above (see Section two, Unit two, note 6) this passage may be evidence for the influence of the troubadour tradition. This topic is beyond the scope of this study but deserves examination in the future. The historical issues involved are complex and require careful consideration both of the exegetical material and the development of the troubadour tradition as a cultural component of the Middle Ages. While the issue has, in this context, been unexplored, one should consult a study concerning a slightly later period as a model for the research into the troubadour question. See M. Harris, "The Concept Of Love In Sefer Hassidim," The Jewish Quarterly Review, 50 1959 pp. 13-45. On the development of the troubadour and courtly love traditions in the context of secular culture see the following: F. X. Newman, ed., The Meaning of Courtly Love, Albany, 1968; P. Bec, La lyrique francise au moyen âge (XIe-XIIIe siècles), vol. 1, Études, Paris 1977; J. M. Ferrante and G. D. Economou, eds., In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, Port Washington, 1975.
6. WHO IS SHE?: Now he praises his lover and says to his friends, "Look, see, who is like her? Who is she that comes following after me because of her love for me? She rises and hurries to come with me like a column of smoke. She is perfumed and fragrant with myrrh and frankincense and all the choicest spices that merchants sell, whose fragrance is sweet and pleasant to all." The subject of this verse is the young woman who flees with her lover into an unsown land, into the desert because she loves him as much as she loves her own life and he, too, is bound to her. The allegorical meaning of the verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who followed the Holy One through the desert into a land parched and dark through which no one travels and in which no one dwells. Before the Holy One she would burn the regular incense-offerings causing smoke to release its fragrance perfumed with the spices of the earth just like the incense-offerings that has been the custom of her ancestors (lit., the ancients).

65. POWDER: The word means the fine powdered form of spices, for it is not placed upon coals [as incense] unless it is completely dried out like dust. For this reason, it is called "powder." 86

87. This point seems to be an expansion of that of Rashi. Ibn Ezra notes the same word, but refers to the phrase "dust of the feet."

86. Rashbam is noting the physical similarity between powder and dust and noting that they both share the quality of dryness.

7-8. THERE IS SOLOMON'S COUCH: She recounts the praises of her lover to her companions and says, "The splendor of my lover is such that he lies upon his couch as though it were the couch of King Solomon whose warriors, trained in warfare and each with his sword bound at his side and spears held in hand, guard him at night, as is the custom of kings to be watched over while they sleep. It has the sense of what David said to Abner, "Why did you not watch over your lord, the king?... You have not given a good account of yourself! As the Lord lives, [all of] you deserve to die because you did not keep watch over your lord." 89 "Just as one would praise the palace so, too, should one praise the couch of my beloved."

9. PALANQUIN: He [my beloved] built a palace made of the choicest trees of Lebanon like the palanquin of King Solomon. Its posts were cedar wood and its back made of silver. The bedframe was of gold and the cushions of the couch upon which he lies are of purple wool. The bedroom is decked with the love of the daughters of the princes of Jerusalem who sit around his bed.

11. GO FORTH AND GAZE: Go, my girls, my maids, daughters of Zion, and gaze upon my beloved who is as praiseworthy as

89. I Sam. 26:15,16.
King Solomon who was crowned with the crown that his mother, Bathsheva, made him for his wedding day and his party. This is the rhetoric of the discourse: every mention of kingship refers to King Solomon, who had warriors surround his bed, his pelican was of silver, his bed of gold, and the cushions of purple have the sense of the verse "...couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaic," (may one distinguish between the sacred and the profane!).

King Solomon who composed this song did not find even one human king more splendid, more royal or of greater sovereignty than himself and therefore likened the praises of the male character to images of his own kingship when the female character speaks about her beloved. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One who caused His Presence to be condensed and dwell in the Tabernacle between the two cherubim. For this reason when the Assembly of Israel remembers this she says to the nations, "Go forth and see if any other nation is as loved as I am. I complain of His love for He has gone far away from me."

10. COVERINGS: The word connotes making a bed and arranging its covers as in the verse "I made my bed in a dark place." DECKED: The word connotes spreading out or covering as in the verse "a pavement of marble and alabaster." 93

90. Esther 1:6. Rashbam means that the verse refers to the wealth and luxury of kingship. His remark on the "distinction between the sacred and the profane" refers to the fact that he is offering an explanation concerning Solomon that is based upon a report that refers to King Ahasuerus.

91. JPS renders "back" (of a bed). Rashbam understands the word to refer not to a part of the bed but to the covers that are placed upon it.


93. Esther 1:6. Ibn Ezra cites this verse and offers a similar explanation.
Chapter Four

3. YOUR LIPS: Close and tight beside each other, so alike it is as if there were [only] a colored thread between the two, reddening their flesh. Your speech is sweet and pleasant. Your face, inside your kerchief, is red, radiant and round like a pomegranate.

4. LIKE THE TOWER OF DAVID: Tall, lofty, and straight-built with turrets on which the shields and quivers of warriors are hung on it as ornaments. So, too, is your neck-erect and attractive.97

5. YOUR BREASTS: Shapely and lovely, matching like two small twin fawns of a gazelle grazing among the lilies.

6. WHEN THE DAY BLOWS: While the [morning] breeze still blows before the heat of the mid-day sun when the shadows disappear.

6. I WILL BETAKE ME TO THE MOUNT OF MYRRH: Come with me into the orchards. There we will walk and embrace each other among the trees. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the beautification of the Tabernacle's construction and the dwelling of God's Presence therein as well as to the building of Solomon's Temple and the Tower of David toward which all peoples bow down, submit, and turn.

95. Although Rashbam's observation is based upon Rashi's comment, it is clear that Rashbam's intent is to expand upon the meaning of the metaphor of doves and goats.

96. The reading "numbered" represents a correction of the text. See Hebrew note as well as the comment "Counted" below. The word is used in this verse, and the manuscript is clearly in error.

97. The neck with its necklaces is likened to a tower lined with shields and banners.
The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to Israel’s two great leaders, the shepherds of Israel, the king and the high priest, who protect the Assembly of Israel guiding them in and out.98

1. AN, YOU ARE FAIR, MY DARLING: This verse repeats its opening words in order to emphasize and reaffirm what it states, as in verses like “Awake, awake, O Deborah! Awake, awake, strike up the chant”99 and “Surely, Your enemies, O Lord, surely your enemies shall perish.”100

1. WITHIN:101 The word connotes being enclosed as in the verses “closed within every womb,”102 and “fenced him in,”103

98. It is clear that this allegorical motif does not apply to verse six solely. If that were the case, the analogies offered would make little sense. Here, as in other places, the allegory is meant to be applied to several verses. In this case it is obvious that the comment includes verses four, five, and six.


100. Psalms 92:10.

101. JPS renders “behind” which is good in this sense. Rashbam’s comment emphasizes the eyes being “within” the veil.

102. Gen. 20:15.

103. Job 1:10.

VEIL: The word connotes a covering or wrap. Those who explain that this word is similar to כָּסָר (i.e., that the letter tav is part of the root) claim that the root of the word is נָשָׁה but the derivation from the word נָשָׁה [in which the tav is radical] is incorrect. For if their explanation were correct and the letter tav were part of the root, it would have to be pointed with a dagesh within it as in the words

וַתָּלָם וְהֶנְחִיתָו יְהוָה and וַתִּבָּל נְתִיתָה יְהוָה in which the tav is part of the word. The tav of נָשָׁה is spirantized [i.e., without a dagesh] because it is not part of the root but stands in the place of the hey as in the words נָשָׁה נָשָׁה and others. For this reason the form of this word is נָשָׁה נָשָׁה.

Words in which the tav receives a dagesh [even though it is not a root letter] such as מָרֵכַת-ֵּרֹכֵבָה מָסְבִּיתָה and others is because of the shortened vowel which precedes the tav. In such a case the tav is pointed with a dagesh but the dagesh is of no importance.

Should you have reservations because the word נָשָׁה comes to mind because its form are as follows נָשָׁה נָשָׁה נָשָׁה נָשָׁה, one should know that the dagesh appears in this word because the uninflected form of the word, נָשָׁה, ends with a tav. One who understands will know that the tav of נָשָׁה is not a root letter. The masculine counterpart, נָשָׁה, and the feminine form, נָשָׁה, are both from the word נָשָׁה. Since one finds
STREAMING DOWN FROM MOUNT GILEAD: In the region of Gilead one finds goats that have very beautiful fleece. It is the habit of goats to wander about on the mountains as they graze. As they descend from the mountain they are a lovely sight to those who observe them from the foot of the mountain.\textsuperscript{107}

STREAMING DOWN: The meaning of this word is, as Menahem explained it in his "notebook,"\textsuperscript{108} to "go up."\textsuperscript{109}

2. YOUR TEETH: Such an expression is meant to be a compliment to a woman - her teeth are white and thin, aligned one next to the other, without blemish or crack.

[CLIMBING UP FROM] THE WASHING POOLS: Most ewes are white and when their fleece is freshly washed it is soft and white.

\textsuperscript{107} This comment is similar to that offered by Ibn Ezra. Both exegetes are aware that it is the visual impression that creates the meaningfulness of the metaphor.

\textsuperscript{108} See Mahberet Menahem, ed. Filipowski, p. 56. As Jellinek mentions in his note, Menahem notes that the word is a hapax legomenon and, from the context, ascribes to it the meaning of "going up." The translation offered here is based on Jellinek's proposal for correcting the text with which I agree (see Hebrew note). That such a correction is correct was shown by Geiger, Parshandata, p. 36. In this comment Rashbam is clearly rejecting the commentary of Rash (cf. ad. loc.).

\textsuperscript{109} This understanding of the word does not contradict the preceding comment in which the goats are spoken of as coming down the mountain rather than going up. The idea is their movement on the mountain and the visual impression created upon those viewing them.
COUNTED: Like ewes whose number is counted because of their importance.\textsuperscript{110}

\section{YOUR LIPS ARE LIKE A CRIMSON THREAD:} When the lips are together the line between them appears like a thread dyed red for beauty.

\section{YOUR WORDS ARE WONDERFUL:}\textsuperscript{111} The word מעים is a noun like the words שְׁדוֹ וָאָתָא and connotes speech.

\section{LIKE A POMEGRANATE SPLIT OPEN:} Like half a pomegranate, round and red on the outside, so too are your cheeks—round and red, bright and clear.

\section{YOUR BROW:} In Aramaic this word refers to the face.\textsuperscript{113}

\section{[BUILT AS A] MODEL:}\textsuperscript{114} Built as a splendid building that all craftsmen and builders might come and learn from it. The (initial) מ of מִיתוֹנִים is like the tav of מִיתוֹנִים and מִיתוֹנִים (i.e. a nominal prefix). The word מִיתוֹנִים is from the same root as מִיתוֹנִים which appears in the verse “more knowledge than the beasts of the earth.”\textsuperscript{115} In the present context the word means that the tower was beautiful and such that it served as a model for others.\textsuperscript{116}

\section{A THOUSAND SHIELDS:} Shields that are hung on a tower as ornaments.\textsuperscript{117}

\section{ALL THE QUIVERS:} These are worn to hold arrows. The same word appears in the verses “polish the arrows and fill the quivers”\textsuperscript{118} and “they hung their quivers.”\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{itemize}
\item[Ibn Ezra offers a different understanding of the word “counted” based upon the fact that all of the ewes are identical.]
\item[JPS renders “your mouth is lovely” but Rashbam contends that the word is a noun denoting not the organ of speech but speech itself.]
\item[This comment discussing the grammatical form of the word opposes that of Rashi but agrees with the view of Ibn Ezra.]
\item[The text is difficult here. Jellinek omitted two words from the text but it seems that the scribe must have also omitted words from the text. We are able to understand the context of the comment based upon Rashi (ed. loc.) but it is impossible to conjecture as to what Rashbam intended to add to Rashi’s mention of the Aramaic phrase.]
\end{itemize}
5. **TWINS OF A GAZELLE:** It is customary for a gazelle to give birth to twins that travel in pairs when they are lead to pasture together here and there while they are still young. They are a pleasant sight to behold.\textsuperscript{120} In this passage the lover once again recounts the beauty of his beloved [and describes her] from head to toe: her hair, her eyes, her teeth, her lips, her mouth, her face, her neck, her upper body, and her breasts while they embrace together in the orchard. He praises her in response to her praise of him when she said "there is Solomon's couch."\textsuperscript{121} Before the sun reached the point of mid-day he said to his beloved "I will betake me to the mount of myrrh because of the heat and you will come with me and we shall walk about together there."

6. **MOUNT OF MYRRH:** The name of a spice as in the phrase "myrrh and aloes"\textsuperscript{122} for there [i.e., on the mount] is where they grow.

**TO THE HILL OF FRANKINCENSE:** This term is synonymous [with "mount of myrrh"].

7. **EVERY PART OF YOU IS FAIR, MY DARLING:** He speaks of her beauty, that she is without blemish, and speaks with her .\textsuperscript{123}

8. **[COME] WITH ME FROM LEBANON:** Come, walk with me. Look about and gaze to and fro from the tops of the hills and there we shall embrace.

9. **YOU HAVE CAPTURED MY HEART:** with your glance of love for me when you look at me but act as though you don't even see me. In my eyes but one coil of your necklace endears you to me more than all other women who wear two coils.\textsuperscript{124}

10. **HOW SWEET IS YOUR LOVE:** Sweeter than any sweet drink! How pleasant is the fragrance of your perfume, sweeter than any spice!

11. **[SWEETNESS] DROPS:** of the honeycomb is the sweetness that flows from your lips.

**THE SCENT OF YOUR ROBES:** and clothes are more pleasing to me than the scent of frankincense. The allegorical meaning

\textsuperscript{120} This point is made by Rashi but Rashbam has expanded upon Rashi's comments in order to make more explicit the meaning of the comparison.

\textsuperscript{121} Verse 3:7, cf. Rashba's comment there.

\textsuperscript{122} 4:14.

\textsuperscript{123} In the Hebrew this comment serves as the context for the verses that follow. This is one of the methods that Rashbam uses both to integrate the verse of the book and his own comments. It should be remembered that the commentary forms a running paraphrase of the book itself and, therefore, demonstrates the ways in which the verses form a continuity of thought and what we might call "plot."

\textsuperscript{124} That is to say that her beauty is natural--she does not need jewelry or ornaments to attract him.
of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who lived in peace and quiet while the Temple still stood and before the subjugation. Then was she (the Assembly of Israel) beloved and pleasing to God.

8. Amana: The name of a mountain like "Semir" and "Hermon."[125]

FROM THE HILLS OF LEOPARDS: [So called because] it is on those very hills that wild animals dwell (lit., grow).

8. FROM LEBANON COME WITH ME; FROM LEBANON, MY BRIDE, WITH ME: This verse repeats its opening words like the following verses: "Ah, You are fair, my darling, Ah you are fair,"[126] "The ocean sounds, O Lord, the ocean sounds its thunder,"[127] "Surely Your enemies O Lord, surely Your enemies perish."[128] and "You have captured my heart, My own, my bride, you have captured my heart."[129]

9. ONE COIL OF YOUR NECKLACE: A necklace is always worn outside the blouse but there are some women who wear a "doubled" necklace with one coil inside the blouse and the other outside.

10. MORE DELIGHTFUL YOUR LOVE: The term repeats the idea of "How sweet is your love" at the beginning of the verse. The structure of this verse is similar to "Your silver and gold are mine, and your beautiful wives and children are mine,"[130] and "A woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was she hid him."[131]

11. DROPS: The word is the same as in the verse "sweeter than honey, than drippings of the comb."[132]

Psalms 92:10.

129. 4:9. Cf. Rashbam's comment above on verse 4:1. There he states that the reason for such repetition is to emphasize or affirms the subject of the verse.

130. 1 Kings 20:3.

131. Exod. 2:2. Rashbam's point is that the wording of the verse makes it clear that both the word ḥêt as well as the word ḥêt refer to the same person—the male lover. Hence, either word could be considered superfluous.

THE SCENT OF FRANKINCENSE: That is, the scent of a tree bearing frankincense that gives off its scent.

12. A GARDEN LOCKED: He recites the praises of his loved one and says, "You my sister, my bride, are precious. You watch and guard yourself from the love of others like an orchard locked and guarded from everyone. Like a spring of flowing water that is locked and sealed in the midst of the garden from which to water the trees. Even your "dry fields" are moist and wet like the watered orchards of others. It is so good that pomegranates, luscious fruits, henna, nard, and all the choice perfumes grow there. The sense of "garden" is that it has a well of fresh water in it. Its waters drip and flow among aromatic woods that are in the orchard. For from among these aromatic trees flows the source of the fountain. Therefore, its waters are fragrant and give off their scent because of the perfumes that are absorbed in it. Nevertheless, even your "dry fields" are better than this orchard— even that which is unattractive in you is still lovelier than the beauty of other women. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Land of Israel— there the people knew rest and peace and enjoyed strength as long as the Temple stood and while they observed God's commandments, i.e., until they transgressed and were exiled from their land.

12. A FOUNTAIN LOCKED: the word נֶבֶר means a fountain as in the phrase "springs of water." A SEALUP SPRING: the phrase is synonymous with "a fountain locked."

14. NARD AND SAFFRON, FRAGRANT REED AND CINNAMON: These are spices that grow on trees as is proven in the next verse, "with all aromatic woods" [i.e. trees].

MYRRH AND ALOES: These are spices that grow in the bushes of the orchard. The verse itself proves this because it is written "all the tops of spices" which refers to the roots of spices.

16. AWAKE, O NORTH WIND: Now she complains to the north and south winds that they might blow saying, "My loved one called me a garden locked, an orchard that contains spices and perfumes. Awake, north wind, come south wind and blow among the trees of spices to stir up the trees and branches

133, JPS renders "like the scent of Lebanon" but Rashbam disagrees taking his clue from the similarity between the word Lebanon and Lebonah (frankincense).

134. The term refers to lands that are arable but require irrigation. With this image the lover claims that even the least attractive features of the beloved are more attractive than the beauty of others.

135. This comment expands upon Rashi's observations on the verse. Ibn Ezra offers a different understanding of the term "a garden locked."


137. JPS renders this phrase as "all the choice perfumes," interpreting the word רוח as "important", hence "choice". Rashbam explains the word in reference to where such plants grow rather than to their quality.
so that their fragrance will reach my beloved. Let my loved one come into my garden and enjoy its luscious fruits." She says this as if to say, "My soul and my body are all his, let him appear before me with his love to do to me all that he desires for my heart desires him. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to Israel who will be gathered from the exile in order to sacrifice to God in Jerusalem, the holy city. There they will offer to Him righteous and pure sacrifices.

Chapter Five

I. I HAVE COME TO MY GARDEN, MY OWN, MY BRIDE: When he returned to his loved one he said: "I have come to my garden, my own, my bride, just as my heart longed and yearned. I have gathered myrrh with other spices in order to eat them." I HAVE EATEN MY HONEY AND HONEYCOMB, DRUNK MY WINE AND MY MILK: with the love of my dear one. You, my friends, companions, members of my assembly, eat, drink, and be intoxicated with the joy that my heart [knows] loving my own, my bride. The allegorical meaning of this passage refers to The Holy One, Who, in the future, will return to dwell in the midst of Israel and place His Presence among them as He did in the past.

PLUCKED: The word connotes gathering.138

HONEYCOMB: A hollow tree in which there is honey like the phrase "beehive of honey."139 One can remove the honey which clings to the wood and then discard the wood.140

†39. Ibn Ezra proposes the same meaning for the word.

139. I Sam. 14:27.

140. This explanation is also found in the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra.
2. —7. I WAS ASLEEP, BUT MY HEART WAS WAKEFUL: Now she complains about what she did and that her love has distanced himself from her. "I sleep on my couch and am like one who is lazy and drowsy upon my bed but my heart is awake. Here is the voice of my loved one knocking on the door and he calls me saying, 'Open the door, my own, my darling, my dove, my perfect one. My hair is filled with dew, my locks are filled with the damp drops of dew that fall during the night. All night I have travelled briskly to come to you.' I answered him, 'I have taken off my robe to lie naked and I am drowsy. How shall I get dressed again and get up, for it is cold. I washed my feet at the time that I laid down--shall I walk barefoot and dirty my feet in order to open the door for you?" When he heard what I said he drew his hand back toward him, away from the opening in the door upon which he had been knocking with all his strength because of the cold that was chilling him. [It was then that] my heart was stirred to pity him. I arose to open [the door] for him. My hands dripped with oil of myrrh which I had put on that night after bathing and the oil dripped upon the lock and the door. When I opened the door for him my loved one had already disappeared and gone off. When I realized that he had gone off I felt faint [lit. my soul went out and fled] because of what he had said to me asking me to open the door. But I had not answered him as I should have nor did I open the door as I should have when I heard him riding briskly, [asking me] to open the door for him.141

2. —7. CON’T: I sought him but found him not. I called to him loudly but he did not answer. I wandered about the city to seek him but the watchmen found me and struck me and bruised me for they suspected me [saying], "You go around at night for prostitution and robbery." When I escaped from the watchmen who guarded the walls and towers they bruised me and took away my adornments.

The allegory of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who grew weary of the commandments. The Holy One sent prophets and seers and rebukers to rebuke them that they might return to Him and observe His commandments and statutes. They (Israel) rejected them (the prophets) and did not listen to them. Therefore they were oppressed with the yoke of their exile. They cried out to God in their distress but He did not listen [lit., incline His ear] to their cries for it was the time to punish them for their refusal to heed His prophets and seers.

2. MY LOCKS: the curls of the hair.
THE DAMP: The word means drops of dew.

5. MY FINGERS, FLOWING MYRRH: This phrase is synonymous with "my hands dripped myrrh."

141. Commenting on these verses Ibn Ezra proposes that this scene took place in "the garden" (referring to vss. 4:12ff) and contrasts it to the dream scene of vss. 3:1ff.
G. [MY BELOVED] HAD BEEN DEAR: The word connotes pleasantness and affection like the phrase "יָשָׁר בְּנַעֲרֵי הָאָדָם." 142

S. HANDLES OF THE BOLT: This connotes the handle of the door latch. It means a lock.

7. MY ADORNMENTS: The word refers to garments, as in the phrase "the kerchiefs and the adornments." 144

8. -16. I ADJURE YOU, O MAIDENS OF JERUSALEM: Now she complains and adjures her companions [saying], "If you find my beloved tell him that I am love sick. I have made you swear, my friends, if you find my love you know what you must say to him about me. I have made you swear that if you see him you will tell him that I am faint because of love." They answer her asking, "In what way is your lover greater than other lovers that you are sick because of him and make us promise to tell him of your sickness? She answers them:

142. 7:2. JPS renders the phrase "my love had turned." Rashbam, however, connects this appearance of the root ḫmo with the form ḥamusa, in 7:2 and tries to establish the similarity between them. Perhaps Rashbam would read this verse as "My beloved loved me but, nonetheless, he left." 143. JPS renders "my mantle" but Rashbam disagrees with this translation which is also the case for the prooftext which he cites.

144. Isa. 3:23.

"I am sick for him because he is more handsome than all other men on the face of the earth and more praiseworthy from head to toe just as I will now describe him, from top to bottom.

10. MY BELOVED IS CLEAR SKINNED AND RUDDY: Preeminent [even] among the chariots of his troops.

11. HIS HEAD: Handsome and goodlooking like finest gold. His locks are curled and black like a raven.

12. HIS EYES: are fixed and beautiful like the eyes of doves that stand by watercourses enjoying the dampness and wetness of the water. His eyes are bright and clear—both the white and the iris. His eyes,145 well fitted in their sockets, sit flat in their sockets like a stone in a ring, neither protruding nor sunken just as described in the phrase "set in it mounted stone." 146

13. HIS CHEEKS: Sweet and pleasant, their scent lovely and perfumed like beds of spices the produce of which are perfumes.

145. This comment follows that of Rashi who notes the same qualities of the lover's eyes.
HIS LIPS: They give forth a pleasant scent like lilies, they give forth oil perfumed and good like those in which the merchant deals.

14. HIS HANDS: Lovely like wheels and circlets of gold. When he stretches his fingers back and forth they are handsome like sparks of gold that shoot forth from the hub of a golden wheel. His fingernails are even and full, clear and white like beryl which is clear and white.

14. HIS BELLY: A plane spread out this way and that like a tablet of ivory, and the skin of his belly is white as if adorned and covered with sapphires.

15. HIS LEGS: Straight and strong like marble pillars set in sockets of fine gold. His feet are like sockets of fine gold.

HIS APPEARANCE: Handsome as Mt. Lebanon which produces flowers and plants, Stately as a cedar in height and posture as it is said in the phrase "whose stature was like the cedars." 147

16. HIS MOUTH (lit., "palate"): Sweet and pleasant like delicious food, he is entirely pleasing like the palm tree. 148 Because of all of these comparisons, my friends.


148. All of the text from the comment "I adjure you, O maiden's of Jerusalem" (vss. 8-16) to this point has, according to Rashbam, been one continuous monologue of the daughters of Jerusalem. [you should now understand why] I am love sick! After they hear all of his praises they reply to her and ask. ["Where has your love gone?"] (Chapter Six vs. 1-3) WHITHER HAS YOUR BELOVED GONE?: 149 and turned, let us seek him with you to return him to you. She answers them, "It is his habit and custom to go down to his garden and grove near the beds of spices, to pasture his flock among the spices and to collect the lilies from there. Even though he has gone away from me I am his beloved and he is my beloved. He who pastures his flock among the lilies will eventually [lit. in the end of days] return to me again.

The allegorical meaning of these verses [5:8- 6:3] refers to the Assembly of Israel. Afflicted and enslaved by the yoke praise for the beloved. The female character claimed that she was sick with love, her friends wanted to know why. Having heard the description of the man, they now understand why she is lovesick now that he is gone. The present comment forms a narrative continuity with the one that follows. Understanding her lovesickness, her friends now ask for more information.

149. The reader should note that with this comment Rashbam has introduced material from chapter six. Following this discussion he will return to solve lexical problems in chapter five. The reason for this seeming discontinuity is twofold: First we must keep in mind that the divisions of chapters and verse is a late medieval Christian convention. In traditional Jewish exegesis passages were referred to by their opening words. In this sense, the concept of chapter and verse did not yet exist. More importantly, Rashbam arranges his comments as he does because it is his goal to explicate narrative units. He very correctly understands the words of 6:1-3 to be in reply to the words that preceded them. In this way Rashbam is trying to point out to the reader the poetic units that represent the dialogue between the female character and her companions.
of the exile, she says to the nations of the world, "Give testimony on my behalf on the day of judgment and justice when I will go forth from my misery through which I suffered because of the love of the Holy One for Israel." They [the nations] respond to her saying, "What more have you to do with your loved One? Turn your heart away from Him and be like us, cling unto our faith! Why suffer the yoke of enemies because of Him? What do you see in Him? What do you find in Him?"

6:1-2 CON'T: She answers them saying, "Since ancient times He has performed wonderful deeds on my behalf and His love has been with me. Surely I will not forget Him for He took me out of Egypt and appeared at the [Reed] Sea for me as a warrior, a man of war ready to fight my battles. He was preeminent, standing out from among the host of His warriors who had descended [from Heaven] for His glory. Afterwards He brought me near to Him so that I might be His nation and that He might be my God. He gave me His Torah, which is likened to eternity and honey and milk. He commanded me with laws as pleasant as fine spices, including the Ten Commandments, out of His love and mercy, out of joy and generosity He gave me the Tablets of the Covenant written by His own hands and He appeared in all His glory at the giving of the Torah.

6:1-2 CON'T: [At the giving of the Torah] I saw beneath His feet a pavement of sapphire as it is written: "under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire." He was exalted, lofty, elevated above all of the exalted ones because of His victory over Sihon and Og and the thirty-one kings. His name became known in every corner of the world, among all the nations and they, too, pledged their trust in Him and [their desire] to sit in His shade (i.e., protection). Many nations will convert [to Judaism] in order to worship Him upon His holy mountain in Jerusalem. Because of these and those things in which He has shown me His glory and greatness, I will not be disloyal to Him nor will I go after other gods to worship them.

6:1-3. CON'T: The nations now say: "Now that His might is known among all the peoples tell us, please, where he has gone. Let us seek Him with you. We, too, will be His people, we, too, will seek Him." It is like that which is reported in the book of Ezra, where the nations wanted to aid Israel in rebuilding the Temple but Israel said to them: "It is not

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151. The phrase "milk and honey" or, as in this case, "honey and milk," is common in the Bible although it generally alludes to the bounty of the land of Israel. While an allusion to the land of Israel would be chronologically out of place here, the phrase alludes to the enumeration of God's benefits.

152. Exod. 24:10.


for you and us to build a house to our God together."\textsuperscript{155} We are His people and the flock that He herds and therefore we, alone, will build the House. This incident is told in the book of Ezra.

\textbf{14. RODS OF GOLD:} The term connotes a wheel.

\textbf{11. FINEST GOLD:} Like "a golden ornament,"\textsuperscript{156} i.e., different kinds of gold melted together.

\textbf{GOLD:} Refined gold.\textsuperscript{157} Because its appearance is like that of pearl [bright] it is called p\textit{az}. [i.e., refined gold].

\textbf{BLACK AS A RAVEN:} There is no hair more becoming a young man than curly black hair.\textsuperscript{158}

\textbf{14. STUDDED:} [The fingers are termed] "studded" because the ends of the fingers are rounded at the fingertips.

\textsuperscript{155} Cf. Ezra 4:3.

\textsuperscript{156} Prov. 25:12.

\textsuperscript{157} In this comment Rashbam intends to make a distinction between p\textit{shay}, the usual word for gold, and p\textit{az}, a word used for a particular type of quality of gold.

\textsuperscript{158} This point is made by Rashi. The treatment of the physical beauty of the man and woman is expanded in the commentary of Rashbam. Although noted by Rashi in passing, the description of the lovers (and attention to the ways in which they describe each other) come to the fore in the commentary of Rashbam.

\textbf{WITH TARSHISH:} \textsuperscript{159} A precious white stone, made from marble. It is called "crystal" in Old French.

\textbf{TABLET [OF IVORY]:} Like the phrase "polished iron."\textsuperscript{160} and "fat and sleek."\textsuperscript{161}

\textbf{IVORY:} Like "throne of ivory."\textsuperscript{162} and "ivory beds."\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{159} JPS renders "with sapphires" which is not Rashbam's intention. From his comment it is clear that he refers to a stone that is white.

\textsuperscript{160} Ezek. 27:19.

\textsuperscript{161} Jer. 5:28. In this comment Rashbam uses two prooftexts which employ different uses of the root \textit{AST}. As it stands now this comment is contradictory perhaps because of the influence of Rashi's comment ad. ioc. Ibn Ezra also offers the second prooftext.

\textsuperscript{162} I Kings 10:18, 2 Chr. 9:17.

\textsuperscript{163} Amos 6:4.
Chapter Six

4-10. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, MY DARLING: Now he relates the praises of his loved one [saying], "You are beautiful, my darling, like the city of Tirzah, lovely in its construction pleasant like Jerusalem.

4. AWESOME AS BANNERED HOSTS: and armies.

5. TURN YOUR EYES AWAY FROM ME: Take your eyes off of me for they overwhelm me! They stir my heart and my thoughts for you. [When you look at me I can not contain myself from you].

YOUR HAIR: Lovely and beautiful like the hair of flocks of goats.

6. YOUR TEETH: Fine, straight, and very white like a flock of ewes. Your cheeks are red and sparkling like half a pomegranate split open. I have many wives who are queens, and many concubines, and countless young girls whom I might enjoy but my darling one is fairer and more beautiful than all of them. My heart, soul, and spirit [are given] to you.

9. THE ONLY ONE OF HER MOTHER: The young women see her and acclaim her. Queens and concubines behold her and praise her for they are all jealous of her and say,"Who is she..."

10. WHO IS SHE THAT SHINES: like the dawn so that everyone looks, gazes, and waits for her as for the dawn. Just as the world waits at night saying "When will the day shine forth for it is beautiful and bright and awesome." The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One Who desired and chose for himself the Assembly of Israel from among all the other nations. They were jealous of them (i.e., Israel) because the Holy One performed miracles and mighty deeds on their behalf. The Assembly of Israel was a special people to the Holy One and, therefore, the nations acclaim and praise her and say of her, "Who is this nation upon which He has bestowed so much of His love?"

4. TIRZAH: An important and beautiful city which King Solomon built. 166

164. This comment is based upon that of Rashi but the material has been condensed.

165. In the Hebrew this comment continues the next lemma so that Rashbam can indicate the narrative continuity between verses nine and ten.

166. Ibn Ezra associates the mention of Tirzah with Ahav (Cf. I Kings 15-16). It is not clear why he makes this connection rather than the "more obvious" one which would, like Rashbam's comment, place Tirzah within the "world" of the text.
countless princes and leaders yet of all these He chose only Israel, their kings, leaders, priests and prophets. A similar image [of a king having many wives] is found concerning Ahasuerus.\textsuperscript{171} This example, taken from the life of Solomon, is similar to what I explained above concerning "There is Solomon's couch."\textsuperscript{172} The numbers that are written—sixty and eighty—are not exact for they are not condensed (i.e., the numbers are too large to render precisely).

11. I WENT DOWN TO THE NUT GROVE: Now he tries to appease his love so that she will go and walk with him in the orchard under the nut trees that give forth their scent.


168. Cf. verse 8.

169. Ibid.

170. See comment on 6:6, "Your teeth."


172. See comment on verse 3:7. The point that Rashbam has in mind is this: Solomon is used as a figure of comparison because of his great majesty and wealth. For this reason he, as the author, likened royal images to events in his own life.

173. With these words ("Turn back...") Rashbam connects the end of chapter six with the beginning of chapter seven which
Chapter Seven

1. **TURN BACK, TURN BACK, MY PERFECT ONE: 174** My friends and I will gaze upon the beauty of your body and the loveliness of your stature. She replies to him [saying], "Why should you gaze at me, my beauty, and the loveliness of my stature that you might call me 'perfect one'? Why do you tell me to expose myself to everyone as if I were dancing? It would be disgraceful for me to be seen by everyone and, therefore, I will not come back to you." He now answers her in order to appease her and to speak her praises, describing her beauty from head to toe.175

2. **HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR FEET IN SANDALS: Your steps, the ornaments of your shoes, are like those of a princess. The he understands to be the continuation of the would be-encounter in the orchard.**

174 JPS renders this word as Shulamite, taking it as an adjective describing the female character as a native of Shulam. Raishban, among others, connects the word with the root SHLM, whole, complete.

175 The comments that follow are the lover's words that he offers in praise of her.

hidden parts of your thighs are lovely and beautiful like jewels. Your ornaments, the work of a master craftsman, are made with skill.

3. **YOUR NAVAL: Your navel is bright and clear like a basin or a goblet full of water that appears white and brilliant inside because of the brightness of the water. The luster of the goblet that does not lack the mixing of water (and wine) is like that of the moon.**

YOUR BELLY: Spread out this way and that like a wave, like a heap of wheat fenced in and hedged about by a border of lilies while other stacks of wheat are bordered by thistles. Now this border of roses around her, and whiteness of wheat, and redness of roses join and make your stomach appear lovely, red and white, beautiful to behold.

4. **YOUR BREASTS: Close to each other and identical like two twins of the gazelle.**

5. **YOUR NECK: Lofty like a tower built upon a crag. Lofty, visible to all.**

YOUR EYES: Brilliant and lovely like a pool of water in Heshbon, a city of many gates, through which most of the people come and go in order to visit (the city), and through

176 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The text as is contains either a mistake or an omission. The translation reflects what seems to be the intention of the passage.
which people come to look and walk around there. Your nose is straight like a tower in Lebanon that looks out facing Damascus.

6. THE HEAD UPON YOU: in its height like Mt. Carmel. The hair of your head is lovely and beautiful like a purple thread which contains no white within it which is called indes cleris [i.e., brilliant purples] in Old French.177 I, the king, your lover an tangled up in the thread with which you plait the braids of your hair. [I am caught up] because of my love and desire for you.

7. HOW FAIR YOU ARE, HOW BEAUTIFUL: [How pleasant it is] for me to rejoice in your love.

8. YOUR STATELY FORM: straight and tall. He likened her to a palm tree which is erect and straight.

8. YOUR BREASTS: Like two clusters hanging on a vine. Because I love you and have likened you to a palm tree, I said, "I will climb up the palm and hold its limbs and branches. This should inform you that I will come and love you, kiss you and embrace you. Let your breasts be as lovely to me as two clusters of grapes and your breath sweet like the fragrance of apples. Your mouth and the taste [of your lips] will be sweeter to me than the taste of fine wine.

Come, awake yourself to my affection and love like good and strong wine that gives joy and spirit to those who are tired and weary as it is said, 'wine that cheers the hearts of men'178 and 'young women like new wine.'179 Now she is appeased by his words and by his words as he tells the praises of her entire body from top to bottom. She is reconciled by his words and answers him,”I am my beloved’s.”180

11. I AM MY BELOVED’S: in all his desire his longing is for me. Let him do with me all that he wishes [lit., what is good in his eyes] and all that he desires. The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One who sent His prophets to rebuke the Assembly of Israel while the Temple still stood in order that they might fulfill the (laws of the) Torah. Israel would respond to them, "We are not able to fulfill the commandments or to be occupied with the Torah for such activity is bad for us." The other nations try to appease Israel by saying that she should convert to their faith and worship other gods. Israel responds that she will not turn their way, but still the


178. Psalms 104:15.


180. As has been noted several times above, Rashbam has included the words of the following passage to create a commentary that is also a paraphrase. By so doing he creates a unity within the text that forms the framework for the dialogue between the characters.
nations urge her to do so in every manner of appeasement until Israel responds, "I am my beloved's and my desire is for Him." I will not worship or turn to the faith in foreign gods but only the Holy One. Blessed be He, who has been good to me with his abundant mercy and devotion that has lasted from long ago to this very day.

13. LET US SEE IF THE VINE HAS FLOWERED: This phrase is synonymous with "to see the budding of the vale." 181

1. PERFECT ONE: complete and perfect.

2. YOUR FEET: The word refers to feet and footsteps.

JEWELS: The term connotes ear rings and ornaments.

MASTER CRAFTSMAN: 101 The aleph is pointed with a hataf kamatz and the word means the same as יִתְנָה. The hataf kamatz and the shurug are often interchangeable in words such as יִתְנָה, רָבָא, etc., and many others.

5. A TOWER OF STONE: 182 This phrase is similar to "lodging upon the fastness of a jutting rock." 183


182. JPS renders the phrase "a tower of Ivory." Rashbam connects the word with a passage in Job and follows the interpretation "stone."


5. YOUR NOSE: Your nose. It is very beautiful for a woman to have a straight, symmetrical nose without any crookedness. 184

6. THE LOCKS OF YOUR HAIR: The braids of her hair are called locks because they are drawn into locks at the top of the head. 185

LOCKS: The basic meaning of the word has to do with height. 186

IN THE HAIR RIBBONS: 187 The golden ornaments of her braided hair. It is still the custom of young lovers to collect the hair ribbons of their loved ones as a keepsake of the love between them. The bet in the word שְׁרָפָה is pointed with a kamatz 188 (indicating the definite article) which proves 184. This comment is proposed in reaction to Rashi who claims that he does not understand how or why the metaphor of the verse should be understood. Rashi seems to think that the verse means that her nose is "big." Rashbam's comment explains that it is not the size of the nose that is intended but its attractive straightness.

185. The basis of this comment is the different uses of words sharing the root פֶּל.

186. This comment is based upon that of Rashi but the material has been condensed and Rashbam offers the "results" of the longer discussion of the word offered by Rashi.

187. JPS renders the word "tresses" with the note that the Hebrew is uncertain. It seems from this comment that Rashbam was sure about the meaning of this word based both on the customs of his time and the context of the verse.

188. It should be noted that the treatment of vowels in this commentary is consistent with that found in Rashbam's commentary on the Torah.
that this word refers to the same objects described by the words "the locks of your hair are like purple." This is because the letter beq is not pointed with a hirik [which would indicate an indefinite noun].

8. YOUR STATELY FORM IS LIKE A PALM: There is no tree taller or straighter than the palm.

9. LET ME TAKE HOLD: The word is a prefixed verb form like the forms ḥelak and ḥirak.

10. LIKE CHOICEST WINE: One familiar with grammar will know that the word ḥîw is usually pointed with a short kamatz when it is not in a construct form such as this.

LET MY AFFECTION FLOW: The word ṣîḥ is a noun. The phrase means "flow of my love." It is similar to the verse "Your love is better than wine."190

12. COME, MY BELOVED, LET US GO INTO THE OPEN: Now she appeals her loved one (suggesting) that he should walk with her and embrace her saying, "Come, my dear one, let's leave the city and go into the open countryside. Tonight we shall

sleep in a village and tomorrow we will continue our walk in the vineyards and we shall see if the time for love has arrived.

13. IF THE VINE HAS FLOWERED: Let us see if the buds have opened, if the pomegranates are blossoming. There I shall give you my love and my affection shall be yours.

14. THE MANDRAKES: and the spices that give off their fragrance.191 Near the entrance to our garden, as we enter it, there we shall find all kinds of choice fruits.

BOTH FRESHLY PICKED AND LONG STORED: [We shall eat from] the choice fruits that I have stored away for you from last year.

189. JPS renders "Let it flow to my beloved". Rashbam's interpretation may reflect a slightly different text, i.e., a text that read holek dodi rather than holek ledodi. This point is only conjecture since the scribe may have supplied the lemma from his text of the book while Rashbam's comment probably was written as a gloss in the margin of his Bible.

190. 1:2.

191. Cf. Rashbam's comment on Gen. 30:14 in which the association between "mandrakes" and "fragrance" appears again. The comment offered here is meant to counter that of Rashi. Ibn Ezra offers a different explanation of the term and notes that mandrakes grow in "the shape of human beings" (†).
Chapter Eight

1.-4. IF ONLY IT COULD BE: That you could be like a brother to me showing me love, affection, and companionship. [If that were so] when I meet you on the street or anywhere in public I could kiss you in sight of everyone. Would that those seeing me embrace you and kiss you would not disrespect me--that I would be respectable to them. From there [the streets] I would lead you to my mother's house where you could teach me how I might serve you, there I would pour you a cup of sweet, mixed wine just as a wife is obliged to do for her husband. [Reflecting to herself she thinks] "He would place his left hand under my head, and with his right hand he would hold me drawing my mouth and my body close to him lovingly."

1.-4. CON'T: As she complains and yearns for him saying to her friends that he has left her because of them, they rebuke her and say, "Attach yourself to others and no longer crave and yearn for him!" she answers then [saying], "I made you, my friends, maidens, daughters of Jerusalem, swear that you wouldn't talk about this to me anymore. Why do you provoke me by saying all these things? I consider them as nothing and senseless as long as love wishes to remain within me!"

The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who complains to the Holy One, Blessed be He, from her exile asking that He return her from the exile to her former [glory] and to the site of her Temple so that she might once again serve Him as in olden times with offerings, libations, and incense. [She also asks that] He might dwell in her midst as He did in the past, when He condensed His Presence between the two cherubim like the love between a man and a woman. When the nations press her to turn away from Him she makes them swear that they will not suggest such a thing to her any longer.

(Chapter Seven)192 12. THE OPEN: Campagna in Old French, [i.e. field].

192. The following lexical notes are out of order. They concern words found in chapter seven although the commentary has discussed the opening words of chapter eight. There is the possibility that this represents either a scribal error or, as some have suggested, that the commentary is actually a composite work. While it is impossible to disprove either of these possibilities, I would propose that such discontinuities in the text could stem from two reasons. First, we must remember that Rashbam does not discuss the text verse by verse but concentrates on poetic units. What often seems "out of order" to the modern mind, conditioned by the artificial concepts of chapter and verse, may actually be the result of Rashbam's literary reading of the text. I for one often find his attempt to integrate the material in a narrative framework far superior to the reading of text using the accepted chapter divisions. The second factor that we should bear in mind is that the scribe who might have had access to the autograph found only glosses in the margin of a Bible, hence it may have been that scribe who established the "order" of the text and set the precedent for the manuscript as we have it.
13. LET US GO EARLY TO THE VINEYARDS: It is the usual practice that vineyards are not located near the city but close to [rural] villages.

OPENED: *espan* [i.e., opened] in Old French. The word connotes opening and refers to the blossoms. Before grapes begin to form the buds fall off like small, hard nuts. When they open they release their fragrance.

MY LOVE: i.e., "my [male] beloved.

14. THE MANDRAKES: A kind of spice that gives off a pleasant scent.

(Chapter eight) 2. THE JUICE: The word connotes the pressing of new grapes [or other fruits].

POMEGRANATES: The juice of pomegranates.

5—6. WHO IS SHE THAT COMES UP: Now she speaks words of love to him saying, "All those that see me following you will be surprised and say to each other: 'Who is this who "burns"after her loved one and comes up from the desert to join her lover?' Beneath the apple tree I will awaken your love for me, where love and desire are great. You will


194. JPS renders "spiced wine." Rashbam connects the root with the meaning "juice" and, hence, the process of pressing the juice out.

195. The Hebrew of this section is difficult. My translation is based upon the context of the comment as well as the verses involved.

love me there for it was there that the pains of childbirth came upon your mother and it was there that she gave birth [to you]. With the same kind of love [like that of your mother] I plead with you to place me as a seal upon your heart- like a seal stamped in the place of its sealing- and like a seal upon your arm.

6. LET ME BE A SEAL: in order that my love will be a reminder to you.

LOVE IS FIERCE AS DEATH AND MIGHTY AS SHEOL: The love I have for you is that strong. My burning coal of love is a fiery coal whose flame is strong and mighty.

7. VAST FLOODS: could not extinguish it. Even if a man would give me all the wealth that he possessed if I would turn away my love from you, that would be despised by me.

The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who, in exile, remembers the love [that accompanied] the giving of the Torah when she was at Sinai and her declaration "We will observe and we will hearken!"

196. Ibn Ezra states that the scene described in this verse takes place in "the garden." She says, "look at her who has come up" as if to prove to him how great her love is. In her desire to know that he feels as she does she asks him to "set her as a seal upon his arm."

197. Cf. Rashbam on Exod. 13:9. In that comment Rashbam cites this verse again using the idea of "a memorial." It seems that this is also the way that Rashbam explained 6:8. (Cf. Joseph Ezekiel Shor who seems to quote Rashbam's interpretation.)
With that same love she trusts in and prays to God to hasten for her the time of the redemption and salvation.

5. LEANING: The word connotes "joining together." The word is Arabic.

CHILD BIRTH: The word refers to your mother giving birth, the word is like "My children have gone forth from me" and "your sons, your own issue." 

THERE SHE GAVE BIRTH TO YOU; THERE SHE BORE YOU; The words [give birth and bear] are synonymous.

WHO BORE YOU: That is, she who gave birth to you.

FLAMES: The word implies hot coals and refers to their burning.

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A BLAZING FLAME: is one word. Its form is like that of and there are many other such words.

8. WE HAVE A LITTLE-SISTER: Now she recounts what her brothers and her family said to her when she was young: "This is our little sister and her time to be married has not yet arrived- she does not yet have breasts for she is still small. We must prepare ornaments for her which she will need when the time comes for her to marry. What garments shall we make for her so that they will be ready on the day when thirty matchmakers will ask for her? We shall dress her in jewelry studded with silver and clothes fit for a queen to marry her off if she is seemly and prominent. Like a wall, to marry her to a prince, we shall build and outfit halls and palaces of silver for her. But if she is like a door, not beautiful or worthy of royalty, we shall build her a house of cedarwood and clothe her as befits one of her age and looks." (She then says) "After I heard what they had said I answered them saying, 'I am a wall and you must build for me a tower of silver and dress me in royal...

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204. Rashbam's intent is to counter those exegetes who explain the word as two words (cf. Rashi and Ibn Ezra ad loc.). Rashbam's example is meant to show that there are many words that end with the letters yod and hev and that such a combination need not be considered God's name. (Yah is a name for God often found in compound words such as hallelyah.)

205. Ibn Ezra offers a similar explanation of the brothers' speech but suggest that it refers to her virginity.
clothing. As for your saying, "She has no breasts," (you should know) my breasts are like towers." 206

10. MY BREASTS ARE LIKE TOWERS: My time to marry has arrived. When my lover heard and took notice of what I said there, he set his heart upon me, and I found favor and perfection in his eyes.

The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Assembly of Israel who remembers in exile the wonderful love that He showed her in Egypt by sending His lieutenants, Moses and Aaron, to lead them out from the afflictions of Egypt. They went out redeemed and rewarded with gold, silver, precious stones, and ornaments. The Holy One, Blessed be He, did all this (in the past) but now she is punished with hard servitude and her soul longs for the Holy One, Blessed be He, to bring her forth into freedom.

9. A SILVER Battlement: The word means halls and palaces as in the phrase "עָרִי הָבְנֵי יָהוּדָה.

11-12. SOLOMON HAD A VINEYARD IN BAAL-HAMON: Once again she is speaking of her lover who left her [and relates this story]. Solomon had a vineyard in the place called

208 With these words Rashbam introduces the next comment thus integrating verses eight, nine, and ten.

207 Gen. 25:16. JPS renders these words as "villages and encampments" which, obviously, is not what Rashbam intends. Since we do not have his commentary on this passage we can only infer that he understood these words differently.

Baal-hamon. 208 Each year that vineyard yielded wine worth one thousand silver coins. Solomon placed the vineyard under the care of guards who watched over the year's crop. His wages were one-fifth of the fruit. It happened that someone came to buy the fruit from the king and offered him one thousand silver coins but the guard protested saying: "How can you buy [all of it] for I have already received [the promise of] one-fifth of it as my wages." The would be buyer replied, "Here are the thousand silver coins that I would have paid King Solomon for purchasing the fruit of the vineyard, and in addition I will pay you two hundred silver coins for the fifth of the produce that you were to receive- then you won't have any claim against me."

This incident happened to Solomon and he placed it here for an analogy. 209 This is an example of that which I explained above concerning "Here is Solomon's couch," 210 and "There are sixty queens." 211

209 As noted above, Rashbam regards Solomon's mention of himself to be one of the conventions of the book. Solomon recalled incidents in his own life that were worthy of inclusion as images of wealth and splendor.

210 See comment above on 3:7.

211 See comment above on 6:6.
11. CON'T: The allegorical meaning of this verse refers to the Holy One who made the Assembly of Israel His "vineyard" as it is said "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel."212 and "My beloved had a vineyard on a fruitful hill."213

GUARDS: [A continuation of the allegorical imagery.] Cruel Gentiles, taskmasters who rule over them and steal all that they have. Israel says to them. "In the end of days you will be destined to account for what you have done. The Avenger will come to avenge us just as He did to the hosts of Egypt, their horses, and their chariots." The nations then answer her saying, "If, in the end of days, we are found guilty we will restore all [that was yours] and we will add a fifth to it. Then we shall be innocent before the law."214

12. TWO HUNDRED: This sum represents one-fifth of a thousand (and, therefore, the punitive amount in the case of theft).

11. BAAL-HAMON: The name of a place.215

212. Isa. 5:7.

213. Isa. 5:1.

214. Behind this idea of restoring stolen goods and adding a fifth of the value are the Biblical laws concerning the return of stolen property. See Exod. 21:37; Num. 5:6.

215. This comment is meant to counter Rashi's interpretation which takes Baal-hamon as an expression for Jerusalem. [Cf. Rashi ad. loc.] Ibn Ezra, like Rashi merely notes that Baal-Hamon is a place name.

13. YOU WHO LINGER IN THE GARDEN: She now talks about her loved one: "This is what my dear one said to me, 'My sister, my beloved, who sits, lingers, and strolls in the gardens and orchards, my friends and companions who have come with me long to hear your voice for it is pleasant. Let your voice be heard singing a beautiful song so that my friends might listen.'" But she answers him [Hurry, my beloved]216.
HURRY, MY BELOVED, SWIFT AS A GAZELLE: or a young stag. [Hurry] to run and range on the hills of spices, the mountains of frankincense. I too will go with you there and we will embrace each other there, I and you. There will I sing a song and raise my voice for the two of us and I will please you with my song. But in front of all these others it is not becoming for me to sing for my glory is revealed only in private.

The allegorical meaning of the verse refers to the Holy One, Blessed be He, who says to the Assembly of Israel, "The angels wait and listen to hear your voice raised in prayer as you offer proper sacrifices." The Assembly of Israel responds, "Hurry, my beloved, to my holy city, the site of my sanctuary. Restore to me my judges as of old and leaders as in the beginning and redeem me from my exile. Then your levites and priests will sing to you as they offer incense and proper sacrifices and whole offerings. Then they shall offer bullocks upon your altar.


218. This statement is a word-play on Psalms 45:14. The comment indicates that the female character feels that singing in public is immodest and should be done in a moment of privacy.

219. It is impossible to determine if this is the work of the author or a postscript added by the scribe but, given the custom of copyists, it is safe to assume that the note is the work of the scribe who added it upon the completion of his copying of the manuscript.