Notes

Vulture in a Cage: Poems by Solomon Ibn Gabirol

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Introduction to the Notes

Preamble:

No medieval Hebrew poet devoted as much attention to himself in his poetry as did Solomon Ibn Gabirol. His poems of complaint are so numerous and distinctive that they may be considered his own special genre, and so personal that a reader is sometimes tempted to try to use them as the basis for a psychological study. Even Ibn Gabirol's panegyrics to patrons, where much self-referentiality would seem to be out of place, are replete with themes that are native to his poems of personal complaint. This volume of his poems is designed to document as vividly as possible the persona that Ibn Gabirol created and whose creation is such a distinctive part of his achievement. It covers his poems of personal complaint and poems to friends, patrons, and enemies; it includes a selection of poems on the pleasures of wine, love, and gardens, themes treated by all the great Hebrew poets of the age, but to which he brought his peculiar sensibility. It rounds out the picture with a selection of Ibn Gabirol's devotional poetry, another sphere of literary activity to which he made a distinctively personal contribution.

Vulture in a Cage includes, alongside Ibn Gabirol's most famous and most frequently anthologized poems, many that are less familiar; some that are less polished; and a few that are downright forbidding. The selection is extensive enough to give the reader a sense of the sweep of Ibn Gabirol's work, of the myriad ways in which he tackles the major themes of his poetry, and the flashes of originality that dot even his longer, more conventional, odes.

The book has been designed for the general reader, with only the briefest of notes to explain the minimum that must be known to grasp the poet's intent. The Hebrew text has been provided for readers who know Hebrew and would like to see for themselves what Ibn Gabirol actually said. I thought that such readers might want to know more about the poems: how the text was established, why the translation sometimes seems to deviate from the Hebrew; the meaning of enigmatic passages; the significance of allusions or images; what to read for more information. Since some of the poems are long, I thought that readers might be grateful to have them broken down into segments and for help in following the sequence of Ibn Gabirol's thought. For such readers, the present notes have been compiled.

As of July, 2016, the notes have been compiled for nearly all of the book's first four sections; I plan to complete the notes in the coming months and to revise them from time to time as I continue to study the poems and ponder their meanings. I have made prose translations and notes on many more of Ibn Gabirol's poems, and I intend to add these to the site in due course. I invite those who consult this website to write me with suggestions and comments for the improvement of the notes based on their own erudition and study of the poems. Perhaps this website can become a forum for the interpretation of Ibn Gabirol's poetry.

Text of the Poems:

The basis of the Hebrew text of the non-liturgical poetry is the critical edition by Ḥayim Brody and Ḥayim Schirmann (hereinafter designated B-S; for details, see the bibliography at the end of this Introduction), which provides thorough coverage of variant readings and permits the user to trace the text back to the manuscripts.

Ibn Gabirol's poems were collected in the Middle Ages, possibly quite close to the poet's own time. Such collections—in principle, devoted to a single poet (though they sometimes include appendixes containing the works of other poets)—are known as *dīwān*s. Ibn Gabirol's

dīwān is mentioned in twelfth-century letters and book lists, but no copy has survived intact from his period. Fragments of his *dīwān*, small selections of his poems, and miscellanies containing poems by him have survived in the Cairo geniza. None of these early manuscript fragments can be dated, but most of them can be assumed to go back to the so-called classic period of the geniza (tenth–thirteenth centuries). Collections of Ibn Gabirol's poems were sometimes included in other poets' *dīwān*s, mostly in manuscripts copied in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among the Ottoman-period manuscripts, MS Schocken 37 particularly stands out. It is a collection of whole *dīwān*s of various poets, along with a great number of miscellaneous poems by other poets, known and unknown. It contains the only extensive manuscript *dīwān* of Ibn Gabirol.

Brody and Schirmann made Schocken 37 the basis of their edition, relegating the readings of the other manuscripts to the critical apparatus. Although Schocken 37 is by far the most complete manuscript edition of Ibn Gabirol's poems, its copyist was not the most reliable, and he employed a script in which many letters resemble one another. The earlier manuscripts, fragmentary though they are, are often clearer and more correct and therefore extremely important in establishing the text. Brody and Schirmann made full use of the manuscript resources available during the long period when their edition was in preparation—from the 1930s, when it was begun by Brody, to 1975, when it was completed by Schirmann. The fragments that have come to light since then have contributed little to the textual criticism of the poems in this book.

Because Brody and Schirmann generally printed the text as it appears in Schocken 37, even when erroneous, it has sometimes been necessary to adopt a variant found in their critical apparatus or to emend the text in accordance with conjectures by other scholars or myself. Whenever I deviate from Brody and Schirmann's text, I provide a brief explanation in the notes. When Brody and Schirmann have emended the text, I ordinarily adopt their emendation without comment.

The Translations:

The translations are anchored in painstaking philological study of the poems, drawing on medieval lexicography, biblical exegesis, the language conventions of the Golden Age, and the work of earlier scholars. But the wording of the interpretations thus arrived at is not rigidly dictionary-bound. I have tried to write idiomatic, though only rarely colloquial, English. Flexibility in wording was also necessitated by the decision to cast the translations in metered verse.

Since the poetry is couched in a self-consciously formal biblical idiom and was written for an aristocratic and learned audience, I generally keep the diction, if not formal, at least decorous. Occasional lapses into the colloquial occur when I think that the poet is aiming for a lighter tone.

I try to clarify the relationship between verses by adding conjunctions and by using other syntactic devices that are not present in the original. I eliminate the poet's redundancies, when the redundancy appears to be merely metrical filler. When possible, I incorporate explanatory glosses in the translation so as to avoid sending the reader to the notes more than necessary. While I regard the poet's imagery as sacred, I do occasionally replace it with imagery that sounds less foreign or stilted. But I do not engage in free composition or attempt to write my own poetry. I see myself not as a poet-translator but as an academic translator wielding poetic techniques.

Readers who know Hebrew well but have little experience with Golden Age poetry will notice that many Hebrew words have shifted in meaning since Ibn Gabirol's time. His vocabulary comes almost entirely from the Bible, and he uses words in accordance with the way he and his contemporaries understood the passage in the Bible from which they are derived. This means that interpretation depends not on how we use the word today or even on how we understand the biblical usage of the word based on our knowledge of Semitic philology, but on how the Bible was understood by medieval lexicographers and commentators. Another reason that Ibn Gabirol's language may seem strange to speakers of modern Hebrew is that, like all Hebrew writers between the second and the twentieth century, he was not a native Hebrew speaker. Ibn Gabirol's native language was Arabic; accordingly, his Hebrew displays the influence of Arabic syntax and word usage, as well as calques of Arabic turns of phrase.

Format:

All the poems in this book are written in Arabic-style quantitative meters, in which each verse is divided into two approximately equal hemistichs. (For details of Hebrew quantitative prosody, see the Resources page on this website.) The verses are printed here with the two hemistichs on separate lines and the second line indented. This procedure has the advantage that the printed lines are approximately the length of a normal English line of verse. Occasionally, I have taken the liberty of dividing a single translated verse into three lines instead of two. But verse numbers, as used in the notes, apply to the whole verse, so that verse 1 consists of the first and second lines, verse 2 consists of the third and fourth lines, and so on. Because of the differences in English and Hebrew syntax and because of the exigencies of the prosody, the translated verses are not always divided at the same point as in the originals. But the verses of the translation generally match the verses of the original exactly, as the independence of the verse was an important feature of the poetics of the age.

Long poems are often broken up in this book by spacing to call attention to a change of theme or of speaker. The reader should not think that this means that the poem is composed of stanzas; the poems in this volume are nearly all monorhymed and therefore non-strophic.

The Notes:

In the notes, each poem's first line is followed by a reference to its location in B-S and, in most cases, by a summary of the poem's contents. The summary divides the longer poems into segments. It was a convention of the age for long poems to begin with a theme that is unrelated or only indirectly related to the poem's main theme, and to reach that main theme through a pivot passage, known by the Arabic term *takhalluṣ*. In such poems, the transition can overlap with the main theme for a verse or two; this explains why the verse numbers of successive segments sometimes overlap.

If the poem has been the subject of important studies, a short bibliography follows, with emphasis on the most recent or most substantial publications.

It was pointed out above that verses of poetry in quantitative meters (i.e., most of the poems in this book) consist of two hemistichs, which in this book are printed on two lines (in the case of the translations, occasionally on three). The verse numbers used in the notes are those of whole verses, which usually means that a given verse number is only half the number of lines, counting from the beginning of the poem. Therefore, the easiest way to locate a comment in the notes is by looking for the appropriate *lemma* (the words quoted from the poem that begin each

note). The *lemmata* are in Hebrew when they refer to the Hebrew text, in English, when they refer to the translation.

The notes are intended to provide whatever the reader needs to know for a first understanding of the poem and to explain deviations from the text in B-S. Earlier scholarship on the poems is cited only when there are serious disagreements about the meaning of a passage. Cross-references to poems in the book are usually given in English; the poems can be located by using the search function. Biblical verses are cited only when an awareness of the biblical verse is essential to understanding the poem, or when a word is translated in accordance with a usage in a particular biblical verse as that verse was interpreted by Ibn Gabirol's contemporaries. To cite every biblical quotation in a medieval Hebrew poem is fruitless labor; those who want more detail of this kind can consult the commentaries on Ibn Gabirol's poetry in the bibliography below. A new and up-to-date commentary on Ibn Gabirol's poetry is long overdue. Perhaps these notes will serve as a first step in that direction.

Index

The notes are arranged by the order of the poems in the book. Each poem is identified by its first line in Hebrew and English and by its page numbers. Thus, if you are reading through *Vulture in a Cage* and want to consult the notes on a particular poem, you can locate it by page number. But if you want to know whether a particular poem by Ibn Gabirol appears in the book, you can locate it by using the index at the end of the Notes, where the poems are listed with their page numbers. Of course, you can also find a particular poem by using the search function.

Select Bibliography

Editions of poems by Ibn Gabirol, from the earliest nineteenth-century publications until the early 1970s, are cited by B-S in the apparatus to each individual poem. A complete bibliography on Ibn Gabirol up to 1976 may be found in Jarden's work cited below. The works listed here under the heading "Editions and Commentaries" are the most serviceable sources in use today; under "Translations, Studies, and Other Frequently Cited Works" are listed only works that are the most comprehensive, most useful, or most often mentioned in the notes accompanying the poems in this book.

Editions and Commentaries

B-R: see below, Ḥ. N. Bialik and Y. H. Rawnitzky.

B-S: see below, Ḥ. Brody and Ḥ. Schirmann.

Bialik, Ḥ. N., and Y. H. Rawnitzky. שירי שלמה בן יהודה אבן גבירול. 7 vols. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1924–32. The last volume, containing important notes by the editors and supplementary notes by Ḥayim Brody, is often referred to in scholarly literature as vol. 3, part 3; in the present notes, it will be called vol. 7, as on the title page.

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———, and Ezra Fleischer. תולדות השירה העברית בספרד המוסלמית. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995.

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The Notes

ואל תתמה באיש כמה בשרו
Don't be amazed at one who burned to scale
pp. 2-3

Source: B-S p. 40, no. 72

Bibliography:
Katz, בנות השיר הנאוות, pp. 73–82.

Notes:
v. 2. The poet surrounds and animates the universe, just as the individual's soul surrounds and animates his body, a frequent paradox in Ibn Gabirol's poetry; see **TK parallels.**

ואם אתם ישישים בי תמהתם
You elders stare at me, amazed.
pp. 4-5

Source: B-S p. 160, no. 246

אני השר והשיר לי לעבד
A prince am I, and poems are my subjects;
pp. 6-7

Source: B-S p. 77, no. 129
Notes:
1. השר: This reading, which yields a consistent metaphor and avoids the repetition of the word שיר in v. 2a, has been adopted by most editors, though B-S prefers the majority reading, השיר. Some editors have vocalized the word as הַשָּׁר, yielding the translation "I am the singer."

3. בָּן: This participle of the root בין in the *qal* conjugation, occurs again with the same meaning and in a similar paronomasia in "Wrap, adorn yourself in splendor," v. 11. Though not in use in modern Hebrew, it is not uncommon in medieval poetry and has precedent in biblical Hebrew (Ps. 139:2).

אני האיש אשר שנס אזורו
I am the man who cinched his belt
pp. 8-13

Source: B-S pp. 116–17, no. 193

Summary: On the poet's struggle for occult wisdom, much celebrated for its description of a night storm. The poet declares his devotion to wisdom to the point of self-destruction (vv. 1–11). He then describes the storm, interpreting it as a symbol of his struggle (vv. 12–26). In vv. 27–28, he concludes the poem with a weary maxim.

Bibliography:

Bargebuhr, *The Alhambra*, pp. 260–327.

Dvora Bregman, צנפת חור in מחקרי ירושלים בספרות עברית 10–11 (1987–88): 445–67.

Aviva Doron, שתי קריאות בשיריו האישיים של שלמה אבן גבירול, in Zvi Malachi, מחקרים ביצירת שלמה אבן גבירול (Tel Aviv: Mekhon Katz, 1985), pp. 53–78.

Israel Levin, הסוד והיסוד (Lod: Mekhon Habermann, 1986), pp. 164–67.

Yehuda Liebes, "ספר יצירה אצל אבן גבירול ופירוש השיר "אהבתיך, in Yosef Dan, מחקרי ירושלים במחשבת ישראל 6 (1987): 73–123.

Yosef Tobi, *Between Hebrew and Arabic Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 273–75.

Reuven Tsur, מוסכמות וריטוריקה בשירה העברית בימי הבינים (Tel Aviv: Dagah, 1975), pp. 45–48.

Zemach, כשורש עץ, pp. 50–65.

Notes:

3. *Time*: For this ubiquitous personification, see **TK**

6. *learning*: The word מוסר is the Hebrew equivalent of the Arabic word *adab*, a term of ramified connotations in Ibn Gabirol's cultural environment. Both terms began by meaning "discipline," but their semantic fields expanded to embrace manners, culture, good conduct, morality, and literature. For a full discussion, see S. A. Bonebakker, "Adab and the Concept of Belles-Lettres," in Julia Ashtiany et al., eds., *'Abbasid Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 16–30.

18. *Aram lamented Beor's son*: Beor's son is undoubtedly Balaam ben Beor, the wizard hired by Balaq ben Tsipor to curse the Israelites as they encamped in Moab (Numbers 22–25). In Num. 27:7, Balaam says that he came from Aram. Balaam meets his end in Num. 31:8, as one of the dignitaries killed in the hostilities between the Israelites and the Moabites, but there is no mention of the Arameans mourning him, either in the Bible or, apparently, in the subsequent rabbinic tradition of biblical exegesis and narrative. The Bible knows also a Bela ben Beor, a king of Edom (Gen. 36:32); indeed, some editors have preferred the reading אדם, found in one manuscript, instead of ארם. But the figure of Balaam, a man thought to be endowed with knowledge of the divine world, is uncannily apt for the situation that Ibn Gabirol describes here.

Interestingly, Petrus Alfonsi (Toland, p. 76) includes Balaam in list of philosophers along with Enoch, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Marianus. He also cites Moses, Job, and Solomon, but does not call them philosophers. Balaam is sometimes associated with the legendary Arab sage Luqman; see Chauvin, Bibliographies des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabs 2:188-209.

24. וכל: Some editors have read this word, which appears in three manuscripts, as ובל, but our reading seems to be confirmed by one manuscript that reads ועת (this is the version that was adopted by B-S), which yields the same meaning ("whenever"). It is also better suited to the context. The poet is not saying that he has no hope of ever seeing the light; rather, if he waits passively for it to appear, he will eventually glimpse it (v. 26).

בחר מהחלי מבחר שביסו

“Select one anklet, but a choice one
pp. 14-21

Source: B-S pp. 85–86, no. 139

Bibliography:

Mirsky, המבנה בשירי הידידות, pp. 443–45.

Summary: The poet’s friends advise him to reduce his intellectual ambitions (vv. 1–8). He replies by praising wisdom and confirming his commitment to its pursuit (vv. 9–18). A pivot passage (vv. 18–19) leads to praise of Yekutiel (vv. 20–24). The poet complains that Yekutiel has turned away from him; he boasts of his own loyalty (vv. 25–33) and literary prowess, given his youth. He ends by declaring his dependence on Yekutiel (vv. 34–41).

Notes:

7. *Azazel*: a desert demon mentioned in Lev. 16:8. The birds are partly from the list of unclean fowl in Leviticus 11 and partly from Ps. 102:7.

12. וירים הזמן אחרי פעמיו: This reading, found in three manuscripts and most editions, seems preferable to וילך הזמן אחרי פעמיו, the reading preferred by B-S.

18. *creations*: lit., “ways”; but this is the implication of the word in Prov. 8:22, to which our verse alludes.

reserved: lit., “hid,” alluding to the ancient idea that God put away the light created on the first day of Creation (Gen. 1:3–4) and stored it for the World to Come, replacing it with the ordinary light of the sun, moon, and stars; see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:8–9. Here, he identifies this hidden light of rabbinic legend with the intellect in a kind of Neoplatonic midrash. Cf. his lines on the primordial light in כתר מלכות, paragraphs 4 (end) and 7, in Israel Levin, *“Keter malkhut” lerabi shelomo ibn gabirol* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2005), pp. 258–59.

19. Besides being his patron’s name, Yekutiel is one of the seven names of Moses, according to rabbinic tradition; see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:269.

28. ינובון: The reading יזובון in B-S appears to be a typographical error.

29. *knots*: Most medieval commentators take this word, found only in Hab. 2:11, to mean “brick,” in accordance with its usage in the Mishna (Bava Batra 1:1) and the Talmud, or as a wooden plank. My translation follows Abraham Ibn Ezra’s explanation in his commentary on that passage.

31. הניסו: This word recurs in rhyme position again in v. 40, suggesting that one of them is a mistake or that they are alternate versions of the same verse.

36. *Pharaoh’s viceroy*: Joseph, who was seventeen at the time of his sale to Egypt; see Gen. 37:2.

39. *yearns*: B-R, Jarden, and Levin take חמד as meaning “to envy,” a sense that it often has in medieval Hebrew, and interpret it as meaning that all the universe, from the stars to the lowly creepers of the earth, envies him. But חמד also retained its biblical meaning, “to desire,” and this seems more appropriate here. The poem has turned to speaking of the poet’s own attitudes (see v. 40) and his ambitions to comprehend all knowledge.

40. *put him to flight*: See comment on v. 31.

41. Lit., “all his lot and all his portion,” i.e., like God (Ps. 16:5).

לו היתה נפשי מעט שואלת
If all I wanted were some little thing,
pp. 22-25

Source: B-S pp. 53–54, no. 96

Summary: The poet broods on his frustration in the quest for wisdom and social status. His friends advise him to take some pleasure in worldly recreation, but he is consumed by his quest for wisdom and vows to soldier on, even if honors and wisdom remain beyond his reach (vv. 1–8). Friends advise him not to care about worldly honors. He responds by insisting that he deserves them (vv. 9–14). He concludes with a manifesto that is a kind of key to Ibn Gabirol’s view of his art and career (vv. 15–17).

Bibliography:

Katz, בנות השיר הנאוות, pp. 86–111.

Scheindlin, “Caged Vulture.”

Notes:

2. *Endless hoping makes men heartsick*: lit., hope is deferred. The poet is alluding to Prov. 13:12, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.”

5. *Solomon*: The text refers to him as Qohelet, the purported author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, whom the Jewish tradition identifies with Solomon.

9. ימל: This reading seems superior to B-S’s יזל.

11. *On ben Pelet*: a participant in the rebellion of Korah against the leadership of Moses and Aaron in the wilderness (Numbers 16–17). It is hard to see why Ibn Gabirol singled out On, who played no notable part in the rebellion, from among the other rebels; perhaps the choice was simply dictated by the rhyme. In alluding to Korah’s rebellion, the speaker may be threatening his detractors, whom he portrays as rebels against his own justified claim to leadership, with a fate similar to that of Korah and his men; or he may be asserting his own willingness to emulate them in usurping leadership at the risk of self-destruction.

15. An allusion to the story of the child Moses confronted by Pharaoh with jewels and coals; see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1938–42), 2:274 and the notes at 5:402. The verse also alludes to Isaiah’s call as a prophet (Isa. 6:5–7) and God’s turning Balaam’s curse into a blessing (Numbers 22–24). **F.O. see above, p. {19}**.

17. *Sodom’s men*: alluding to the story in Gen. 19:1–11.

“A soul, her outcry rising—
pp. 26-31

Source: B-S 71–72, no. 122

Summary: The poet’s friends admonish him that his intellectual and social ambitions are beyond his reach (vv. 1–7). The poet responds by complaining of his lack of intellectual peers, raging at fate for not granting him due recognition, and lampooning the world for its low regard for wisdom and its devotees (vv. 8–20). He concludes by reaffirming his commitment to the pursuit of wisdom (vv. 21–31).

Bibliography:

Zemach, כשורש עץ, pp. 81–100.

Notes:
6–7. B-S have reversed the order of these verses, following a proposal of Brody in B-R 7:125, but I do not think that enough is gained thereby to justify diverging from the unanimous evidence of the manuscripts.

6. *sheet*: The word סדין, translated here “sheet,” could designate any expanse of cloth, whether used as a covering for things or people (cf. “Wrap, adorn yourself in splendor,” v. 92); it was not specialized to mean a bed covering until modern times. But the sexual overtone is present even so, as may be seen in “I gazed into the upper world,” v. 6, where the same expression is used in an undoubtedly erotic context.

20. *without … clergy*: lit., “though they were not [the sun’s] sons-in-law.”

בפי חרבי ובלשוני חניתי
My sword and spear are in my mouth,
pp. 32-33

Source: B-S p. 152, no. 234

The poet expresses his commitment to wisdom and his contempt for worldly things.

נטוש לו ועזוב אולי
Abandon ‘ifs,’ and stop your ‘maybes.’
pp. 34-37

Source: B-S pp. 49–50, no. 89

Source: The world seems to be telling the poet not to set his aspirations too high, but he defies it, seeing himself as the very impulse that animates the world (vv. 1–9). He lets worldly things

neither discourage him nor give him joy, but he does take great pleasure in being generous to friends and in crushing his enemies with his verse (vv. 10–18).

Notes:
5. *sons of Days*: For this personification, see **TK**

7–9. As he often does, Ibn Gabirol speaks of himself as the World-Soul, surrounding and animating the universe; see above, p. **TK**

Filled by my robe's folds: A particularly daring boast, as it virtually identifies the speaker with the divinity via the image in Isa. 6:1.

16–17. The order in the manuscripts, followed by B-S, is 17–16, which leaves unclear what the speaker is trampling underfoot. I have followed B-R in reversing the order and emending ושתיה in v. 16 to read ושתיהו. It is remarkable that, though Brody did not raise an objection to this change in his notes to their edition (B-R 7:124), he restored the manuscript's order in B-S.

אמור לאומרים כלו עלומיו
Answer those who say, "His youth is done
pp. 38-41

Source: B-S p. 58, no. 103

Summary: The poet explains his withdrawal from society. His friends accuse him of isolating himself out of arrogance (vv. 1–7). He replies that he has been preoccupied with the self-destructive pursuit of wisdom but that he is steadfast in his loyalty (vv. 8–14). He concludes with a threat directed at those who would defame him (vv. 15–16).

5. *onyx*: perhaps referring to the black writing of his poems.

9. *eating his own flesh*: Ibn Gabirol uses this image to describe his intellectual efforts in "I am the man," v. 7; "If all I wanted," v. 3; and elsewhere.

14. ולו. This version seems more consistent with the powerful first-person manifesto in vv. 15–16 than ולא, the version preferred by B-S. The latter would yield the meaning: "He does not refuse to forgive his sins." Each version is found in one manuscript of the two witnesses for vv. 14–16.

יגון חשק ואהבת הנעורים
Passion's pain and youthful love
pp. 41-47

Source: B-S pp. 132–34, no. 206

Summary: The speaker begins by lamenting his friendlessness and his troubles, and boasting of the bitterness of his own poetry (vv. 1–9); this leads, via a pivot passage (vv. 9–11), to the praise of an unnamed patron, who must have been a man of considerable political importance and

religious scholarship (vv. 11–29). He then reverts to speaking of his own poetry, boasting of his own talent and promising great literary achievements in the future (vv. 30–40).

Notes:
4. Alluding to God's blessing to Abraham, Gen. 15:5: "Count the stars, if you are able.… So (numerous) will be your descendants."

13. I follow a suggestion of B-R in interpreting the obscure second hemistich.

16. *Edom … Zefo … Kedar*: The first two are traditional epithets for Christians, the third for Arabs. All three terms are derived from biblical genealogies.

darkens: a pun on the name Kedar, the root of which, קדר, means "dark."

33. This verse plays on imagery associated with Moses, who, upon descending from Mount Sinai, radiated beams of light and covered his face with a veil so as not to overpower his listeners (Exod. 34:29–35). Here, the veil is imagined not as shutting out the radiance but as being the cause of it.

עטה הוד ועדה ולבש גאונים
"Wrap, adorn yourself in splendor, dress in pride!
pp. 48-67

Source: B-S pp. 79–82, no. 132
Summary:
This panegyric to an unnamed person is couched as a reply to encouraging words by an imaginary friend, who counsels the poet to take comfort for his sorrows in the fame of his poetry (vv. 1–3). The poet answers that he is not cowed by his misfortunes (vv. 4–10). He speaks of his ceaseless lifelong pursuit of wisdom and of his contempt for worldly success and for those who are ambitious for it (vv. 11–26). He mocks inferior poets and boasts of his own poetic mastery at great length (vv. 27–68); he then laments the dearth of great men in his age (vv. 69–73). This thought leads through a pivot passage (vv. 74–75) to praise of the unnamed person (vv. 76–97). The poem ends with the poet proclaiming his own special qualifications to praise a man whom all serious people wish to praise (vv. 98–99).

As B-R point out, this poem has many repeated rhyme words, leading them to conjecture that it is a draft. The manuscripts differ in their contents, some omitting verses, others containing extra verses, and it is not clear how to decide which verses, if any, are spurious. The last fourteen verses contrast with everything that came before, in containing many obscurities. Perhaps in a final version, the poem would have been shorter and its conclusion more polished.

Notes:
23–24. *his*: The masculine pronouns do not have an obvious referent. Perhaps the masculine subject is היום (the day, or Time) in v. 22. More likely, a verse in which the subject shifted from אדמה (world, fem.) to זמן (Time, masc.) has fallen out.

26. מעריהם: an emendation by S. D. Luzzatto, in התחיה 1 (1850): 47, and adopted by B-R. B-S preferred רוגניהם from among the variant readings.

29. *master metrics*: following a brilliant interpretation cited anonymously and justified by B-R in their commentary. For a similar usage of the verb, cf. Isaac Ibn Ghiyath's commentary on Eccles. 12:9 in Yosef Kafaḥ, חמש מגילות (Jerusalem: Ha'aguda lehatsalat ginzei teiman, 1961/62), pp. 292–94, which is echoed by Abraham Ibn Ezra in his commentary. A less daring interpretation would be "if only they would listen."

31. ארנים: a simple emendation proposed by Abraham (Adam Hakohen) Lebensohn, in התחיה 2 (1857) and adopted by B-R but rejected by B-S. The manuscripts read אדנים, which means a base or pedestal, not a board, as stated by various commentators on this verse, and thus does not make a plausible antithesis with the trees of paradise. Saadia (Isa. 44:14) renders ארן as Arabic *ṣanawbar* (pine or holm oak).

34. Another possible interpretation: If their verses were placed in a balance, they would prove no weightier than smoke and dust.

39. *geonim*: the heads of the academies of talmudic scholarship, especially of the academies of Sura and Pumbedita, then located in Baghdad.

45. *its chambers*: The Hebrew has "their chambers." Perhaps Ibn Gabirol intended to refer to the three items mentioned in v. 42: מליצה, דעת, בינים. I have changed the pronoun to singular for the sake of clarity.

55. *pretending cinnamon was straw*: i.e., by claiming that my poems were no better than theirs.

58. *we*: Ibn Gabirol here loftily refers to himself in the plural.

67. *reserved*: The translation of כבודה reflects the use of the word in Ps. 45:14.

74–75. Words meaning "remnant" or "remain" based on the root שאר occur four times in this pair of verses, referring to the Jewish people, as in Isa. 10:20.

82. Schocken 37 has different wording and an additional line: לולי ראש מליצי התעודה / אשר חזק ידי דת אל אמונים // אזי מעד אשור כל מאשורה / והיו מחמדיה צניניים, "if it were not for the chief of the spokesmen of the Torah / who strengthened the hands of the religion of the faithful God // everyone's steps would have slipped from the straight path, / and all its delights would have been brambles." B-S consider the additional verse a later interpolation.

83. The Torah's longtime heirs are Israel. Cf. Deut. 33:4; or the scholars of the Torah.

85. *problems has he solved*: lit., "legal resolutions has he uncovered."

87–90. The feminine pronouns in these verses could refer to דת or לשון in v. 86. It sounds as if the object of the panegyric is being praised for having written a book, with its chapters (שערים) and their subdivisions (מחלקות) mentioned in v. 90. If so, it could have been a book on grammar or on talmudic law.

87. The martial language derives from the traditional depiction of talmudic dialectic as warfare and the disputants as warriors.

88. גנונים: Modern editors have emended this reading of both manuscripts to גאונים, but this seems unnecessary. גנונים means "protected, as by a shield," and therefore is a natural extension of the military vocabulary of the passage and a good parallel to בצורים in v. 88. The *qal* form of the verb is unusual in Golden Age poetry but occurs in the Bible and is quite common in *piyyut*.

89. משחותיה: Most editors, including B-S, emend to read משתותיה; if correct, the poet must have been thinking of the image of water emerging from under the Temple in Ezek. 40:1–2. But the manuscript reading is a form of the noun שוחה (pit) found in Prov. 28:10, which makes perfect sense here.

shards: I take the root of נפוציה to be נפץ rather than פוץ; the meaning, therefore, is not "scattered," but "broken into bits."

95. *Sabea and Dedan*: Though biblical nations were often used to represent contemporary peoples, these two nations merely stand for faraway lands in general. Saadia, in his translation of the Torah, identified them with Hind and Sind, the peoples of India.

זממי הה בהר כסל נבוכים
"My thoughts are straying, lost, about Mount Folly.
pp. 68-73

Source: B-S pp. 39–40, no. 70

Summary: The opening describes the poet's frustrations in his quest for wisdom (vv. 1–12) and the shortcomings of the people around him (vv. 13–17). In the pivot passage, he promises to lead his fellow men to the addressee, an unnamed rabbi, from whom they can learn wisdom (vv. 18–20); the panegyric proper follows (vv. 21–31).

Notes:
6. This striking and original image seems to be equivalent to "wasting my youth with worldly activities."

28. There seems to be no reasonable explanation for the abrupt shift to third person in this verse and the reversion to second person in the next.

29. Emulating Moses' miracle related in Num. 21:4–9.

בשורי העליה כי מאד שגבו מעוניה
I gazed into the upper world,
pp. 74-79

Source: B-S pp. 70–71, no. 121

Bibliography:

Levin, הסוד והיסוד, 159–64.

Tobi, *Between Hebrew and Arabic Poetry*, pp. 245–46, 272.

Summary: A lament on the absence or perhaps the death of communal leaders, prefaced by a remarkable vision of the soul's ascent to the supernal realm. The speaker begins by describing

his ascent to a place where he is entertained by a beautiful woman (vv. 1–12) and where he hopes to find tranquility. But his troubled soul spends the night in lamentation until the denizens of heaven come to ask the cause of the soul's troubles (vv. 13–19). She replies that she is mourning the passing of wisdom's adherents (vv. 20–27). The poem concludes with a prayer for the soul's restoration (vv. 28-30).

Notes:
1. *upper world*: This inanimate thing definitively devolves into a female beloved by v. 3; I have therefore felt justified in referring to it by feminine pronouns from the beginning. Tobi (*Between Hebrew and Arabic Poetry*, p. 246) suggests that the poet, thinking of the Hebrew expression בני עליה, may have intended the word as meaning a noble woman.

9. This verse is not found in Schocken 37, the only source for the poem that was known to B-S. It is found in the version published by Nehemya Allony and Dov Jarden in their book קובץ שירי חול לרבי שלמה אבן גבירול (Jerusalem: n.p., 1968/69), p. 65. They did not bother to identify the source, presumably a geniza document.

20. *her*: The referent could be wisdom or Zion; in either case, the speaker is lamenting the passing of important communal teachers and leaders.

25–27. She is compared to various sacred paraphernalia described in Exodus: the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 25:10–160); the lamp stand that stood before the Tabernacle housing the Ark (Exod. 25:31–36); and the priestly garments (Exod. 28:4 and 28:33–34).

29. להשיג. B-S have להשיב, following the only source known to them, Schocken 37. Schirmann proposed emending it to להשיג; see his שני שירים חדשים של שלמה אבן-גבירול in יובל שי, ed. Baruch Kurzweil (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1958), pp. 163–66, at p. 165. His intuition is remarkably confirmed by the unidentified manuscript published by Allony and Jarden in the work cited above. The poem thus ends with a prayer that the speaker's soul attain knowledge of God, resuming the theme of its unusual opening.

כאבי רב ומכתי אנושה
My pain,'s too much, my wounds are deadly.
pp. 82-83

Source: B-S p. 146, no. 220

Summary: A complaint about the poet's anguish in the form of a prayer.

מליצתי בדאגתי הדופה
My song has been displaced by sorrow,
pp. 84-87

Source: B-S p. 99, no. 160

Summary: The sixteen-year-old poet attempts to explain to an imaginary interlocutor why he cannot permit himself to pursue a young man's normal pleasures. The friend thinks that he is upset about worldly troubles, but the speaker is obsessed with the pursuit of wisdom, to the detriment of his own morale.

Bibliography:

Zemach, כשורש עץ, pp. 41–49.

2. *life*: חיה normally means "soul" in medieval Hebrew poetry, but the context makes "life" more appropriate.

3. *Day of Gathering*: i.e., death.

4. *narcissus*: There is no consistency in the use of flower names in Golden Age poetry. Ibn Janāḥ, citing Yehudai and Haya Gaon, identifies חבצלת with the narcissus, but Ibn Gabirol uses it several times in his poetry to mean a red flower—presumably, the rose.

6. *learning*: See the comment on מוסר in "I am the man," v. 6.

כשורש עץ יהי אורך אמיריו
The longer the branches, the longer the roots;
pp. 88-99

Source: B-S pp. 128–30, no. 203

Summary: A poem devoted to justifying the poet's quest for wisdom; at its climax is a description of the moon as contemplated in his night vigils (vv. 38–47). The poem opens with a complaint about the sorrows that impede the poet's quest and the loneliness accompanying it (vv. 1–14). There follows a brief imaginary exchange with friends, who attempt to discourage him (the rather obscure vv. 15–18), and a lengthy boasting passage in which he depicts himself and his quest in heroic terms; the description of the moon is an extension of this passage (vv. 19–47). In the last part of the poem, the speaker complains about his failure to find a circle of true friends and about the intellectual and moral poverty of his generation (vv. 48–61).

Bibliography:

Tova Rosen, חושן ירקרק: עיון בתיאור טבע של אבן-גבירול, in תעודה 5 (1985/86): 9–28.

Notes:

3. *sorrow*: The text has only the implied pronoun "it," which all commentators agree must refer back to "sorrows" in v. 2. The first word of the verse, ידידי, is probably a scribal error for יגוני (my sorrow), which would provide the needed subject; but in the absence of manuscript evidence in a poem that is attested by no fewer than eight manuscripts, several of them from the geniza, it seems safer not to meddle with the Hebrew text.

6. I.e., as if I were the soul for all men's bodies, therefore the receptacle for all their pain. The word פגר is often used for living bodies in medieval Hebrew poetry, especially when contrasted with the soul.

10. וכל seems preferable to ובל, the reading preferred by B-S from among the various manuscript readings. But ובל is also a viable reading; the meaning would be: "So that I not.…"

12. *pearls and corals*: The two Hebrew words were both generally understood to mean "pearl," but since English has only one word for "pearl," I have chosen a different gem of marine origin.

13. ניב: This reading, which is attested in all manuscripts but one and which was adopted by B-S, seems preferable to בין, the reading adopted by Jarden and Levin. It is supported by the opening word of the verse, ודי, which implies that the author is speaking of a minimal satisfaction, whereas בין, wisdom, is his most desired goal. Furthermore, v. 12 has the speaker swimming in a sea of wisdom, so it makes sense that v. 13 should have him gathering eloquence, a fruit of wisdom, rather than wisdom itself.

לבדי: This is the reading of all manuscripts but one; it seems better suited to the theme of the solitary quest begun in the preceding verse than לבבי, the reading preferred by B-S and Levin.

15–19: The exact meaning of this passage, which is shaped by four questions asked by the speaker (vv. 15, 17, 19), is elusive because, as often in Ibn Gabirol's poetry, the pronouns could be construed as referring to several antecedents. Furthermore, two phrases in v. 17 are barely intelligible (כהמס ... ייגע לנפשו וללבבו).

15. I understand the verse as meaning: What reproach attaches to a man who withstands his heart's worldly promptings? Why do friends call on each other to release the bonds of friendship and stop associating with him?

24. וקם: Three manuscripts have the tempting reading וקט, which would yield the meaning "It would be a small thing for him to crush Orion…."

25. *six directions*: i.e., the four cardinal points plus up and down. For the conceit of the heart encompassing the cosmos, see above, p. **{x-ref TK**.

29. *limit*: This interpretation of the word חקר is supported by Ibn Janāḥ.

35. *white and black*: i.e., day and night; meaning, I never sleep.

39. *pale gold*: As discussed in detail by Tova Rosen in the article cited above (pp. 19–20), ירקרק is an epithet of gold (Ps. 68:14) but also has associations with the law of leprosy (Lev. 13:49, 14:47). Ibn Janāḥ, in his dictionary, explains it as yellow, and this is the sense in which it is often used in poetry.

40. אורו: This reading, found in three manuscripts and supported by a fourth, which reads אוריו, yields a more consistent image than אורי, the reading preferred by B-S, Jarden, and Levin. The moon wears a veil to protect the stars from its own light, as Moses wore a veil to protect the people from his radiance (Exod. 34:33). The reading אורי would mean that the moon's luminaries feared the speaker, which makes little sense and which would intrude the speaker into the vision.

45. The image of the morning dew as water put by the barber on a head of dark hair that is about to be turned bright by being shaved is most striking and, as far as I know, unprecedented. The practice is cited by Yehudah Ratzhaby, עיונים בדרכי שירתנו הספרדית, in A. Saltman, ed., ספר ברוך קורצווייל (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1975), pp. 306–53 at p. 336.

50. ומרע: This reading, which was adopted by Levin, is well attested in the manuscripts and yields a clearer meaning than ומי ידע, the reading preferred by B-S.

hang ... deer: a proverbial expression in rabbinic Hebrew, meaning "to waste money or effort."

מה תפחדי נפשי ומה תגורי
Why so anxious, soul of mine? Why so afraid?
pp. 100-101

Source: B-S p. 128, no. 202

Summary: The poet urges his soul not to try to resolve his problems by leaving his physical place but by barricading herself against society. (The poem is a counterpart of "What is it, soul," in which he urges his soul to adopt the opposite course.)

Notes 1. Verse 1 is built on an untranslatable but all-important pun on the two meanings of the verb לגור: "to fear" (the last word of 1a) and "to dwell" (the last word of 1b).

מה לך יחידה תשבי
What keeps you sitting, O my soul,
pp. 102-111

Source: B-S pp. 12–13, no. 13

Summary: A tirade against his contemporaries. The poem begins as an admonition to the speaker's own soul and a rebuke to the mundane world, a common theme of preaching poetry (vv. 1–13), but the focus of the complaint shifts from the mundane world at large to the people of the poet's unnamed town. Using language normally associated with the discomfort of the soul in the body, he speaks of his own discomfort in that place and of his desire to leave it and al-Andalus altogether (vv. 14–21). He exhorts himself to leave (vv. 22–38) and curses his townspeople (vv. 39–42). In the final exclamatory lines, he returns to the thought of leaving, lapsing into Arabic to conclude his complaint (vv. 43–50).

Bibliography:

Masha Itzhaki, אני השר: עיונים בשירת החול העברית בספרד (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 1986), pp. 96–100.

24. As far as I can determine, this is the only place in Ibn Gabirol's extant poetry where he speaks of his parents as living. It would seem to prove that this poem was not written late in his Saragossa period, i.e., at the same time in his life as "My throat is inflamed," in which he says that he is orphaned of both parents (for the traditional view, see Schirmann, תולדות השירה העברית בספרד המוסלמית, pp. 287–88.

29. *Land of Beauty*: i.e., the Land of Israel (Dan. 11:16).

32. *your people*: The word עם was often used with the semantic range of Arabic *qawm*, which, like it, means nation, but also family, members of any group, or simply a group of people.

35. תרקבי is to be understood, like תשקטי in Jer. 47:7, as third-person feminine, with an archaic suffix that makes it resemble the second-person feminine. The phenomenon was familiar to medieval grammarians; cf. Ibn Janāḥ, *Sefer hariqma*, trans. Judah Ibn Tibbon, ed. Michael Wilensky, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1928–30), 1:378.

39. בן לבי has not been convincingly explained. The following proposals have been put forward: 1. Emend to בן אבי and understand it as a shortened form of בן אבינועם, i.e., Barak, whose curse is quoted in Judg. 5:23. Poets did sometimes shorten names of biblical figures; cf. נבוכד for Nebuchadnezzar, in "Has night spread out its pinions" (Luzzatto's suggestion, cited by B-R in commentary 1:19 and adopted by Jarden). 2. לבי should be לביא, which actually is the reading in one of the five manuscript witnesses; the phrase בן לביא should be understood as son of lion = David, who cursed Mount Gilboa in 2 Sam. 1:21. (Schirmann, in his anthology, followed by Levin); 3. לבי should be emended to לוי and the phrase בן לוי be understood as referring to Moses, a grandson of Levi, whose curse would be Deut. 28:15–68, the terms of which are echoed in v. 40 of the poem. Even Geiger, who proposed this solution (Geiger, *Salomo Gabirol*, p. 129), was not convinced that it was correct. Against it is the fact that the reading לבי is well attested, being found in four of the five manuscript witnesses for this verse and in the first printed appearance of the poem, in Abraham Gavison, עומר השכחה (Livorno: Avraham Refa'el Meldolah, 1748), p. 136b); the fifth manuscript reads לביא, which could be a scribal error for לבי, or evidence in favor of proposal 2 above. Nevertheless, Geiger's suggestion seems more convincing than the other two, and I have translated accordingly. A cloud over proposals 2 and 3 is that there is no plausible vocalization of לבי, לביא, or לוי that suits the meter.

40. *in the ground*: As pointed out by B-R, בעבי is short for בעבי האדמה, as in 2 Chron. 4:17.

נחר בקראי גרוני
My throat is all inflamed with crying,
pp. 112-121

Source: B-S pp. 67–69, no. 120

Bibliography:

Zemach, כשורש עץ, pp. 66–80.

Summary: The poet has worn out his voice lamenting his misery; he wishes that he had a comrade to hear him (vv. 1–8). He invents a well-wisher and lays out his complaint to him: he is an orphan and a stranger among people who are hostile to him and to wisdom, besides being treacherous (vv. 9–27). He resolves to crush them with words, though had they been amenable to his teaching, he would have treated them kindly (vv. 28–36). There is nothing left for him in the world; he would rather die, for death would release him to spiritual existence (vv. 37–51). But since there is no choice but to live, he renews his dedication to the pursuit of wisdom (vv. 52–54). In several of the manuscripts, the poem is prefaced by a heading stating that it was written when Ibn Gabirol left Saragossa.

Notes:
13. מדבר = cemetery; see Brody's commentary on Moses Ibn Ezra's *dīwān* 107:14 (p. 108) and 203:28 (p. 205).

21. ויני: This spelling of יניא appears in Ps. 141:5, to which the entire verse is an allusion. The verb was understood as meaning "to break" by such commentators as Abraham Ibn Ezra, Joseph Qimḥi, and David Qimḥi.

27. *Ashkelon babble*: lit., "the Ashkelonite tongue." Ashkelon was a Philistine city in biblical times, its language presumably unintelligible to the Jews.

36. When disaster called for a public fast, it was customarily held on Monday, Thursday, and the following Monday; the practice is recorded as early as the tannaitic period.

52. He is not claiming that Solomon was literally his ancestor; besides sharing the poet's name, Solomon was viewed as the archetypal master of wisdom. The Book of Proverbs, traditionally ascribed to Solomon, is replete with admonitions to pursue wisdom.
54. והוני: If this word is correct, he means that "wisdom is my only portion, my only treasure." But perhaps the correct reading is ואוני, found in one geniza manuscript; although this word appeared already in the rhyme position in v. 2 with the same meaning, there is enough distance between the two occurrences for the repetition not to offend against the rules of prosody. Nor would its occurrence in v. 50 be a problem because the meaning there is strength, whereas the meaning in v. 54 is wealth.

רביבי דמעך היו רסיסים
"Your tears, which were a downpour, now are droplets,
pp. 122-127

Source: B-S p. 87, no. 141

Summary: A friend addresses the poet, advising him to celebrate with wine some improvement in his circumstances that the poet has recently enjoyed (vv. 1–3). The poet replies at first with a series of riddle-like similes, and then with a description of his latest illness (vv. 4–14). He complains particularly of his insomnia, which compels him to gaze endlessly at the night sky (vv. 15–21). He concludes by describing the advent of dawn, transforming the tears with which the poem began, into comforting dew.

Bibliography:

Reuven Tsur, השירה העברית בימי הביניים בפרספקטיבה כפולה (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1987), pp. 176–94, esp. 177–78.

Notes:
1. כבקעות הרכסים: an emendation by Brody (B-R 7:126); the manuscripts read הבקעות כרכסים.

3. *Jeroboam*: The story is recorded in 1 Kings 11:40.

4. *the grape*: The Hebrew has only a pronoun, which in B-S is בם; this would refer to the "wine" in v. 2, which in the Hebrew appears in the plural.

6. *children … young*: Presumably, the subject is the personified troubles.

7. This Hebrew text only apparently says the opposite; the unusual syntax is explained by Brody (B-R 7:126) with convincing parallels.

Red Sea … Egyptians: The Egyptians, according to the biblical story, drowned in the Red Sea (Exod. 14:26–28).

17. ולא: This is the reading of the more reliable manuscripts. B-S and other editions follow Schocken 37 in reading ולו, but this creates a conditional sentence that lacks an apodosis.

20. *left … behind*: interpreting שבחו as it is used in Prov. 29:11.

21. *Asael*: a swift runner named in 2 Sam. 2:18.

Jebusites: a people described as lame in 1 Sam. 5:8.

הלא אצדק באמרי כי אמריו
I know I'm right in likening his words
pp. 128-132

Source: B-S p. 111, no. 184

Summary: The poet explains that he is unable to accept an invitation to visit on account of an illness. He opens with panegyric (vv. 1–3). After a pivot passage of two verses (vv. 4–5), the poet offers a lengthy and lurid description of the boils on his legs (vv. 5–20) and ends with the apology (vv. 21–24).

Bibliography:

Schirmann, לחקר חייו של שלמה אבן-גבירול.

Reuven Tsur, 'הלא אצדק' מאת אבן גבירול: אפקטים ריתמיים וגרוטסקיים, in בקורת ופרשנות 39 (2006): 43–72.

———, השירה העברית בימי הבינים בפרספקטיבה כפולה, pp. 176–94, esp. 177–78.

Notes:
3. ימריץ: My interpretation of this word follows the use of the word in Job 16:3, as interpreted by Saadia and Ibn Janāḥ.

באנוש: B-S has כאנוש, and this is the word that Schirmann saw in MS Schocken 37, from which he published the poem in the article listed above, and which he emended to באנוש. Yet to my eyes, Schocken 37 actually does read באנוש.

מחוקק: This word was often used to mean "writer" by geonic writers; Ibn Gabirol sometimes uses it to mean "poet" (e.g., ידיד סוב ודמה, v. 14).

7. The plague of boils was triggered by Moses throwing handfuls of soot toward the sky; for the story, see Exod. 9:8–12.

8. נשׂקם: B-S's נשקם seems to be a typographical error.

10. *Oholiav*: One of the craftsmen charged with building the Tabernacle carried by the Israelites in the desert (Exod. 31:6). See below, note for v. 19.

12. *rhinoceros*: ראם ordinarily was taken to mean a wild ox or gazelle, but Ibn Janāḥ explains it as rhinoceros, as does Saadia in his translation of Deut. 33:17 (but not elsewhere). Ibn Gabirol here draws from Job's description of a great river beast that can swallow a whole river (Job 40:23, which uses Jordan as a metonymy for rivers in general); he must have confused this beast with the animal called רים mentioned in Job 39:9–10.

14. Lit., "Like roses that their pluckers carried until they cut their thighs with their thighs." Although Ibn Janāḥ explains שושן as "lily," I translate it here as "rose" because the simile implies a thorn-bearing plant. As remarked in the notes to "My song has been displaced by sorrow," v. 4, there is little consistency in the use of flower names in Golden Age Hebrew poetry.

14. Or: until they cut their stalks in the marketplace.

15. The plague of blood is described in Exod. 7:14–25.

בראוֹת: B-S have בראוּת, probably a typographical error.

17. *Like nitwits*: Prov. 27:22: "Even if you crush a fool with the grain in a mortar with a pestle, you can't remove his folly."

19. *Bezalel*: the chief craftsman in charge of building the Tabernacle (Exod. 31:1).

20. *Ishmael … Gedaliah*: Jer. 41:1 ff. The former was head of a conspiracy that killed the latter, who was governor of Judaea. It is hard to understand why these particular names are used here.

אהה לי מזמן מניד יחידים

Poor me! Time drives away the best of men.

pp. 134-137

Source: B-S pp. 21–22, no. 35

Summary: The speaker lives in terror of separation from his special friends, and indeed has suffered from this all his life (vv. 1–11); he is particularly upset at the absence of his friend Samuel, and he looks forward to their reunion (vv. 12–14). The speaker reverts to complaining about his fate and ends with a prayer for all who have been forced to leave their homes (vv. 15–22).

Bibliography:

Mirsky, המבנה בשירי הידידות, pp. 445–46.

Notes:

15. שדודים ... והיינו: The reading in B-S, שרידים ... והיו, is unintelligible. I follow B-R and Jarden in adopting the reading והיינו, which appears in one of the two manuscripts, and in emending שרידים to שדודים.

הלא גודל חלי גדל יגוני
I'm ailing, I'm in misery
pp. 138-39

Source: B-S p. 67, no. 119

Summary: To Yekutiel Ibn Ḥassān; an apology for not visiting

Notes:
4. *on my face and eyes*: an Arabic idiom meaning "submissively."

משמן בשרי ידל
My flesh is wasting,
pp. 140-41

Source: B-S p. 22, no. 36

Summary: A prayer composed in illness

Notes:
2. *Minḥah*: the afternoon prayer, recited between mid-afternoon and nightfall. Though the three daily prayers may be recited by an individual at any location, it is considered meritorious to recite them as part of a congregation praying together in a synagogue. Certain prayers may be recited only in the presence of a congregation—including Kaddish, which is mentioned in v. 3.

3. *God's name*: Hebrew, שדי, usually interpreted as meaning "the Almighty." Oddly, this word hardly occurs in the prayers, and not at all in the Minḥah prayer, unless the version used in al-Andalus was quite different from any other known text. The poet is probably referring to the name Adonai, which is used only in prayer; otherwise, it is always replaced with one of several substitute words. That may be why the poet used שדי here.

5. *Alef-dal*: a substitute for the name אדני, composed of the name's first two letters as they were called by Arabic-speaking Jews.

7. This verse is built on an untranslatable quadruple pun involving the word דל.

give him voice: lit., "open [his] mouth." The word דל can be used to mean "mouth," based on this interpretation of the word in Ps. 141:3. The poet is asking God to put appropriate words of prayer into his mouth, a common liturgical theme.

בשרי דל מאד מרב דאגה
Cares have turned me scrawny; you could throw me

pp. 142-143

.

Source: B-S p. 26, no. 49

Notes:
This epigram appears to be a translation and an adaptation of an anonymous Arabic poem quoted in Schocken 37 and by Ibn Aqnin in his commentary on the Song of Songs, titled *Inkishāf al-asrār wazuhūr al-anwār* (ed. A. S. Halkin; Jerusalem: Mekitzei nirdamim, 1964, p. 434). The Arabic version begins "Love has emaciated me," in accordance with the traditional depiction of forlorn lovers in Arabic erotic literature. In his adaptation, Ibn Gabirol has replaced "love" with "care" as the cause.

2. יִשלך: This reading is better attested than B-S's אשב and is a more accurate translation of the Arabic original.

אם תאהב להיות באנשי חלד
If you desire to live eternal life
pp. 144-145

Notes TK

ולב נבוב ותושיה סתומה
The mind is flawed, the way to wisdom blocked.
pp. 146-47

Notes TK

אם אחרית שמחת אדמה הבל
Since all life's joys are doomed to end in sorrow,
pp. 148-49

Notes TK

אני כל אוהבי אהב בכל לב
I'm loyal to my friends with all my heart.
pp. 152-153

.

Source: B-S p. 175, no. 251

Note:
Though Schirmann expressed doubts about the authorship of this epigram, his reasoning in favor of attributing it to Ibn Gabirol seems cogent.

מי זאת כמו שחר
Who is this rising like the dawn? Who peers,
pp. 154-157

Source: B-S pp. 98, no. 159

Summary: The speaker describes a vision of a mysterious beauty, who, upon being questioned, states her intention to visit Samuel the Prophet. The poet informs her that the prophet has died for her love but that she can visit Samuel Ibn Naghrālla, who is his equal (vv. 1–13). After brief verses of panegyric (vv. 14–15), the poet concludes by addressing Samuel and promising to outdo his contemporaries in singing his praises (vv. 14–19).

Bibliography:

Katz, בנות השיר הנאוות, pp. 127–70.

Mirsky, המבנה בשירי הידידות, pp. 440–42.

13. Ramah and Mizpah: places associated with Samuel the Prophet (1 Sam. 7:16–17).

ואת יונה חבצלת שרונים
Ah, dove, you Sharon rose
pp. 158-161

Source: B-S p. 77, no. 130

Summary: The speaker sees a beautiful woman and asks her to sit at his side and sing the praises of Yekutiel (vv. 1–6); he goes on to laud Yekutiel, particularly for his generosity, and ends by obliquely asking for a gift (vv. 7–14).

Bibliography:

Katz, בנות השיר הנאוות, pp. 127–70.
Mirsky, המבנה בשירי הידידות, pp. 442–44.

Notes
2. *priests*: Their robes of office are lavishly described in Exodus 28.

כל הזמנים—קום הזמן
Every age since time’s beginning
pp. 162-175

Source: Prelude: B-S p. 76, no. 127; Ode: B-S pp. 73–75, no. 126

Summary: “Every age since time’s beginning” is a prelude to “Arise, O age, put on your ornaments,” whose first hemistich is anticipated in its last hemistich of “Every age.” According to Moses Ibn Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara*, p. 280, “Arise, O age” is an apology for an earlier poem, שפת מזרק מנשקת שפתי (“The goblet’s lip that kisses mine,” below, pp. 254-57), in which Ibn Gabirol deprecated Ibn Naghralla’s poetry.

In the prelude, the speaker announces that all previous ages enthrone the present as their king because it is the age of Ibn Naghrālla. In the ode proper, the speaker addresses the age, urging it to put on its finery (vv. 1–3). An early pivot passage (vv. 3–4) introduces Ibn Naghrālla himself, followed by a few lines of praise (vv. 5–9). The speaker addresses his own heart, preparing it for a confrontation with Ibn Naghrālla (vv. 10–15). The remainder of the poem is addressed to Ibn Naghrālla directly. The speaker rejects the complaints against him, welcomes a hearing, professes his loyalty, and attributes the complaints against him to rumormongers, for no one would dare to oppose Ibn Naghrālla (vv. 15–45). The speaker now invites Ibn Naghrālla himself to don royal garments, reminds him of the panegyrics he has written in his honor, and praises him for his Levitical descent and rabbinic learning (vv. 46–56). He ends with a bit of boasting and a prayer for Ibn Naghralla’s welfare (vv. 57–60).

Notes:
7. *Levites*: The Hebrew text names Yitzhar, a grandson of Levi (Exod. 6:16–18), using his name as a synecdoche for the tribe as a whole. The Nagid was a Levite, as mentioned repeatedly in this poem and as he himself often stressed in his own poems.

11. This puzzling verse seems to contradict the entire tenor of Ibn Gabirol’s personal poetry, in which he repeatedly stresses the dedication of his life to the pursuit of wisdom. Perhaps it is merely a throwaway allusion to Eccles. 1:18, in the sense of “I should have known that all this scholarship would get me into trouble some day.”

24. עת: This reading, found in three manuscripts, seems preferable to B-S’s reading עד because if we read the latter, we would be forced by the parallelism with v. 23 to take זמורת זר as something positive. But the phrase, meaning “spurious twig,” is so well established that this seems impossible. Cf. Isa. 17:10.

34. The story of Mephibosheth and his betrayal by the false servant Ziba is told in 2 Sam. 16:1–5 and 19:25–29.

36. The sons of Amram were Moses and Aaron.

37. Samuel is not named in the Hebrew text but is indicated by the abrupt switch of the second-person pronoun from plural to singular.

38. *Heman and Asaf*: Levites who served as singers in the First Temple (1 Chron. 15:19 and elsewhere).

50. *Hebron and Uziel and Mishael*: members of the early generations of Levites (Exod. 6:18, 22).

53–54. *Babylon … Iraq … Shinar*: The Jews continued to call Iraq בבל (denoting both Babylon and Babylonia) in Hebrew long after the Muslim conquests. Shinar is another Hebrew name for the region. The Jewish academies of Iraq, headed by sages known as geonim, were considered the leading centers of rabbinic learning until the mid-eleventh century.

אמור לפני צפירת התעודה
Say to him—the Torah's crown,
pp. 174-175

Source: B-S p. 16, no. 23

Summary: An apology for not attending a social gathering

Notes:
4. *gathering*: ישיבה does not only mean a talmudic academy; as a calque of the Arabic word *majlis,* it can refer to a reception or other gathering.

6. The poor may sometimes substitute two doves for larger, more expensive, sacrifices; cf., e.g., Lev. 5:7, 14:22.

תריבון איש אשר לולי דמעיו
You pick a quarrel with a man whose tears
pp. 176-179

Source: B-S p. 94, no. 151

Summary: First addressing his circle of friends, the speaker laments his suffering over the loss of a particular friend, a former patron (vv. 1–6). He then addresses that person, accusing him of betrayal, and professing his own loyalty (vv. 7–14). He concludes with a curse against those who caused the rift through their malice (vv. 15–16).

Notes:
2. דמעיו: Each of the three witnesses for this verse has a different reading. This reading seems preferable to נגעיו (its wounds), the one chosen by B-S.

עזוב הגיון במהלל כל סגנים
"Quit singing hymns to other courtiers.
pp. 180-185

Source: B-S p. 78, no. 131

Summary: Someone tells the poet to sing the praises of Yekutiel (vv. 1–3). He replies that he is too sick and victimized by fate to do anything but lament (vv. 4–14). He is particularly upset by the faithlessness of friends (vv. 15–25) and seems to have a particular friend in mind. Could the faithless friend be Yekutiel himself?

Notes:
12. The translation of this obscure hemistich follows the interpretation of B-R.

אמור לשר אשר עלה וגבר
Tell a courtier who rose to power,
pp. 186-187

Source: B-S p. 14, no. 17

הלא צוה אבי כל החכמים
The father of all sages ordered us
pp. 188-189

Source: B-S p. 19, no. 31

Notes:
1.The chief of sages is Solomon. There is no verse in the books traditionally attributed to him (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) that is exactly like the admonition here, but several passages in the Book of Proverbs, such as 25:8, make the same point.

התלעג לאנוש יחיד בדורות
And do you mock a man unique in every age?
pp. 190-197

Source B-S pp. 125–26, no. 200

Summary: A rebuke by the sixteen-year old poet to someone who insulted him, remarkable for its brash tone. The poet counters the insult with praise of himself and his poetry, with insults to the addressee, and with the threat of future lampoons (vv. 1–20). He promises effective panegyric, given an acceptable apology (vv. 21–29). He concludes by dedicating the poem to its recipient with a promise and a threat (vv. 30–35).

Notes:
4. *clean*: נעור means, lit., "overturned," "shaken out," therefore empty. The word is used as an elliptical allusion to Isa. 33:15, which speaks of the hands being free of bribe money.

ואהבתי ושברי שבלבי
The love and hope abiding in my heart
pp. 198-201

Source: B-S pp. 51–52, no. 93

Summary: Denouncing and breaking ties with an unnamed recipient

Notes:
5. שתום עין: In its context in Num. 24:3 and 24:15, the phrase must mean "sighted" (the opposite of "blind"), and it was so interpreted by Ibn Janāḥ and other contemporaries of Ibn Gabirol. Yet

there is a line of medieval interpretation going back to the Talmud that took it to be related to סתום (“closed up,” “blocked”), and it was therefore occasionally used by poets to mean “blind.” Cf. Judah Ibn Ghiyāth in Heinrich Brody and K. Albrecht, *Sha’ar Hashir: The New-Hebrew School of Poets* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906), p. 124.

10. *dirt beneath their feet*: lit., “the dirt of my feet is dirt to theirs.” Perhaps the reading of the Oxford manuscript, ואבק עפר, is to be preferred.

שמואל מת בנו לברט
O Samuel, old Dunash is no more,
pp. 202-205

Source: B-S pp. 65–66, no. 115

Summary: The first part of the poem is an encomium on Samuel Ibn Naghrālla and his remarkable war poem beginning “O God of Power” (vv. 1–12); the conclusion expresses contempt for an unnamed poet and his poem (vv. 13–15).

1. *Dunash*: See above, “One time, breeze-borne,” v. 11 and the note.

6. *O God of power! Raging God!*: The opening words of Ibn Naghralla’s famous poem אלוה עז ואל קנוא ונורא, the Hebrew text of which may be found in Schirmann, השירה העברית בספרד ובפרובנס, 1:85–92. My translation, along with extensive introductory remarks, may be found in Joseph V. Montville, *Prelude to History: Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2011), pp. 55–70; an abridged version appears in Olivia R. Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 357–63; 2d ed. (2011), pp. 107–16.

8. *Menaḥem … Abun*: See the note on v. 1.

10. *Egypt*: The Hebrew נא was ordinarily used for Alexandria, which I have taken as a synecdoche for Egypt.

אמרי לו שקלתם בכספים
If you would try to price my words,
pp. 206-207

Source: B-S, p. 102, no. 167

Summary: A rebuke to someone who was taken in by a plagiarist who claimed a poem of Ibn Gabirol’s as his own.

5. *learning*: On the connotations of מוסר, see "I am the man," v. 6 and the note.

11. מקרות: Brody, in B-R 7:142, found this word obscure and proposed emending it to מאורות, which was adopted by B-S. But מאורות occurs in the rhyme position in v. 15, and all three manuscripts have ק as the second letter. מקרות has the advantages of being a *lectio difficilior* and of obviating the repetition. It could represent either of two words that have to do with heights: מקֵרה, a cool upper chamber (Judg. 3:20); and מקָרה, "roof" (Eccles. 10:18). Binyamin Klar, using a different biblical prooftext (Ps. 104:3), reaches a similar result; see his מקורות ומחקרים בלשון בשירה, ובספרות (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot lesifrut, 1953/54), pp. 111–19.

30. *lovely verse*: The awkward word הדורות presumably refers to verses of this poem.

הגנבת וכחשת אמרי
Did you dare to plagiarize my verses,
pp. 208-209

Source: B-S p. 124, no. 199.

Notes:
1. *break through boundary-fences*: This is Hebrew's proverbial way of expressing the idea of encroachment, derived from Deut. 19:14.

כתב סתיו בדיו מטריו וברביביו
Winter wrote with rains and showers for ink
pp. 212-213

Source: B-S pp. 14, no. 14
Summary: See *Vulture in a Cage*, p. xiv.

This charming description of spring is quite different in tone from most of Ibn Gabirol's poems, different even from most of his other nature descriptions. It is featured in the introduction to this book as evidence that Ibn Gabirol was capable of writing in the classic style of his contemporaries and was not limited to his dark, sometimes perverse style. Unfortunately, while the book was in the press, an article by Jonathan Vardi appeared in Tarbiz 83 (2014/5) pp. 605-634 making a strong case that the poem was actually composed by Samuel the Nagid. The case rests on a careful analysis of the poem's position in the manuscripts in which it appears, supported by stylistic arguments. While the article falls short of absolute proof, its argument is strong enough to require that the attribution to Ibn Gabirol now be considered questionable. We Gabiroleans will be sad to lose this poem, if lose it we must.

2. מכתב The enjambment is striking, and, coupled with the echo of the first word of v. 1 (כתב) in v. 1, very effective. Enjambment was discouraged by medieval critics and was not much used by Ibn Gabirol, but it is common in the poems of the Nagid, as Vardi points out in the stylistic part of his argument.

ישלם הסתיו נדרו ויקים
Winter kept its vow,
pp. 214-215

Source: B-S pp. 109–10, no. 182

Summary: The poem begins with a description of spring (vv. 1–9), then goes on to blame the addressee for turning against the speaker (vv. 10–15); it ends with a riddle (vv. 16–17).

Notes:
2. ליד: This reading, supported by two manuscripts, originally seemed preferable to B-S's ליום. But now I realize that the context demands that the meaning be "all through winter" and it's not clear that either of the readings can bear this meaning. Could both be wrong? This is a *jumla dhat wajhain*.

6. הברקים: B-S follow the majority of manuscripts in reading הירקים, but this word does not yield a useful meaning. The reading adopted here, הברקים, which occurs in one manuscript, means lightning but has also been interpreted as a variant of the word ברקת, a yellow precious stone; this would make a good parallel with הכתמים in v. 6a. That it already appeared as the rhyme word in v. 2 is not a problem, as it would have a completely different meaning.

7. For the image, cf. "Come, spend a night," vv. 27 ff.

10. השחקים: This reading is far better attested and makes more sense than B-S's הארקים.

13. ומגיני נעורינו אפיקים: This reading is far better attested and somewhat more intelligible than the reading of B-S, which is ומגני כבר ערצו אפיקים.

15. *blemished*: lit., "castrated." A castrated animal was considered unfit for sacrifice; see Lev. 22:24.

17. By paraphrasing Prov. 20:5, the poet seems to be admonishing the addressee to live up to his claim to wisdom by perceiving the profound message in the poet's modest verses. Secondarily, the poet may be challenging the recipient to grasp the meaning of the riddle in v. 16.

הנה בנות עגור אשר נועדו
Look! The cranes are gathered
pp. 216-217

Source: B-S p. 19, no. 30

לכה רעי ורע המאורים
Come with me, let's spend a night in the country,
pp. 218-227

Source: B-S pp. 134–35, no. 207

Summary: An unusually elaborate and masterfully constructed description of a palace, its dome, and its patios with gardens, water channels, birds, and gazelles, both sculpted and real (vv. 1–33); a pivot passage (vv. 33–34); and the praise of an unnamed patron (vv. 34–44).

Bibliography:

Bargebuhr, *Alhambra*, pp. 97–104, 117–18, 197–99.

Masha Itzhaki, אלי גנת הערוגות (Tel Aviv: Notza vaqeset, 1988), pp. 28–33.

Raymond P. Scheindlin, "El poema de Ibn Gabirol y la fuente del Patio de los Leones," *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 29–30 (1993–94): 185–89.

———,"Poet and Patron: Ibn Gabirol's Palace Poem," *Prooftexts* 16 (1996): 31–47.

———, "Solomon Ibn Gabirol: In Praise of an Unnamed Patron," in Sperl and Schackle, *Qasīda Poetry*, 1:121–35; 2:140–47.

Notes:
18–19. My article "El poema de Ibn Gabirol" listed above is intended to definitively refute Bargebuhr's willful misinterpretation of these lines, which was the main justification for his theory that the present Fountain of Lions in the Alhambra was part of the palace built by Yehosef Ibn Naghrālla on the Alhambra hill.

23. It is not easy to see how the treetops could pour water like clouds. The word כענים could be read as רענים ("fresh"), but this would not make it easier to pin down the meaning.

27. זה עלי זה: This is Schirmann's reading of the passage in Schocken 37, the only source for this verse; see his הארמון והבוסטאן, in קובץ הוצאת שוקן לדברי ספרות (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1941), pp. 146–49. B-S have זה עליהם. Schirmann's reading is now confirmed by a geniza fragment in the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies (University of Pennsylvania), no. NS 30, fr. 2r (=RAR MS 85.126.27ab fr. 2r), which was not available to him and was not known to B-S.

28. הכפרים: B-S have הכפירים. My reading reflects Schirmann's emendation, which must be correct, though not supported by the manuscript mentioned in the preceding note.

אדוני קח בכפך מתוקה
My master, take this sweetness in your hand,
pp. 228-229

Source: B-S p. 106, no. 189

Summary: Poem sent with an apple to a friend or a patron

היש כזאת בצמח האדמה
Is there another fruit like this?

pp. 230-231

Notes TK

אכול גזרה משחקת
Bite into this smiling thing,
pp. 232-233

Notes TK

הלא תראו חבצלת
Behold the rose:
pp. 234-235

קרא הציר עלי אחי שלומות
Speak, messenger, my greetings to my friend,
pp. 236-243

Source: B-S pp. 56–57, no. 102

Summary: A grotesque fantasia on a gift of flowers, unparalleled in medieval Hebrew literature. The poet expresses his gratitude for the gift by describing the flowers as humiliated and sickly creatures that arouse in the beholder horror and bewilderment rather than admiration. (vv. 1–33). The poem concludes with a notably brief encomium and prayer on behalf of the sender (vv. 33–38).

Bibliography:

Masha Itzhaki, פרחיו המיוסרים של שלמה אבן גבירול in מחקרי ירושלים בספרות עברית 10–11 (1986/87–1987/88): 567–75.

Scheindlin, “Caged Vulture.”

11. בו: This reading, from Schocken 37, is preferable to בי, the reading adopted by B-S from the only other manuscript witness, which involves an inexplicable intrusion of the first person.

16. *Yevamot*: a proverbially difficult tractate of the Talmud; it deals, inter alia, with forbidden degrees of marriage.

19. Time here signifies not the aging process but life or fate, so common in the poetry of Ibn Gabirol and his contemporaries.

22. *gnawed*: The Hebrew verb נבר can be construed as the *nif‘al* participle of the biblical root ברר or the *qal* perfect of the rabbinic Hebrew root נבר. The former would mean “it is clear,” which is not an impossible meaning here, but the latter fits the sequence of images better, and I have translated accordingly.

28. *Ahasuerus' harem*: lit., "the house of Hegai." Hegai, according to Esther 2:3 (where he is called Hege), was the officer in charge of the harem of King Ahasuerus, generally identified today with Xerxes I.

ראה שמש לעת ערב אדומה
Behold the sun at evening, red
pp. 244-45

Notes TK

הלא תראה מיודעי
Can you see what I see, friend?
pp. 246-247

Notes TK

ואלין ואני נבכל
I spent the night in agitation. It seemed as if
pp. 248-249

Source: B-S p. 114, no. 190

Summary: In honor of two rabbinic dignitaries. The poem begins with a vision of the night (vv. 1–8) and then pivots to the praise of the two unnamed rabbis (vv. 9–16).

Notes:
10. The ellipses represent lacunae in the manuscript.

11. I have slightly rearranged the precious stones in the translation.

12. *sons of generosity*: The Hebrew, which means "sons of Mas'et and Yitra," sounds like a typical biblical genealogy; yet Ibn Gabirol does not seem to be referring to any specific biblical characters but to the words משאת and יתרה themselves. The former means "gift" and the latter "wealth."

14. *Sura and Nehardea*: the two great rabbinic academies in Iraq, both located in Baghdad by Ibn Gabirol's time. Questions were ordinarily addressed to the academies of Iraq by distant communities, so to say that questions are expected from them for two Andalusi rabbis is as much as to say that they are greater in scholarship than the geonim themselves.

15. The verse is too damaged to be read in its entirety.

ידידי נהלני על גפנים
Bring me to the vineyard, friend.
pp. 250-251

Notes TK

ואל תתמה ואל ירום לבבך
Don't be self-satisfied or vain

pp. 252-253

Source: B-S p. 148, no. 224

Notes: 1. *wine*: אשישה in Song of Songs 2:8 and 2 Sam. 6:19 was usually understood to mean a pitcher of wine or wine itself. The epigram is addressed to a *sāqī*, a servant (usually a youth) who goes around the circle of guests, pouring wine. Drinking was often said to cure emotional pain; the philosopher-poet claims to cure intellectual or spiritual pain. Others have interpreted the poem as addressed to a doctor and interpreted אשישה as a cure of one kind or another.

שפת מזרק מנשקת שפתי
The goblet's lip that kisses mine
pp. 254-257

Notes TK. In the meantime, see above on pp. 162-175.

Notes on pp. 258-273 TK

בעלות יה על לבבי
When God arises in my mind
pp. 276-77

Source: B-S p. 7, no. 3

Bibliography

Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Contrasting Religious Experience in the Liturgical Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi," *Prooftexts* 13 (May 1993): 141–62.

אשר לראה לכל צפון וחזה
O You who see all hidden things,
pp. 278-79

Source: B-S p. 26, no. 48

3. Cf. Ps. 17:15, a verse that was given quasi-mystical weight by philosophically minded poets.

אלוהי שא עוונותי וכפר
O Lord, remove my sins and wipe them clean,
pp. 280-281

Source: B-S p. 103, no. 171

Penitential poem

שאי עין יחידתי לצורך
Lift Your eye to God, my precious soul
pp. 300-301

Source: Jarden, pp. 333-34.

Genre: This poem, like those that follow, down to p. 315, belongs to a genre of liturgical poetry called Reshut (רשות), a genre pioneered by Ibn Gabirol and much cultivated by later poets of the Golden Age and beyond. Like the poems called reshut in the earlier liturgy, these poems were intended as introductions to standard prayers of the public liturgy and were couched as petitions to God by the precentor on his own behalf. In the pre-Golden Age reshuyot, the precentor typically confesses his unworthiness to pray on behalf of the congregation and prays for help in formulating his prayer appropriately. In the work of Ibn Gabirol and his followers, the reshut became a meditation couched in the private voice of the worshiper, almost as if the congregation were not present, and were prefaced not to the major prayers of the public liturgy but to three standard prayers that precede the officially public part of the service, the prayers known as N*ishmat*, *Qadish*, and *Barekhu* . Reshuyot usually, but not always, are short, having three to six verses; contain an acrostic of the poet's name (in this and the other reshuyot in this book, שלמה, Solomon); are couched in quantitative meters, like non-liturgical poetry; they nearly always end with an allusion to one of the three prayers to which they were prefaced; and they are noteworthy for their serene voice and suggestion of intimate address to God. For more information on the genre the reader is invited to consult my book *The Gazelle*, Chapter 2, which is largely devoted to it. Because the soul is a major focus of attention in these poems, the reader is also referred to Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul* (Leiden, 2002), which deals extensively with this and other neoplatonic themes in medieval Hebrew poetry.

Acrostic: שלמה

1. *my precious soul*: The Hebrew word יחידתי literally means "my only one," but in Ps. 22:21 and 35:17 it is used to mean "my life." It was understood by the rabbinic tradition and by medieval commentators, and used by medieval Hebrew poets, to mean "my soul." The identification is made in the Targum's interpretation of the biblical verses and in the classical midrash (Bereshit raba 14:9, in Theodor and Albeck, p. 132). Several explanations were given for it: 1. It is alone in the sense that the other body parts come in pairs but the soul is only one (Bereshit raba, ibid.); 2. there is nothing comparable to it (Saadia Gaon, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions, trans. S. Rosenblatt [New Haven, 1948], p. 244; 3. it is alone in the sense of isolated in the body, separated from the universal soul from which it came and to which it will, if properly prepared, return after death (Abraham Ibn Ezra, commentary on the next verse, Ps. 22;23); 4. it is one, by

contrast to the parts of the body, which are numerous (Qimhi, Sefer hashorashim s.v. יחד); 5. it is one in the sense that it dwells alone surrounded by the body (Qimhi, commentary on Psalms 22:21). Given the impossibility of conveying any of these explanations in a single adjective or short phrase, I translated in accordance with what seems to me to be the reasonable association of "only one" with "precious one."

4. *next to you*: In accordance with the elaborate scheme of the cosmos propounded in Ibn Gabirol's great meditation The Royal Crown, section 27. Here, the souls of the righteous are said to occupy the space beneath the throne of God, this spot being identified with the World to Come.

5 אברך...הנשמה: allusions to the points in the fixed liturgy to which this poem could serve as an introduction.

שאלוני שעיפי התמהים

My mind was asking me in wonderment

pp. 302-303

Source: Jarden, p. 450.
Genre: Reshut. See the discussion of the reshut in the introduction to the preceding poem.
Acrostic: שלמה
1.יחידה: See the note on the preceding poem, v. 1.
4. תברך...נשמתי: allusions to the points in the fixed liturgy to which this poem could serve as an introduction.

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שחי לאל יחידה החכמה

Submit to God, my cerebrating soul

pp. 304-305

Source: Jarden, p. 80.
Genre: Reshut. See the discussion of the reshut in the introduction to the poem on pp. 300-301.
Acrostic: שלמה
Bibliography: Scheindlin, *The Gazelle*, pp. 202-207, includes a full discussion of this poem alongside an earlier version of the translation. See the bibliography and notes, pp. 261-262.

3.-5. This series of comparisons between God and the soul belongs to a literary tradition going back to Midrash Vayiqra raba 4:8 and the Talmud, Berakhot 10a. The edition of Vayiqra raba by Mordecai Margaliot, 1:96, lists and compares other rabbinic sources, and my discussion in *The Gazelle* cites some medieval sources in the notes.

6. אשר לא שם דמותך באדמה/For nothing has He put on earth like you: This formulation points to one of the explanations for the use of יחידה as a word for the soul; see the discussion of the poem on pp. 300-301, line 1.

7. ברכו..כל נשמה: allusions to the points in the fixed liturgy to which this poem could serve as an introduction.

שחר אבקשך צורי ומשגבי
At dawn I come to You, my Rock, my Strength
pp. 306-07

Source: Jarden, p. 79.

Bibliography: Scheindlin, *The Gazelle*, pp. 170-75 and notes, pp. 258-59.

Genre: Reshut. See the discussion of the reshut in the introduction to the poem on pp. 300-301.

Acrostic: שלמה

This poem has been adopted by many modernized prayer books, usually as an introduction to the morning service.

3. *man's mind and mouth*: Possibly an allusion to an Arabic maxim *innamā l-insān / al-qalb wa l-lisān*, meaning "Man is just the heart and the tongue." The rhyme of the Arabic maxim is echod in the Hebrew by the alliteration of הלב והלשון. The whole passage is underlined by the additional alliteration in לעשות and the hemistich enjambment, showing that the poet wanted to call special attention to it. For a fuller discussion, see my *Gazelle*.

4. נשמת: alludes to the point in the fixed liturgy for which this poem was designed as an introduction.

שחרתיך בכל שחרי ונשפי
At morning and at evening I seek you
pp. 308-309

Source: Jarden, p. 461.

Bibliography: Scheindlin, *The Gazelle*, pp. 182-87 and notes, pp. 259-260.

Genre: Reshut. See the introduction to the poem on pp. 300-301.

Acrostic שלמה

This is a key poem for understanding Ibn Gabirol's concept of prayer. The reader is particularly advised to consult the discussion in *The Gazelle*.

3. *palace:* The Hebrew has מקומך, which means merely "your place." I have introduced the word palace to call attention to the Ibn Gabirol's play on Solomon's prayer on the dedication of the Temple. On that occasion, Solomon addressed God, saying, "The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!" (I Kings 8:27) Ibn Gabirol reverses that image to say that though the heavens cannot contain God, the soul of man can. The soul of man is thus a temple, even better than a temple, and it was this allusion that I wanted to convey. There is a very slight verbal justification in the particle ואולם (=but) with which the second hemistich begins; this word also means "hall," and thus could be understood as subconsciously reinforcing the allusion to the building.

4. נשמת: alludes to the point in the fixed liturgy to which this poem was designed to serve as an introduction.

שלושה נוסדו יחד לעיני

Three things there are together in my eye

pp. 310-301

Source: Jarden, p. 464

Genre: Reshut

Bibliography: Scheindlin, *The Gazelle*, pp. 188-193.

Acrostic: שלמה

4. ברכי: alludes to the point in the fixed liturgy to which this poem was designed to serve as an introduction.

Note the plethora of i-sounds in the last line. For an interpretation of this another sonic features of the poem, see the discussion in *The Gazelle*.

שפל רוח שפל ברך וקומה

With lowly spirit, lowly knee and head

pp. 312-313

Source: Jarden, p. 20

Bibliography: Scheindlin, The Gazelle, 176-181.

Genre: Reshut

Acrostic: שלמה

ששוני רב בך שוכן מעוני

My joy in You is great, O You who dwells on high

Genre: This poem resembles the reshuyot of the preceding pages, but it is rather longer and does not end with a definite allusion to a fixed prayer. It may be a devotional poem in the voice of an individual. This is not a recognized genre in medieval Hebrew poetry, yet all the great poets from Ibn Gabirol on composed poems of this type.

Acrostic: שלמה הקטן

3. Another allusion to Solomon's prayer, but much more conventionally used than in שחרתיך בכל שחרי והנשפי ("At morning and at evening I seek You), pp. 308-309, v. 3.

4. Your Name: For the idea that man contains God's name inside his heart, cf. the poem just cited.

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Index of First Lines

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