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Mystical Interpretation of the Song of Songs in the Light of Ancient Jewish Mysticism

S.O.Fawzi

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To Him

Who is with me at all times
and
was with me at hard times

Abstract

The present work understands the book of the Song of Songs as a mystical composition that can be placed within ancient Jewish mystical literature expressing love for the divine. Aspects of the text, namely structure, unity, theme, literary genre and the nature of love, have been discussed and their mystical characteristics and tendencies are examined accordingly. Also the work discusses the association of the Song with the Merkabah tradition and the Shiur Qomah doctrine the most mystical aspect of Merkabah mysticism. This has led to the examination of the grounds behind the tacit restrictions on the text. The work ends by discussing the mystical treatment and understanding of the Song in the Middle Ages, also its influence on and its popularity amongst biblical scholars and mystic circles of the time demonstrated by some extracts from their writings. Some parts of Ibn Aknin's Judaeo-Arabic mystical interpretation of the Song have been translated into English and attached as an appendix to this study to illustrate the mystical approach with which the Song was treated and interpreted.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to all scholars, dead and alive, in the field of Biblical Studies and Jewish Mysticism whom I had the honour to have met through their valuable contribution in this field and who have thus helped me to produce this humble work. Without discrediting any one of them I would like to express my special thanks and appreciation to two of them. Amongst the dead, Professor G. Scholem for his valuable and pioneering contribution to Jewish Mysticism which was and still is a source of inspiration to most scholars and students in this field. Among those alive, and I hope for many years to come, I express my endless thanks and appreciation to Dr. J.F. Healey. He is not only my supervisor but also my teacher. I owe him a great deal for his sound and valuable views, remarks and suggestions which helped me immensely throughout my work. Also without his support, encouragement, understanding and most of all his extreme tolerance, this work would have never seen the light. Finally I am very grateful to my husband, Muaadh, mainly for his support and encouragement and secondly for his kind help in typing some parts of this work.

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Abbreviations

AER	American Ecclesiastical Review.
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures.
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
BT	Babylonian Talmud
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly.
Hag	Hagiga
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review.
HTR	Harvard Theological Review.
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature.
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies.
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies.
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society.
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JSJ	Journal of the Study of Judaism.
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies.
JTSA	Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
MGWJ	Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums.

PAAR	Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
PT	Palestinian Talmud
RB	Revue Biblique.
TOS	Tosefta
VT	Vetus Testamentum.
ZE	Zeitschrift für Ethnologie.
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamenliche Wissenschaft.

GLOSSARY

Amoraim (Plural)
Amora (Sing.)
Title given to Jewish scholars in Palestine and especially in Babylonia between 3rd-6th Cent. C.E.

Nagid "Prince"
Title applied in Muslim and some Christian countries in the Middle Ages to a leader recognized by the state as head of the Jewish community.

Karaites
Jewish sect founded by Anan ben David in the 8th Cent.. They rejected the Oral Law and deduced a code of life by attempting to interpret the Bible literally.

Al-Mu`tazila
Religious movement founded at Basrah in the first half of the 8th Cent. A.D. by Wāṣil b.'Aṭā`, subsequently becoming on of the most important theological schools of Islam. Al-Mu`tazila, while rejecting the doctrine of predestination, believed in the affirmation of the absolute responsibility of the individual with regard to his transgressions which could not be in any sense the work of God.

Elkesaites
Sect existing between 2nd-4th Cent. C.E. in Transjordan with adherents also in Syria and Rome. Like the Essenes they stressed ritual purification but, unlike the Essenes, they observed the duty of fertility.

Valentinians
Second century C.E gnostic sect existing in Alexandria. It is believed that the most striking parallel to the Shiū'r Qōmah fragments was developed by the Valentinian Markos in his description of "the body of the Truth".

Al-Maghariyah
Jewish sect founded in the first century BCE and deriving their designation from the fact that they kept their books in caves. They believed in an intermediary power. This power was an angel who is God's representative and to whom are referable all the anthropomorphic expressions concerning God found in the Bible.

Haftarah
Additional prayer read immediately after the reading of the Torah on Sabbaths and festivals. Usually it consists of an appropriate selection from the Prophets.

Shiu'r Qomah (lit."the measure of the body" namely the body of God)
Hebrew term for an esoteric doctrine concerning the appearance of God in a quasi-bodily form. This doctrine developed in the first two centuries C.E as the most secret part of Merkabah mysticism.

Introduction

One of the striking features in the book of the Song of Songs is the nature of its language. Despite its obvious simplicity it seems powerful enough to introduce themes or to create images and negate them. In verse 4.12 for example the beloved is described as "a garden enclosed , a fountain sealed" but in 4.15 she is "a well of living water". Her eyes in 4.1 are described as pure and innocent but in 7.4 they are captivating and overwhelming. On the other hand this power sometimes becomes more of an obstacle than a tool to facilitate expression, especially where feelings or intense emotions are concerned, thus resulting sometimes in what seems to be brief or strange expressions and descriptions. Such inability to use the language rationally is not uncommon in mystic literature in general. Rather it is a basic phenomenon in this connection since mystics usually experience that which is inexpressible. Perhaps the feeling of intoxication generated from being possessed by an intense passion for the divine renders the mystic confused or speechless as someone experiencing a crisis. Therefore the ambiguity of the language or better perhaps "the language crisis" in this context seems to be more likely a product of an inward crisis of feelings. Accordingly what is left unsaid or what is only implied or hinted at in the Song, if it is not more important and more relevant for the overall meaning of the text than what is obviously stated, is certainly as much to be reckoned with.

Also in a mystical experience desire is as fundamental as it is in human love experience. Therefore conventional secular love poetry seems to be the ideal vehicle of expression for the mystic since metaphors and

symbolic devices find ready acceptance there, thus suggesting deeper meaning than the expression on the surface. The language of the Song is an example of paradoxical or double level expressions or as Landy describes it " a feeling of paradox pervades the language of the Song"[1]. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find the Song rather simple to understand where feelings and sentiments are concerned, while on the other hand it appears difficult to comprehend intellectually. Furthermore, this particular feature seems to have been accentuated by the Song's apparently unconnected themes and sections. Scholars often find it difficult to follow the sequence of themes and sections in the text. This characteristic seems to have given rise to the assumption that the Song lacks fundamental coherence. But the Song is that type of poetry where the sequence is generated through the juxtaposition of themes and sections. Thus the general message of the poem lies more in the relationship generated between these sections and themes than in their semantic contents, as the present study has demonstrated in the analysis of the theme/structure relationship. Perhaps, this characteristic becomes clearer or less ambiguous when the sequence of the Song is understood to follow the stream of consciousness. The transformation of consciousness in the Song seems to fluctuate between the torment of separation and the joy of union within a ring-pattern structure. Indeed, the lovers in the Song, though they are united through their love and present in each others' imaginations, seem so distant from each other. Therefore, since love is their only uniting bond, the concluding part of the Song presents a defiant message in acknowledgement or in praise of

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[1] F. Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise*, Sheffield 1983. p. 140

love as a bond too strong to be severed.

The ambiguity of the Song seems to extend further to include the nature of the love involved in the Song. In this case ambiguity seems to emerge from the fact that the experience of human love and that of mystic love are closely associated both in conception and experience. Thus the basic similarity between the erotic and the mystical experience makes it almost impossible to differentiate between the sacred and the profane in love poetry. Particularly this similarity seems to be related to the general anthropomorphism which is essential for any imaginative personal relationship with the divine. Consequently erotic metaphor seems to be a satisfactory expression for the self-exaltation that results from the mystical experience. To be aware of this dilemma may not solve the problem but certainly it would be a step forward in understanding the nature of poetry involved in this connection. However, ambiguity has its own positive contribution on the artistic level by adding richness and flexibility to the text and the case of the Song is a good example in this connection, where it seems to appeal to both popular as well as spiritual and intellectual imagination. Therefore, ambiguity and complexity in the Song may not necessarily correspond to inaccessibility. Rather they are part of the artistic form and value of the Song. As Landy rightly states "the complexity of the Song accounts for its greatness"[2].

A number of theories have been offered to interpret the Song. The

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[2] *ibid.* p. 272

present study has outlined and discussed these theories and has added its own contribution to the field hoping to offer a better or perhaps different understanding for the book. To treat the song objectively requires taking into consideration the nature of the composition. This can help towards arriving at a reasonably objective approach to interpretation. Objectivity in this connection lies in the degree of accommodation that a particular approach can offer regardless of whether it is a literal or allegorical approach. In this connection the present study has examined the nature of the love involved in the text, being the main theme of the book, together with the literary genre of its poetry. As a result the present study has offered to treat the Song as a mystical composition since the nature of love in the text seems to be distinguished as intense, possessive and idealistic, representing an expression of divine passion rather than an expression of human love. Therefore the ambiguity of the Song seems to emerge from the very nature of its subject matter and has been accentuated by the fusion between passion and poetry. Also, mystical tendencies, thoughts, expressions and images in the text seem to have a similar ground in ancient Jewish mystical literature as demonstrated by the present work. Particularly, like mysticism of other religions, the devotional aspect of Jewish mysticism also seeks to establish direct communication between the worshipper and the Lord[3]. Accordingly, the song may be looked at as a prayer or a hymn modelled along the broad lines of the Merkabah hymns expressing love for the divine. It is a testimony to the author's genius and brilliant inspiration that his/her poetry is distinguished with

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[3] E. Muller, *History of Jewish Mysticism*, Oxford 1946 p. 9

this extraordinary use of language which has made it a composition either too advanced for the conventions of some or too simple and straightforward for others to find any deeper meaning in it. The Song is a bridge combining the secular and the sacred. Thus it is a typical expression of mystic love. Indeed, it is joyous yet complex, as Schonfield rightly remarks " Love is a many splendoured thing"[4]

[4] H. Schonfield, *The Song of Songs* . p 9 (London 1960)

Major Views of Interpretation of the Song

Since the first century C.E., two types of interpretation of the Song have existedSthe allegorical and the literal. The allegorical view dominated the interpretation of the Book for centuries, while the literal view was advocated only rarely until the late eighteenth century, when Herder interpreted the book on the basis of the plain meanings of the words, understanding it as a collection of love songs.[1] At the present time, the literal view is more dominant and opinions have differed as to the manner with which the subject of the Song is dealt. The subject of the book is evidently love, but there is as yet no generally accepted view of its interpretation. While the wide diversity of scholarly opinion on the Song does not seem to favour any one particular view of interpretation, it has, however, contributed a great deal to the understanding of the Song. Before suggesting another view, the discussion in the following pages will concentrate on the main existing views of interpretation of the Song.

1. *Historical allegory*

It is difficult to attach a fixed date to the rise of the allegorical interpretation of the Song. In the first century C.E., R. Aqibah's words in declaring the Song as the "holy of holies"[2] implies an allegorical understanding of the text. On the other hand, his condemnation[3] of those who sing the Song in taverns indicates that the literal and secular understanding of the Song was also held at the time. The school of Shammai, for example, seems to have favoured the liberal interpretation of the book

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[1] C. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs* (1857), p.90.
[2] Mishna, Yadayim, 3.5.
[3] Tosefta Sanhedrin 12.10.

by regarding it as a song of romantic love.[4] However, fragments of two manuscripts of the Song were found in Cave 4 at Qumran[5] indicating the possibility of an allegorical understanding of the Song at that early date. By the second century C.E., the allegorical interpretation of the Song had become current, interpreting the Song as a depiction of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The Targum and the Midrashim gave consistent support to this approach in interpreting the book, and thus the Song of Songs in the Targum was interpreted to embrace the entire history of Israel from the Exodus to the time of the Messiah.[6] The Midrash followed the allegorical approach too, interpreting the Song as mutual love between God and Israel.[7]

Christian tradition took over the allegorical interpretation of the Song from the Jews, seeing in it the most sublime expression of love between Christ and the church. It was Origen who gave impulse to the allegorisation of the book. While recognising the literal significance of the book as a marriage drama, he nevertheless gave deeper significance to the book as being a love song of Christ and the church.[8]

The allegorical view of interpretation soon became popular and continued to be so in medieval times. In this connection Young,[9] perhaps rightly, seems to believe that this view would have been judged to be correct if the majority of opinion was the criterion employed to determine the correctness of an interpretation. However, since Herder in the eighteenth century regarded the book as a collection of love songs to be understood according to the plain meaning of the words, the allegorical

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[4] J. Steinmueller, *A Companion to the Scripture Studies* II (1948), p.202.
[5] M. Burrow, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York 1958), p.145.
[6] J. Steinmueller, op.cit., p.205.
[7] Midrash Rabbah (trans. M. Simon), *Song of Songs* (1939), p.vii.
[8] A. Gordon, *The Poets of the Old Testament* (1919), p.311.
[9] E. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (1953), p.324.

interpretation of the book started to decline as modern scholarship gradually abandoned it in favour of the literal approach.

This approach of interpretation is supported by the assumption that the Old Testament frequently uses marriage relationship to symbolise the covenant relationship between God and Israel where Israel was pledged to the faith of the true God, but at times was portrayed as committing adultery or marital unfaithfulness because she sought other gods. Passages such as Isaiah 50.1, 54.4-6; Jeremiah 2.2, 3.1, 5.6; Ezekiel 16.8-14, and Hosea 22.16-20 are occupied with this theme. Therefore, for the advocates of this view, there seems no reason why marriage relationship in the Song should stand as a symbol of the love bond between God and Israel. Accordingly, the book gained religious significance and was read on the annual observance of the Passover as a reminder of God's love for Israel.[10] But the significance of the husband/wife relationship in the above-mentioned biblical passage does not necessarily have to lend itself to the interpretations of the Song, particularly as it does not lend itself to other marriage relationships in the Bible, such as Jacob and Leah, Moses and Zipporah, or David and Abigail. Furthermore, while in the aforementioned biblical examples there is specific indication that marriage is so used, such specifications, as Rowley[11] rightly believes, are lacking in the Song. Indeed, while the above-cited passages speak of Israel as the unfaithful wife, the Song on the other hand does not form a comparison since it speaks more of the love relationship rather than marriage. Also, neither of the two parties involved in the Song was portrayed as unfaithful.

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[10] M. Stuart, *Critical History and Defence of the Old Testament Canon* (1849), p.342f.
[11] H. Rowley, "The interpretation of the Song of Songs", *JTS* 38(1937), p.345.

Therefore, the case in this connection seems to be as Ginsburg[12] rightly states, "the one cannot be reasonably supposed to have suggested the other".

On the other hand, Wolf[13] maintains that the Song at face value has insufficient merit to warrant cognition. While Young[14] seems to believe that since the Song has cognition, it should be explained with this allegorical view in order to give the book a religious meaning. Adeney[15] seems to adopt a pragmatic opinion in this connection, as he maintains that this interpretation must be correct since it enables some to find and reach spiritual depths in the book. Harper[16] too adopts a similar line, and maintains that this view of interpretation is like a key that works well in the lock and therefore must have been designed for it. In this connection it seems important to differentiate between the allegorical approach of interpretation in the general sense and this particular allegorical view. The assumption that this particular view does not seem to suit the text of the SongȘfor whatever reasonȘneed not mean that the fault lies in the allegorical approach itself. The Song being poetry does not seem to lack evidence to indicate its allegorical design. Indeed, the Song with its symbols and imageries is a typical poetic text, and its interpretation, according to whichever view or approach, will always require imagination, insight and sensitivity.

On the other hand, it may be true that long-standing tradition may add the dignity of antiquity, as is the case in this view. But this does not necessarily make this or any other view of interpretation credible or correct. However, although this

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[12] C. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs* (1857), p.110.
[13] R. Wolf, *The Song of Solomon* (1948)m p.636.
[14] E. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (1953), p.324.
[15] W. Adeney, "The Song of Solomon", *The Expositer's Bible* (1903), p.46.
[16] A. Harper, "The Song of Solomon", *the Cambridge Bible* (1907), p.XL.

view is less widely acknowledged, or rather, generally abandoned by modern scholars, nevertheless, it is worth recognising that it is to this historical allegory view and its advocates that we owe the preservation of the Song. As Rowley right states in this connection, "We are deeply in their debt and gladly acknowledge that in the providence of God their follies have served a purpose".[17]

2. *Drama Theory*

This view of interpretation adopts a literal and secular approach towards the Song. As early as the third century C.E., Origen seemed to find the dialogue in the book of a dramatic nature, and thus termed it as a drama.[18] However, though this view gained wide popularity and became particularly elaborated in the nineteenth century, the idea seems to have been first suggested in the eighteenth century by John Milton, who described the Song as divine pastoral drama.[19]

The dramatic view seems to have assumed two main forms. The first regards the Song as "two-character drama", mainly Solomon and Shulamith. The chief advocate of this view is Delitzsch,[20] who maintained that the Song is a dramatic pastoral where Solomon's love life is elevated and purified. However, he does not believe that the book was written to be acted.

The second form of this view was made prominent by Ewald,[21] who found three principal characters in the Song—Solomon, Shulamith and her shepherd lover. Upon this view Shulamith resists the advances of Solomon and remains

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[17] H. Rowley, "The Song of Songs", *JRAS* (1938), p.276.
[18] T. Gaster, "What the Song of Songs means", *Commentary 13 (1952), p.381.*
[19] H. Rowley, "the interpretation of the Song of Songs", *JTS* 38 (1937), p.348.
[20] F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes* (1877), p.8.
[21] G. Ewald, *Das Hohe Lied Solomos, ubersetzt mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und linem Anhang uber den Prediger* (1826).

faithful to her lover. This form of the drama theory of the book was supported by Driver,[22] who maintains that the "two-characters" view in this connection consists of nothing but mutual declarations of passionate emotions which were followed by the royal marriage. While the "three-characters" view has an ethical value as it shows the strength of true love where the emotions expressed in the poem would have an aim and purpose, which is contrary to the other view where these emotions are evoked solely by the contemplation of physical beauty.

As for the identification of the character of Shulamith, Delitzsch[23] favours the idea that Shulamith is an unknown peasant girl who caught Solomon's eye. Waterman[24] identified her with Abishag, the Shunamite, the daughter of Pharaoh, who is referred to in Kings I:3,4; 2:17-22. The "lamed" in Shulamith could be interchanged for the "Nun" in Shunamite, and seems to have made such identification possible. In this connection, this idea which understands the Song to be about the marriage of Abishag and Solomon was first suggested by Theodor of Mopsuestia in the fifth century, and was later maintained by Lowth[25] and Gordis.[26] Segal,[27] believes that a marriage between Solomon and a rural girl is unlikely, and suggests that Shulamith is a city girl, making use of the few references in the text, such as "watchmen" and "streets".

Other advocates of this theory, such as Renan,[28] was able to find in the text a cast consisting of ten performers with two choruses, one of men and the other of

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[22] S. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1913), p.445f.
[23] F. Delitzsch, op.cit., p.4f.
[24] L. Waterman, *The Song of Songs Translated and Interpreted as a Dramatic Poem* (1948), p.20.
[25] R. Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1815), pp.417-33, 435ff.
[26] R. Gordis, *the Song of Songs* (1934), p.20.
[27] M.. Segal, "The Song of Songs", *VT* 12 (1962), p.482.
[28] E. Renan, *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (1860), pp.179-210.

women. Hazan,[29] in his study of the Song, offers the text a complete reading for the stage in a dramatic verse. Clarke[30] suggests that the Song is in the nature of a masque with a dramatic cast where the performers are not formally introduced. It is supposed to be an entertainment for the guests attending the wedding ceremony. Driver,[31] on the other hand, suggests that Ewald's view is perfectly compatible with the typical interpretation of the book. Accordingly, Solomon would represent the blandishments of the world, the shepherd represents God, and Shulamith would be the heart of the faithful servant.

On the other hand, Kline[32] challenges this view of interpretation on the ground that though dialogue and repetition of theme may add dramatic quality to the text, however, this is not enough since it is not structurally a drama. Delitzsch[33] though, as mentioned already, described the book as a dramatic pastoral, states however "the Song is certainly not a theatrical piece". Hyde[34] finds a lack of dramatic plot in the book and difficulty in deciding the number and identity of the characters involved. Also, he believes that the size of the book would result in making some scenes very short and therefore can never be acted on a stage. Adeney[35] and Oesterly,[36] on the other hand, expressed their doubts regarding the possibility of the existence of a drama among ancient Jews since it was regarded as heathenish and irreligious. Such doubts seem to have been confirmed by and based upon Josephus's statement in this connection: "Israel had a horror of drama as a gentile

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29 A. Hazan, *La Cantique des Cantiques, Enfin Explique* (1936), pp.257-320.
30 A. Clarke, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, III (1936), p.2563.
31 S. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1913), p.424.
32 M. Kline, "The Song of Songs", *Christianity Today* III, 15 (1959), p.23.
33 F. Delitzsch, op.cit., p.8.
34 W. Hyde, "Greek anthology to the Song of Songs", *The Song of Songs a*
35 W. Adeney, *the Song of Solomon. The Expositor's Bible* (1903), p.5.
36 W. Oesterly, *The Song of Songs* (1936), p.10.

perversion, akin to, if not directly involving, idolatry".[37] These difficulties seem to have contributed to the decline of this view of interpretation since they have rendered it impractical in so far as stage acting is concerned, and unthinkable in so far as its place among biblical literature is concerned.

3. *The King's Week Theory*

Modern scholars who adopted this view have offered modern wedding customs of Syrian peasants as a key to the text of the Song. Bossuet[38] revived the idea that the Song celebrates a wedding, which was initially suggested by Origen, suggesting that some parts of the Song were sung at the wedding week., Later, Renan[39] suggested that it is mid-way between a drama and a pastoral dialogue performed for the wedding ceremony. In 1873, Wetzstein,[40] in an article based on his observation of the wedding customs among the peasants, offered some of their waṣf songs for comparison with the waṣf in the Song. In 1898, Budde[41] produced his commentary on the Song where he based his view on Wetzstein's observations. This view received some degree of confirmation from the discovery of parallels to the waṣf genre of the Song represented in modern folk songs of Jordan[42] and Palestine.[43]

According to Wetzstein's study, the wedding ceremony takes place at the village threshing-floor where the villagers are gathered for the occasion. The bridegroom and the bride are proclaimed as king and queen for the seven days of the ceremony,

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[37] *Antiquities*, 15.8.1.
[38] J. Bossuet, *Biblia sacra cum commentaries*, XIV (1715), p.vi.
[39] E. Renan, *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (1860), p.179ff.
[40] J. Wetzstein, "Die Syrische Dreschtafel", *Zeitschrift fur Ethnology* (1870), p.287ff.
[41] K. Budde, Das Hehelied erklart, Karl Marti's kurzer Hand kommentar zum Alten Testament, XVII, 1898.
[42] S. Linder *Palastinische Volksgesange autgezeichnet und gesammelt* (Uppsalsa, 1954/55)
[43] H. Stephen, "Modern Palestinian parallels to the Song of Songs", JPOS, II (1922), pp.200-78.

which are given to feasting and dancing. The threshing-board is the throne where the royal pair sit during the "king's week", watching the festivities. In the evening of the wedding day the bride performs the sword-dance before the bridegroom and the assembled villagers. The sword she holds in her hand is said to symbolise her readiness to defend herself against other suitors. In his remarks on the Song of Songs, Wetzstein cited a biblical parallel to the seven-days wedding feast in Judges 14.12, which refers to the seven-days feast of Samson's wedding. As for the praise for the physical beauty of the lover and the beloved in the Song, he identified it with the Arabic genre waṣf meaning "description".[44] Budde,[45] based on the Wetzstein's remarks, interpreted the references to King Solomon in the Song as allusions to the bridegroom, and lines 3:6-11 in reference to the enthronement of the married couple on the corn-drag, with line 7.1 referring to the bride's sword-dance. Gordon[46] in his support of this view, believes that the song should be understood in the light of modern Syrian poetry, even if Budde's theory proved to be unsatisfactory. Eissfeldt,[47] while admitting that some parts of the Song have no direct bearing on the wedding, maintained that since they are likely to be used on wedding occasions, then the Song can be used as a collection of wedding poetry. Haupt[48] believes that though the Song may have not been originally composed for weddings, but it may have been sung at wedding festivities since it is a collection of love ditties and erotic

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[44] J. Wetzstein, "Remarks on the Song of Songs" in F. Delibzch (trans. M. Eaton), *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiates* (1877), p.170.

[45] K. Budde, Das Hehelied erklart, Karl Marti's kurzer Hand kommentar zum Alten Testament, XVII, 1898.

[46] A. Gordon, *Poets of the Old Testaments* (1919), p.317.

[47] O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament An Introduction* (1974), p.487.

[48] P. Haupt, "The Book of Canticle", *AJSL* (1902), p.207.

songs. Dalman,[49] on the other hand, questioned the validity and application of the term *waṣf* in this connection, and rightly maintained that *waṣf* was not limited to celebrating the beauty of brides only, but rather of loved ones generally, and he adduced some Arabic pre-nuptial *waṣfs*. Therefore Budde seems to have narrowed the theme of the Song, particularly the overall tone of the book, which is about love rather than marriage. Gordis,[50] Bettan,[51] Jastrow[52] and Robinson[53] share Dalman's view in this connection. Hyde[54] also held the view that the Song cannot be interpreted in the light of Wetzstein's descriptions, and the king's week theory, because there is no evidence of the description of wedded love anywhere in the Song. Cantwell[55] agrees with Hyde that there is no mention of marriage in the Song. He also adds that if the book is about marriage, it seems strange that procreation of children has no place in it, particularly when fruitfulness was considered a special blessing among the Hebrews. It seems relevant in this connection to mention that lines 3.6-11 in the Song do not actually refer to any wedding or crowning occasion taking place at the time as it is thought to be by advocates of this theory. The above lines seems more likely to be a description of the royal office of the king; all the description is focused on the glory of his kingship which naturally includes the crown. Also what is said about the crown in the above-mentioned lines is simply added information drawn from past occasions when he was presented and crowned with this particular crown. It is therefore less

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[49] G. Dalman, *Palastinischer Diwan* (1901), pp.xii, 10ff.
[50] R. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations* (1974), p.1.
[51] I. Bettan, *The five Scrolls* (1950), p.9f.
[52] M. Jastrow, *The Song of Song* (1925), pp.117-23.
[53] W. Robinson, *The Old Testament. Its making and meaning* (1939), p.161f.
[54] W. Hyde, "Greek anthologies to the Song of Songs", in Schoff (ed.), *The Song of Songs: a symposium* (1924), p.34.
[55] L. Cantwell, "The allegory of Canticle", *Scripture* 16 (1964), p.82.

likely to refer to any occasion taking place at the time.

Furthermore, even if accepting that a wedding occasion is taking place in the Song, the description in some aspects does not seem to fit that in Wetzstein's. According to al-Barghouthi,[56] for example, it is the bride and not the groom (as is the case in the Song) who is adorned with some kind of crown. Also, Haupt[57] maintains that the threshing-board plays no part in the wedding celebration in Palestine. Therefore he does not like to encourage the generalisations of Wetzstein's remarks and observations to cover other parts of the area, especially Wetzstein's remarks seem to refer only to the neighbourhood of Damascus and some parts of Hauran.

It is worth mentioning in this connection, that while Wetzstein's data speak of the bridal couple sitting together on the threshing-board, in the Song, on the other hand, we not only fail to see any reference to the threshing-board, but we find the king sitting alone in his palanquin, which is identified by Wetzstein with the threshing-board. Also, Granqvist[58] in her study of the marriage conditions in Palestine, does not seem confident enough to endorse Wetzstein's observations in this connection. She points out that it is uncertain whether the king's-week custom exists in Palestine, and therefore her study does not describe such a custom. Another weak point upon which this theory rests seems to be the similarity between the Syrian sword-dance of the bride and the alleged dance in verse 7.1 of the Song. In his study on the folklore of Jordan and Palestine, al-Barghouthi[59] does not mention this particular sword-dance as performed by the bride on her wedding day.

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[56] A. Al-Barghouthi, *Arabic Folk Songs in Palestine and Jordan* (1979), p.81.
[57] P. Haupt, "The Books of Canticles", *AJSL* (1902), p.211.
[58] H. Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* (1935), p.137.
[59] al-Barghouthi, op.cit., p.81.

However, he does list this dance under"women's dances" and not under "wedding dances". Even then, he does not mention that it could be a bride dance. Doughty[60] maintains that a sword-dance is performed among the Bedouin Arabs at wedding festivities, usually by the men friends of the bridegroom. This custom seems to have been known and practised among the Muslims in Palestine.[61] According to Dalman,[62] among the Bedouin Arabs the bride on her arrival at the bridegroom's house, dances with a candle in her hand. This dance is no more than a few slow movements in all directions. Al-Barghouthi[63] speaks about the same dance in Jordan and Palestine, and mentions that it is performed by the bride before the bridegroom and villagers, and once more when she is taken to the bridegroom's house. On the other hand, Granqvist[64] maintains that the bride dances only among her women friends when she arrives at the bridegroom's house. The bride performs this dance accompanied by another woman who moves beside her with a lifted sword, apparently to protect the bride from the evil eye. Granqvist also mentions that the bride usually does not show joy and happiness, nor does she participate in the festivities. Instead, she shows sadness because sometimes through marriage she has to leave her native village. Accordingly, even if a sword dance by the bride is invloved in the wedding festivities and even if verse 7.1 in the Song is about this alleged dance, the parallel still does not seem to hold since verse 7.1 in the Song does not speak explicitly about Shulamith as a bride or that she is actually dancing . Secondly, even if Shulamith is dancing there seems to be no sword or a candle

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[60] C. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1921), p.118.

[61] J. Rothstein, "Moslimsche Hoch zeitsgebrauche in Lifta bei Jerusalem", in Dalman's *Palastinischer Diwan* (1901), pp.110-114.

[62] G. Dalman, *Palestinischer Diwan* (1901), p.254.

[63] al-Barghouthi, op.cit., p.80f.

[64] H. Granqvist, op.cit., pp.65, 118.

involved in the performance. Therefore, this theory seems to be doubtful and questionable on various aspects, since Wetzstein's observations upon which it rest, seem to be unreliable on various occasions, and most of the time do not constitute a plausible parallel to the Song. It is a sketchy parallel rather than a clear, or at least reasonably clear parallel. Also what adds to the doubts and uncertainties in this connection, is that there is no evidence that this wedding custom, or at least some aspects of it, existed among the Hebrews thousands of years ago.

4. Cultic Theory

This theory, like the king's week theory, interprets the Song according to its literal sense. However, unlike the former theory, it has found the Song to be religious. This religious sense seems to lie in its being a residue of an ancient Near East cult.

At an earlier date in 1906, Erbt[65]put forward a cultic interpretation to the book in the form of the Astral Theory of the Babylonian school. In 1914, Neuschotz de Jassy,[66] developed the view in terms of the Osiris cult, where Solomon was identified with Osiris and Shulamith with Isis. The theme of the Song was regarded as the resurrection of Osiris, where verse 1.2 was interpreted as the priestly kiss of resurrection. In 1919, Ebeling[67] published fragments of texts of the Babylonian Tammuz cult which influenced the interpretation of the Song. In 1920, Meek[68] developed the view into its present form. His view gained support from Ebeling,

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[65] W. Erbt, *Die Hebräer: kenaan in Zeitalter der hebräischer wanderung und hebräischer* (1906), pp.196-202.

[66] O. Neuschotz de Jassy, *Le Cantique de Cantiques et le mythe d'Osiris-Hetep* (1914).

[67] E. Ebeling, *Kelschtift texte aus Assur religiosen Inhalts*, vol.1, 4 (1919), pp.267-76.

[68] T. Meek, "Canticle and Tammuz cult", *AJSL* 39 (1922/23), pp.1-14.

Minocchi,[69] Waterman,[70] Wittekindt,[71] Snaith,[72] Graham and May,[73] Oesterly,[74] Schoff[75] and Margolis.[76]

Meek maintains that the Song is a religious composition belonging to the liturgy of the Tammuz cult, which has been revised in terms of Yahweh's worship. He also believes that the structure, the general theme (love) and the intent of both the Song and the liturgy of Tammuz cult are very much the same, in fact he states in this connection that "both must belong together".[77] Some supporters of Meek's view presented their interpretation with some variations on the theme. Therefore, Wittekindt, for example, maintained that the Song is a Jerusalem liturgy representing the cycle of cult songs of the wedding festival of Tammuz and Ishtar, and he wrote his whole interpretation of the Song in terms of the fertility rites.[78] Oesterly,[79] on the other hand, while believing that there is a good deal in the Song to justify its interpretations in the light of the fertility cult, at the same time still finds that some parts of the book are nothing more than purely wedding songs. He therefore reaches the conclusion, perhaps rightly in this connection, that all the songs in the book are unconsciously based on ancient liturgies of the cult whose original character has been lost. Waterman[80] maintains that the Tammuz cult in the Song was not revised to bring it into accord with Yahwehism, as Meek believes,

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[69] S. Minocchi, *Le Perle della Biblia, il cantico dei cantici el Ecclesiaste* (1924), p.22f.
[70] L. Waterman, "The role of Solomon in the Song of Songs'" *JBL* 44 (1925), pp.171-87.
[71] W. Wittekindt, *Das Hohe lied und Seine Beziechungen zum Istarkult* (1926), pp.179-217.
[72] N. Snaith, "The dances of the Virgin", *AJSL* 50 (1933/34), pp.129-42.
[73] Grahman and May, *Culture and Conscience* (1936), p.122f.
[74] W. Oesterly, *the Song of Songs* (1936).
[75] W. Schoff, 'The offering lists in the Song and their political significance", *The Song of Songs a Symposium* (1924), p.88f.
[76] M. Margolis, "How the Song of Songs entered the Cannon", in ibid., p.16f.
[77] T. Meek, op.cit.
[78] W. Wittekindt, op.cit.
[79] W. Oesterly, op.cit., pp.11f, 15.
[80] L. Waterman, op.cit.

rather it has undergone a different revision and was reduced to the level of folk poetry in which the political relations between the two Israelite kingdoms are represented. Snaith,[81] on the other hand, found two cycles in the song, one having associations with the spring and the other with autumn, and connected the book with the stories of Shiloh and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter.

In support of his view Meek[82] argues that fertility cults were common among the early Hebrews despite the preaching of the prophets against it. Also, he points out that the Old Testament contains many allusions to the cult, referring to some passages in Isaiah 16.10; Jeremiah 22.1: Ezekiel 8.14; Zachariah 12.11; Joel 1.8ff. While this may be true, the above-mentioned examples did not recognise the cult as a legitimate practice. It was mentioned merely to convey the idea that the cult was commonly practised, a case which is similar to that of Baal worship in the Old Testament. Therefore references to the cult in the Old Testament are not meant to be some kind of justification to preserve a ritual of its practice in the Canon. As to Meek's argument that the Song was revised to accord with Yahwism, it seems that there is no trace in the Song of Yahweh's cult. Perhaps Meek's own remarks in this connection are sufficient enough evidence for this fact when he states "rather strikingly Yahweh never once appears in the book. When the liturgy was incorporated in Yahweh cult, it was deemed sufficient to transfer the title to him without adding his name".[83] Surely such important revision is supposed to be indicated clearly rather than left to the imagination or guesswork of the reader. On

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[81] N. Snaith, op.cit.

[82] T. Meek, op.cit., p.3; "The Song of Songs and the Fertility cult" in Schoff (ed.), *Song of Songs Symposium* (1924), p.48.

[83] T. Meek, op.cit., p.56.

the other hand, Schoff,[84] in support of this opinion, maintains that the book has passed double revision. The first was a general adaptation to the Temple where he found 134 of the terms to have reference to the Tammuz cult, such as dove, king, folk, wine, vineyard and couch, and 126 terms belonging to the Temple, such as ointment, tent, veil, chariot, chamber, stud, gold and cypress. In the second revision, Schoff points out five terms to indicate the adaptation of the book to the second temple. These terms are spikenard, henna, saffron, aloes and palanquin. In both attempts Schoff does not seem to show anything that exhibits Yahweh's cult, or relate to the idea of Yahwism. Rowley's comments in this connection rightly sum it up, "A revision which consisted merely in rubbing a little ointment on the old ritual, and which failed to bring out the real qualities of the faith in whose interest it was carried through, would be let to exist in the mind of the interpreter rather than in the achievement of the reviser".[85]

On the question of the canonicity of the Song being a remnant of the Tammuz cult, both Meek[86] and Schoff[87] maintained that both David and Solomon had recognised Tammuz cult. Their argument is based on the assumption that the name David is connected with the divine name "Dod", which has been identified with Tammuz. Also they identified "Sholem", from which the word Solomon is derived, with Tammuz. Accordingly, Schoff seems to believe that when the Temple was built, it was natural that the Tammuz cult found a home in it, and so he states "there is nothing intrinsically impossible therefore in the presence of the Tammuz cult in

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[84] W. Schoff, op.cit., pp.98, 118f.
[85] H. Rowley, "The Song of Songs", *JRAS* (1938), p.264.
[86] T. Meek, "Canticle and the Tammuz cult", *AJSL* 39(1922/23), p.4ff.
[87] W. Schoff, op.cit., p.88f.

the Temple or in the survival in some of its ceremonial".[88] But the case is different where the Canon is concerned, for it seems improbable that such a pagan cult could have been preserved in the Canon, as Oesterly[89] rightly believes in this connection that it is highly unlikely for such a liturgy to have been brought into the Canon in post-exilic days, since at that time Judaism kept itself exclusive to preserve the faith from alien contamination. Also, it could not have been brought in in pre-exilic days, for there was no such thing as a Canon then.

Another questionable point which encounters this view is related to the assumption that words, expressions and allusions to the characteristic features of the cult may be recognised in the Song. The word "Dod", for example, the regular term for the lover in the Song, was identified by Meek with the Babylonian term "Dudu", the title for Tammuz.[90] According to Gaster,[91] the connection of "Dudu" with the Hebrew term "Dod" seems to be doubtful. Also, he seems to believe that "Dudu" was not a prominent name in the Tammuz cult, and therefore it is unlikely that it was taken over when the cult passed to Syria and Palestine.

As for the many words and expressions cited by Meek as parallel to the Song, though they are undoubtedly impressive and perhaps suggestive, they hardly seems to provide grounds for justification. Terms like dove, gazelle, garden, bride, honey, moon, sun, vine and springŞthough it may be true that they have their roots in the myths of the ancient Near East, or occurred in relation to the Tammuz cult, nevertheless this does not mean that they refer only to that cult wherever employed, and in any case they are common terms in the love poetry of most cultures. Another

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[88] Ibid., p.94f.
[89] Oesterly and Robinson, *Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* (1934), pp.1-10.
[90] T. Meek, op.cit., *AJSL*, p.4ff.
[91] T. Gaster, "What the Song of Song means", *Commentary* 13(1952), p.320.

doubtful point is related to Meek's assumption that the reading of the Song at Passover is a survival of the custom of its recitation at the pagan festival.[92] But he himself admits that this custom was officially adopted by the Jews in the Middle Ages.[93] Gaster[94] maintains in this connection that the custom cannot go beyond the Geonic age, that is, the sixth century C.E., and that the book was then understood according to the allegorical interpretation. However, whenever the reading of the Song at Passover began, it is most likely to be a mere coincidence that it was chosen to be read at the spring festival of Passover. Perhaps its contents, which describe nature at springtime, may have determined its recitation at the spring festival, rather than because spring is the season of Adonis. It it possible also that it is the literal interpretation of the book which has led to its recitation at the spring festival in as much as it led to its singing at wedding celebrations, particularly as the contents of the book can be easily adapted to such occasions. Therefore, according to this view, while it offers another way for understanding the book, however the cultic affinities of the Song do not seem distinguished enough in characteristics or role to warrant regarding the Song as written to serve as a cultic liturgy. Also, although this view is supposed to treat the book according to its literal sense, none the less the manner in which this view was applied made the interpretation appear like an allegory no less observed than the usual allegorical treatment of the Song by traditional scholarship, especially when almost everything in the Song starting with the sun, moon or mountains, and finishing with doves, pomegranates or perfumes, are explained in relation to the Tammuz cult. Furthermore, it may be true that this

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[92] T. Meek, op.cit., p.49.
[93] Ibid., p.4.
[94] T. Gaster, op.cit., p.320.

view has distanced the book from the secular sphere of interpretation, but only to connect it with a pagan cult. Accordingly, to classify this view, as it claims for itself, to be "literal and sacred" seems a doubtful classification in this connection, rather than one that is deserving or at least proper.

5. *Human Love In The Religous Context*

Other scholars, who approve of the literal approach of interpretation of the Song, hold the view that the book is religious because it expounds the divine view of human sensuous love, and therefore is worthy of a place in the Bible since it represents the ideal marriage relationship. They have adopted a religious view towards human love and marriage, and have based their argument on the assumption that human love has its spiritual and religious aspects, and that God has blessed its fulfilment in marriage. Thus, the existence of the Song in the canon is "to teach us the purity and the sanctity of that estate of marriage which He Himself established".[95] Furthermore, in justification of their view, some advocates and supporters maintained that the Bible is frank and certainly not Victorian in its view of sex, and at the same time never indicates that human love and marriage is secular.[96] As Laurin puts it,[97] "the Bible is fully aware of lust and misuse of sex, but, at the same time it is forthright in approving the wholesomeness of sex". Also, in this connection, Kline[98] finds the book presenting the ideal picture of love and

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[95] E. Young, *An Introduction to the OT* (1953), p.328.
[96] W. Graham Cole, *Love and Sex in the Bible* (1959), p.436.
[97] R. Laurin, "The Song of Songs and its modern message", *Christianity Today* 6, 29 (1962), 1062ff.
[98] M. Kline, "The Song of Songs" *Christianity Today* 3, 15 (1959), p.39.

marriage. Gordon[99] shares Renan's view which states that "The Bible would be lacking in something if one should not find in it expression for the deepest and strongest sentiments of humanity". Kerr[100] believes that human love has been misused and sees the Song as "point[ing] the true road to paradise". Napier[101] too maintains that the book belongs to the Old Testament since it restores tenderness and freshness to the marriage relationship, and thus it is a gift to be enjoyed and for which to be grateful. Gordis[102] shares the same view and believes that the Song is about, courtship and marriage. Also he explains that Hebrew thought does not make any distinction between the religious and the secular aspects of life, thus "the natural is holy". For Eisseldt,[103] the book expresses the love relationship between the sexes as one of the greatest gifts of God. He also maintains that the book is worthy of a place in the canon since it is like the praise of the virtuous woman in Proverbs. In Rowley's opinion,[104] the book expresses the sacredness of marriage, and describes the spiritual and physical emotions on which marriage rests, and therefore it should be worthy of a place in the Bible. Murphy[105] advances the same opinion, and maintains that the Song is worthy of divine authorship because "male and female He created them". Halley[106] also believes that marriage was ordained by God, and thus the essence of the Song is found in its tender expressions in relation to the intimacies and delights of wedded love.

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[99] A. Gordon, *the Poets of the OT* (1919), 309ff.
[100] H. Kerr, "Preparatory exposition of the Song of Songs", *The Interpreter's Bible* V (1956), p.100.
[101] B. Napier, *the Song of the Vineyard* (1962), p.356.
[102] R. Gordis, "The Song of Songs", *Jewish Theological Seminary* (1954), p.x.
[103] O. Eissfeldt, *The OLdTestament, an Introduction* (1965), p.489.
[104] H. Rowley, "The interpretation of the Song of Songs", *JTS* 38 (1937), p.358.
[105] R. Murphy, "The Canticle of Canticles", the *American ecclesiastical Review* 133 (1955), p.98.
[106] H. Halley, *Pocket Bible Handbook* (1959), p.248.

The above statements may have weight only if one's view towards human love and marriage is religious. However, the opinions of the advocates of this view, as mentioned above, seem to be either vague or too general at times. Gordis' view, for example, seems to regard human love holy because it is a natural feeling. If this is the case, it makes it difficult to believe that hate and jealousy are holy too, after all both are as natural and instinctive as human love. Rowley and Murphy's views are even more general. Expression of emotions and sentiments is not only part of the marriage relationship, but also of the love relationship, and male and female are not God's special creation, nor his only creation. They may be different, but they are still part of God's overall creation. Furthermore, expression of emotions and sentiments have always been the main characteristic of love poetry in general, and the Song is no exception on this ground. In this case the issue seems as if it is defending the place of love poetry rather than that of human love in the Bible, and neither of them need to have a religious touch to secure a place in the Bible. In so far as human love is concerned, despite the non-committal attitude of the Bible regarding the nature of human love, it does not avoid talking about it and acknowledging it as part of human life. As for love poetry, it mayṢand canṢbe accepted in the Bible for its artistic excellence and its literary merits, just as other books were accepted for their historical value. Therefore, it seems a weak argument to attach religious nature to human love so that love poetry, or in this case the Song, may have a place in the Bible while ignoring the Song's own literary originality as refined love poetry; a ground which is sufficient enough to secure a place for it in the Bible, particularly as there is nothing explicit in the Song to suggest marriage, which seems to have inspired or led to the assumption of human love, since both

can easily be associated with each other. Furthermore, intimate sentiments and emotions involved in the love/marriage relationship are usually of a highly subjective nature, and for this reason there is hardly one single representative standard or an ideal example of it, making itṢor anything like itṢunlikely to be found in the Bible. In fact, it would be difficult to believe the Song stands as an example in this connection, while on the other hand the Bible, as a book for life and about life, is supposed to acknowledge the fact that there is no single model in this connection since human beings are not created with the same degree of sensitivity and emotions. Therefore the sentiments of love and admiration involved in love poetry, even if it is in the Bible, are not actually meant to be an example to follow. They are there simply to be appreciated by the reader or listener, while at the same time giving satisfaction to the author in expressing feelings and emotions involved in personal, or perhaps imaginary experience. As for Renan and Gordon, both seem to believe that human love feelings are the "deepest" and "strongest" feelings of humanity, and for this reason the Song deserves to have a place in the Bible. Human love feelings and sentiments can be deep and strong,but it seems doubtful that these feelings can be "the deepest" and "the strongest" feelings of humanity, especially when they are compared to the strength and effectiveness of the expression of anguish, distress and affliction among humanity past, present, and no doubt for time to come. In this connection and in so far as biblical literature is concerned, it is difficult to agree with above statement while seeing in the biblical Psalms not only an expression of the deepest sentiments of humanity, but also the deepest expression of human sentiments. Therefore, on this ground the Bible would not be lacking in something, or in anything, by the absence of the Song.

However, the Song's presence in the Bible has enriched it literally and culturally.

As for the views of Young, Halley and Graham Cole, the fact that the Bible does not mention that marriage is an institution of secular nature does not necessarily mean or automatically lead to the assumption that marriage is a religious institution, particularly as the Bible does not state either that marriage is of a religious nature or that it is ordained by God. Perhaps it is only fair in this connection to assume that the Bible's attitude towards marriage is non-committal. Marriage is basically but a promise, like any other promise or agreement, between two individuals. Therefore, marriage is more likely a moral institution to safeguard this promise. Morality, though, has always been supported by religion but not derived from it, rather from reason. Therefore, morality is desired, exercised, respected and observed by society for its very own sake, and thus has become part of society's attitudes, feelings and manners of conducting its own affairs, and this may perhaps explain why marriage seems also to be acknowledged and observed amongst those who have no religious beliefs.

As for expressions of intimacy and delight in the Song, they are by no means exclusive characteristics of "wedded love". Love by its nature leads to or creates a state of delight and intimacy whether inside or outside marriage. Furthermore, love does not necessarily suggest marriage or lead to it, because it does not recognise marriage. Indeed, love is an independent and free feeling which does not recognise institutions, situations or barriers, and always retains its neutral and enigmatic nature within religious or non-religious contexts. In fact, it is marriage that recognises love because it needs love as one of its basic components. Therefore, the fact that the Song can be sung or is usually sung at weddings because it speaks of

love, does not necessarily mean that it celebrates wedded love, especially as there is nothing explicit in the Song to suggest marriage.

Kline, in a similar manner, seems to adopt a religious view towards human love and marriage, and thus regards the Song as representing an ideal picture of love and marriage. This assumption is the most contradictory of all. "Ideal picture" may mean either answering to the highest ideal/conceptions, or serving as an example to follow.

Examining the Song, depending on one's understanding of the book, the emerging pictures would be that the beautiful maiden is either in love with the shepherd, preferring his beauty to Solomon's wealth and power, or, if the lover is Solomon himself, then she has found her heart's desire in Solomon's beauty, wealth and power. In either case, the picture is far from ideal and a poor example to follow within a religious context. It would have been more consistent with this assumption if the attributes of beauty, wealth and power had been played down and presented as ordinary or average, rather than unique in their excellence, and stressed as the main qualities of the partners involved. Also, attributes such as modesty, honesty and understanding were expected to be emphasised and focused upon, especially as these attributes are more valid within the religious context, and indeed they usually outlive beauty, power and wealth. Religion is supposed to reflect reality where an ideal picture is supposed to represent those average or less fortunate in beauty and wealth. Therefore it seems an ideal too difficult to justify on religious, and indeed on moral grounds. Realistically, it is particularly rare to find, and very difficult to achieve, and so does not seem to stand as an example to follow on any ground. In this connection, the attitude of the Bible may have been non-

committal towards the nature of human love/marriage, but fairly explicit in so far as general morality is concerned which may be applicable to the basis of the marriage relationship, for it states, "Grace is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that fears the Lord, she should be praised".[107] Even if what is meant by "ideal picture" is to show that love should be the basis of the marriage relationship, the Bible had already made this message clear and succinct when it said, "enjoy life with the woman [wife] you love",[108] while leaving aside the details of the feelings and sentiments involved, since, as already mentioned, the Bible is aware that this a highly subjective issue, and there is no one single example to follow.

On the same subject of marriage, M. Goulder[109] also believes the Song is about marriage, and specifically the marriage of Solomon to an Arab princess. The underlying message seems to encourage intermarriage. In his interpretation he treats the Song as a sexually arousing song of basic sexual language. In his work he seems to be consistent in finding, creating and very often forcing sexual interpretations to the Song to the extent that when it does not fit the sequence of the text, then it is one of the Song's rare failures to think precisely".[110] Perhaps his work would have been more interesting had he paid some attention to the literary merits and aesthetic characteristics of the Song.

It is generally agreed that the Song falls into the category of poetry, that which expresses sentiments and feelings of love and admires and appreciates beauty; a fact which makes it difficult to believe that Goulder seems to find nothing in the Song apart from sexual images. Does he regard love poetry as basically sexual poetry? If

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[107] Proverbs, 31:30.
[108] Ecclesiastes 9:9.
[109] M. Goulder, "The Song of fourteen songs", *JOST* supplement, series 36 (Sheffield, 1986).
[110] Ibid., p.50.

not, where does he draw the line, especially as the Song seems to have something in common with other oriental love poetry, such as Arabic, Persian, Tamil or ancient Egyptian, particularly where metaphors, similes, images and aesthetic characteristics are concerned. Also, while Goulder rightly states, "we must judge ancient literature by ancient norms", [111] on the other hand he seems, most of the time, to show either disregard or lack of knowledge of ancient cultures and ancient norms throughout his work, which has led to a number of contradictions in his interpretation. According to Goulder, for example, the couple were married in Chapter Five. However, in 2.4 he states "she lies beside him and can feel the strength of his feeling". In 2.7., he states "they are engaged in passionate kissing but they are not married yet". And in 3.1, he states, "they went to bed together". From the cultural viewpoint this is a chain of contradictions. Among Arabs of all classes intimacy of the nature described above does not take place between the sexes before marriage. This ancient tradition and common practice had been well known from pre-Islamic times, and is still observed today. This does not include superficial and purely imaginative literature like " A Thousand and One Nights". Also, this tradition seems to be familiar among some oriental Jews. Johannan Spector,[112] who worked with Yemeni Jews who immigrated to Israel between 1949 and 1950, described some of their marriage customs thus: "For the first time the bride and the bridegroom are alone, both tremble. It is the first time that either of them has been alone with a member of the opposite sex outside the immediate family". Therefore, his illustrations may appear captivating sometimes, but they are

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[111] Ibid., p.80.

[112] J. Spector, "Bridal songs and ceremonies from San'a", in *Studies in Biblical and Jewish Folklore* (Indiana, 1960), p.274.

hardly convincing, since at most events seems to have taken much at face value, thereby disconnecting the Song from its cultural background. In this connection, Goulder does not find Murphy[113] to be fully aware of the sexual nature of the Song, since he regards only some of the language/images in the Song as straightforwardly sexual. Thus, in his review of Murphy's commentary, Goulder states, "Murphy is frequently vague and evasive, and misses the erotic force of the poem to miss too much of what is going on is to miss the significance of the whole".[114] But it is equally true that to read or to force too much into the text is to miss and indeed to damage the true essence and spirit of the Song. For Goulder the breasts/fawns image, for example, seems to project an "erotic force" as he states, "Fawns have Bambi-style noses reminiscent of nipples".[115] But the object to which the breasts are compared is too innocent and timid, and thus can hardly present a picture of erotic force. It seems more likely that fawns are used here deliberately to play down the natural erotic/sexual appeal of the breasts rather than to accentuate it. Therefore, the end picture can only be described as beautiful, timid, warm and humble, rather than erotic or sexual. In fact, the beauty and warmth of this image is similar to that of a woman breast-feeding her baby, where in both cases sexuality and eroticism of the breast are transformed into warmth and beauty.

Unlike Goulder, Landy in his study of the Song,[116] seems to appreciate and successfully combine the sexual aspect of the images in the Song with their aesthetic and literary aspects, which did not seem to escape his attention throughout his study. In a manner of comparison regarding the breasts/fawns image, for

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[113] R. Murphy, *A Commentary on the Book of Canticles* (Fortress Press, 1990).
[114] M. Goulder, "Review of Murphy's *Commentary*", *JTS*, 44, 1 (1996), p.207.
[115] Ibid.
[116] F. Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise* (Sheffield, 1983).

example, Landy states, "it is an extraordinary sensitive metaphor combining colour, warmth, liveliness and delicate beauty it represents the power that guarantees feminine sexuality".[117] It appears surprising, however, that Goulder does not find the breasts/towers image of sexual nature also. He simply regards it as representing towers of chastity.[118] But chastity and sexuality do not contradict each other, certainly not in eastern culture where chastity suggests and accentuates sexuality, and as Landy rightly states, "the chastity of language and imagery diffuses sexuality over the entire body".[119] Fox[120] is another example in this connection. In his comparison of the Song with the ancient Egyptian love songs, he in a similar manner finds the Song of sexual nature. However, like Landy, his treatment of the images in the Song is comprehensive and effective, pointing out not only their sexual aspects but also their presentational and representational aspects alike. Beauty is like art. When recognised and appreciated it reveals its colourful and imaginative nature, while if minimised in nature or role, it becomes monotonous and lifeless.

It is worth mentioning in this connection that basically there seems to be nothing explicitly sexual in the book since the main concentration is on the experience of love. However, what is really explicit in the Song is expressions of love sentiments and admirations of beauty. But love and beauty do not necessarily suggest marriage or lead to it, not to mention that the text itself does not explicitly sugget marriage in the first place. Furthermore, beauty is not necessarily always sexual. It can be simple, plain, or warm beauty, or it can be attractive, sexual or even terrible

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[117] Ibid., p.76.

[118] M. Goulder, "The Song of fourteen songs", *JOST* supplement 36 (Sheffield, 1986), p.66.

[119] F. Landy, op.cit., p.23.

[120] M. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egypotian Love Songs* (Wisconsin Press, 1985).

beauty, all depending on the degree of sexual appeal involved in each category. Also,what is naturally or traditionally regarded sexual can be presented, especially in poetry, less or even more sexual depending on the object employed in the comparison and the manner applied to draw the ultimate picture/image required. These are but basic and obvious facts which are supposed to be taken into consideration especially when dealing with love poetry like the text of the Song where the images involved though simple or straightforward as they may appear, nevertheless, they are capable of revealing a fair degree of sophistication and complexity especially when their aesthetic, artistic and cultural aspects are acknowledged and appreciated. On the other hand, treating these images at face value may result in a text either literary distorted or culturaly uprooted.

Furthermore, Goulder does not seem to speak about the merits of intermarriage which is supposed to be the theme of his interpretation Intermarriage is a noble cause to adopt and to promote, and there is indeed more to it than just the sexual aspect which needs not be presented as an outstanding feature in this connection, since the case is no different where marriage within the same community is concerned. The sexual aspect is indeed equally desirable and vital for both types of marriages, and thus to focus upon it as the main aspect of intermarriage does not seem to serve any special purpose in this context; it is rather out of context. Goulder not only seems to have reduced this noble cause to mere sexual indulgence, but what is more important, he seems to ignore the human and cultural merits attached to it. If intermarriage was the real message/intention of the author, it seems difficult to believe that he/she would have agreed with Goulder's interpretation or misrepresentation of this cause.

Therefore, had Goulder shown some interest in the wider aspects of intermarriage and in the multi-nature aspect of the images in the Song, his interpretation would have gained some literary and cultural merits, and would certainly have acquired an objective face. As it is, his interpretation of the Song does not seem to provide a sound or plausible alternative for the understanding of the text, as Exum rightly comments in this connection, "the evidence is too scanty to be convincing".[121] However, the number of contradictions on various grounds appears to have made a novel and exciting work of Goulder's interpretation.

Conclusion

In the face of the increasing abandonment of the allegorical approach of intepretation of the Song according to which it was cognized, the literal approach of interpretation with its various views took precedence to help to determine the understanding of the Song. The allegorical approach was abandoned as it seemed to be imposing, subjective and preoccupied in digging and finding symbolic explanations everywhere in the text. But this seems also true in the case of the literal approach of interpretation of the Song since most of the literal views seem to be preoccupied in finding or exaggerating the erotic and the sexual implications of the images involved in the text, particularly most of the views in this connection seem to assume that marriage is involved in the book in one way or another. This assumption seems to have complicated the matter as it has led to a dispute over the

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[121] J. Exum, "Review of Goulder's interpretation", the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), p.124.

nature of marriage and human love, whether it is sacred or secular. However, both the allegorical and the literal approaches are not to be held responsible for the shortcomings involved in any of the views of interpretations. Indeed, the validity or the plausability of the interpretation does not actually lie entirely in the type of the adopted approach whether it is allegorical or literal, traditional or novel, rather in the view adopted by that approach and more important in the manner that particular view is applied to the text and the degree of understanding and appreciation it shows towards the literary and the cultural aspects of the text especially when their role seems to be vital and relevant to that particular view.

UNITY / STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

A. *Survey of previous views*

Like other aspects in the book, structural unity or the lack of it is a matter upon which there have been and remain still wide variations of opinion. These opinions, while they are always striving to arrive at a reasonably objective view on the subject, have always been and will continue to be more based on the individual's view and less on the intention of the author in this connection. It is especially difficult to overlook the fact that each opinion has its own particular concept in relation to the meaning and making of structural unity, since it is usually shaped and coloured by various tendencies, traditions and presuppositions. Disagreement of opinions does not end with whether the Song is a single poem, or whether it is an anthology of lyrics, or a collection of unrelated songs, but rather extends to include the number of songs, units or divisions into which the text is divided.

According to Adeney,[1] for example, consistency of style and consistency of the portrayal of characters in the Song are good enough to hold the text together in a unified form. Meek,[2] seems to find the composition too disorderly to be attributed to a single author; on the other hand he believes that the various types of repetition in the book contribute to its structural unity. Hyde[3] suggests that the style and the form of the book show a unity of design, and perhaps the effort of a single author, while Wittekindt,[4] on the other hand, cannot find anything in the book other than an inconsistent variety of songs

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[1] W. Adeney, *The Song of Solomon: the Expositor's Bible*, (1903), p.5

[2] T. Meek, 'The Song of Songs, introduction and exegesis', *The Interpreter's Bible*, (1956), Vol. 5, p.91

[3] W. Hyde, 'Greek anthologies of the Song of Songs', in W. Schoff (ed.),*The Song of Songs: a symposium*, (1924), p.40

[4] W. Wittekindt, *Das Hohelied und Seine Beziehungen zum Istarkult,* (1926), p.192

from different sources, such as Canaanite or Babylonian. Buzy[5] found unity in the Song by using 'refrains' to divide the book into seven poems, each of which begins with the theme of desire and ends with the theme of fulfilment of that desire. His suggested pattern was supported and accepted by Robert.[6] Oesterly,[7] on the other hand, divides the book into 28 separate songs attributed to more than one hand. Murphy[8] suggests that the Song is a composition of a single hand, and structural unity is provided by means of repetitions of certain themes, words and motifs, as well as by the consistency found in the mutual devotion expressed by both the lover and the beloved in the Song from start to finish. For Parente,[9] unity in the Song is provided by a certain order prevailing through the entire book, as he states "there is a unity of purpose and a unity of style and persons". As for Haupt,[10] he sees the Song as a collection of nuptial songs and popular love ditties of no certain order, but rather a collection of "charming confusion" and a composition of more than one hand. Also, he tried to suggest a "better sequence" for the erotic images in the text, for he seems to think that they are not focused in the way they should be as a result of the disorderly state of the text. Eissfeldt[11] is also of the opinion that the book is a collection of love and wedding songs, and gives an estimate of 25 poems for their number. Landsberger,[12] though he agrees with the opinion of Eissfeldt, differs with him about the number of the Songs, but does not give a specific number. He only states that the number is "far, far greater". Gordis,[13] on the other hand, believes that the book is a collection of 28 poems, while Schmidt[14] reduced the number to 19, though he suggested

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[5] D. Buzy 'La composition "litteraire du Cantique des Cantiques', *Revue Biblique*, ,(1940),p.49

[6] A. Robert, 'La paix eschatologique dans le Cantique des Cantiques', *RTF*, (1954).,118ff

[7] W. Oesterly, *the Song of Songs*, (1936) p.6 .

[8] R. Murphy, 'The unity of the Song of Songs', *VT*, 29 (1979), 441 ff.

[9] P. Parente, 'Canticle of Canticles and mystical theology', *CBQ*, VI (1944), p.149.

[10] P. Haupt, 'The Book of Canticles', *AJSL*, 18 (1902), pp.193-214.

[11] O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, An Introduction t*(1965), p.534.

[12] F. Landsberger, 'Poetic units in the Song of Songs', *JBL*, 73 (1954), 212ff.

[13] R. Gordis, 'The Song of Songs', *Jewish Theological Seminary* (1954), p.24.

[14] N. Schmidt, *the Message of the Poets* (1911), 230ff.

that it is the composition of a single author. Israel Beathan,[15]however, reduced the number of the songs further to 18 songs. For Segal,[16] the work is a collection of love songs of varied character which were transmitted orally, but later the fragments were put together in their present arrangement by the collector. In Jastrow's opinion,[17] the work is a collection of 23 folk songs of varied dates and places of origin. Also, he seems unable to find any guiding principle in the text to help explain its order satisfactorily. According to Kessler,[18] the Song consists of four parts with adjuration at the end of each part. However, though he finds repetitions evenly spread in these parts, he was unable, on the other hand, to find a certain governing pattern in relation to the distribution of love epithets in the Song. He believed this phenomenon to constitute a strong argument against establishing unity in the Song. Structural parallels were the criteria for Exum[19] in her treatment of the unity of the Song. She divided the text into three pairs of poetic units, and examined the form and stylistic characteristic of each poem, establishing parallels among them. This led her to believe that the Song can hardly be an anthology or a collection, since structural parallelism is usually found within an intentional design. Shea[20] agrees with the broad lines of Exum's analysis with some modifications. Like Exum, he divides the texts into six units with slight adjustment of their boundaries, suggesting that the unity of the text can be seen through these units as paired into a chiastic pattern. For Pope, the Song is a collection of love ditties lacking organisation and order. Also, he does not seem to agree with the attempts made to demonstrate the possibility of finding or establishing order in the text, as he states, "the present writer agrees with Haupt in appreciation of the charming confusion in the Canticles and has not been convinced by any of the efforts to

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[15] Israel Bettan, *The Live Scrolls* (1950), p.10.
[16] M. Segal, 'The Song of Songs', *VT* 12 (1962), p.477.
[17] M. Jastrow, *The Song of Songs* (1921), p.137.
[18] R. Kessler, *Some poetical and structural features in the Song of Songs*, Leeds University Oriental Society monograph series 8 (1957), pp.94ff, 43
[19] J. Exum, 'A literary and structural analysis of the Song of Songs', *ZAW* 85 (1973), 78ff.
[20] W. Shea, 'The chiastic structure of the Song of Songs', *ZAW* 95 (1980), 378ff.

demonstrate or restore order or logical sequence and progression".[21] Goulder,[22] on the other hand, believes that the Song is a single poem. He divides the text into 14 scenes following the sequence of his suggested plot, which is the marriage of King Solomon to an Arabian princess, covering the events from the time of the princess's arrival at Solomon's court, to her acknowledgement by him as queen. Falk[23] suggests that the text is a collection of love songs of different types to suit different occasions which were not necessarily composed by a single author. She divides the text into 31 poems according to changes in settings, speakers, moods, arguments and tone of voices. Landy[24] argues that unity in the Song is demonstrated through the Song's thematic coherence, its erotic mode and the reappearance of the same elements in diverse context. According to Fox,[25] the Song consists of a unified collection of poems. Its unity lies in stylistic uniformity, repetition of phrases and motifs, and the echoing of the words of the lovers. He divides the Song into 19 units, based upon the natural continuities of dialogue and events. Elliott[26] suggests that the whole Song is a unified structure. She divides the text into four parts with prologue and epilogue, all of which is unified through repetitions, refrains, the prominent role of the woman in each part and dialogue form together with the theme of love. Dorsey[27] suggests dividing the Song into seven units with the refrain marking the end of each unit. These units form a chiasm pattern with a wedding scene at the centre.

Therefore, the Song seems capable of offering a variety of structural forms depending on the way it is viewed and understood. However, diversity of opinion in this respect should not reflect negatively on the Song, suggesting an exaggerated ambiguity or disorder in the text, nor should it necessarily mean that the Song is originally structureless

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[21] M. Pope, *the Song of Songs* (1977), p.54.
[22] M. Goulder, *The Song of Fourteen Songs* (Sheffield, 1986), pp.4, 55.
[23] M. Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Sheffield, 1982), p.4.
[24] F. Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise* (Sheffield, 1983), p.37.
[25] M. Fox, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Wisconsin, 1985).
[26] M. Elliott, *The Literary Unity of the Canticle* (European University series XXIII, Theology , Benn, 1989).
[27] D. Dorsey, 'Literary structure of the Song of Songs' *JSOT* 46 (1990), 82ff.

and that these views are but futile efforts to force a structure on it. On the contrary, bearing in mind the fact that ambiguity or disorder is not exactly a rare phenomenon or unknown characteristic among ancient near eastern literature, the variety and diversity of opinions in this connection may well suggest that structurally the Song is a flexible, adaptable and imaginative text. Also, it may be true that none of these forms of structure was originally the intention of the author of the Song, but it is equally true that there is no way of knowing whether structureless composition was the aim of the author in this connection. However, despite the unknown intention of the author in either case, the "structureless" view, compared with the "structured" view, does not seem to be plausibly argued. Themes, motifs, patterns and repetitions, which present themselves as the main points in the argument for structural unity in the Song, seem to have been simply dismissed or discarded rather than argued against as accidental or non-contributory factors in this connection.

Whatever was the original intention of the author, and whatever was the purpose of these devices in the Song, even if they were merely decorative, nevertheless, they seem to have made useful contributions towards the possibility of finding or establishing structural unity in the Song. Furthermore, while the diversity of opinions and views and the variety of options did not, and perhaps will not, make of the "structured" view anything more than a possibility, the lack of argument in so far as the "structureless" view is concerned, seems to have rendered it as an opinion offered instead of an opinion argued, or rather reduced it to a mere safe option rather than an equally possible view. The discussion in the following pages will present or add another view for the structural unity of the Song. Perhaps this will be an alternative which may help to throw a different light on the subject, and may lead to a different or better understanding of the text.

B - Present View

A Suggested Unity of The Text :

The discussion in the previous section seems to point to the fact that unity in the Song is still an outstanding question. The complex and perhaps puzzling nature of the text seems to have made the idea of tracing and establishing unity in the text less easy or perhaps less tempting than that of proving disunity, disorder or confusion in the text. Accordingly, the assumption that the Song is "a text of charming confusion" as characterised by Haupt,[28] seems not to be unique amongst modern biblical scholarship.

Examining the text, however, seems to show that despite its so called disorganisation and disorder, there appear to exist some striking elements in the text which may be used individually or collectively to establish fascinating unity in the text as credible as its charming confusion. Under the present assumption unity seems to establish itself upon an equal participation between the contents and the theme of the text on one hand, and the form or structure on the other. Particularly that on the whole, form and content are but the product of each other, as Landy[29] rightly remarks in the connection, "form arises from content and is part of it". Therefore, a plausible ground in support of unity in the text may be established by examining those elements and aspects in the text which have direct bearing to this point. The inner connection between the form and the theme of the text is the first of these suggested aspects to be discussed on this occasion.

1. Structure/theme relationship

This relationship assumes four main sections in the text. Within each section a set of verses seems to form a subsection. Accordingly, under this assumption the text is divided

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[28] P. Haupt,"The Book of Canticles", *AJSL*, vol.18 (1902), p.205.
[29] F. Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise (Sheffield, 1983)*, p.39.

as follows:

Section One	1.2-2.17
Subsection One	2.8-2.15
Section Two	3.1-5.1
Subsection Two	3.6-3.10
Section Three	5.2-7.13
Subsection Three	5.9-6.2
Section Four	8.1-8.14
Subsection Four	8.5-8.9

The suggested theme involved in these sections assumes the development of a spiritual/mystical relationship between the individual and the Lord using human love as a model for this experience. This theme seems to develop in a reasonably consistent manner through the four suggested sections of the text forming a consistent pattern. In this pattern each subsection is preceded by an adjuration verse (2.7, 3.5, 5.8, 8.4) which, according to the suggested theme mentioned above, may be regarded as representing a moment of contemplation or a trance. Accordingly, each subsection may seem to function as an explanatory part of this supposed trance detailing its theme.

According to the present suggested plan, Section One (1.2-2.17) seems to function as introductory. The first line, 1.2, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth", expresses a wish for a longed-for kiss by the woman. In the second part of this verse she praises his love as she says "Your love is better than wine". Therefore, the first line seems to set the theme for the entire Song, which sounds like a declaration that she is not seeking his person but rather his love. Particularly that the kiss wish reappears in the final section of the suggested plan where in Verse 8.1 she says, "if you were to be as my brother...I would kiss you and not be despised". This is followed in 8.6-7 by further praise and affirmation of love, its values and merits, so she says, "love is strong as death...many waters cannot quench love..."

Also, according to the present assumption, Section One, as introductory, seems to introduce the ordinary individual involved in this experience under the guise of the

humble maiden of the Song whose so-called "mother's sons" had made her work for them, as lines 1.5-6 read, "I am black but beautiful...my mother's sons were incensed against me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards...". While Verse 1.4, on the other hand, seems to introduce her beloved/Lord as "the king", "the king brought me to his chambers" Furthermore, the above mentioned verse seems to indicate that the text is narrating events of a relationship or an experience which took place in the past and which will be remembered with joy and happiness as mentioned in the second part of Verse 1.4, "we will rejoice in you...we will remember your love more than wine...".

Finally, apart from setting the theme of the experience involved in the text, this section seems to set the starting point of the experience too. The initial stage seems to have started when the woman, perhaps as a result of reasoning and discussing with her heart, contemplated her beloved's voice, as in 2.8, "the voice of my beloved, behold...", and listened to his repeated calls upon her to join him, as in 2.10 and 2.13, "my beloved spoke and said to me, rise up my love and come away..., arise my love and come away". Also, this section seems to indicate in 2.15 the woman's willingness to be involved in this relationship/experience, "our vineyards are in blossom", as well as her fears and anxieties lest it be severed or spoiled. She seems to express these fears in terms of "foxes", and naturally she seems to have requested their removal, "take us the foxes that spoil the vineyards".

This introductory section leads to Sections Two and Three which are the main body of the experience according to the suggested plan. Therefore Section Two 3.1-5.1 seems to centre around the woman's first vision of the glory and majesty of the king/lover where in the related subsection 3.6-3.10, his crown, palanquin and his guards were portrayed in a manner conveying power, pride and exultation. Section Three, 5.2-7.14, seems to centre around the woman's second vision which concentrates on the beauty of the king/lover. He is portrayed in the related subsection 5.9-6.2 as having unique beauty, and thus can

hardly be identified with any particular person.

Section Four 8.1-8.14, which is the final stage of this relationship/experience, seems to focus in its related subsection 8.5-8.9 upon the acknowledgement and vindication of the essence, merits and values of true love, as stated in what seems to represent the crux of the Song, in lines 8.6-7, "..for love is strong as death. the flashes thereof are the flashes of fire...many waters cannot quench love...if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be condemned". Therefore, this type of love, according to the present assumption, seems to be the only path towards mystical/spiritual union which seems to be realised in 8.5 where the woman is pictured in the company of her beloved "who is this coming up leaning upon her beloved". Also, the continuity and the development of the suggested theme seems to be gradual and reasonably consistent within the four suggested sections in the text.

Further examination indicates, perhaps rather significantly in this connection, that these suggested sections correspond or relate to each other by forming certain patterns which seem to hold them together as one integrated part. These patterns may be illustrated as follows:

1. Sections One and Four start with a long wished-for kiss and end with an anticipated meeting, e.g.:

   Section One begins with 1.2 "let him kiss me..."

   Section Four begins with 1.8 "Oh if you were my brother...I would kiss you..."

   Section One ends with 2.17 "turn my beloved and be like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices".

   Section Four ends with 8.14 "make haste my beloved and be like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountain of spices".

2. Sections Two and Three start with the vision and end with the vineyard/garden theme,

e.g.:

Section Two starts with 3.1 "by night on my bed..."

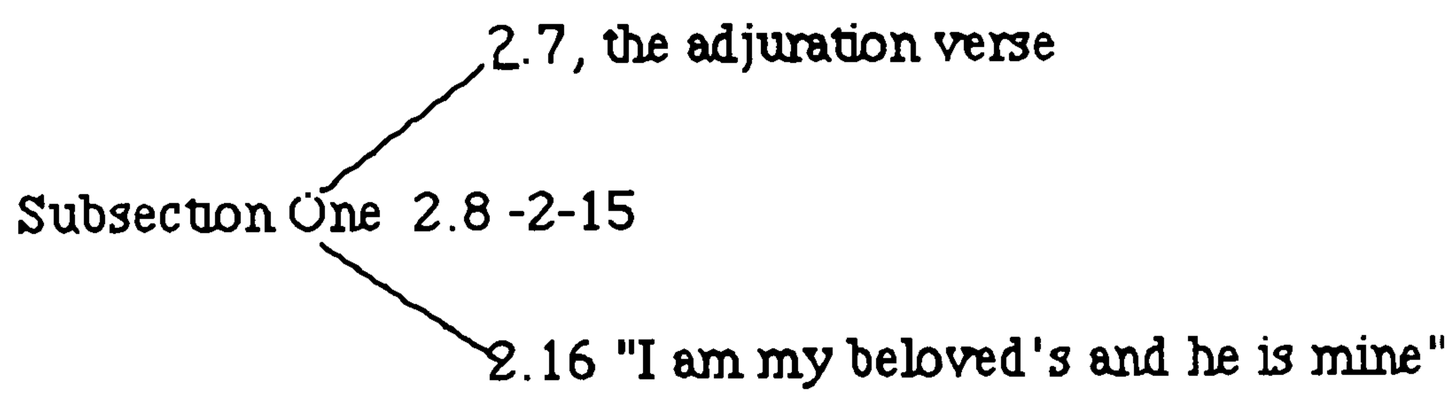
Section Three starts with 5.2 "I am asleep but my heart is awake..."

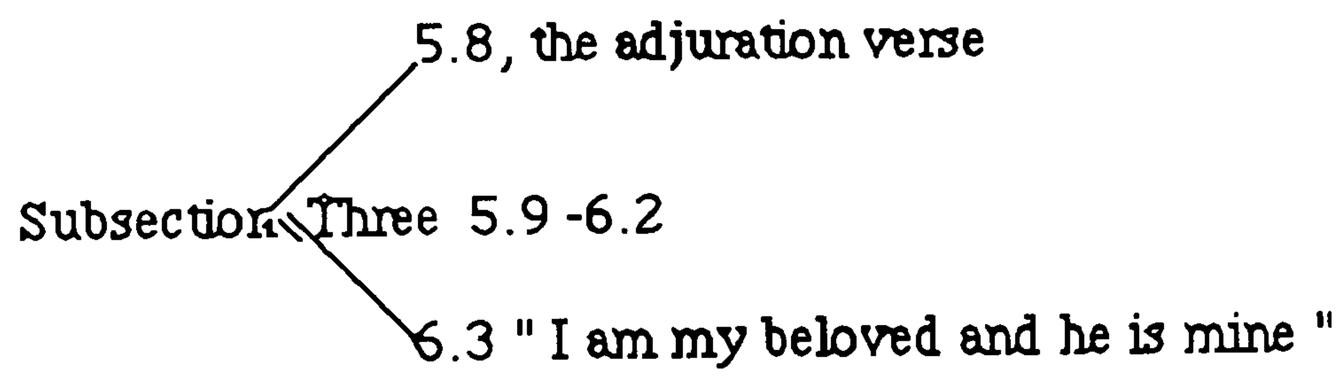
Section Two ends with 5.1 "I came into my garden, my sister..."

Section Three ends with 7.13-14, "let us get up early to the vineyards..."

Therefore, in so far as the main suggested sections are concerned, the pattern involved seems to bind the first section with the last and the second section with the third. The case changes however where the subsections' pattern is concerned. On this occasion the line of connection seems to bind Subsection One with Subsection Three, and Subsection Two with Subsection Four as follows:

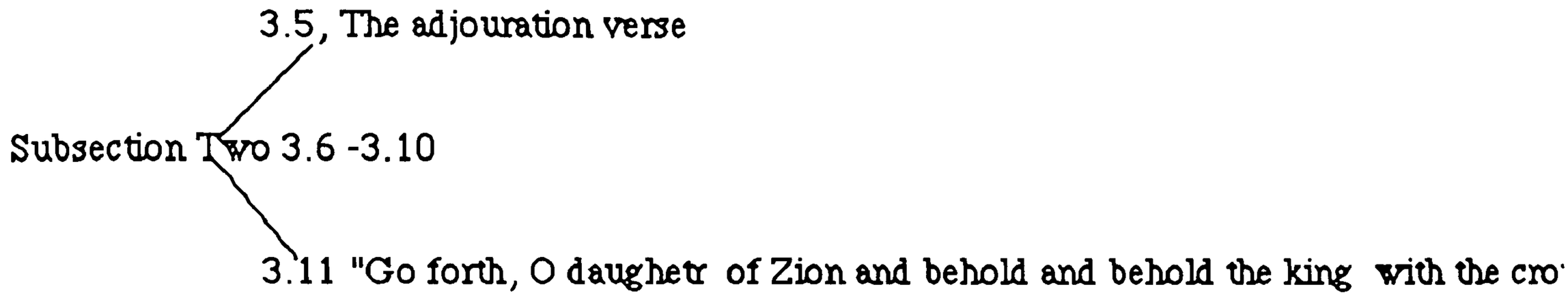
1. Both Subsections One and Three are preceded by the adjuration verse and followed by the affirmation of love verse, e.g.,





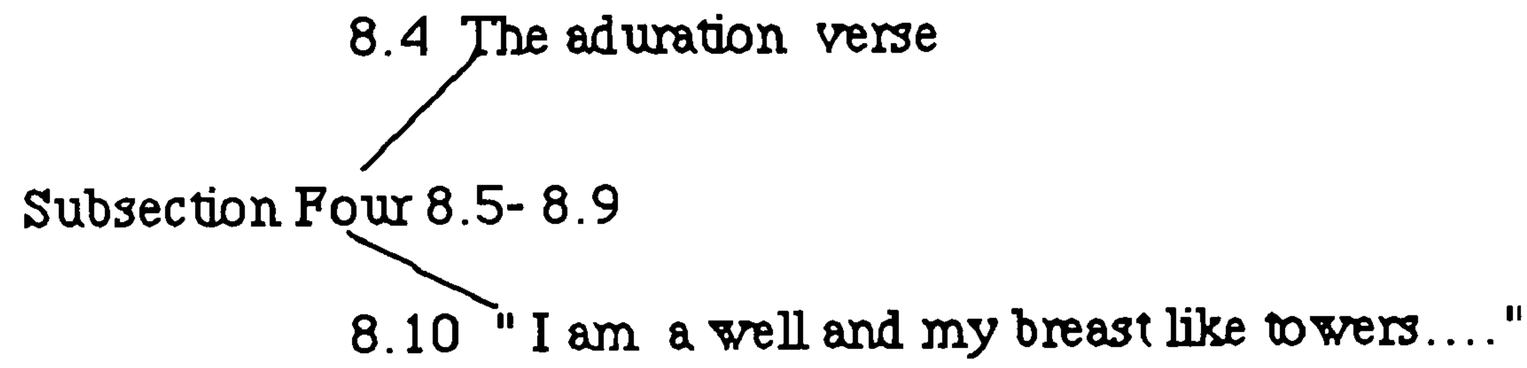
2. Subsections Two and Four seem to follow the same pattern of Subsections One and Three with slight differences. The affirmation verse on this occasion is not in relation of love but rather of glory and eminence. Therefore, the verse which follows Subsection

Two speaks of the king/lover fully crowned in affirmation of his state of eminence and grandeur. Subsection Four, on the other hand, is followed by an affirmation of the beloved's eminent character and dignity, e.g.,

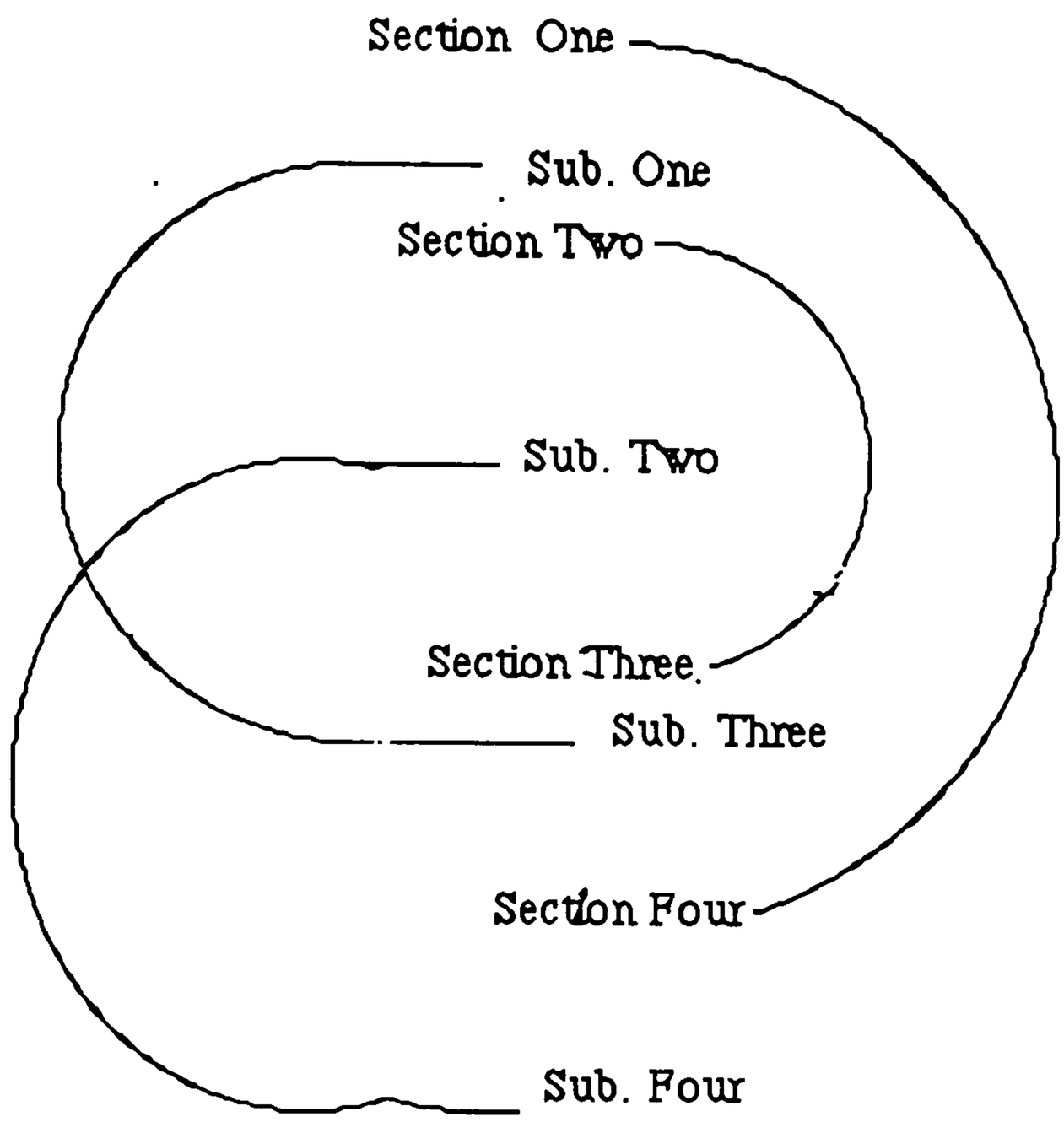


Subsection Two 3.6-3.10

> 3.11 "Go forth, O daughter of Zion and behold the king with the crown..."



Accordingly, this relationship between the four main suggested sections and their subsections seems to take the following shape:



In addition to the subsections mentioned above, there seems also to exist subsidiary sections which are attached to the first three main suggested sections only. The contents of these subsidiary sections on the whole appear to be a mixture of expressions of sentiments, admiration of human beauty or description of nature. What is interesting however about these subsidiary sections is that they seem to have a loose connection with the section they are attached to. Also, it is significant to notice that omitting them seems to have no effect on the consistent development of the suggested theme within the four main suggested sections.

Section One seems to have two subsidiary sections, 1.9-2.6 and 2.9-2.17, both of which are a mixture of expressions of sentiments and descriptions of nature.

Section Two, on the other hand, appears to have one subsidiary section, 4.1-5.1, which speaks mainly in admiration of human beauty.

Section Three, however, is like Section One. It appears to have two subsidiary sections, 6.3-6.10 and 7.1-7.14, which are a mixture of admiration of human beauty and

expressions of sentiments.

Without the above-mentioned subsidiary sections the text, according to the present suggested plan, would continue to maintain the introductory part 1.2-4, starting with the kiss wish, followed by the biographical introduction 1.5-6, the heart-searching theme 1.7-8, leading to the initial stage of the experience 2.7-8, where the beloved seems to contemplate her lover's voice calling upon her to embark on this experience. This introductory stage develops into the main part of the experience which consists of two visions—3.1-3.11 the vision of the king's/lover's majesty and power, and 5.2-6.2 the vision of the king's physical beauty. From there the experience enters its semi-final stage—6.11-12—starting with the garden theme, and finishing with the beloved finding herself among the chosen few. This stage leads to the final one 8.1-14 which starts with the kiss wish 8.1-4, and is followed by the union 8.5, vindication of true love 8.6-7, vindication and acknowledgement of the beloved's dignity and eminent character 8.8-10, condemnation of material life 8.11-12, and finally an anticipation of future meeting 8.13-14.

Though the role of the subsidiary sections seems hardly noticeable or significant in so far as the progression of the theme is concerned, they in fact seem to have a special and indispensable function of carrying the suggested theme from one stage to the other, as follows:

Subsidiary section 1.9-2.6	leads to the initial stage of the experience, 2.7-8.
Subsidiary section 2.9-2.17	leads to the first vision which is about the glory and majesty of the king/lover, 3.1-11.
Subsidiary section 4.1-5.1	leads to the second vision which is about the physical beauty of the king/lover and the related garden motif 5.2-6.2.
Subsidiary section 6.3-6.10	leads to the semi-final stage. The garden motif in relation to

the beloved, the place where she seems to have been elected

to join the chosen few 6.11-12.

Subsidiary section 7.1-7.14 leads to the final stage 8.1-14. The kiss wish 8.1-4, the union 8.5, vindication of true love 8.6-7, vindication of the beloved's dignity and eminence 8.8-10, condemnation of material life 8.11-12, anticipation of future meeting 8.13-14.

Furthermore, it is significant to point out that these subsidiary sections seem to be in agreement with the present suggested plan in so far as placement order is concerned. Accordingly, it seems only natural that Section Four of the present suggested plan has no subsidiary section. This is because Section Four is the final stage of the experience and where the development of the theme comes to an end. Consequently, a subsidiary section in the final stage would have no place since it would have no function. Also, in so far as their contents are concerned, they seem to follow a pattern of gradual distribution. therefore, in Section One of the present suggested plan the contents of the attached subsidiary sections, 1.9-2.6 and 2.9-2.17, appear to be mainly expressions of sentiments apart from occasional verses in reference to the admiration of human beauty, such as 1.9-10 and 1.15, or some verses describing nature, such as 2.11-14. In Section Two of the present suggested plan the sentiments seem to develop a more intimate tone, and therefore the attached subsidiary section 4.1-5.1 seems to speak mainly of human physical beauty. In Section Three of the present suggested plan, however, the contents of the attached subsidiary sections 6.3-6.10 and 7.1-7.14 seem to be a concentrated mixture of both expressions of sentiments and admiration of human beauty. Since this stage is regarded as semi-final in so far as the development of the present suggested theme is concerned, and as final in so far as the function of the subsidiary sections is concerned, it

is expected therefore that a concentration of sentiments and admiration would occur at this very stage. As far as the subsidiary sections in particular are concerned their pattern of gradual distribution of contents seems to indicate that there is some kind of relationship, perhaps a close relationship, between this pattern and the development of the suggested theme. In other words, it seems to suggest that the deeper the theme develops, the more intimate and concentrated the contents of the subsidiary sections become.

To this point it seems to safe to suggest that there is, after all, a reasonably defined theme and a connected structure in the Song. It may be described as a structure of a multi-layered nature closely connected with its, suggested, theme. The main suggested sections of this structure, together with the related subsections and subsidiary sections, seem to follow certain patterns enabling them to function together as one connected whole allowing the theme to travel gradually, consistently and without interruption throughout the text.

2. Repetitions in the Text

The other aspect in support of the unity in the Song is the obvious characteristic of various types of repetitions. It is striking and interesting in this connection to note that, in the Song, repetitions like the suggested structure seem to follow certain patterns connecting the four suggested sections of the Song. The discussion of this aspect will examine each type of the repetitions involved in the text as follows:

A. *Repetitions of regular patterns*

According to the present suggested plan the following patterns are formed :

1. The kiss wish seems to function as an opening pattern for Sections One and Four, e.g.

   1.2 "let him kiss me…"

   8.1 "Oh that you were my brother…I would kiss you…"

2. The anticipated meeting seems to function as a closing pattern for Sections One and Four, e.g.:

   2.17 "turn my beloved and be like a gazelle upon the mountain of spices"

   8.14 "make haste my beloved and be like a gazelle upon the mountain of spices".

3. The dream/vision pattern seems to open Sections Two and Three, e.g.:

   3.1 "by night on my bed…"

   5.2 "I am asleep but my heart is awake…".

4. The garden/vineyard celebration pattern seems to close Sections Two and Three, e.g.:

   5.1 "I have come to my garden my sister bride…eat, O friends, drink…"

   7.13-14 "let us get up early to the vineyards, there I will give you my love…at our door all manner of precious fruits…".

5. The dream/vision seems to create and follow certain patterns in both Sections Two and Three of presnt the suggested plan. This pattern may be explained as follows:

   Section Two: dream 3.1-4 —> adjuration phrase 3.5 —> question form verse —> description of the glory and majesty of the lover/king 3.7-10, e.g.:

   "by night on my bed… —> I adjure you… —> who is this coming…? —>behold, it is his litter…".

   Section Three: dream 5.2-7 —> adjuration 5.8 —> question form verse —> admiration of the king/lover's physical beauty 5.10-16, e.g:

   "I am asleep but my heart is awake… —> I adjure you… —> what is your beloved… —> my beloved is white and ruddy…".

6. The adjuration phrase seems to form a pattern around itself each time it appears in the four suggested sections. Accordingly, this phrase while it is followed by the question/interjection type of verse in each section, on the other hand it seems to be

preceded by either the dream/vision theme, as in Sections Two and Three, or by the embrace theme as in Sections One and Four, as illustrated below:

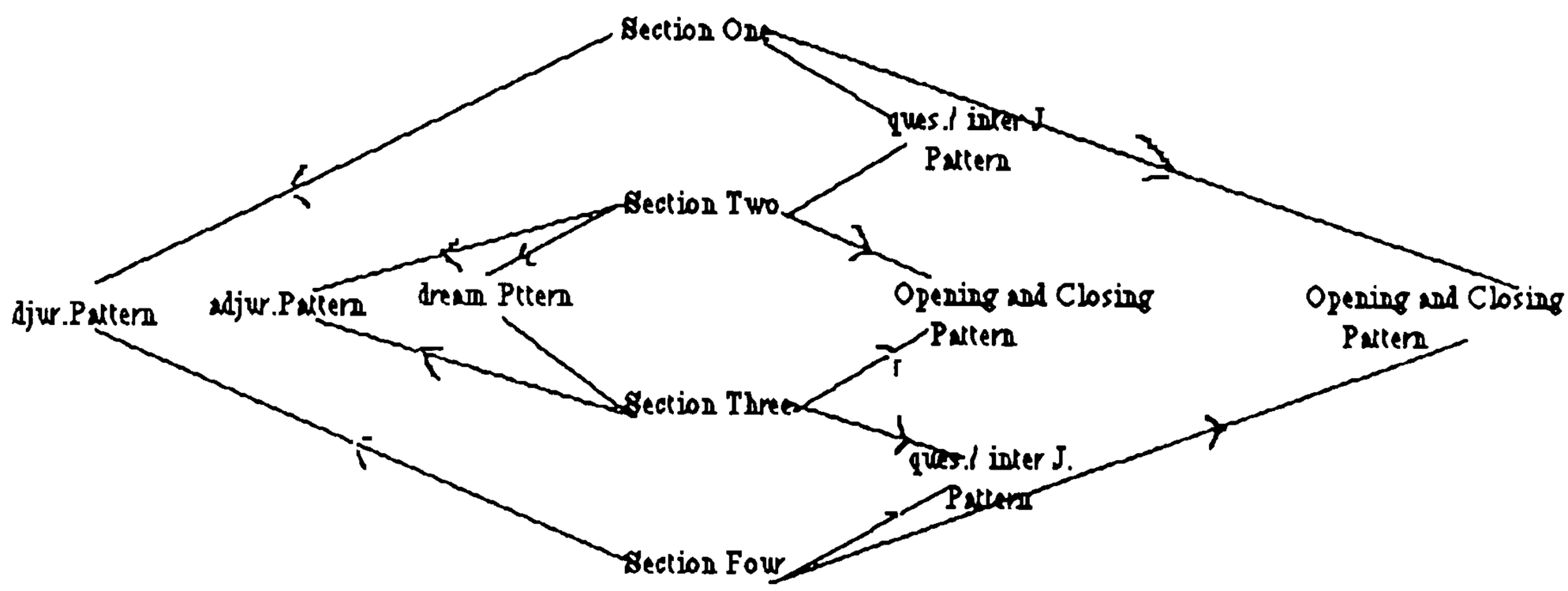
	embracement verse 2.6 "his left hand under my head and his right hand embraces me
Section One	adjuration 2.7
	interjection verse 2.8 "behold, my beloved he is coming…"
	dream 3.1-4
Section Two	adjuration 3.5
	question form verse 3.6 "who is coming out of the wilderness?"
	dream 5.2-7
Section Three	adjuration 5.8
	question from verse 5.9 "what is your beloved more than another beloved…?"
	embracement verse 8.3 "his left hand under my head…"
Section Four	adjuration 8.4
	question form verse 8.5 "who is this coming out of the wilderness?"

7. Like the adjuration phrase, the question/interjection-type verse seems also to form a certain pattern. While it is preceded by the adjuration phrase in the four suggested sections, it is on the other hand followed by either a descriptive passage, as in Sections One and Two where nature and the king/lover's glory are described, or by a passage of admiration praising either the physical beauty of the king/lover, as in Section Three, or the values and merits of true love, as in Section Four. This pattern may be explained as follows:

	adjuration 2.7
Section One	interjection verse 2.8-10 "behold my beloved, he is coming"
	description of nature 2.11-12 "the winter has past, the rain is over..."
	adjuration 3.5
Section Two	question verse 3.6 "who is that coming out of the wilderness?"
	description of the glory of the king/lover 3.7-11 "behold it is his..."
	adjuration 5.8
Section Three	question verse 5.9 "what is your beloved more than another?"
	admiration of the beauty of the king/lover 5.10-16 "my beloved is white and ruddy..."
	adjuration 8.4
Section Four	question verse 8.5 "who is that coming out of the wilderness?"
	admiration of the values of true love 8.6-7, "love is as strong as death"

Therefore, it may be possible to conclude that the above-mentioned patterns seem to demonstrate that their reappearance within the present suggested sections is designed to establish a link among them. Accordingly, the pattern which appears first in Section One reappears in Section Four, and that which appears first in Section Two reappears in Section Three. However, and as usual, there is always an inter-link between the suggested sections, and this case is no exception. Therefore, the descriptive passage which appears first in Section One, reappears in Section Two. Likewise, the passage of admiration

which appears first in Section Three, reappears in Section Four. In other words, these patterns seem to build a structure within the suggested structure whereby there seems to be an inside pattern encircled and secured by outside patterns, as illustrated below.



B. *Repetition of Themes and Motifs*

Like the repetitions of patterns, themes and motifs seem to follow their own certain patterns too within the four suggested sections.

Section One seems to employ the following themes/motifs:

1. The kiss, 1.2 "let him kiss me..."
2. The apple tree, 2.3 "as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons"
3. Self-assertion, 1.5 "I am black but beautiful..."
4. The companions, 1.7 "why should I be as one veiled beside the flock of your companions?"
5. The vineyard:

   A. In reference to a location, 1.6d "they made me the keeper of the vineyards", and 1.14 "my beloved unto me as a cluster of saphire in the vineyards of Ein-

gedi".

B. Metaphorically in reference to happiness, 2.5 "take us the foxes...that spoil the vineyard..."

C. Metaphorically in reference to the lover, 1.6E "but my own vineyard I haven't kept".

6. Day/shadow, 2.17 "until the day breaks and the shadows flee away..."
7. Affirmation of love, 2.16 "my beloved is mine and I am his".
8. Love sickness, 2.5 "stay me with flagons...for I am love-sick".
9. The lily, 2.1 "I am the rose of the sharon and the lily of the valley".
10. Wine/love, 1.2 "for your love is better than wine".

Section Two seems to introduce few more new themes/motifs, such as:

1. The garden:

   A. As a location, 4.16 "awake, O north wind...and blow upon my garden", and 5.1 "I come into my garden, my sister, my bride...".

   B. Metaphysically in reference to the beloved, 4.12 "a garden enclosed is my sister", and 4.15 "you are a fountain of gardens, a well of living water..."

2. The dream/vision, 3.1 "by night on my bed...".
3. Losing and seeking, 3.1 "I sought him but found him not...".

At the same time Section Two seems to share some of the themes/motifs of Section One, such as:

1. The lily which reappears here in 4.5 "Your two breasts like two young roes...which feed among the lilies".
2. The day/shadow reappears in 4.6 "until the day breaks and the shadows flee away...".
3. The wine/love reappears in this section in 4.1 "how better is your love than wine".

Section Three, on the other hand, does not introduce new themes or motifs: however,

it seems to share some of the themes/motifs of Sections One and Two. Accordingly Section Three shares the following themes/motifs of Section One:

1. Affirmation of love reappears in Section Three in 6.3 "I am my beloved and he is mine", and 7.11 "I am my beloved and his desire towards me".
2. The love-sickness motif reappears in 5.8 "I charge you…if you find my beloved not to tell him I am love-sick".
3. The lily motif reappears in 7.3 "your belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies".

Also, in 5.13 "his lips like lilies"; 6.2 "my beloved has gone to his garden to gather lilies", and "he feeds among the lilies".

As with Section Two, it shares the following themes motifs:

1. The dream/vision reappears in 5.2 "I am asleep but my heart is awake".
2. Losing and seeking reappears in 5.6d "I sought him but could not find him".
3. The garden, as a location, reappears in 5.1 "I come into my garden…"; 6.2 "my beloved has gone into his garden"; 6.11 "I went down into the garden of nuts".

Section Four, like Section Three, introduces no new themes or motifs, however it shares most of the themes/motifs of Section One, such as:

1. The kiss reappears in 8.1 "O if you were my brother…I would kiss you…"
2. The appletree reappears in 8.5 "I awakened you under the appletree"
3. Self-assertion reappears in 8.10 "I am a wall and my breasts like towers…"
4. The companions reappear in 8.13 "you who dwell in the garden, the companions are listening to your voice".
5. The vineyard as a reference to the lover reappears in 8.12 "my vineyard which is mine before me".
6. The vineyard as a reference to wealth and happiness reappears in 8.11 "Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-hamon…"

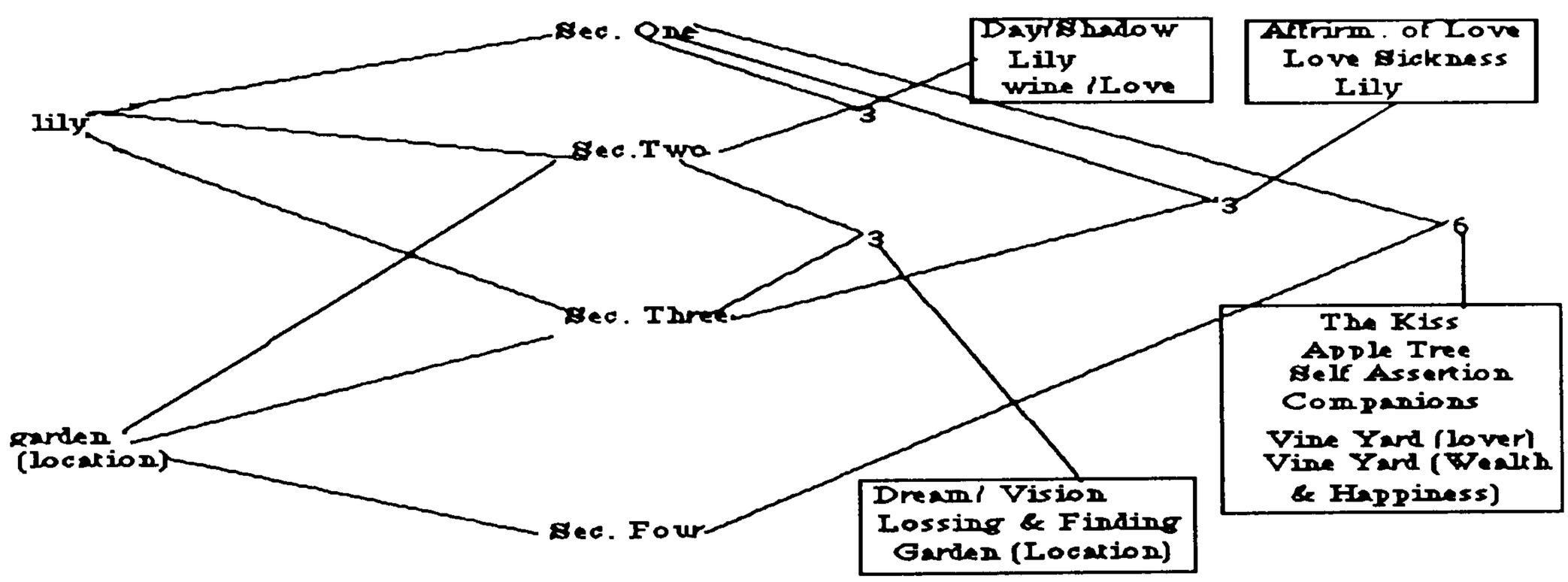
On the other hand, Section Four shares the "garden" as reference to location, with Sections Two and Three. This motif reappears in Section Four in 8.13, "You who dwell in the garden".

Therefore, the above discussion seems to suggest that the four main suggested sections are of two types, the originator and the sharer. Section One seems to be the main originator or the main source of these themes and motifs. It contains almost all of them and organises their distribution to the other three sections. Section Two is both an originator and a sharer, while Sections Three and Four are only sharers. The distribution of the themes/motifs from Section One seems to follow a certain pattern. Section One seems to pass six themes/motifs to Section Four, the outside section, and three themes/motifs to each of the inside sections, Two and Three. In other words, the number of themes/motifs passed to Sections Two and Three together is equivalent to that which is passed to Section Four alone.

Section Two while originating three new motifs/themes (the garden as a location, the dream/vision, the losing and seeking) and passing them to Section Three, receives at the same time three themes/motifs from Section One and shares them with it. In other words, Sections Two and One share three themes/motifs together, and Sections Two and Three share three themes/motifs together. The final emerging pattern would be an outside and inside section sharing equal numbers of themes/motifs as follows: Sections One and Four form an outside section and together share six themes/motifs; Sections One and Two on the one hand, and One and Three on the other, together form the first inside section and together share six themes and motifs. Sections Two and One on the one hand, and Two and Three on the other, together form the second inside section and together share six themes and motifs.

Therefore, the pattern followed in this connection seems to be systematic and consistent in both order and function within the four suggested sections. Furthermore, this

pattern has its own interlinks too adding balance to its well-ordered shape. In this connection it is interesting to note that the lily and the garden motifs, each on its own, seem to link three sections together. The lily motif originates in Section One and reappears in Sections Two and Three, while the garden motif, in reference to location, originates in Section Two and reappears in Sections Three and Four, thus closing the circuit by binding Section Two with Section Four. This pattern may be illustrated as follows:



C. *Repetitions of Endearment Epithets*

1. Female epithets

The distribution of the female epithets in the four suggested sections is as follows:

	Section One	Section Two	Section Three	Section Four
1.	ra'yati "my friend" occurs four times 1.9, 15; 2.10, 13	ra'yati occurs twice 4.1,.7	ra'yati occurs twice 5.2; 6.4	—
2.	yafati"my fair one" occurs twice, 2.10, 13	—	—	—

3.	hayafa bannashim "fairest among women" occurs once, 1.8	—	Occurs twice, 5.9; 6.1	—
4.	yonati "my dove" occurs once 2.14	—	Occurs twice, 5.2; 6.4	—
5.	—	aḥōtī "my sister" occurs four times, 4.9, 10, 12; 5.1	Occurs once, 5.2	—
6.	—	kallah "bride" occurs six times 4.8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 5.1	—	—
7.	—	—	tammatai "my perfect one" occurs twice, 5.2; 6.9	—
8.	—	—	bat-nadib "noble maiden" occurs once, 7.2	—

2. Male epithets

Their distribution in the four suggested parts is as follows:

	Section One	Section Two	Section Three	Section Four
1.	dodi "my beloved" occurs nine times, 1.13, 14, 16; 2.3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17	Occurs once, 4.16	Occurs 16 times 5.2, 4, 5, 6 (twice) 8, 10, 16; 6.2, 3 (twice); 7.10, 11, 12, 14	Occurs once, 8.14
2.	she - ceheba nafshi "whom my soul loves" occurs once, 1.7	Occurs four times, 3.1, 2, 3, 4	—	—

The above table indicates that female love epithets seem to appear only in Sections One, Two and Three. It also indicates that though Section One is the main originator of these epithets, Sections Two and Three on the other hand can be described as originators as well as sharers. While each one of them originates two epithets of its own, Section Three seems to be the main sharer of Section One, and Section Two seems to be the least one in this respect since it shares only one epithet from Section One.

In so far as the male love epithets are concerned, the case seems to take a different turn. The originators in this case are Sections One and Three only. Section Two, on the other hand, seems to be only a sharer, and in fact the main sharer of Section One. This is contrary to its role with relation to the female love epithets mentioned above. Also, love epithets in general, though their distribution within and their relation with the suggested section seem to be different from that which is related to the repetitions of patterns, they however seem to follow the example of the patterns in so far as one main characteristic is concerned, namely linking together the sections within which they appear and function. Therefore, the female love epithet *ra'yati* and the male love epithet *dodi* appear consistently in each of the three sections, where they mainly appear and function, binding them together.

The above table has also indicated that these love epithets, in general, seem to concentrate in number, type and frequency in Section Three. Therefore, the total number of epithets, male and female, in Section One is six, making a total frequency of 18. Section Three, on the other hand, has a total number of eight epithets, male and female, making a total frequency of 26.

Furthermore, most of these epithets, especially the female epithets, seem to be found in the subsidiary sections. Therefore their concentration in Section Three with the exclusion of Section Four (except for one male epithet only) seems consistent with the development of the suggested theme. In particular, Section Four, as mentioned above, is where the theme comes to an end and this has no subsidiary section. Accordingly, it seems natural for these epithets to terminate and concentrate in Section Three. Moreover, it is worth mentioning in this connection that this feature may also be found in the Hekhaloth texts where mystic expression, symbols and formulae are found concentrated towards the end for the purpose of enabling the individual involved to overcome the

frustration usually experienced while passing through the final stage.[30] Therefore, it seems significant that this characteristic appears to be in line with or in support of the assumption made earlier in this connection which regards the Song as a prototype of Jewish mysticism. Also, this characteristic seems to suggest, or perhaps explain, that love epithets, because of their special role and function in the text, had to adopt a plan or an order different from that adopted by the repetitions of patterns or of themes and motifs.

Finally it may be possible to conclude that within the present suggested structures such specific details in planning various types of repetitions in the text are but indicators to point out that the Song is one connected whole, and that its idea belongs to one author who designed its structure to suit its theme. In other words, repetitions in the Song may not be regarded as an accidental or haphazardly-planned feature, but rather a well-designed and neatly-planned one. Indeed, it may be described as a feature that is deliberate enough to create unity in the Song.

3. *Triadic Dimension of the Theme*

The third and final aspect in support of unity in the Song seems to be the dimensions of its theme and their role in establishing unity in the text.

Further examination of the text seems to suggest that unity in the Song does not confine itself to aspects of structure only. The theme of the text seems to have a triadic dimension holding the text together by providing comprehensive unity which appears to be as solid and coherent as structural unity. mAs mentioned already, love seems to be the main theme in the Song. Also, love in the Song seems to be an enigmatic theme, it is a sentiment of many colours. Therefore, what seems to be of considerable importance to this discussion is the manner in which love is conceived and presented in the Song. Accordingly, an investigation along these lines would lead to the gradual emergence of

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[30] G. Sholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), p.50f.

the three aspects of the theme.

In the Song love is conceived of as an all-possessing power whereby the beloved and the lover represent a self-contained unity. Indeed, it seems to be a fusion of two souls into one, as expressed 2.16, 6.3 and 7.11, "my beloved is mine and I am his". Lines 8.6-7 speak of love as a blazing flame that cannot be extinguished not even by floods of water, "the flashes there are flashes of fire...many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it". Also, love, according to the above lines, is fatal and invincible as death, nothing stands in its way, neither can it be equated with anything, "love is as strong as death...if a man would give all the substance of his house for love he would utterly be despised".

Also, love is painful. Some of this pain or suffering seems to be self-sought or self-inflicted, as indicated in lines 3.1-3 and 5.2-8, where the beloved goes around the city at night seeking her lover and thus suffers harm at the hands of the city guards. The other type of pain in this connection seems to be that which is imposed upon her by her so-called "mother's sons" who made her work for them as a keeper of their vineyards, as mentioned in line 1.6—perhaps to keep her away from her lover, as the same verse indicates, "but my own vineyard I have not kept". On other occasions, love, being the essence of the relationship, seems to be conceived of as a supreme will or a divine power. Indeed, it seems that it is this will/power that causes the individual involved to fluctuate between the state of happiness and sadness or that of the rational and irrational depending upon union or separation between the two parties involved. In this connection it is interesting to note that the state of union seems to be conceived as a vital source for ife. In line 5.5, for example, the presence of the lover seems to cause the beloved's hands to drop myrrh suddenly, "I rose up to open to my beloved and my hands dropped with myrrh". On other occasions, such as 1.12, his presence caused her nard to send forth its fragrance, "while the king at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance". On the

other hand, separation or remoteness seem to be conceived of in a manner similar or equivalent to that of death. It is like the state of separation from one's own soul as the beloved felt when her lover turned away. She expressed this feeling in line 5.6 and said, "my soul failed me". Furthermore, this divine or supreme will of "love" seems in line 8.6-7 to have been accepted and acknowledged as a "seal", or perhaps as some kind of conviction or faith on the part of the beloved, thus presenting her as one worshipping the faith of love. Therefore, the beloved as a faithful worshipper seems to experience the fear of abandonment, or fear that this love may be severed, lost or destroyed. Indeed, this fear of abandonment seems to be lurking behind the repeated affirmation of their union in 2.16, 6.3 and 7.11 "my beloved is mine and I am his" On the other hand, love or perhaps the intensity of love in the Song seems to be presented as having a possessive power. Indeed, the beloved seems to be possessed with love to the degree of sickness. In 2.5 and 5.8, for example, the beloved referred to herself as love-sick. In fact she does not only seem to feel possessed, but she also seems to behave like one possessed. Consequently, her irrational behaviour, such as roaming the city streets at night, exposed to harm at the hands of the city guards, as mentioned on occasions such as 3.1-3 and 5.2-8. Moreover, being possessed does not only seem to cause her physical harm, but also psychological suffering. She seems to have become an object of sympathy and concern. In 6.2, for example, she aroused the sympathy of her female companions as they offered to help her find her love. In 8.8, on the other hand, she aroused the concern of her so-called "mother's sons", who seem to express their concern in relation to her personal integrity.

Finally, love in the Song is conceived of as faithful, pure and chaste. Therefore, the beloved in 8.10 asserts herself proudly as a "wall" for being restrained and faithful.

From the above picture it emerges that the text of the Song seems to speak of a possessed-possessor relationship and such dominant, intense, possessive, blazing, painful and faithful feeling or sentiment expressed throughout the text seem to be more than just

ordinary love—it is but passion.

In this connection it is interesting to note that love/passion in the Song is not only the prime mover in the text but also the sought for end in this possessed-possessor relationship, leaving the lover as but a "means" on this occasion. In other words, love is the possessor on this occasion while the lover is used as a means by the beloved/possessed to attain her goal. This assumption seems to be supported in the Song on a number of occasions. In line 1.2, for example, the beloved praises his "love" as better than wine, and in 4.1 it is his "love" that they will remember more than wine. The adjuration verses 2.7, 3.5, and 8.4 consistently request that "love" should not be disturbed. Furthermore, it is significant to note that in 8.6-7, which is the crux of the Song, love and not the lover seems to be praised, upheld and acknowledged just like a faith.

It is equally important to point out on this occasion that this blazing love/passion in the Song does not go beyond the "kiss", or perhaps the "wished-for kiss", as in 1.2 and 8.1 on the one hand, and the "embrace" as in 2.6 and 8.3 on the other. Accordingly, this type of love/passion seems, more than anything else, to fit the definition of true/pure love. According to Andreas Capellanus,[31] the concept of this true/pure love is that which "usually goes as far as the kiss and the embrace omitting the final solace". On another occasion, he describes it as "an inordinate desire to receive passionately a furtive and hidden embrace".[32] On the other hand, in so far as human/marital love is concerned, Andreas States "love can have no place between husband and wife. They may be bound to each other by great and immoderate affection, but their feeling cannot take the place of love because what embrace between husband and wife can be furative?"[33] In contrast to pure/true love, Andreas terms marital/human love as "mixed love". Also he believes that

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[31] *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. by J. Parry (New York, 1941), p.100.
[32] Ibid., p.123.
[33] Ibid., p.100.

this love, contrary to pure love, tends to "get its effect from every delight of the flesh and culminates in the final act of Venus".[34] In other words, Andreas seems to suggest that while mixed love is a fulfilled love, pure love on the other hand seems to be an intentionally unfulfilled desire living on the spirit of anticipation from which it gets its dynamic nature and thus keeping it alive. Likewise, the initial kiss in the Song seems to have injected love in the whole text with the kind of dynamism that exists in passion and thus kept it alive, intense and strong but never sexually fulfilled. Indeed the text of the Song starts with an anticipated kiss and ends with an anticipated meeting, union or perhaps togetherness, as 8.14 states "make haste my beloved and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices". Also, between these two states, love/passion in the Song does not go beyond the embrace which appears in 2.6 and 8.3 "his left hand under my head and his right hand embraces me". Even the crux of the text 8.6-8, mentioned above, is wholly about the vindication of true/pure love, an acknowledgement of its strengths and values, and a total embracement of it just like the embracement and acknowledgement of faith.

So far the above discussion seems to have pointed out two aspects or two dimensions of the theme, namely passion and possession. The third and final aspect in this connection seems to be poetry. The tension created by passion on the one hand and by possession on the other, seems to resolve itself through the artifice of metaphoric language, or in other words, in poetry. Poetry in this connection seems to be a remedy or a medium of relief on the part of the possessed. There, in poetry, the possessed will have the freedom to live in a world of wishes and hopes, visions and dreams, anticipations and imaginations. Also dialogue in the Song may have been employed as a means of introspection. Therefore it would not be impossible to assume in this case that the beloved is speaking to and discussing with herself or her heart. Particularly, it does not seem a remote possibility the

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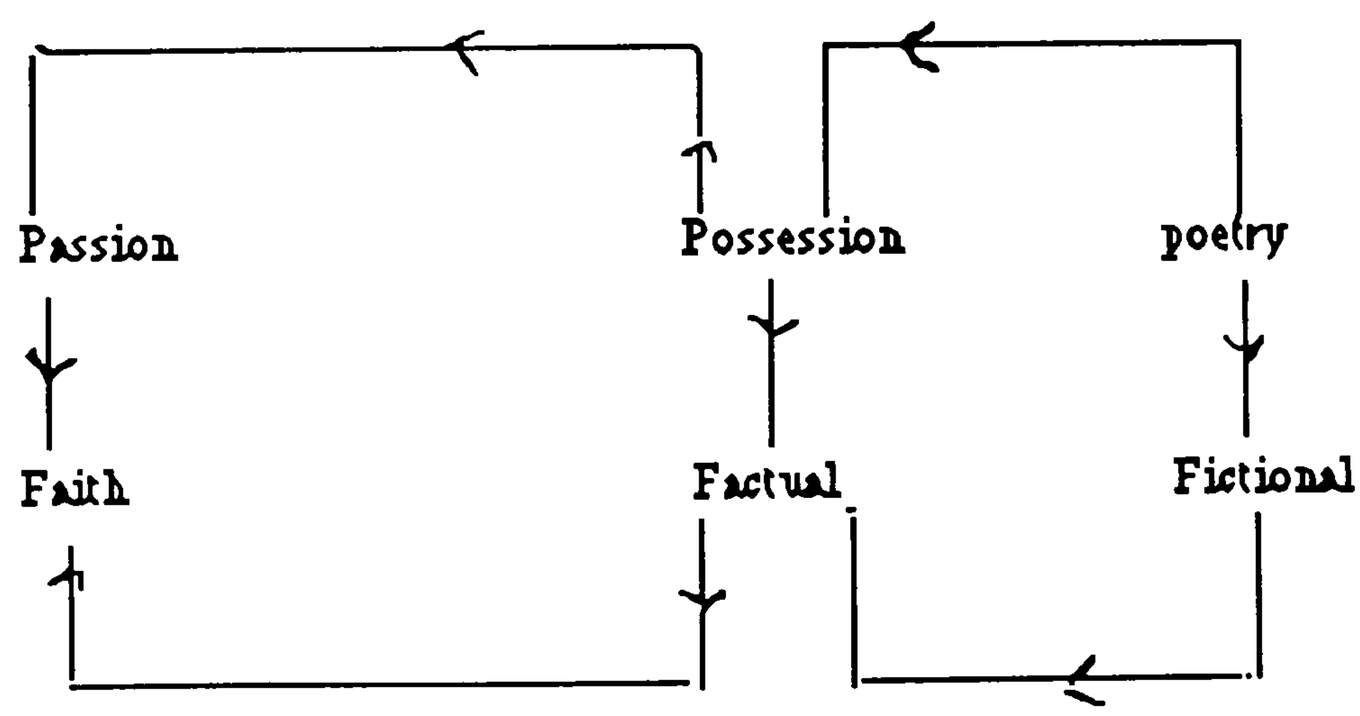
[34] Ibid., p.123.

assumption that the beloved may be the sole character in the Song and probably its author, as the discussion will show later when dealing with the authorship aspect of the text.

Therefore, it appears that the overall picture of the Song seems to rest upon a triadic equation of passion, possession and poetry. Furthermore, in the case of the Song, possession seems to transmute poetry into vision and passion into mystic union. If this assumption is sustained, it may be possible then to perceive the theme of the Song as divine possession. In particular, love/passion in the Song seems, as mentioned above, to have been treated, acknowledged and embraced in a manner similar to that applied to faith. This triadic dimension of theme in the Song may naturally relate to, or perhaps corresponds to, a set of three closely related aspects or worlds. In other words, according to the present assumption, passion may correspond to faith, possession may correspond to the factual world which reflects actual feelings and events experiences by the beloved as a result of being possessed. Poetry, on the other hand, may correspond to the fictional world with all its hopes, anticipation and imagination. This concept may be illustrated as follows:



Therefore, it may be possible to conclude that the present approach seems to point out the creative impulses of the theme in the Song demonstrating its complexity, its richness

and indeed its positive role in contributing to the overall literary unity of the Song. On the whole, this type of unity does not seem less convincing or less plausible than structural unity. In fact, it seems to manifest the literary originality in the text whereby complexity such as this meant unity as well as flexibility. Indeed with such a multi-layered but integrated nature, the Song seems to have become flexible enough to satisfy the demand of different levels of interpretations, popular as well as spiritual/mystical.

Present View of Interpretation

1- Translation of the Text

Chapter One

2 Let him kiss me with his mouth kisses
Better than wine your love is

3 Delicately fragrant is thy ointment and richly shine
Flowing oil is the name which is thine
Thus the maidens' love is truly thine

4 Draw me, we will run after thee
Into his chambers, the king has brought me
We will be glad and rejoice in thee
It is thy love that we shall find sweeter than wine
Truely they loved thee

5 O daughters of Jerusalem, dark may be I am as Kedar's tents
But beautiful and soft as Solomon's curtains

6 Stare not at me, the sun has blakened me
My mother's sons were incensed against me
A vine yard keeper they have made of me

But I could not keep the vine yard that belongs to me

7 Tell me my soul's beloved

Where do you rest, where do you feed

for why should I be as one vailed

8 If thou do not know, O fairest of women

Follow the tracks the flocks have trodden

There thou shall attend to your young flocks

Besidethe shepherds' tents

9 To a mare, in Pharoh's chariot, I compared thee,O my friend

10 Thy cheeks with rings, thy neck with beads, beautifuly arranged

11 Circles of gold we shall make for thee,with studs of silver, elegantly adorned

12 While the king is on his couch, there spread the nard fragrance of mine

13 A bundle of myrrh my beloved is, lying betwix the breasts of mine

14 A cluster of camphire in the vine yard of Ein-gedi is this beloved of mine

15 Fair and pleasant thou art my love

And thy eyes like dove's my love

16 Fair and pleasant, my beloved is

Fresh and green, our bed, it is

17 The beams of our house are of cedars

And of cypress are our rafters

Chapter Two

1 I am a rose of the plain, I am a lily of the valleys

2 As a lily among the thorns, is my beloved among the daughters

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood

So among the sons, is my beloved

Under his shadow I rest with delight

And to me his fruit is of sweet taste

4 To the banqueting house, he brought me

And love was his intent towards me

5 With flagons stays me, I am love sick, with apples do comfort me

6 His left hand is under my head and his right hand embraces me

7 O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you by the roes and the hinds of the field

That you may not stir love until it is fulfilled

8 Listen, my beloved's voice, he is coming
Upon the mountains he is leaping
Upon the hills he is skipping

9 Like a roe or a young hart, behind our walls, he is standing
Through the windows he is looking
Through the lattices he is peeping

10 My beloved spoke, and to me he did say
My fair one, rise up and come a way

11 The rain is over and the winter has passed a way

12 The flowers have covered all the land
The time of the singing birds has arrived
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land

13 The figs are ripe, the vines are tender and the sweet odour is spreading all over
Arise my love, my fair one and do come over

14 My dove, thou who resides in the clifts, in the secret place
Let me hear thy voice, let see thy face
For sweet is thy voice and pleasant is thy face

15 The little foxes, the spoilers of the vine

Take them away, for our vine is tender and the grapes are fine

16 My beloved is mine and I am his

He feeds among the lilies

17 Until the day ends and the shadows flee

Upon the mountains of Bether, come away to me

And like a gazelle or a fawn, my beloved be

Chapter Three

1 On my bed by night, he whom my soul loves, I sought him

I sought him but I did not find him

2 Around the city, in the alleys and the broad streets, I looked for him

I sought him whom my soul loves, but could not find him

3 From the guards around the city, about him I enquired

4 but shortly after I passed them, whom my soul loves I found

5 O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you by the roes and the hinds of the field

That thou may not stir love until it is fulfilled

6 Who is this like pillars of smoke coming out of the wilderness
Perfumed with all the merchants' powder,with myrrh and frankincense

7 Behold, the litter of Solomon
Guarded by three scores of Israeli mighty men

8 They are expert warriors ready for the fight
Each one holds his sword on his thigh, ready for the dangers of the night

9 For himself,a palanquin of Lebanon's wood, the king, Solomon made

10 Silver its pillars, its top is gold, purple its bottom,with love its midst is paved
With the love of the daughters of Jerusalem, its inside is inlaid

11 O daughters of Zion behold, Solomon, the king, on his special day
Behold the crown his mother crowned him with on his wedding day
With his heart delighted on this happy day

Chapter Four

1 Behold my love, fair thou art behind thy veil, like doves thy eyes are
Thick as a flock of goats streaming down mount Gilead, thy locks of hair are

2 Thy teeth are white as a flock of sheep newly washed
In twin pairs they are neatly shaped

3 Thy lips are a thread of scarlet
Thy word are sweet and pleasant
Thy temples behind thy veil are like a peice of pomegranate

4 Thy neck like David's tower adorned with armours
With thousands shields of mighty men and warriors

5 Thy breasts are as a twin of young gazelles
That are feeding among the lillies

6 Until the day is over and the shadows flee away
Upon the myrrh mountains and the frankincense hills, to me turn and come away

7 Thou art fair and perfect my love and blemish in thee, there is none

8 With me my bride thou shall come from Lebanon
From the top of Amana, Shenir and Hermon
From the leopards' mountain and the lions' den

9 My sister bride, thou have ravished my heart with thy glance
Thou have ravished my heart with one bead of thy necklace

10 My sister bride, how fair is this love of thine
How much better is thy love than wine
Thy ointment, above all odours, how much it is better and how much it is fine

11 My bride, thy lips with honey drippings are moist and soft
Under thy tongue, honey and milk, an exquisite taste
Thy garment's odour as Lebanon, fresh and pleasant

12 My sister bride, garden enclosed and afountain sealed, thou art

13 An orchard of pomegranates thou art and thy fruit is precious plant

14 Spikenard and saffardn, aloes and myrrh, calamus and cinamon

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters streaming from Lebanon

16 O north wind,blow south upon my garden and let my beloved awaken
Let him eat from its wonderful delight
And enjoy its pleasant sight

Chapter Five

1 To my garden, my sister bride, I have entered
Myrrh and spices, I have gathered
Honey with honey comb, I have tasted

I have drunk my wine with milk
O, friends and lovers, eat and abundantly you shall drink

2 While I am asleep, my heart is awake
Listening to his voice and, on the door, hearing his gentle knock
My sister, my friend, my perfect dove, open to me and be quick

Filled with dew, my head is wet
My locks with the drops of the night are damp and moist

3 I have put off my garment, shall I get dressed?
Shall I dirty my feet, they have been cleaned and washed

4 His hand turned the door's latch, and for him my heart moved

5 With my hands distilling myrrh, I rose up and for him the door I opened

6 I opened for him, with myrrh in my fingers dripping away
I sought him but to find him there was no way
I called him, but already he was far away

7 The watchmen, the guards of the city, found me
Smote me and beat me
And my robe, they stripped off me

8 O, daughters of Jerusalm, my beloved, if you find him
I am love-sick I adjure you to tell him

9 What is thy beloved like that you do so adjure us, fairest among women?
How different is thy beloved than all other men?

10 My beloved is the matchless one
Pure and ruddy among ten thousand men

11 His head is as fine gold, and as raven black his locks are shinning

12 His eyes as doves bathing in milk, by the water brink peacefully resting

13 His cheeks as beds of spices, as flowers of delicate qdour
His lips as lilies saturated with sweet smelling myrrh

14 His hands as rods of gold, with jewels neatly covered
His abdomen as ivory, with sapphire beautifully adorned

15 Pillars of marbles his legs are, on a golden base firmly attached
his aspect is as lebanon,like cedars proudly stand

16 Sweet is his taste
And all over, he is of fine trait

O, daughters of Jerusalem, such is my beloved
And such is my friend

Chapter Six

1 O, fairest amongst women, to where has thy beloved turned from here?
Tell us and let us seek him with thee everywhere

2 To his garden he has gone, to the beds of spices
To pasture there and to gather some lilies

3 My beloved is mine and I am his
He who feeds among the lilies

4 Like Tirzah, my friend, thou art lovely
Like Jerusalem, thou art comely

5 Thou art awesome like a great army
Turn away thy eyes, they do threaten me

6 Thy hair as thick as a herd of goats, from Gilaad, streaming down evenly
Thy teeth as white as a flock of ewes, in pairs, arranged firmly

7 Through thy locks, thy temple as a slice of pomegranate, beautiful and comely

8 Queens are sixty in numbers, concubines are eighty
and maidens' number may reach infinity

9 My dove, my undefiled is but one

For her mother, she is the only one

Amongst women, she is the one blessed

Amongst queens and concubines, she is the one praised

10 Who is she,like the dawn, emerging gracefuly

Like the moon looking luminously

Like the sun shining brightly

Like an army standing frightfully

11 To the garden of nuts I have descended

To see whether the vines have budded

To see whether the pomegranates have flowered

12 And upon the chariots, unknowingly, my soul placed me

The chariots of honorable people, those who belong to me

Chapter Seven

1 Return, O, Shulamite, return, we are watching

Do not look at the Shulamite as if the dance of the two camps, she is performing

2 O, honourable daughter, thy feet are beautiful

With sandals, they look graceful

Like jewels thy thighs are, firm and round
delicately designed by skilful hand

3 A round goblet that never lacks wine thy naval is
A heap of golden wheat set about with lilies thy belly is

4 Thy breasts like two fawns, a pair of young twins
And a tower of ivory, thy neck is

5 Pools by the gate of Bet-Rabbim, in Heshbon, thy eyes look like
And a tower of Lebanon which facing Damascus, thy nose looks like

6 Thy head like carmel
Thy hair like purple
The king is held captive there
Bound with thy rich wavering hair

7 Thou art fair, thou art pleasant
Thou art love with delight

8 Beautiful as a palm tree, is thy stature
To vine clustors thy breasts resemble

9 I said I will climb the palm tree and to its boughs, I shall hold
There, as clusters of vines, thy breasts I shall found

10 As the fragrance of apple,the smell of thy breath
As sweet wine the taste of thy mouth

For the lovers and the righteous,it is smooth blending
For sleeping lips it is gentle fondling

11 I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me

12 To the fields, in the village together be with me
Among the henna blossoms, thou shall lodge with me

13 Early in the day, we shall go to the vine orchard
To see whether the vine have budded or the pomegranates have blossomed
And I shall give thee my love there
With the fragnance of the mandrakes scattered everywhere

14 And all types of fruit, at our doors, I shall lay prepared
precious fruit for thee my love, new and old

Chapter Eight

1 I wish, like a brother thou art to me
Who sucked my mother's breast together with me
I would kiss you in the street, yet none would despise me

2 I would lead thee to my mother's house, she who instructed me
From my special wine and my pomegranates' juice, thou shall drink with me

3 His left hand is under my head and his right hand embraces me

4 I adjure thee, O, daughters of Jerusalm, love is not to be disturbed
Until it is fulfilled

5 Who can this be? upon her beloved she is leaning
From the wilderness she is rising

Under the apple tree, I awakened you
There thy mother conceived thee
And there she gave birth to thee

6 As a seal upon thy heart, thou shall set me
As a seal upon thy arm, thou shall place me

For love is strong as death
And jealousy is hard as the grave's depth

7 The flames of love are the most vehement
Many waters can not quench love's infinite thirst
Neither floods can put off the flames of love's divine intent
If a man would exchange love for his house and all that is in it

He would be scorned and utterly despised for it

8 Little and flat chested still, is our sister
What shall we do when the day comes and she will be spoken for

9 If she is a wall, with silver she will be adorned
If she is a gate,with cedar she will be enclosed

10 But I am a wall and my breasts like towers
Thus I was favoured in his eyes

11 In Baal-Hamon, a vine yard Solomon had
Looked after by keepers of trusting hand
A thousand shekels for each, he had

12 Indeed, before me is my own vine yard
Solomon, thine is the thousand
And so is the two hundred

13 Let me hear thee, O garden dweller
For thy voice friends are very eager

14 Be like a young hart , O my beloved, and make haste
Be like a gazelle , on the perfumed hills, where, for you, I shall wait

2 - AUTHORSHIP OF THE TEXT

Like some other aspects of this book, the question of who composed the Song of Songs is still far from reaching a satisfactory answer. Though scholars sometimes tend to avoid the issue of authorship of the text, or perhaps leave it open, however, general opinion agreed on ascribing the book to Solomon. This opinion seems to have been based upon the association of Solomon's name with the book. His name is mentioned in verse 8.11-12. Also, in other instances such as 3.9 and 3.11 it is mentioned apparently for the purpose of identifying the "king" in the text. Thus it may be that this idea of Solomonic authorship was responsible in the first place for the search for a spiritual/religious message in the book and consequently led to its allegorical interpretation.

When we examine the text, however, there appears to be some inconsistency in this assumption. If the "king" in the text was meant to be Solomon, then it would be natural and most appropriate to assume that clarification of this fact would take place early in the work. And such an opportunity does present itself in the first chapter where in verse 1.5 Solomon is mentioned but not identified with the "king". The first reference to the "king" in the text also occurs in the first chapter, namely in 1.4 and 1.12, but without any identification with Solomon. Furthermore, reference to Solomon occurs in the last chapter of the book in 8.11 and 8.12, yet again without identification with the "king". This pattern is consistent enough to make clear a distinction between the "king", whoever he is, on the one hand, and Solomon on the other. Accordingly this consistent pattern does not contribute to the identification of the 'king' with Solomon in 3.9 and in 3.11, nor to the association of the "litter" with Solomon in 3.7. Also, it seems more likely that the reference to Solomon in 1.5 and 8.11-12 is for the purpose of comparison. On both occasions his name is mainly associated with his wealth or his luxurious life-style.

On the other hand, it is interesting that there seems to be a gradual and consistent

progression of the association between the "lover" and the "king" from a very early stage in the text leading to the identification of the one with the other. This pattern starts in verse 1.2 where the woman in the Song opens the text expressing longing for his (her lover's) kisses. In 1.3 this theme seems to develop into an intimate tone where she praises his love. In 1.4 she develops the theme even more intimately where she not only says that he brought her to his chamber, but also he is no longer the mysterious "him". This time rather than referring to him with the third person pronoun, as she did in 1.2 and 1.3, she indeed starts the verse by identifying and introducing him as the "king" who brought her to his chamber.

This lover/king association appears once again towards the end of the chapter in 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14, but in a manner which is the reverse of the above pattern. In other words, this time the king identifies and is identified with the lover. The common and continuous line of thought between these three verses is the theme of "sweet smelling perfume". In this unit the beloved starts in 1.12 by speaking of the "king" and saying that in his presence she smells the odour of her sweet nard. Immediately in 1.13 and 1.14 she associates this theme of sweet odour with her lover, and speaks of him as a "bundle of sweet odour resting between her breasts". Therefore, it is the king/lover who is a bundle of sweet odour, and thus it is his odour which she smells when she is permeated with his presence.

Similarly, the indirect reference to him in verse 3.7, "behold his litter", is immediately identified with the "king" in 3.9 and 3.11. In this connection Jastrow[1] may be right to believe that the occurrence of the name "Solomon" in 8.11 and 8.12 may have possibly led to its insertion in 3.9 and 3.11 to identify the "king" as well as to associate the "litter" with Solomon in 3.7.

This insertion may possibly have been the work of whoever favoured the assumption

[1] M. Jastrow, *The Song of Songs* (Philadelphia 1921), p.8.

attributed to any other man. of Solomonic authorship, perhaps either to add a sacred touch to the Song, or even possibly to popularise it. On the other hand, it is equally possible that it is the popularity of the song which suggested or led to the identification of the "king" with Solomon. As Landy[2] rightly explains in this connection, Solomon's name was most likely employed as a figure of speech symbolising worldly glory. Whichever the case may be, it nevertheless led to the establishment of the tradition of Solomonic authorship.

This tradition has gained respectability through the ages. Even some modern scholars still associate the "king" with Solomon, or emphasise Solomon's role in their interpretation of the Song.[3] In particular, it is not impossible to trace an event or an issue in Solomon's life that might seem to have some relevance to the Song, distant or otherwise. Also this tradition seems to have generated deeply-rooted preconceived opinions of male authorship of the Song.

However, the moment the Song is no longer attributed to Solmon, it becomes an anonymous work which could be attributed to any other man. On the other hand it is not impossible or improbable to assume that the writer was a woman. At this early stage it is difficult to venture and pronounce how far this conjecture may be supported, but it may be proper to point out a few relevant and perhaps interesting details that might give some support to this assumption.

It is perhaps right to point out that one of the striking characteristics of the Song is that it reflects a woman's world. The beloved assumes a primary role in the text. She starts and ends the Song and delivers the majority of its lines. Apart from the beloved and her leading role, the Song refers to other female figures with important supporting roles in the text. On several occasions the Song refers to the "mother" as a family figure, not only in relation to the beloved herself, but most interestingly in relation to the lover too, as mentioned in verse 8.5 of the text. Also the Song mentions the "daughters of

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[2] F. Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise* (Sheffield, 1983), p.19.
[3] M. Goulder, *The Song of Fourteen Songs* (Sheffield, 1983).

Jerusalem" on several occasions throughout the text, and depicts them as the beloved's closest companions.

On the other hand, it is very noticeable that apart from the lover, the Song does not refer to or even mention any male figure of a parental nature, such as "father" in correspondence to "mother", for example, as mentioned already. As Trible[4] rightly explains in this connection, among the Israelites it was the father rather than the mother who usually stood as a reference to family life in general. It is also interesting to point out in this connection that the beloved, even when she mentions her so-called "brothers", identifies them with her mother rather than with her father, and thus addresses them as "my mother's sons". In fact it seem doubtful whether they were the beloved's actual brothers, otherwise she would have simply addressed them as "my brothers". It is most likely the case that she used this expression in the metaphorical sense of brotherhood, meaning her fellow countrymen, particularly as she seems to be familiar with and able to differentiate between the two terms used in this connection. Therefore, in 8.1, rather than wishing her lover to be her "mother's son", the beloved on the other hand, explicitly wished him to be "her brother who sucked her mother's breast", thus leaving no room for doubt. Accordingly, 8.8Ṣ"we have a little sister"Ṣdoes not necessarily mean or prove that these words were said on behalf of her so-called "brothers". Similarly, "sister" in the above verse may indeed mean nothing more than an endearment epithet as it has always meant throughout the text. Furthermore, in a manner of confirmation of this analysis, verse 6.9 clearly states "she is the only one for her mother". Therefore, it was not accidental after all that she made no explicit reference to her brothers or to her sisters.

However, while she seems neither bothered enough to mention her father nor desperate enough to find substitute figures for "brothers", she seems, on the other hand, to have needed a substitute for "sisters" and had indeed managed to find it in her female

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[4] P. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, 1978), p.144ff.

companions "the daughters of Jerusalem". Accordingly, her attitude suggests that even if she had a brother or brothers, she would have been as indifferent towards them as she has been towards her father, alive or dead. In other words, her world first and foremost seems to revolve around her mother as a family figure with whom she appears to have a close relationship, and secondly "the daughters of Jerusalem", as outside companions, with whom she too has as close relationship as she would have with her own sisters, if she had any. This attitude on her part is most likely to be of a cultural/traditional nature, and she certainly gives the impression that she has become very much used to it as a away of life. Thus, throughout the text whenever the need or the choice for companionship presented itself, it seemed natural for her to choose her associates from female circles only, at home or outside.

Furthermore, the beloved seems to be fully aware and very conscious of the social restriction imposed upon and observed by women in general in her own community. Therefore, issues such as sound personal reputation and self-integrity were emphasised in the Song as a matter of considerable importance in so far as women's standing in the community is concerned. Accordingly, in verse 8.10, where the beloved seemed to be subjugated to a moral assessment, she asserted herself confidently and proudly, declaring her unblemished record on this ground. Also it is interesting to notice that in verses 5.6-8, where the beloved suffered humiliation at the hands of the city guards, she at the same time seemed to be aware that public expression of love sentiments by women of her community is beyond the traditional code of conduct. Therefore, she immediately turned to her female companions "daughters of Jerusalem" pleading desperately to them not to tell her lover that she was love-sick, nor that she publicly suffered humiliation for that matter. Obviously, she was aware that what she did was unforgivable even by her lover, though it was because of him that she exposed herself to suffering and disgrace. Her awareness of these and similar restrictions is even more apparent in verse 8.1. On this

occasion, in as much as she was longing to kiss her lover publicly, she was even more hesitant to do so lest she would be despised by the community. However, the matter would have been different if she were kissing her brother in public, and that is indeed what she wished her lover to be, if only for that moment, to fulfil her wish. Even more to the point, it is interesting to notice in 1.2, another "kiss-wish" verse, the brother/sister motif did not arise on this occasion to safeguard her position because, unlike, 8.1, the beloved was not asking for her wish to be granted explicitly publicly.

Domestic environment particularly the theme of "home" is perhaps another point relevant to or perhaps in support of the assumption of female authorship of the Song. This theme occurs frequently in the text and is usually attached to the beloved. It seems that "home" not only creates the right environment for her dreams, but the events of her dreams are usually attached to the home too. In her dream in verse 3.1-4, for example, when she eventually found her love she took him to her mother's home. Again in verse 8.1-2, she wished to have her lover as a brother not only to justify kissing him publicly, but to be able to take him to her mother's home too. In verse 5.2 the events of her dream revolve around the home. She dreamt of her lover standing at the doorstep of the house, knocking the door and asking her to let him inside. In 2.9 though, there is no explicit reference to the "home"; however, her words clearly implied that she was at home while watching her lover standing behind her walls and looking through the windows. Furthermore, she seems to believe that home life is inseparable from and complementary to home life. There in 1.16-17, for example, she ended her praise and commendation for her lover with commendatory remarks in respect of their home which is built of cedars and cypresses. What is even more interesting in this connection is that her obsession with "home" persists even when she is outside. In 7.12-13, for example, while she invites her lover to the fields, on the other hand she immediately suggests lodging somewhere in the village with all kinds of precious fruits at their doorstep. Indeed, "home" appears to be an

inseparable part of her being to the extent that when the actual home environment is not available, she speaks of an equivalent interior environment, such as her lover's chamber or the banqueting house. On the whole, it is at home where she seems to spend most of her time, and it is there where she feels most happy, content and secure. indeed, the very few times she was outside the home were those distressing occasions when she was either searching for her lover or unhappily watching the vineyard for her "mother's sons". It is also interesting to point out that she hardly ever responds to her lover's many invitations to meet him outside the home, neither does she ever herself attempt to invite him outdoors. The only exception in this connection is in verse 7.12-13, mentioned above, and even then she suggests finding somewhere to lodge. Her lover, on the other hand, seems to spend and enjoy most of his time outside among the lilies and on the mountains.

The other and perhaps most relevant point in so far as the issue of authorship of the text is concerned is the autobiographical sense which exhibits itself in the text through the frequent occurrence of the personal pronoun "I" used almost exclusively by the beloved throughout the Song. Accordingly, it is not unlikely that the beloved herself could have been the authoress of the Song in which she speaks of her own experience. In this connection Landy rightly states "if there is a story in the Song, it is of herself shaped by suffering, pleasure and self-reflection".[5]

Goitein[6] shares a similar view on the subject, and suggests that the Song could be a compilation of one of the female singers at Solomon's court writing her own experience. Rabin[7] too opines that the work in its entirety is a woman's imagination as he rightly states "everything the lover says is imagined by her, even if this is not expressly stated".

Also it is equally relevant to mention that the most difficult task for a man in this connection would be to convey the beloved's feelings as deep and effective as they are

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[5] F. Landy, *Paradox of Paradise* (Sheffield, 1983), p.68f.

[6] S.Goitein, *ʿIyyuṇim Bammiqra* (Tel-Aviv, 1957),p 301

[7] C. Rabin, "The Song of Songs and the Tamil poetry", *Studies in Religion*, vol.3 (1973), p.210.

expressed in the Song. Particularly the best he can do is only to describe them as his imagination would dictate upon him rather than actually expressing them. Furthermore, it may also be difficult for a man to remember every restriction observed by women of that community and employ them whenever the need arises with the same authenticity and accuracy as the Song does. Indeed, it is most likely that the beloved in the Song is speaking from experience since she seems to know what she can and cannot do or say, where and when and observe everything in exact conformity. This is even more evident in the Ghazal passages on behalf of the beloved. Unlike the lover whose ghazal lines in favour of the beloved are usually detailed and sometimes considered rather erotic as in 7.2-10, the beloved on the other hand, in her major ghazal passage 5.10-16 for example, managed to portray a unique and attractive image of her lover in far less erotic language. Indeed, her manner of ghazal compared with his, is rather conservative. Accordingly it is interesting to note in this connection that, unlike the lover, rather than going into more details in her lines of ghazal, the beloved on the other hand summed up her ghazal passage as "he is altogether lovely". What is even more significant in this connection is that it is only in her visions/dreams when she seems to forget about these restrictions and limitations or perhaps let herself to ignore them. However, even then she seems unable to get rid of the sense of shame and guilt as a result of her misconduct. Therefore she seems to be fully aware that under no circumstances is she able or allowed to step beyond her limitations, not even in her dream world.

Accordingly, everything in her exposition, in as much as it is accurate and vivid, is also naturally said and placed. Though accuracy may be accomplished by a male author too, it may however, prove an uneasy task for a man to provide vivid exposition and natural touch in relation to delivery and placement of details: also it may even be a difficult task for a woman alien to this particular community. In fact, an alien women would be in a position as disadvantageous as that of a manSwhether a member of that

community or otherwise. Both would be in a position where they would be only too well aware of the complexity of such a life-style, but had never actually lived or experienced it. Surely while vivid imagination is supposed to be prerequisite for a writer, experience would be an added advantage to the end result of a good composition. Hence, if the Song is the work of a man or an alien woman, the end result would have been a composition "as good as", but never a masterpiece, which the Song most decidedly is. In addition, although there is much in every line of the Song that could have been written by a man or a woman, there is, however, much beauty and delicate details (as mentioned above), which a man would be almost certain to neglect.

This assumption may sound a great feat of imagination, but it is not a far-fetched idea. Indeed, women like Debora, Miriam and Hanna were acknowledged as poetesses. Also Koheleth 2.8 indicates that women singers seemed to exist as well as men singers, and it is not unlikely that some of these women singers may also have composed their own songs. Therefore Goitein's suggestion mentioned above may be considered as a possibility in this connection, particularly if the Song is viewed as a secular composition.

However, if the assumption that the Song is a prototype mystical composition can be sustained, then the authoress had to be more than just a poet or a singer: she had to have some spiritual inclination and devotional tendencies. Perhaps it is not improbable to assume in this connection that the authoress herself either independently believed in, or probably was directly influenced by, the mystical tendencies and ideas of the very early mystic communities, such as the early members of the Essene sect, particularly since they did not seem to find the book objectionable. In fact, among other biblical texts a fragment of the Song of Songs part 1 was found in the Qumran library from the minor caves 2, 3, 5-10, and the Song of Songs part 3 from cave 4.[8] If she was associates with

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[8] P. Skehan, "The biblical scrolls from Qumran and the text of the Old Testament", in F. Cross and S. Talmon (eds.), *Qumran and the History of Biblical Text* (Harvard Press, 1975), p.265.

the Essenes, her contact with them could have come either through marriage or membership. Indeed recent research has shown that there is grounds for both possibilities. According to Josephus,[9] though celibacy seems to have been the general practice of the Essenes, there did, however, exist amongst them another order who believed in marriage, most likely for the purpose of the propagation of the race. Also in relation to ritual purity among the marrying Essenes, Josephus indicated the participation of women, as he states "in the bath the women wear a dress, the men a loin cloth".[10] Philo too, in his description of the Essenes, does imply that some of their members were married, as he states, "the elderly too even if they happen to be childless are treated as parents".[11] Accordingly, we find that the Cairo-Damascus document, rule, 7.6-9, discusses the case of the non-celibates, and states, "if they live in camps according to the rule of the earth marrying and begetting children they shall walk according to the lawSaccording to the rule of the law which says 'between a man and his wife and between a father and his son'".[12] Also, though divorce seems not to be mentioned in any document, the question of polygamy, however, was discussed and argued against in Cairo-Damascus, rule 4.20-5.2.[13] Further, Baillet[14] in his study of 4Q 502, had arrived at the conclusion which emphasises the existence of the subsection of the marrying Essenes. 4Q502 speaks of joyous celebration, where praise and blessings were attributed to God. Baillet's conclusion that the text celebrating marriage is based upon the reference to "man and his wife" in the text, and the frequent occurrence of the two words איש and . אשה.which he often associated with the gathering of the community to celebrate weddings. Therefore it is possible to assume that married couples who accepted the ascetic order of the community would be received as valid members of the order as

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[9] Josephus, War II, p.121.
[10] Ibid., p.161.
[11] Hypothetica, II, 1.3.
[12] G. Vermes, *the Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Oxford, 1977), p.108.
[13] Ibid., p.107.
[14] M. Baillet, "Qumran Grotte 4", *DJD, VII, Text 502* (Oxford, 1982), pp.81-105.

Baumgarten[15] rightly explains their positions, and states that "their personal relationship would be subordinated to the greater spiritual unity of the Yahad".

On the other hand, Baumgarten[16], in his study of 4Q 502, had arrived at a different and interesting conclusion. His examination of the text has shown that like the Therapeutae, the Essenes too seem to have had an order of elderly women. Baumgarten questions Baillet's conclusion on the basis that while the text is certainly joyous, it does not necessarily celebrate marriage. According to Baumgarten this is because on other occasions the text had used other expressions, such as "a man and his companion",."mature men and women", "old men and women", all of which seems to be in reference to the praising of men and women in the ceremony. He also points out that the occasion celebrated in the text seems to have a prescribed time, as the text itself states "a fixed time of joy to praise His name".[17] Accordingly, Baumgarten argues that unless weddings at Qumran was celebrated at a specific time of the yearŞfor which we have no evidence so farŞthen it is rather unlikely that the text is celebrating a wedding, and particularly not the wedding of old men and women. He also point out the occurrence of other expressions in the text, such as "daughter of truth", corresponding to "sons of truth", and *ahayot* in association with *ahim*.[18] On another occasion the text refers to a blessing for long life[19] which takes place in the midst of an assembly of the elders. The blessing itself is exchanged between a man and a women, where the women is described as standing amongst a gathering of elderly men and women. Therefore, Baumgarten believed, the celebration in the text is not that of marriage, but rather of "the place of honour as brothers and sisters of the community".[20]

Although Baumgarten and Baillet had arrived at different conclusions, what is

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[15] J. Baumgarten, "4Q 502, marriage or golden age ritual?", *JJS*, vol..34 (1983), p.134.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., p.128.
[18] Ibid., pp.128, 129.
[19] Ibid., p.113.
[20] Ibid., p.134.

important, however, is that both conclusions have attested the presence of women within the Qumran community, either through marriage or through their membership in the order of the *ahayoa*.. Also the Cairo-Damascus document 14.14-16 hints at the same idea of the order of the *ahayot* when enlisting, amongst others, "virgin without a protector" under the category of those eligible for communal support.[21] Furthermore, archaeological findings have reported that unmarried women belonging to the Qumran community were accommodated in camps, and that skeletons of women and children were found buried in the Qumran cemetery.[22]

Drawing the threads of this discussion together, it is perhaps safe to conclude that it was not impossible for a woman to have been involved in devotional life, or perhaps individually inclined towards spiritual tendencies of this nature. Accordingly, the assumption that the Song may have been written by a woman, or rather by the beloved in the Song herself, as a form of spiritual/mystical expression may no longer be regarded as a remote possibility. Indeed it seems no less possible than the preconceived assumption of male authorship. However, what is actually impossible to find out in this connection is the identity of the supposed authoress in question. Perhaps, like most authors of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha who generally preferred to remain anonymous, she too followed the same practice of secrecy. Scholem's words seem most appropriate on this occasion, when he states "there is little hope that we shall ever learn the true identity of the men who were the first to make an attempt to invest Judaism with the glory of mystic splendour".[23]

3 - GENRE AND FIGURATIVE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SONG

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[21] G. Vermes, op.cit., p.105.
[22] R. De Vaux, *Archaeology and the DSS* (London, 1973), pp.47f, 128f.
[23] G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), p.41.

In his study of the Syrian wedding songs, Wetzstein[24] had identified some of these songs which speak of the bodily perfections of the newly-wed couple, with the Arabic genre *waṣf* "description". Since then scholars had followed his example and thus had often identified the Song of Songs with the waṣf genre too.

In her study of the Song of Songs, Falk[25] is the latest example in this connection. In her definition of waṣf she states, "*waṣf* is an Arabic word meaning 'description' and has come to refer to a kind of poem or poetic fragment that describes through a series of images the parts of the male and female body". This definition may be true only on general or technical grounds, and even then, contrary to Falk's assumption, it should not be limited and confined to the description of physical beauty. On technical grounds, *waṣf* is far more flexible in its application. Apart from describing bodily perfections, it is also applied to describe feelings, sentiments, merits, traits, wine, etc. On literary ground however, *waṣf* is a genre in its own right which tackles a variety of subjects, such as the description of night, war, horses, camels and particularly nature.[26] Therefore, when employed on a technical basis, *waṣf* as a literary genre is absorbed beyond recognition within the main poetic theme itself. Accordingly, when describing wine, for example, *waṣf* is no longer recognised as a genre, instead it is known as 'khamriyyat". Also, when feelings and sentiments are described and expressed, the literary genre in this case would be known as "petitionary love". The same principle is applied when description of physical beauty is involved, as in the Syrian wedding songs and the book of the Song of Songs, where the literary genre in this connection would be rather known as "ghazal".[27] Therefore, it may be reasonably safe to identify the Song with "ghazal" and "petitionary love" poetry. These two genres overlap with each other throughout the text, employing familiar figurative language and comparisons derived from the traditional fund.

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[24] J. Wetzstein, 'Die syrische Dreschtatel', *ZE*, 5 (1873), pp.270-302.
[25] M. Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Sheffield, 1982), p.80.
[26] M.O. Ali, *Fi adab ma qabla al-'Islam* (Beirut, 1983), p.121f.
[27] Y. Al Jubouri, *Al-Shi'r al-Jahili* (Baghdad, 1972), p.163f.

Like typical Arabic ghazal, the parts of the Song which speak in praise of physical beauty are rather static and do not refer to or create any kind of circumstances as their starting point. In other words, they have a loose connection with the Song as a whole. Also, as in Arabic ghazal, the beloved and the lover are presented as a stereo-type, usually superior above all in degree and kind, and thus can hardly be identified with a particular person.[28] Furthermore, the beloved's name is mentioned nowhere in a ghazal poem. Instead, she is usually addressed by love epithets, such as "dove", "fawn", or "gazelle", etc. Sometimes, regardless of her real name, the beloved is referred to by the traditional name "Leila". This common practice is usually meant to protect the identity of the beloved.[29] This is also true in the Song where the beloved's identity is nowhere revealed in the text since she is always addressed as a "gazelle" or a "dove". However, she was called "Shulamit" on one occasion (7.1), but even then it is difficult to decide whether this was her real name, or whether it is a common title-name traditionally used in love poetry as equivalent to the Arabic name "Leila" in this connection, or perhaps another endearment epithet derived from the root ش ل م , possibly used in reference to her perfection.

Petitionary love poetry on the other hand, is essentially concerned with the relationship rather than with the individuals involved in it. Accordingly, emotions and sentiments are expressed either for the sake of drawing the attention of the lover/beloved or pleading with her/him to acknowledge and return these sentiments. Therefore, unlike the static ghazal, petitionary love poetry injects some life and sensitivity in the poem.[30] This is also true in the Song where delicate expressions of devotion and sentiments in verses such as 1.2-4; 1.13-15; 2.14-17; 4.7-16; 7.10-13; 8.1-7, etc., had certainly broken off the monotony of ghazal and breathed some life and variation into the text. Therefore,

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[28] Ibid., p.165.
[29] Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove* (trans.A. Arberry) (1953), pp.79, 86.
[30] Al-Jabouri, op.cit., p.168.

the Song appears to be a combination of ghazal and petitionary love poetry. These two genres, though different as they may appear, nevertheless usually complement each other. It is indeed as Scheindlin[31] rightly states in this connection, "love poetry when it strays from describing the beautiful man or woman, it strays to one subject alone, the emotion of the poet lover".

As to the relation of the Song to wasf, this cannot be phrased better than the words of I. Abrahams,[32] when he states, "while *waṣf* touched the surface of love, the Song sounds its depth too". Furthermore, compared with ghazal and petitionary love verses, wasf in the Song is employed on a lesser scale. It is confined to verses such as 2.17; 3.7-12; 6.11; 7.13-14, where mainly nature is described, or sometimes objects are described, such as the "litter" in 3.7-12, mentioned above. Therefore, though *waṣf* has its own share in the overall composition of the Song, its role however is not major enough to embrace the Song within its own literary category.

Despite the identification of the Song with ghazal and petitionary love poetry, there still remain, however, some characteristics in the text which left the Song distinguished within this literary category. t is a common practice that the beloved in petitionary love poetry is portrayed as unobtainable, and that the poet/lover never refers to her as being in love but rather arousing love.[33] Furthermore, longing in petitionary love poetry is expressed by the lover seeking his beloved, who on the other hand hardly ever expressed any kind of longing. However, if she ever makes such an attempt, it is usually never expressed publically. It is indeed, as Rabin, [34] rightly believes and states in this connection, "If she does, perhaps it is without him (her lover) knowing it". In the Song, it is significant to note that this common practice and this traditional role is reversed.

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[31] R. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death* (JNew York, 1986), p.85.
[32] I. Abrahams, *The Book of Delight*, "Hebrew Love Songs" (Philadelphia 1912), p.186.
[33] M.A. AL-Khafaji, *Al-Ghazal* (Beirut, 1973), pp.122f, 134.
[34] C. Rabin, "The Song of Songs and Tamil Poetry", *Studies in Religion*, vol.3 (1973/74), p.212.

Indeed the occasions of longing and seeking expressed on behalf of the beloved in the text outnumber similar occasions expressed on behalf of the lover. The text had assigned about ten occasions of this type on behalf of the beloved, while only five occasions were assigned on behalf of the lover. Also, it is even more significant to notice that the beloved on some occasions did publicise the fact that she is deeply in love. In 2.5 and 5.8, for example, she speaks of herself as being lovesick and on other occasions, such as 6.3, 7.11 and 3.3, she tells that she is closely attached to him. The lover, on the other hand, does not seem to express likewise sentiments and feelings anywhere in the text. However, it is interesting to notice in this connection that the beloved on one occasion (5.8) did plead to her female companions not to tell her lover that she is lovesick. This cautious gesture may be interpreted as demonstrating that she was well aware of the prevailing tradition which does not allow her to assume such an untraditional and leading role, therefore she felt the need to exercise caution sometimes. Furthermore, it is equally significant to point out that the beloved and the lover in the text not only had adopted reverse roles to each other, but a reversed pattern of expression too. The table below points out the verses of ghazal and petitionary love on behalf of the beloved and the lover, stating the mode of expression employed on each occasion.

Ghazal

Lover	**Beloved**
4.1-5 2nd person 7.1-9 2nd person	5.10-16 3rd person

Petitionary Love

1.16-17 2nd person 2.14 2nd person 4.7-16 2nd person 6.4-9 2nd person (mixed unit) 8.13 2nd person	1.2-4 started with 3rd (mixed unit) 1.12-14 3rd person (mixed unit) 2.16-17 3rd person 3.1-5 3rd person 6.3 3rd person 7.11-13 3rd person\ 8.1-2 starts 2nd person, ends 3rd 8.6A 2nd person 8.14 2nd person

From the above table it appears that the beloved's main mode of expression is 3rd person. This manner of expression while it is consistent with the traditional manner of expression usually employed in ghazal, it is, however, inconsistent with the manner of expression in so far as petitionary love poetry is concerned where the 2nd person mode is usually employed. The lover, on the other hand, seems to adopt the 2nd person as his main mode of expression which, in this case, though consistent with the manner of expression employed in petitionary love, it, however, inconsistent with the mode of expression, namely the 3rd person, usually employed in ghazal. Therefore, despite her dominant role in the Song as a whole, the beloved however chose to communicate indirectly with her lover using the 3rd person mode on most occasions as a linguistic barrier. The lover, on the other hand, despite his less leading role in the Song, seems to be able to address her and communicate with her directly and on all occasions.

Furthermore, verses 8.6-7 of the Song express an ethical/spiritual message in relation

to absolute worthiness of love emphasising sacrifice and self-forgetting as essential ingredients. This is an uncommon practice in ghazal, petitionary love[35] or even in popular Syrian ditties.[36]

Therefore, with such unfamiliar characteristics, the Song seems to have granted itself a unique position within the category of love poetry. Consequently this may rightly raise the question regarding the type of love celebrated in the text, particularly that love is the prime mover in the Song.

The present discussion so far has pointed out that despite such possible identification of the Song with Arabic ghazal and petitionary love poetry, the Song, however, does not seem to comply with their traditional rules and roles. In this connection, since the discussion in a previous part of this study has shown the possibility of regarding the song as an antiquity type of Jewish mystical literature, it is therefore neither remote nor unlikely to assume that the Song is celebrating spiritual/mystical love. Particularly that it is not uncommon for mystical poetry to adopt the form of secular love poetry, though not necessarily observing its rules and roles. Furthermore, under this assumption, plausible justification may be found for these unfamiliar characteristics in the text, and they would perhaps cease to be regarded as peculiarities.

Accordingly, it would be only natural rather than unconventional for the beloved to assume a leading role in the Song since in this case she is but an individual seeking the love of God and his nearness. She has expressed this inner quest through a continuous flow of sentiments and praises towards her creator/lover. Also, the indirect pattern of speech (3rd person) in petitionary love verses adopted by the beloved may not be regarded as uncommon in this respect, if it is to be understood as an expression or manifestation of a barrier of reverence, awe and distance experienced by the individual in the early stages of the mystical endeavour. However, this barrier disappears in later

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[35] I. Abrahams, op.cit., p.189.
[36] M. Khafaji, op.cit., p.132.

stages when mystical union is realised, as it indeed disappeared in Chapter 8 of the Song which is the crux of the text. It was replaced by a direct mode of speech (2nd person) as indicated in the table shown above. Therefore, the pattern of speech in the Song has not been distributed randomly or haphazardly. Indeed, it seems on the whole to follow certain and perhapsṢunder the present assumptionṢlogical pattern In other words, the creator/lover has been consistently direct in his communication with and in his response to the individual/beloved whose pattern of speech with her creator/lover seems to be consistent with the development of the mystical endeavour and the change that takes place within it. Therefore, in this respect, both parties seem to employ the rules which fit their own roles.

This idea of expressing mystical/spiritual love through human/secular love poetry is not exactly unknown, nor uncommon. In fact it was not only employed by some other ancient eastern literatures, such as in theSumerian sacred marriage songs[37] and in the Tamil Shaivite poetry,[38] but it was also employed in the biblical literature itself. In this connection the Song may have drawn its inspiration from the Book of Hosea. In Hosea his real life experience with an adulterous wife was taken as a vehicle to illustrate the relationship between God and Israel. Also, in as much as the importance of the Book of Hosea lies not in the events of the prophet's marriage but rather in the meaning of those events, as rightly explained by Ackroyd,[39] this is equally true in the case of the Song. The actual significance of the Song lies more in the meaning and the message behind the human love formula adopted by the text. This task was made possible by choosing sound metaphoric form, which is capable of retaining and abolishing the literal sense of the text at the same time. It is indeed as Ricouer[40] rightly states in this connection "a good

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[37] S. Kramer (trans.) in J. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the O.T.* (Princeton, 1969), pp.64

[38] C. Rabin, "the Song of Songs and Tamil Poetry", *Studies in Religion* (1973/74), 3, p.217.

[39] P. Ackroyd, *Peaks' Commentary on the Bible*, p.603.

[40] P. Ricouer, "The Metaphorical Process", in S. Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor,* (Univ. of Chicago press 1980), p.152

metaphor is that which can entertain two different points of view at the same time". Therefore the Song would not only be indicating the strong relationship between the sacred and the secular in this respect, but also the two-fold nature of the soul in this connection. Indeed, for the mystics love of God is a simultaneous recognition of the spiritual and the natural aspects of the soul. In other words, they love God naturally/selfishly for themselves and spiritually for Himself[41]. Therefore in order to fulfil its quest for the love of God, it seems only natural for the soul to proceed from its own natural aspect for the consummation of its spiritual aim. It is worth mentioning in this connection that Rabbi Aqiba himself was not only a mystic but a lover too. It was through his love for his shepherd master's daughter that he turned towards the love of God and the study of the Torah. He was illiterate and started to learn together with his son[42]

Like any love song, the Song of Songs has employed the everyday language of love used by and known to various social settings. Its literary skills, images and metaphors are most probably derived from oral traditions, folklore tales, and other songs and stories. Indeed, the language of the Song is, as Bayley[43] rightly states in this connection, "emanated from the soil, ascending from the cottage to the castle". This particular characteristic of the Song was most likely the very intention of the author in the first place, not only to make it accessible and popular, but also to present it as an example acting as a bridge linking the sacred and the secular. Accordingly, it may not perhaps be a far-fetched suggestion in this respect, to define or describe the Song as a shared prayer within a frame of intimate dialogue aiming to accomplish the ultimate goal, which for the mystic is as succinct as Corbin[44]describes, "the essential unity between the worshipper and the worshipped, the lover and the beloved, the praying individual and the Lord who is

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[41] H. Corbin, Creative imagination, (Princton, 1959), p. 150
[42]T.B. Nedarim, 50a; Ketuboth, 62b-63a.
[43] H. Bayley, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, vol.1 (London, 1951), p.190.
[44] H. Corbin, op.cit., p.256.

personalized for him so that the faithful individual becomes the necessary complement to his Lord".

In so far as the images of the Song are concerned, they rarely seem to find acceptance or meet the approval of modern scholarship. Some scholars find them either bizarre or grotesque;[45] others describe them as comical[46] or puzzling,[47] or sometimes strange because of their architectural character.[48] This may be true only it literalistic understanding between the tenor and vehicle is not avoided. Also, as mentioned earlier, the Song is a product of an ancient eastern culture, where such and similar images and ideas are neither unknown nor unfamiliar. In the Sumerian sacred marriage songs, for example, not only hair is compared to lettuce, but the king himself too.[49] In the Japanese culture the turn of a woman's ankle is considered an erotic gesture, and the mere tinkling of a woman's ankle bracelets has an erotic sense in Indian culture.[50] Also praising the body of a woman and its perfection starting by the feet upwards, as in 7.2-10 in the Song, is a known feature in Indian poetry.[51] Similarly, the nature of the images of the Song and their sense of eroticism need not be regarded as unfamiliar or unusual.

As for so-called "architectural" images in the Song, such as comparing the beloved's nose or neck to a tower, they seem to be of two types, aesthetical and meritorious, perhaps following the example of Arabic literature as Jastraw[52] rightly believes in this respect. Therefore when someone's nose is praised as high as a mountain or the sky, or compared to a high object such as a tower as in verse 7.4 of the Song, the reference would be to the eminent or the prominent personality of the individual concerned. On the other

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[45] L. Waterman, *The Song of Songs: translated and interpreted as a dramatic poem*, p.6.
[46] M. Segal, "The Song of Songs", *VT* 12 (1962), p.480.
[47] R. Soulen, "The *Wasf* of the Song of Songs and Hermeneutic", *JBL* 86 (1967), p.185.
[48] M. Meyers, "Gender and Images in the Song of Songs", *Hebrew Annual Review*, 10 (1986), p.213ff.
[49] J. Pritchard (ed.), op.cit., p.644f.
[50] J. Sasson, "Major Contribution to the Song of Songs Scholarship", *JAOS*, 107, 4 (1987), p.737.
[51] R. Hueckstedt, *An Introduction to Sanskrit Prose Poetry* (1984), p.85f.
[52] M. Jastraw, *The Song of Songs* (Philadelphia and London, 1921), p.220.

hand, when a woman's neck is praised as being long and strong, or perhaps, as in the Song 7.4, compared to a high and strong object such as a tower, the reference is mainly aesthetic in appreciation of her long and well-built neck. Furthermore, the Bible itself sometimes speaks in architectural terms or images in reference to merits or perhaps worth or excellence. Psalm 144.12, for example, reads:

> Our daughters like corner pillars
> cut for the structure of a palace.

Therefore it seems that the difficulty does not lie entirely in the images themselves, but rather in the fact of ignoring or discarding the cultural background of the text as a whole, which often leads to a lack of appreciation of the images involved. Furthermore, in order to get the best picture and the most impact from these or any other images, it would not be enough only to view them or imagine them within their own particular environment, but it would be equally important that they be viewed or imagined correctly whenever the case requires. In other words, correctness in this respect is mainly with reference to the manner in which these images are viewed; i.e. whether from above or below, from long or short distances, or from the sides or from the front. Accordingly images in the Song such as "hair like a flock of goats" or "teeth like a flock of sheep", when viewed from a distance within their own rural settings in the text, would most probably seem no less acceptable than comparing teeth to pearls, for example, or hair to silk in an urban or more sophisticated environment. Particularly, in ghazal comparisons are not necessarily based upon face-to-face appreciation between a lover and his beloved. The two parties can also be a poet and a beauty observed or perhaps imagined as an ideal picture.[53]

Therefore, the element of distance would be a necessary requirement in the production process of hair/goats' image for example, since it will help to bring about an effective and homogeneous picture, namely one whole tress of smooth hair. This ultimate picture is what is actually required out of this as well as the hair/silk comparison.

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[53] R. Scheindlin, op.cit., p.81.

However, in so far as the latter image is concerned, distance would not be a necessary requirement for its production since its effect would be rather neutral.

An attempt was recently made by Falk[54] to "demystify" these images. She has expressed her disapproval of the observations and criticisms made by the forementioned scholars regarding the images of the Song. Also she has rightly pointed out that the difficulty lies mainly in "the failure of the scholars to appreciate the very essence of metaphor, at a core of great poetry from many different areas and cultures".[55] However, she too seems to find these images "fairly rigid".[56] Her aim in this attempt, as she states it, is "to let the images be vivid rather than puzzling pictures of a foreign but accessible culture".[57] In order to achieve her target, Falk in her translation of the text resorted to the elimination and deletion of place-names in the text using instead some descriptive details as substitutions. Her justification for following such an approach seems to be so that the Western reader "would see in it (the text) what the original audience might have seen".[58] Unfortunately, by this very approach Falk has presented a distorted version of the original text a version which may be "accessible" or perhaps "less puzzling", but rather vague and too plain since it has lost most of its foreign features. Therefore, contrary to her objective, the text can hardly be recognised or appreciated as a foreign product. Even those few remarks that were left with reference to its background identity are rather faceless than indicative. Accordingly, if Falk's version of the text is at all foreign, it is but unfortunately to its own culture. In 4.1 for example, the beloved's hair is compared to "a flock of goats climbing down Mount Gilead". Falk by rendering this verse as "your hair as black as goats winding down the slopes", has restricted the image to its colour only. Accordingly "slopes" as a substitute for "Mount Gilead" seems but redundant. It is hardly

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[54] M. Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Sheffield, 1982), p.85.
[55] Ibid., p.82.
[56] Ibid., p.81.
[57] Ibid., p.85.
[58] Ibid., p.84

relevant particularly where colour is concerned whether the goats are attached to Mount Gilead or to Mount Sinai, on the slopes or on the plains, climbing up or climbing down. And while the colour of the hair is an obvious element in this comparison, it is by no means the only element involved. It is more likely the case that other and more relevant characteristics such as the quality of the hair, its texture, thickness or its style are also involved in the comparison as well as the colour. Therefore, the mostly likely purpose behind choosing Mount Gilead specifically for this comparison would perhaps be with reference to its special breed of goats, renowned for their excellent quality of hair, and thus worthy to stand comparison with the beloved's hair. The other possible relevant aspect of Mount Gilead in this connection would perhaps be its shape in relation to the position of the goats and their movement upon.it. It may be possibly be that Gilead was a rather steep mountain, and thus when the goats upon it were viewed face to face from a distance, climbing down in groups, the first obvious part of the goat's hair would be the long thick locks on both sides of the head covering the neck. This may perhaps resemble the beloved's simple but beautiful hair style. She probably wore her hair loose in two locks, one on each side of her head covering her neck.

Therefore, in the mind of the author, it seems that the image and its specific surroundings are closely related to each other. Accordingly, these specific places or locations seem to have been carefully chosen by the author, certainly not for the purpose of complicating the picture, but most likely to help produce the image intended by this or any other comparison involved in the text. Thus, deliberately eliminating place-names would render the images rather vague in so far as cultural identity is concerned, and simply plain in so far as detailed characteristics are concerned. Clearly, this does not seem to be the intention of the author, otherwise he/she would have resorted by vague/plain images in the first place. On other occasions, such as 7.4 where Falk

rendered this verse as "your eyes like two silent pools",[59] she yet again ignored this essential relationship of image/background location and consequently had deleted the place-name "Heshbon" originally stated in the text. On this occasion she had based her justification on the ground that such place-names "no longer carry the resonance they once had".[60] But indeed, the text is not only old, it is ancient. Therefore, in order to understand a text of such historicity, perhaps it would have been helpful to recognise and appreciate its antiquity with all its ancient and distinct features, values and merits, as they are and in the way they relate to their ancient past and culture. However, it is most likely that in those days the pools of Heshbon were not only renowned for their tranquil surface but also for their pure and clear water. Thus, in so far as the author is concerned, he/she seemed to find in these particular pools the utmost quality of water he/she was looking for to draw a comparison with the purity and clarity of the beloved's eyes.

Also in the same verse 7.4, Falk seems to find the image of "nose like a tower" as "troublesome and specially ridiculous"[61] because it closely follows the comparison of the beloved's neck to a tower. Accordingly, she preferred to translate to mean "face" rather than "nose". But surely, more than anything else, on this or on any other occasion in the text it is the point of reference that decides the nature of the image concerned. Therefore and as mentioned earlier in this discussion, while the nose/tower comparison is more likely employed depicting merits and traits, the neck/tower comparison on the other hand is a straightforward aesthetic image. Accordingly, since the reference in these two comparisons is very different, it naturally follows that neither of them would necessarily look "ridiculous" or "troublesome" whether they occur successively or otherwise. Also it is interesting to note in this connection that Falk in her understanding of these images seems as confused as those scholars whom she criticised for their sharp and exaggerated

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[59] Ibid., p.41.
[60] Ibid., p.127.
[61] Ibid., p.127.

remarks in relation to the images involved in the text, as a result of misunderstanding the essence of foreign metaphors.[62] The major difference, however, is that unlike her, none of them tried to read into the text what was not intended by the author in the first place. Falk has sacrificed originality for the sake of accessibility, and thus her approach has defeated her aim in this attempt.

However, the images of the Song, problematic as they may seem to some, do not, on the other hand, seem to fail to demonstrate their own special and original characteristics throughout the text. One of the interesting points in this connection is sense images, such as images of taste, smell and touch. They are of frequent occurrence in the Song, and they sometimes tend to overlap with the sense of sight. In 7.3, for example, the contemplation of the beloved's belly as a heap of wheat encircled with lilies has allusions to the sense of taste and smel; while in 4.5 the sense of touch and smell are gathered together in the formation of the image where the beloved's breasts are compared to two fawns feeding amongst the lilies. In 7.9, however, the beloved's breasts were compared to clusters of grapes where the contemplation has the allusion to the sense of taste. In 5.13, on the other hand, the sense of smell is stressed as cheeks were compared to a "bed of spices". Her lips, however, combine the sense of sight as compared to a "thread of scarlet" in 4.3, together with the sense of taste when compared to "honeycomb" in 4.11.

Another interesting characteristic in this connection is that some of these comparisons and metaphors form images of a contrasting and versatile nature. In 4.12 for example, while the beloved is described as "a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed", in 4.15 she is "a fountain of garden and a well of living water". In 2.1 and 2.2 she is as humble as the sharon and the lily of the valley, but at the same time she is as unique as the lily among the thorns. In 6.4 and 6.10 she is not only beautiful, comely, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, she is also terrible too as "an army with banners". In 1.5, though

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[62] Ibid., p.82.

the heat of the sun has turned her face dark or black, she is nevertheless of exemplary beauty. Her eyes, while they were praised for their purity and their innocent look in 4.1 and 7.4, were described as captivating and overwhelming in 4.9 and 6.5 Her neck too: whereas in 4.4 it is just strong, well-built and tall as the tower of David, yet according to 7.4 it is soft, smooth and white, as attractive as an ivory tower. In 7.4, 7.8 and 7.9 her breasts were praised as attractive in a modest and traditional manner. They were described as "two small fawns" and as "rich and soft as clusters of grapes and dates". The image however is developed into one of bold attraction when the beloved's breasts in 8.10 were compared to a tower expressing assertive beauty rather than modest beauty.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that though some of the comparisons and metaphors in the Song are employed to praise the beauty of the beloved and the lover alike, the case seems different however in those images of contrasting nature, discussed above. They seem to appear mainly and exclusively in respect of the beloved, while hardly any such example had occurred in respect of the lover.

In the Song of Songs, as in all love poetry, the function of the images employed in the text is to display the author's literary skills and the originality of his imagination in order to impress the reader or the listener. In so far as the Song is concerned, it is probably safe to say that the images and the metaphors involved in its composition did not seem to fail in this respect. Rather they have in fact managed to create a long-lasting effect traced to the days of Israel Najara, a mystic of the middle sixteenth century. Following the pattern of the Song of Songs he composed religious verses expressing love of God. Similarly, Emmanual Frances, a rabbinic scholar of the seventeenth century, who wrote religious and secular poetry, some of which was of the type of the Song, particularly those verses which he addressed to his fiancée.[63] Therefore, these images, metaphors and comparisons in the Song are but the intrinsic feature of the author's manner in conveying his/her

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[63] M. Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol.II (New York, 194), pp.83f, 93f.

message. Indeed, they seem to combine successfully simplicity and originality, and the least original attitude on this occasion would be to dismiss them or treat them otherwise.

4 - ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENTS

Part One 1.2-2.17

According to the present structure, the four suggested parts of the text hold between them a mystical composition depicting the development of mystical experience from beginning to end. Accordingly, Part One prepared the way for it, Part Four results from it, and Parts Two and Three are the keystone of the whole experience. Following these lines, Part One 1.2-2.17, functions as an introduction to the text Lines 1.4 "the king had brought me to his chambers", and 2.4 "he brought me to the banqueting house" refer to the ultimate aim of this experience where esoteric mysteries are revealed to or experienced by the individual involved in it. Also the mood in the above two lines is set to serve or indicate that the text is talking about an experience that has already taken place. Furthermore, this part states clearly that love is the main instigator of this experience and the prime mover of the text. Therefore, the kiss wish expressed in 1.2, the very first verse, followed and emphasised by line 1.4 "we shall praise your love more than wine", seems to put forward the idea that love is the main theme of the Song. In this connection the human love model of the Song, as already explained, is used as a vehicle to express spiritual/mystical love. In this spiritual/mystical relationship the individual is represented by the woman/beloved in the Song, while the Lord is represented by the king/lover in the Song. The concept of God as a king is common in the ancient Near Eastern tradition. It is older than Israel. In fact, it is as ancient as the Summerian times and the Israelites received it through the Canaanites.[64]

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[64] S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, (Oxford, 1962).,vol.1, p.110f .

In 1.4, the beloved, following her compliments for her lover regarding his love, his ointment in the preceding two lines, introduced him as the king who brought her to his chambers. In 1.5, she introduced herself as a humble maiden working for her so-called "mothers' sons" guarding their vineyards. She continues in 1.6 telling about herself, such as her beauty. Although she believes that she is beautiful, her words, actually imply that she is of humble beauty because of the swarthy face, which is caused by the heat of the sun. Those few lines seem to put forward the message that the nature of love involved in this relationship does not recognise barriers or boundaries of any kind, such as status, position or beauty. In this verse too, the woman in the Song refers to her lover metaphorically as her "vineyard", and expresses self-reproach for not being able to keep an uninterrupted relationship with him and be guided by him, particularly, worldly matters such as working for her mother's sons, seem to take precedence in this connection.

This feeling of self-reproach led her to the state of perplexity and soul-searching in lines 1.7-8, "tell me whom my soul loves where you feed, where you rest your flocks...". At this point the theme is carried by the subsidiary part to be continued in 2.5-7 where the beloved enters in a state of trance "stay me with flagons I am love sick". In other words, perplexity and soul-searching has led her to the state of trance, the state which indicates the starting point of the mystical experience. This is followed by the state of contemplation where the beloved contemplates her lover's voice calling upon her to rise and join him as in 2.8-10, "the voice of my belovedSmy beloved said to me rise up and come away".

In this connection it is worth mentioning that the state of trance is expressed in physical terms, namely feeling love-stick. Such physical symptoms in describing a trance is not unknown in the bible. Jeremiah, for example, in a similar state of trance described

himself as "an intoxicated man and a man whom wine has overcome".[65] As for her lover's words, or more likely, commands/calls which are directed to her such as "rise up" or "arise and come away", mentioned above, these instances may be also open to a mystical iterpretation as calls/ commands may be understood as or identified with those divine impulses and inner awareness of God which sometimes are received by the individual in a mystical experience.[66] Examples of such a nature may also be found in the bible, for instance in Jeremiah, "arise and go down to the potter's house".[67]

This part ends with the beloved expressing anxiety and self-assurance at the same time, as in 2.15-16. Her anxiety stems from her fear and doubt that this relationship may be severed or spoiled. In this connection the two terms foxes and jackals seem to have been used in reference to the beloved's fears and doubts. Particularly foxes and jackals are sometimes used in the bible in connection with death since they usually prey on dead bodies, as in Psalm 63.12, "they shall be hurled to the power of the sword/they shall be a portion for foxes". In her attempt to assure herself that these fears and doubts which are lurking in the back of mind have no foundation, the beloved expressed, on behalf of herself and her lover, their total commitment to each other, as 2.16 states, "I am my beloved's and he is mine". A similar idea is expressed by the individual in the Psalms, as Psalm 73.23 reads, "I am continually with you and there none upon earth I desire beside you". The same idea is found in the following hymn from Qumran, "I shall love thee always, and I have loved thee generously and with all my heart and Soul".[68]

Finally, to add certainty to self-assurance, the beloved expressed her intention in 2.17 to meet her lover on the mountain of spices. Metaphorically, the beloved is looking forward to a mystical vision of her lover, particularly mountains and hills, symbolically

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[65] Jeremiah, 23.9.
[66] J. Lindbloom *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, p(1962)., .136f
[67] Jeremiah, 18.1.
[68] A. Dupont-Sommer, "The Essenes Writings from Qumran, (Oxford, 1961). Hymn XV.9, 10", p.245

seem to imply or suggest heavenly communion in this connection.[69] The next or middle state of this experience deals mainly with the mystical vision of the lover which is the focal point in the progress of the suggested structure/theme relationship.

This introductory part seems to set the theme of the text, to determine the nature of the experience or the relationship, and to introduce the parties involved in it. Therefore, this introductory part seems to be set to provide a natural and inevitable progress of the theme, thus preparing the way for the middle and main stage which is to be discussed below.

Part Two 3.1-5.1

This part, together with Part Three, form the main body of the text. Each part speaks about a vision. The vision in Part Two describes the glory and majesty of the lover, while in Part Three the vision revolves around the physical beauty of the lover. In this connection, visions and dreams are not unfamiliar phenomena in biblical literature. They imply a sign of favour, or they function as a sign of sacred communication between man and God.[70] Through dreams God spoke to the prophets and gave the wise men their knowledge as in Job 4.3, "Behold you have instructed many". Likewise, the beloved in the Song was tested in her dreams/visions where her soul was refined and her righteousness was proven, as Psalm 17.3 reads: "You tried my heard, you have visited me at night, you have tested me and shall find nothing".

Line 3.1 introduces the vision with expressions of self-deprivation or passionate yearning by the beloved for her lover, as she says, "I sought him whom my soul loves". Similar ideas may be found in Psalm 63.2, "I seek you earnestly, my soul thirsts for you". The opening account of this vision in 3.6 starts with a natural element, namely "pillars of smoke". Ezekiel 1.4 is a similar case in this connection, where theophany started with

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[69] H. Bayley, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, (London, 1951), vol.1, p.35 .

[70] J. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (1976), p.175.

"stormy winds". Another similar similar example is found in Exodus 19.16, 24.15-18, and 40.34-38, where theophany starts with clouds or a mixture of clouds and smoke.

The focal point of this vision seems to be the throne of the lover representing his glory and majesty. In this connection the implication of אפריון in 3.6 is similar to that in Ezekiel 23.41. On both occasions אפריון may express or carry a meaning similar to that implied by the word אפריון "palanquin" in verse 3.9 in the Song. The description of both אפריון and אפריון seems to refer to a glorious or stately seat or couch. Such a description may possibly refer to the "throne seat". Particularly the reference to the crown seems to follow shortly in line 3.11 of this account, and therefore appears to support the implication of this assumption, or perhaps makes it more plausible. Lines 3.7-8 give a description of the guards surrounding the throne. The general picture created here resembles to certain extent the authoritative picture of the gate keepers in the Hekhaloth texts which read: "Angry and warlike, strong, harsh, fearful, terrific, taller than mountains, sharper than peaks. Their bows are strung and stand before them, their swords are sharpened and in their hands they are equipped with helmets, and spears are hung upon their thighs".[71]

Apart from the obvious significance of the throne, namely glory, majesty and power, as the overall picture described it, it is worth mentioning in this connection the symbolic significance attached to its building materials. Accordingly, wood, of which the main body is made, seems to indicate incorruptibility; silver typifies knowledge, and gold refers to wisdom. As for the colour purple, it is a combination of two shades: red seems to symbolise love and blue symbolises truth.[72] Therefore, his kingship is based on honesty, ruled by wisdom, armed with knowledge, and its basic essence is a combination of love and truth. The royal picture would not be complete without the crown which

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[71] "Greater Hekhaloth" (trans.G. Scholem), ch.15, sect.8, in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (1960), p.31.

[72] H. Bayley, The Lost Language of Symbolism, (1951), Vol. 1, p.55.

obviously represents glory, honour and authority. This vision ends in 3.11 with the beloved expressing joy at the sight of her lover's glory and majesty, and calling upon the general congregation for which "daughters of Zion" is metaphorically employed, to join her in these exciting moments. In this connection expressions of ecstasy and delight at the sight of the glory of the Lord can also be found inz the following hymn from the Hekhaloth, which reads:

"rejoice, rejoice supernal dwelling, shout, shout for joy precious vessel"

...surely you shall gladden the king who sits upon you

with joy as the joy of the bridegroom in his bridechamber".[73]

Therefore, it is worth pointing out in this connection that the theme involved in 3.6-11 describes the exaltation and distinction of the grandeur of kingship rather than a wedding procession, as generally believed. It seems that the simple reference to "wedding day" in this verse has automatically led to this assumption. In fact the reference to "wedding day" on this occasion seems only to have been used in an attributive manner in relation to the description of the crown. Accordingly, it does not seem to contribute to the specific nature of the event—wedding or otherwise—nor to the day on which that event took place.

The build-up leading to this vision seems to consist of three states. the last one is the state of trance in line 3.5, "I charge you daughters of Jerusalem...". The first is the state of anxiety, namely the motif of losing and finding in lines 3.1-3, "by night...I sought him...I will rise. I will seek him...the watchmen...found me". The middle is the state of reintegration between the element and the essence, in other words between the soul and nature as indicated in line 3.4 where the reference to the idea of "mother" occurs, "...I held him...until I brought him into my mother's house...". In this connection the concept of "mother" in the above-mentioned verse may refer symbolically to nature in its

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[73] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* , p.26.

primordial and original state. Also, according to Ellade,[74] the basic idea or the motif of "returning to the mother", as also expressed in the above lines, seems to suggest a spiritual experience corresponding to the reintegration of a primal situation. Accordingly, the middle state seems to be the product of the first state, the state of anxiety and frustration, and a prerequisite for the third state, the state of trance. In other words, it seems that before entering into a trance the soul prepares itself by returning to its own basic and primal state, and reintegrates with it. The spiritual nature of this very process, as suggested by Ellade, mentioned above, seems to be reasonably plausible in this connection since it seems to function as a preparatory stage preceding the visionary experience, which is spiritual too by its own nature. Therefore, the term "mother" in this verse may have been employed symbolically to indicate the primal and spiritual nature of the experience involved in the text.

"Fountain of gardens", "well of living water" are some of the endearment epithets with which the beloved is addressed in 4.12-15. This idea seems to be found in the Qumran hymns where similar expressions were used in relation to members of the community, as the following hymn reads:

> And a spring of living water which shall not run dry
> They that were hidden in the secret shall suddenly gush forth
> And shall flow like rivers of ever-running waters
> And shall become an abyss for every tree green and dry
> ...and shall become an everlasting fountain for the glorious Eden
> And shall bear fruit forever.[75]

Similar terms of expression of the same idea are also found in Enoch, as the following lines read:

> I saw a fountain of righteousness
> Which was inexhaustible
> And around it were many fountains of wisdom

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[74] M.E. Ellade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (New York, 1962), p.155.

[75] A. Dupont-Sommer, *the Essenes' Writings from Qumran* (Oxford1961), hymn VIII, 16, 18, p.228.

And all the thirsty drank of them.[76]

Other terms, like"sister" and "bride", which are introduced for the first time in the text towards the end of this part, also seem to have been employed metaphorically as endearment epithets, perhaps following examples in other biblical or non-biblical literature. The term "bride", for instance, is used sometimes in reference to Israel, as in Isaiah 49.18, "As I live said the Lord ...thou shalt gird thyself with them, like a bride", or Isaiah 61.10, "He has covered me with the robe of victory ....as a bride adornes herself with her jewels", or 62.5, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,so shall thy God rejoice over thee".. As for the term "sister", it seems to have been known and employed in Ugaritic literature as an endearment epithet too. Anat used to address Aqhat as "brother", referring to herself as "sister"[77].

Like Part One, this part also ends with a wish expressed by the beloved hoping to meet her lover, and appealing to the wind to direct him her way, as in 4.16 "awake north wind...let my beloved come into his garden...". This is followed by a positive response to her wish in 3.1 in preparation for the start o the second dream, which takes place in the next part.

PART THREE 5.2-7.14

This part constitutes the second phase in the process of development of the mystical/spiritual experience. Following the vision of the glory and majesty of the lover in the previous part, the vision in this part focuses on the physical beauty of the lover, as in 5.10-16. In this connection it is assumed, as already discussed, that the above-mentioned paragraph is the basis of the Shiur Qomah tradition which seems to have contributed favourably to the restriction imposed upon the book.

The build-up to this vision starts with the beloved expressing the feeling of loss and

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[76] I Enoch, 48.1.
[77] M.Held, A faithul lover in old Babylonian dialogue, *JCS*, 1961, 13, note 1.14.

deprivation in 5.2.,"I am asleep but my heart is awake", leading in the same line to the state of contemplation where she contemplates her lover's voice, "It is the voice of my beloved..." A state of confusion follows in 5.3-6c, "I have put off my coat how shall I put it on...", which develops into a state of anxiety and restlessness in 5.6d-5.7, "I sought him but...could not find him". This is followed by a state of trance emerging in 5.8, "I charge you daughters of Jerusalem...", followed by the vision in 5.9-16 which speaks about the beauty of the lover presenting him as unique and distinguished.

The role of the daughters of Jerusalem and the city guards who appear in both visions seems to resemble the traditional role of the angels in the mystic experience. In the ascension of Isaiah 9.1 and 9.5, for example, there seem to exist opposition angels who try to prevent the ascension of the mystic. On the other hand, the mystic in his heavenly journey seems to be assisted and directed by guiding angels trying to facilitate his progress.[78] Therefore, the daughters of Jerusalem, though they remain colourless and anonymous, they never express inner feelings, they do not describe themselves nor are described by the beloved, however their role in the experience seems to represent that of the guiding angels. They accompany the beloved in every stage responding positively to her requests or adjurations. Also nowhere in the text do they try to prevent or oppose her progress, but rather continued to be helpful and supportive. On the other hand, the "city guards" may figuratively represent the angels of opposition. The beloved's encounter with them in her two visions seems to be either discouraging or painful. In 3.3 the beloved gets no response from them to her inquiry about her lover. On the second occasion, in 5.7, they responded violently towards her and inflicted pain and suffering upon her to impede the progress of her efforts in finding her lover.

Following the vision of her lover the beloved in 6.12 seems to find herself on the holy chariot joining the "noble people" נדיבי עם The word נדיב is also found in Psalms 47.10

[78] J. Schulz, "Angelic opposition to the ascension of Moses and the revelation of the law".,*JQR* (1970/71), LXI, p.288

and 113.8 indicating similar meaning. In 7.2 the beloved is officially acknowledged as a member of this noble circle, and she is accordingly addressed as "noble maiden". Therefore, בת נדיב in 7.1 while it could be the name of the beloved herself, or an endearment epithet in praise of her perfect beauty, may also be used in praise of or in reference to her perfect status as a member of the noble circle.

As for the interpretation of verse 7.1, the consensus of opinion seems to agree upon an interpretation which depicts the beloved as performing a dance. Sometimes this idea is developed even further into some novel assumption, such as "dancing naked or in diaphanous veils",[79] or "performing a belly dance in the nude".[80] The suggestion that the beloved is dancing appears to have been based upon a link made between 7.1 where the beloved was asked to "turn"or "return", depending on how the the text is understood and translated, and 7.2 which praises her feet in sandals. In other words, it seems that 7.1 is understood to depict the beloved in some kind of motion. This motion is interpreted as dancing in 7.2 since this verse praises the beloved's feet. Examining the above two verses does not necessarily suggest a picture of a dancing woman. If שוב in 7.1 is rendered as "turn". The picture in this case, in as much as it may imply that the woman is in motion, may equally possibly—if not probably—assume that she may have been standing still before or when she was asked to turn. On the other hand, if שוב is rendered as "return", the kind of movement involved in this connection can hardly be described as artistic, neither is it of artistic implication to suggest dancing. Furthermore, the response of the beloved to the above-mentioned request, whether it is rendered as a statement "what you see [want to see] in Shulamit is like that of the dance of the two camps", or as a question "What do you see in Shulamit? As it were the dance of the two camps", or as negative imperative, "do not look at Shulamit as if you were [as if you were looking at] watching the dance of the two camps", does not actually refer, indicate or imply that she

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[79] M. Goulder, *the Song of Fourteen Songs* (Sheffield, 1986), p.55.
[80] M. Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible* (Sheffield, 1982), p.128.

is performing a dance. On the contrary, her response simply refers to a name of a dance purely and solely for comparative purposes. In fact this comparative manner of expression seems to have been intended as a cynical remark in this connection. Particularly, the beloved seems to compare, more than anything else, the enthusiasm of those who asked to look at her with the enthusiasm usually inspired by the dance of the two camps. It is possible therefore, that they have misread her mood, since her cynical response suggests that she is in a rather more serious or tense mood than they had thought. Moreover, following the line of thinking that the beloved is dancing and accepting that the she is"naked" on this occasion, means that we cannot ignore the same assumption on other occasions such as 4.5 where she could be described as "half-naked" since her breasts are praised there. Otherwise, the above-mentioned assumption would seem to indicate that unlike the breasts, other parts of the beloved's body, such as her belly, thighs and even her feet are of an intimate and erotic nature. Therefore, they are supposed to be covered, or are usually covered and unless watched in the nude cannot be described or praised. It is worth mentioning in this connection that physical beauty in general when praised or described, particularly in poetry as in the case in question, nudity is not a necessary requirement since imagination can be more useful and rather effective on such occasions. Indeed, while reality in this respect may be disappointing at times, imagination on the other hand can be vivid and innovative. Accordingly, in the absence of direct or "plausible" indirect reference or indication to the effect that the text on this occasion is describing a naked picture of the beloved, the above assumption stands unsustainable and rather far-fetched. Indeed, it seems as subjective as that of the wedding procession in 3.7-11.

Following the alternative assumption mentioned above which pictures the beloved in a rather serious or tense mood, may suggest that she is experiencing a state of anxiety similar to that experienced by the mystic when descending on the Merkabeh. In this

connection, Morton Smith[81] maintains that the mystic before crossing inside the Merkabeh and presenting himself before the glory of God, stands on the threshold trembling and terrified. At the same time, the angels of the throne are watching him while reciting the attributes of God trying to restore a state of tranquility to encourage him to enter. Also according to Blumenthal,[82] Chapter 24 of Hekhalot Rabbati includes the following description,

> as soon as the initiate entreats to descend on the Merkebah...and that man [the initiate] enters to stand on the threshold of the gate of the seventh palace...this man then trembles, moves too and fro...the watchmen of the seventh gate of the palace support him and say 'Do not fear son of the beloved seed, enter and see the king in his magnificence.

Similarly, the beloved in 6.12 could be experiencing a state of awe and fear when she found herself on the holy chariot. Therefore, rather than dancing she was possibly trembling in 7.1 as a result of reverential fear, or because she was stricken with awe. this state is one of humbleness and submission experienced by the individual who through his mystical endeavour finds himself in the presence of the majesty of his creator. Ezekiel seems to have experienced a similar state at the sight of the glory of God: "and behold the glory of Good stood there, and I fell on my face".[83] Enoch is another example in this connection: he began to tremble when he saw the throne in the seventh heaven.[84]

The mystical experience is almost at its final stage in this part, and it seems natural that the anxiety of the beloved has reached its utmost too as manifested in the repetition of the motif of belonging, which is mentioned twice in this part, in 6.3 and 7.10, obviously for the purpose of self-assurance. Therefore it seems that the nearer the beloved is towards achieving unity with her lover, the more intense her anxiety becomes, and consequently the more possessive she feels for fear of losing him. Indeed, anxiety

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[81] M.Smith "Observation on the Hekhalot Rabbati" in *Biblical in Biblical and Other s tudies,* A.Altmann(ed.), (1963), p.146..

[82] David Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1978), p.78.

[83] Ezekiel, 3.23.

[84] I Enoch, 20.2.

and longing are the main characteristics of this experience. They are closely attached to each other, and contribute continuously to one another's existence. In other words, while longing causes anxiety, anxiety intensifies longing.

Like Part Two, this part starts with a dream, and like Parts One and Two ends with the beloved expressing her wish in 7.11-13 to be with her lover, and calling for him to join her in the places where she belongs. this wish is preceded by the motif of belonging and has been developed in a kiss-wish as an opening motif in the next and concluding part, thus echoing the opening motif of Part One.

Part Four: 8.1-8.14

The beloved opens this concluding part with the kiss-wish, then expresses her longing for unity in 8.2., which develops into the embracing motif in 8.3 and leads to the trance in 8.4-5.

The opening verse in this part is a repetition of the kissing motif which stands as the opening verse for Part One as well. Also the pattern leading to the trance in this part is similar to that in Part One. In both cases the trance is preceded by the embracing motif followed by the adjuration. On the other hand, this part shares a similar start to the trance with Part Two. Line 8.5, which marks the start of the trance in Part Four, is a repetition of line 3.6, which starts the trance in Part Two. Both verses are characterised by their question term, "Who is that coming out of the wilderness?", which seems designed to draw attention to a major development within the theme of this mystical experience. Therefore, while 3.6 draws attention to the lover's/King's glory and majesty represented by his throne, the attention in 8.5., on the other hand, is directed towards the beloved's glory as pictured for the first time and in public in the company of her lover, leaning upon him, enjoying his presence and his support. Indeed, she is captured in the glorious moment of unity and fulfilment which marks the major concluding event in the chain of

events on the way of this mystical endeavour. As already discussed, the middle major event in this connection took place in Part Three, 5.9-16, where the focus was on the physical beauty of the lover. It is worth pointing out that though the opening verse to the trance on that occasion is not a repetition of that in Parts Two and Four, it does, however, share with both of them the main characteristic of this pattern, which is the question form verse.

Going back to line 8.5, it is interesting and striking to notice that while the first half of this verse celebrates the first moments of unity, the second half of it romanticises about the first moments of the formation of the sacred bond between the two lovers. In this connecting, the apple tree which often figures as the tree of life in mystic literature[85] seems to play the main role in the very existence of this bond, since it seems to have been formed, born and nurtured under the apple tree. Accordingly, it cannot but be a love bond destined for life. The unique nature and the specific characteristics of this love are detailed in 8.5-7, where it is described as binding as a seal, as intense as death, of inestimable value, and inextinguishable flames. Also, it is even more interesting to notice that while unity is the aim of this experience, love, on the other hand, seems to be the crux in this connection, particularly it is love rather than the lover which has been publicly praised, upheld and applauded as a summing-up account or an overall conclusion. Therefore it seems that love and unity in this connection can be means and aims at the same time. Love throughout the mystical endeavour is a means to attain unity. On the other hand, unity becomes a means to attain and sustain this sublime and refined love. In other words, love and unity are an inseparable entity, they contribute to each other's existence.

While love has been vindicated in the above two lines 8.6-7, in the following lines, 8.8-9, the beloved herself is vindicated. Her worthiness has been debated between the

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[85] H. Bayley, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, vol.2 (London, 1951), p.251.

two categories of "door" and "wall", which seems to correspond metaphorically to "fool" and "wise", which are the criteria usually employed in the Hekhaloth texts to distinguish the worthy amongst those invited to the Markabah. Fools usually rush in, while the wise wait until they are called twice.[86] On this occasion, if the beloved is judged to be a "wall", she would be honoured and adorned with silver, which seems to be considered as a symbol of holiness.[87] But if she is, however, judged to be a "door", she would be enclosed with boards of cedar, used metaphorically in this connection most probably for its hardness rather than for it decorative value, to set her on the right and solid path.

In 8.10, the beloved emerged with an image different from that she had in Part One. There when she asserted herself, she projected an image based on her physical beauty, though presented in a humble and plain manner such as in 1.5 "I am black but beautiful", or in 2.1 "I am the rose of the sharon and the lily of the valley". In Part Four, on the other hand, since she has been vindicated, her new status as a chosen member has injected her with vigour and confidence, and she has therefore asserted herself with pride and dignity, projecting the beauty of the spiritual side of her nature presented in her new and refined image which has placed her favourably in the eyes of her lover. Similar ideas and similar images are found in the following hymn from the Qumran:

Thou hast strengthened me
Thou hast made me a strong tower, a high wall
...and all my ramparts are tried wall
Which shall not sway.[88]

Also Psalm 41.13 expresses an idea of similar contents, as it says:

Because of my integrity you have grasped me
And stationed me in your presence for ever.

Her new status with its special commitments requires her to dissociate herself from the pleasures of the world. Accordingly, in 8.11 Solomon's wealth and power are mentioned

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[86] M. Smith, op.cit., p.146.
[87] F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, trans. M. Easton (1885), p.153.
[88] G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (1977), hymn 7.7-9, p.169.

metaphorically, only to represent the materialistic side of life which has been refuted by the beloved in 8.12, since it can hardly be compared with the eternal happiness she is enjoying in the presence of lover to whom she, figuratively, refers again as "vineyard". His love is her only and eternal possession, it is the source of her strength, righteousness and of her heart's content. Similar ideas are expressed in another hymn from the Qumran, which reads:

My eyes have gazed at that which is eternal
On the fountain of righteousness
On the storehouse of power
On a spring of glory
Hidden from the assembly of flesh
God has given them to his chosen ones
As an everlasting possession.[89]

The beloved's membership amongst the companions, the chosen ones, has been confirmed in 8.13, and she has therefore been addressed as a "garden dweller" since the "garden" seems to be the usual abode for the righteous and the chosen.[90] Also, the beloved on this final stage has been invited to join in the praise for God. this idea is found not only in the Hekhaloth text where the chosen joins the angels in their praise for God,[91] but also occurs in the Qumran hymns when the chosen is to become a companion of the angels, sharing their secret knowledge with them in their praise for God, as the following hymn shows:

And thou has cast an everlasting destiny for man
In the company of the spirit of knowledge
That he might praise thy name in joy [ful] concord
And recounting thy marvel before all thy works.[92]

Like Part One, this part started with the "kiss-wish", and like Part One too, it ends with the "longing-wish" for another meeting. In fact in 8.14, the last verse of this part, is almost a complete repetition of 2.17, the last verse of Part One. Also 8.14 is a response to

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[89] Ibid., hymn 11.5-8, p.173
[90] I Enoch, 60.8.
[91] M. Smith, op.cit., p.157.
[92] Dupont-Sommer, op.cit., hymn,n III, 21ff, p.209.

the invitation or request made to the beloved in 8.13 to join her voice with and to let it be heard by the other chosen companions. Her response is perfect in this connection, since longing to meet the lover is the one and special aim which cannot be surpassed by any other. Indeed, 8.14 is not only a perfect response but also a perfect and natural ending to this kind of experience, since for the mystic nothing can be more satisfying than to be in the perpetual presence of the beloved lord. Particularly, in these circumstances, so long as suffering from love-sickness can never abate, longing for subsequent meetings can never cease.

Conclusion

The above discussion of the contents of the text finds in the Song a description of mystical experience which seems to bear a resemblance to other ancient related mystical literatures inside and outside the bible. In this connection it is interesting to notice that the experience as analysed above, resembles that of I Enoch XIV where we have the description of the oldest Merkabah vision outside the biblical literature, a great deal of which became typical of later Merkabah vision.[93]

Both I Enoch and the Song presuppose heavenly ascent, and the vision occurs in a stage in the middle. The vision of Enoch takes place in XIV.6. In the Song, according to the present suggested structure, the vision takes place in Part Two preceded by an introduction to the idea. Furthermore, both texts follow the same pattern in this connection, since both of them pass from the vision of the throne to the vision of God. Also, neither text gives details of the ascent. In Enoch the information provided in this connection tells nothing more than Enoch saw himself, that he was lifted up to heaven by clouds. In the Song too, the beloved speaks with similar brevity in this connection as she tells that she suddenly found herself on the chariot among the nobles.

Another interesting point in this connection is the overwhelming terror which

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[93] I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism* (1980), p.36.

overcomes the individual at the sight of the glory of the Lord. In XIV.24, the text of Enoch relates that he was terrified at this stage. In the Song, according to the present interpretation, the beloved is depicted as trembling and shaking in 7.1, rather than dancing as explained already. Such states and feelings seem to be typical of almost all the apocalyptic and Merkabah mystics.[94]

Resemblance to the Hekhaloth hymns of the Merkabah seems to be another relevant point in this discussion. Generally, these hymns are songs of praise which can be described as exaggerated, multiplied and symbolic. Also they do not seem to have an effective role in the process of thought of the mystic, neither do they interfere in the development of the experience. Their recitation seems rather to fill the imagination of the mystic with splendid thoughts about the beauty of God, his glory and his kingdom.[95] Consequently, their role seems to create an impression of a profound effect on the soul. It helps the soul to overcome the sense of frustration which may hinder its progress to enter into a mystical trance, to ascend to visions of ecstasy and to pass from one stage of this experience to another.[96] The following examples of these hymns demonstrate their above-mentioned characteristics:

Excellence and faithfulness are his who lives forever
Understanding and blessing are his who lives forever
Magnificence and majesty are his who lives forever
Purity and goodness are his who lives forever
Crown and glory are his who lives forever
Sovereignty and rule are his who lives forever
Adornment and permanence are his who lives forever
Splendour and wonder are his who lives forever
Praise and glory are his who lives forever.

Another example reads as follows:

His throne radiates before him and his palace is full of splendour
His majesty is becoming and his glory is an adornment for him
His servants sing before him and proclaim the might of his wonders

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[94] R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1959), p.26f.
[95] G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), p.56f.
[96] I. Gruenwald, *Knowledge and Vision. Israel Oriental Studies* (1973), p.98.

As king of all kings and master of all masters
Enriched by rows of crowns, surrounded by the ranks of the princes of splendour
with gleams of his ray, he encompasses the sky
And his splendour radiates from the heights.[97]

In this connection we should bring back into the discussion the subsidiary parts of the Song which were mentioned already under the present suggested structure of the text. In so far as their function is concerned, these subsidiary parts in the Song, despite their amatory language, which was already discussed, is in accordance with the human love model employed in the text to portray the relationship between the individual and God, may be classified in the same category of the Hekhaloth hymns of the Merkabah. Thus like the Hekhaloth hymns, the subsidiary parts in the Soong, seem to play a catalyst role. Therefore they only seem to carry the theme from one stage to the other without affecting its process, or interfering with its progress.

Secondly, apart from the similarities in function, these subsidiary passages in the Song seem to have almost the same characteristics of the Hekhaloth hymns, such as exaggerated expressions, repetitions and symbolic meaning. These characteristics are self-evident in the subsidiary passages in the Song, and like the Hekhaloth hymns the beautiful images and ideas they describe fill the imagination of the individual, in both cases, with splendid thoughts and help to create an ecstatic atmosphere leading to the trance.

The doctrine of Shiur Qomah is yet another relevant feature in this connection. As already discussed, this doctrine in the Hekhaloth text grew around the vision of the Lord. Its basic idea is traced to the vision and the description of the lover in 5.10-16 in the Song. Also the description involved in both cases employed exaggerated terms and expressions.

The above point leads to a fourth one regarding the kingship of God. According to the present interpretation of the Song, the lover is identified with the "king", who

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[97] *Greater Hekhaloth*, ch.26, trans. G. Scholem, "Major trends", (New York, 1946), p.58f.

metaphorically refers to God. In as much as the beloved's aim in the Song is to behold the king/lover, his beauty and his glory, so it is in the Hekhaloth texts. There too God is above all "king" and the main object of the initiate mystic is to seek the "king in his beauty".[98]

The following lines are examples in this connection. They read as follows:

Illustrious king, glorious king, masterful king, blessed king, chosen king, luminescent king, distinguished king, heroic king, sublime king, omniscient king, remarkable king, disciplining king, ...majestic king, ...eternal king, ...memorable king, worthy king, radiating king, living king, merciful king, ...chaste king, ...adorned king, ...possessing king, prosperous king, ...wise king, modest king, ...joyous king, ...compassionate king, ...tranquil king, ...perfect king, supportive king. Blessed be He.[99]

King of kings, God of Gods and Lord of Lords
Who is surrounded by chains of crowns,
...And in His majesty appeared from the heights,
From His beauty the deeps are kindled,
...And His crown blazes out the mighty,
...And all trees shall rejoice in His word,
...And his words shall drop as perfumes,
Flowing forth in flames of fire,
Giving joy to those who search them,
And quiet to those who fulfil them.[100]

Apart from I Enoch and the Hekhaloth hymns, the Song, as already discussed, also shares some of its ideas and motives with the Qumran writings. Furthermore, the present interpretation has already suggested that the Song speaks of inner individual experience which is accentuated by the frequent use of the first person throughout the text. The Song shares this characteristic with the Qumran hymns and indeed with the biblical psalms.

As for the human love context of the Song, this is not unknown in the Old Testament tradition, and may be that the song had followed the example of the Book of Hosea in this respect. Also, it is worth mentioning in this connection that this particular context is not unknown in mystic literature in general, where a variety of sensuous appelations common to both cultic and folk songs, are usually employed as a means of expressing divine

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[98] I. Gruenwald, *Knowledge and Vision. Israel Oriental Studies* (1973), p.96.
[99] Hekhaloth Rabbati, 24,4, trans. by David Blumenthal in *Understanding Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1978), p.79.
[100] Ibid., 23.1

love.[101] Perhaps the odes of Solomon are good examples in this connection. These odes are dated to the first and second centuries CE, and some of them are possibly of Jewish origin or perhaps influenced by the Dead Sea or similar Jewish sects of the time. Here we have apocalyptic concepts picked up and developed into deeply personal religious experience.

In Ode III, for example, we have a genuine mystical product where Christ is represented by the beloved and the individual believer is the lover. Some of these verses read as follows:

For I should not have known to love the Lord
If He had not loved me
For who is able to distinguish love
Except one that is loved
I love the beloved and my soul loves Him
And when His rest is, there also am I
...I have been united [to Him] for the lover has found the beloved
I order that I may love Him that is the Son. I shall become a son
For he that is joined to Him that is immortal
Will himself also become immortal
And he that has pleasure in the living one
Will become living.[102]

Other verses from Ode VII read:

As the motion of anger over evil
So is the motion of joy over the beloved
My joy is the Lord and my motion is towards Him
...He became like me that I might receive Him
In similitude was He reckoned like me, that I might put him on.[103]

It does not seem difficult to notice that the above lines, in respect of the ideas expressed in them and the language employed by them, bear considerable similarities to the Song of Songs in both these respects. In this connection, Bacon's words seem appropriate when he rightly described Ode III as "a song in the vein of canticle".[104]

To sum up the above observations, it may seem pointless to assign a definite or

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[101] H. Stephen, "Modern Palestinian parallels to the Song of Songs", *JOPS*, vol.II 9 1922),p. 203.

[102] R. Harris and A. Mingana, *The odes and Psalms of Solomon*, II, (1920),. p.215 f.

[103] Ibid., p.240.

[104] B. Bacon, *Harvard Theological Review* 1916, p.382.

specific category for the Song, however it does not seem impossible, on the other hand, to suggest that the Song is a text of genuine and varied mystical elements, notions and characteristics presenting one of the earliest forms of, or indeed a prototype model of Merkabah text. It is hoped that the above discussion has shown that this assumption, despite its difficulties, can neither be far-fetched nor strained.

THE SONG OF SONGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH MYSTICISM

A. *Early traces of Jewish mysticism*

Mysticism is that type of religiosity which is generally understood to emphasise the immediate awareness of relations with God, through direct and intimate consciousness of the divine presence.[1] Evelyn Underhill[2] evidently agrees with the above definition as he sees in mysticism the establishment of the immediate communication between the spirit of man and God. This definition is further refined in the words of J. Pratt[3] who says "Mysticism is the sense of the presence of reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason".

Mystics are like prophets and their experiences seem to contain the same elements. It is common to both of them to have the vision of God and to hear his voice. Isaiah 6.1-12 illustrated this feeling of direct communion with the Lord. He had a trance or a vision where he saw the majesty of the Lord in the aspect of a monarch sitting on a throne. So did St. Teresa who saw the vision of God and wrote of her experience.

Also, both mystics and prophets speak of divine revelation. In the case of a prophet, God reveals himself through his deed in creation and in history and through sacred books. On the other hand, we find in the case of the mystic knowledge of God is obtained by seeking him in the depth of man's own self. In other words, God encounters man in his innermost being. This experience manifests itself as love and enjoyment.[4] The words of Philo are relevant in this connection when he says "The limit of happiness is the presence of God which completely fills the whole soul with his whole incorporeal and eternal light.

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[1] H. Hines, *The Prophet as a Mystic*, ADSL, p.24f, 1922.
[2] *Mysticism* (London, 1930), p.4.
[3] *The Religious Consciousness* (New York, 1946), p.377.
[4] J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1962), p.351.

And the limit of misery is his passing on".[5] Philo believed that the ultimate goal lies in the vision of God and even the soul's mere quest for God would be sufficient to give the state of joy and happiness.[6] Philo was not a practising mystic, nevertheless he was acknowledged by some scholars as a "mystical theorist".[7] However, other scholars are of the opinion that mystical theorists (those who believe that mystical union is possible) can be included within the category of practising mystics (those who believe they have had such an experience), but not vice versa.[8] According to this viewpoint, Philo can be regarded as a practising mystic.

Like the mysticisms of other religions, Jewish mysticism too seeks to cultivate personal communion between the individual and God. In Judaism as in any other religion, this communion is usually characterised by some degree of ecstasy due to the intensity of the religious feeling involved.[9] Jewish mystics in Talmudic times described this experience as "the ecstatic ascent of the soul to the celestial throne where it obtains a view of the majesty of God and the secret of his realm".[10] In later times, in the Middle Ages, the Hasidic mystic Levi Issac of the sixteenth century, described this experience as "there are those who serve with their human intellect and those whose gaze is fixed at nothing. He who is granted this supreme experience loses the reality of his intellect, but when he returns from such contemplation to the intellect, he finds it full of divine and inflowing splendor".[11] Both statements are trying to express the same experience though in different ways. Both are speaking of this immediate experience which is known only the human being and the eternal being with no mediator in between.[12] In other words, it is

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[5] Philo, QG, 4.4.
[6] Philo, Post.20.
[7] David Winston, "Was Philo a mystic?", J. Dan (ed.) *Studies in Jewish Mysticism* (1982), pp.15-39.
[8] E. Dodds, *Pagan and Christianity in the Age of Anxiety* (1967), p.70.
[9] E. Muller, *History of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford, 1946), p.9.
[10] G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), p.5.
[11] L. Black, "Jewish mysticism", *JJS*, vol.2 (1950/51), p.3.
[12] Ibid.

the soul of the individual that is entitled to feel, see and hear the presence of God. Therefore, mystics and prophets are alike in this respect and their visionary experience is often described as vague and clear at the same time. Also, the expressions used for the description of their visions are mostly derived from actual life, and where symbols are involved they are generally borrowed from nature.[13] This is true with mysticism in general. As E. Underhill rightly said, "all the mystics speak the same language for they come from the same country".[14]

Mystically oriented visions can be traced in the Bible. There God appears in man-like form seated upon a throne, as in the texts of I Kings, Ezek., Psalms and Daniel. These visions together display the following characteristic features:

God sitting on a throne.

God has the appearance of a man (Ezek. and Daniel).

God sitting in a palace (in I Kings and Daniel texts, though there is no explicit mention of a palace, the description presupposes the palace in the vision).

Fire is an important element in the vision.

God is accompanied by angels.

The angels recite hymns.

These elements became major components in later mystical visions found in Apocalyptic and Hekhalot[15] literature. This is not to say that those features are found and stressed equally in all the visions we know of, but it is safe to say that visionaries followed some kind of standard which was basically modelled on these features.[16]

Apocalyptic literature picked up those mystical elements found in the scriptures and worked them into a model of mystical experience. Therefore, similarities to Ezek.1 can be traced in I Enoch 14, where the elements of fire, wind, clouds, the divine figure seated

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[13] J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, pp.37f, 304f.
[14] E. Underhill, *Mysticism*. (London, 1930),p. 26.
[15] The generic name of the literature of Merkabah mysticism 2nd/3rd cent. AD
[16] J. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), p.31.

on a throne, the falling of the visionary on his face in the presence of the divine figure, are repeated and in later apocalyses that describe the visionary's experience. Therefore, Apocalyptic literature, represented by the Ethiopic book of Enoch, the Slavonic Enoch, the Ascension of Isaiah and others, constitutes an important intermediary stage in the process of development in which the seer is granted a vision of the Lord through an ecstatic journey in his sleep. Though it is difficult to assign a certain date to these heavenly ascensions, it seems right to assume that at the time of the composition of the Book of Enoch (second/first century BCE), this practice was already known to the people to whom the book was addressed.[17]

It may also be possible to find a trace of this type of mystic literature in the writings of the Qumran sectarians. The fragments of their work show that they had a keen interest in the divine chariot, though they did not practise or think in terms of heavenly ascensions.[18] The fragments also reveal mystical speculation of the divine throne and the association of the angelic beings. This information which is some kind of description of what can be expected in the heavenly ascent, seems to have drawn upon the exegesis of Ezek.[19] Like the canonical psalms, particularly those designated as "songs of individual thanksgiving", the Qumran hymns are individual prayers and normally begin with "I thank thee". As for their inspiration, it is derived not only from the psalms but also from Jer. and Job to express adoration and gratitude to God and total submission to his will.[20] On the other hand, the purpose of the recitation of these hymns is to help them to achieve their goal. This idea is close to that of the Hekhalot hymns.[21]

In the light of the above discussion it would be possible to assume that

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[17] Op.cit., p.32.

[18] J. Strugnell, "The angelic liturgy at Qumran", 4Q Serek Shirot Olat-ha shabbat VT, supp.7, 1959, pp.318-45.

[19] L. Schiffman, "Merkabah speculation at Qumran.. The 4Q Serek Shirot Olat-ha-shabbat", essay in J. Reinharz (ed.), *Jewish Intellectual History* (Duke University Press, 1982), pp.13-47.

[20] A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essenes' Writings from Qumran* (Oxford, 1961, p.199.

[21] I.Gruenwald, Op.cit..p.152.

Merkabah/Hekhalot mysticism had some of its roots in the Qumran or related circles before penetrating into the mainstream of Judaism through Pharisaic and Tannaitic traditions.

B. Merkabah/Hekhalot mysticism and the role of the Song of Songs

Apart from the mystical elements found in the biblical literature, apocalyptic literature and in the Qumran writings, there existed in the Talmudic period a mystical doctrine of the Merkabah/Hekhalot literature. This doctrine is closely connected to the first chapter of Ezekiel which described the prophet's divine vision of the glory of God, as revealed to him in the midst of cloud, fire and lightning. This doctrine was cultivated by a circle of scholars as early as the day of R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, who most probably was the head of this group. His disciples were R. Joshua, R. Jose, R. Eliezar, R. Eleazar b. Arakh, and the two well-known rabbis Aqibah and Ishmael.[22] This doctrine was preserved in a collection of parables or legends. They are listed in Tos.Hag.2:1-5 as follows:

A. Tos.Hag.2.1 - R. Yohanan ben Zakkai's disciples expound the Merkabah.

Eleazar b. Arakh requested R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and said to him 'repeat to me a chapter of the works of the chariot'. He said to him 'Have I not ruled for you to begin with that' They do not repeat the tradition concerning the chariot for an individual unless he was a sage and understands of his own knowledge?' R. Eleazar said to him 'May I lay matters out before you?' b. Zakkai said, 'Say on'. R. Eleazar commenced and expounded concerning the work of the chariot. R.Yohanan b. Zakkai got up and kissed him on his head and said to him, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who gave to Abraham, our father, a son who knows how to understand and expound upon the glory of his father, who is in heaven. Some preach nicely but do not practise nicely, or practise nicely but do not preach nicely. Eleazar b. Arakh preaches nicely and practises nicely. Happy are you O Abraham, our father, for Eleazar B. Arakh has gone forth from your loins, who knows how to understand and expound upon the glory of his father who is in heaven'.

B. Tos.Hag.2.2 - three lectures.

'R. Jose b. Juda says'. R. Joshua laid matters out before R. Yohanan b. Zakkai. R. Aqibah laid matters out before R. Joshua. Hananiah b. Hakinai laid matters out before R. Aqibah.'

C. Tos.2.3, 2.4 - Four entered "pardes" (paradise).

Four entered the garden: ben Azzai, ben Zoma, Elisha and Aqibah. One gazed and perished, one gazed and

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[22] J.Neusner, "The Development of Merkabah Tradition ", JSJ, vol. 2(1971),pp. 149-160.

was smitten, one gazed and cut down sprouts and one ascended whole and descended whole. Ben Azzai gazed and perished, concerning him scriptures say 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints' (Psalm 116.15). Ben Zoma gazed and was smitten, concerning him scriptures say 'if you have found honey eat only enough for you lest you be sated with it and vomit it' (Proverbs 25.16). Elisha gazed and cut down sprouts, concerning him scriptures say 'let not your mouth lead you into sin' (Qoh.5.5). R. Aqibah went up whole and came down whole, concerning him scriptures say 'the king has brought me into his chambers' (Song of Songs, 1.4).

D. Tos.Hag.2.5 - parable of a royal garden.

To what is the matter to be compared? To a royal garden with an upper room built over it to guard it. What is the guard duty? To look only but not to feast his eyes upon it.

E. Tos.Hag.2.5 Parable of a highway and two roads.

They further compared the matter to what? To a highway passing between two paths, one of fire and one of ice. If one turns to this side, he is smitten by fire and if he turns to that he is smitten by ice. What should a person do? He should go right down the middle and not either to this side or to that.

The first three accounts of the above collection occur in the Tos., PT and in the BT, while the last two accounts occur only in the Tos. and in the PT. Despite the slight variation in their version, either some addition or some omission, these accounts were understood to refer explicitly or implicitly to an esoteric/mystical discourse related to the Merkabah tradition. The importance of these accounts lies in the message they generally convey in relation to this tradition. So Unit A conveys the message that involvement with mystical matters of the Merkabah may be of considerable reward. Equally expressed are warnings against the dangers involved in Merkabah study or practice as demonstrated in Unit D and emphasised in Unit E. Unit C seems to be related in this connection to Unit D since both appear to explain each other. The initiate has to prove himself before his master as in the case of R. Eleazar b. Arakh and his master Yohanan b. Zakkai (Unit A). Three others have so proved themselves as in Unit B.

The most important among these parables is Unit C 'four entered pardes'. This account was regarded by Scholem[23] as an example of practical Merkabah mysticism in rabbinic times. Like the Hekhalot literature, this account centres around the dangers

[23] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), pp.14-19.

facing the mystic in his heavenly journey. Thus, in regard to the dangers that faced R. Aqibah, the most important figure in this parable, Hag.15b reports: 'And the ministering angels wanted to drive away or kill Aqibah too, but god told them "Leave that wise man alone as he is worthy of experiencing my glory"'. Also Hag.14b reports R. Aqibah's advice to his companions in this experience as saying, 'When you reach the pure marble stones do not say: water, water as it is said. No [who] man utters lies shall continue in my presence' (Ps.101.7). Aqibah's advice in this connection does not only point out the dangers involved, but also hints at the possibility that he may have been speaking from experience. Secondly, it is most likely that the term 'pardes' used here has the same mystical context of 'paradise of righteousness' as used in the ascension of Paul. Paul too used the term in its simple form without any qualifications, though most probably he was aware of the technical term 'paradise of righteousness', as it occurs in the Greek translation of the Aramaic term 'pardes kushta' mentioned in two versions of an Aramaic text of the book of Enoch.[24] Therefore, pardes may not only refer to the after-life place for the righteous, but in relation to Apocalyptic literature it may also refer to a place which the mystics enter in their lifetime during their heavenly journey. Accordingly, it is perhaps safe to assume that this particular account corresponds to a form of active experience rather than mere speculation.

This assumption was however dismissed by some scholars. Halperin,[25] for example, does not believe that this parable has any connection with the Merkabah since there is no mention of it in the parable. He also believes that these parables do not stand as part of a mystical tradition related to Tannaitic times. In his opinion, these parables are scholarly constructs which were arranged according to the compiler's belief and interpretation concerning the danger involved in mystical study or practice.

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[24] G.Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (NewYork 1960), p.16

[25] D. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, 1980), pp.83-105.

Schäfer,[26] on the other hand, proposed different readings for R. Aqiba's role in this parable. He replaced the terms 'ascended' and 'descended' with the terms 'entered' and 'came out'. He believes that the latter terms chime better with the title of the parable itself 'Four entered pardes'. Perhaps it is worth mentioning in this connection that the Tos. version and the BT version of this parable used the terms 'ascend' and 'descend'.[27]

Also, Schäfer[28] understands this parable metaphorically rather than as a form of active practice which he believes did not start until some time in the Geonic era. His belief in this connection is based upon some responses written by Hai Gaon (939-1038) in relation to this practice. But Hai Gaon was also quoted describing the technique of mystic communion with God and referring to the scholars of the past.[29] Therefore it is most probable that this practice which started in earlier times, was flourishing by that time among the Babylonian Jewry. On the other hand, the above-mentioned opinions do not change the historicity of this tradition, nor the fact that rabbinic Judaism itself seemed keen to preserve these accounts, most probably because these accounts were understood and acknowledged as representative of Merkabah tradition. Accordingly, perhaps Halperin[30] is right to assume that through preserving these accounts, rabbinic Judaism maintained for itself the image of a master of esoteric science.

The most important literary product of Merkabah mysticism is the Hekhalot[31] literature which describes the ascent to the divine chariot. The texts of the Hekhalot refer to the celestial palaces through which the mystic passes until he reaches the seventh palace where he encounters the divine figure and the glory of His throne. The Hekhalot

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[26] S. Schäfer, 'Merkabah mysticism and rabbinic Judaism', *BSOAS*, vol.104, no.5, 1984, p.539.

[27] Ts.Hag.2.4 'Went up whole and came down whole'; BT Hag.15b (towards the end) 'went up unhurt and went down unhurt'.

[28] S. Schäfer, 'Tradition and reduction in the Hekhalot literature' *JSJ*, vol.14, no.2, p.178, date obscured.

[29] M. Levin, *Ozar ha-Geonim, tractate Hagigah* (Jerusalem, 1931), p.13f.

[30] D. Halperin, *Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven 1980), p.140.

[31] Hekhalot (the palaces). It is the generic name of the literature of Merkabah mysticism (2nd/3rd Cent.CE).

texts are divided into two parts, one of which centres around the ascension of R. Aqibah and is known as Hekhalot Zutarti. The second part known as Hekhalot Rabbati in which both R. Aqibah and R. Ishmael appear, but it centres on the description of R. Ishmael's ascension. Also alongside the descriptive material are hymns or incantations recited by the ascenders or heard by them through their heavenly journey.[32] The recitation of these hymns helps the mystic to pass through the gates of the palaces which are usually guarded by angels. Also, in order to be allowed to continue his heavenly journey the mystic has to show these angels a special sign ('hotam'). At the sixth gate the angels try to stop the mystic's journey and this could expose him to physical harm. Those among the mystics who succeed in arriving at the seventh palace and see the 'king in his beauty', are usually the most accomplished in their knowledge as well as in their ethical and ascetic life.[33] The Hekhalot hymns occupy a prominent place in these texts, particularly in Hekhalot Rabbati where they display some extravagant enthusiasm and a rhythmical approach in the praises of God, his power, greatness and benevolence. These hymns seem to be a collection possibly derived from some unknown or lost schools of mystics.[34] Generally the Hekhalot texts are regarded as reflecting genuine mystical experience because they describe the procedure of achieving heavenly ascent. Indeed the Hekhalot mystics themselves regard their practice as genuine and involving the separation of the soul from the body; while the body remains on earth the spirit ascends to the divine chariot roaming through the divine palaces. R. Nehunia's soul on one occasion was called back from wherever it was in the divine palaces to join his lifeless body on earth so that he could reach an urgent decision concerning the ten martyrs.[35] Therefore, the Hekhalot mystics carry out the ascent in order to attain the vision of the Merkabah. This is in

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[32] A. Altman, *Sacred hymns in the Hekhalot literature*, vol.2, (Milah, 1946) pp.1-24.

[33] J. Dan, *Scholem Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York, 1987), p.55.

[34] J. Dan, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, (Judaic Studies Programme, University of Cincinnati, 1984), p.13.

[35] M. Oron, 'Merkabah texts and the legends of the ten martyrs', in G. Blidstein (ed.), *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp.81-95.

contrast to the Apocalyptists. Their goal in their heavenly ascension is to attain first-hand knowledge of the secrets of the world from creation to redemption, and if the vision of the divine figure occurred it would be an added mystical ingredient.[36]

A lot of the material involved in the Hekhalot text is introduced by technical questions which make the texts look like manuals for mystics. So in order to attain the heavenly ascent and the vision of the Merkabah, the Hekhalot mystics had to go through a rigorous course of moral and ascetic preparation.[37] Hai Gaon was referring to this procedure when he said,

> Many scholars were of the belief that one who is distinguished by many qualities described in the book, and who desires to behold the vision of the Merkabah and the palaces of the angels on high, must follow certain ways. He has to fast a number of days and lay his head between his knees and whisper down to the earth many hymns and songs known from tradition. Then he perceives the interior and the chambers as seeing the seven palaces with his own eyes and it is as though he entered one palace after the other and saw what is therein.[38]

This practice involves special initiation rites too, and the candidate has to put on a robe with the name of God woven into it as an investing with the divine name and he is thus designated an initiate of the Merkabah. R. Aqiba seemed to have been initiated into the mysteries of the Merkabah by R. Eliezer.[39] Some of these ascetic means and measures were already known from Apocalyptic literature, but in the Hekhalot literature they were described in more detail. Also, some rabbinic circles seemed to observe some of these measures because the study of the Torah requires an ascetic way of life. Therefore, Mishna Avot 6.4 reports, 'This is the way of the Torah: a morsel with salt thou shalt eat and water by measure shalt thou drink; and shalt thou lie upon the earth, and thou shalt live a life of hardship and labour in the Torah'. But in the Hekhalot literature these ascetic means became, as Gruenwald rightly describes them, a mystical rite.[40]

Therefore, this information and detailed descriptions found in the Hekhalot texts in

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[36] I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), p.155f.
[37] Ibid., p.99.
[38] M. Levin, *Ozar ha-Geonim, tractate Hagigah* (Jerusalem, 1931), p.13f.
[39] G. Scholem, *Midrash Ha-Neelam*, p.169.
[40] I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), p.101.

relation to the ascent and the procedure to attain the heavenly journey itself could be regarded as part of the development towards active mysticism. In fact, it is possible to assume that the change from speculation to practice took place since the days of R.Aqiba and his principal role in the mystical parable 'Four entered pardes'. As already mentioned, a new concept of possible ascent had developed around this parable. This assumption, on the other hand, was coupled with the new attitude towards the Song of Songs inspired by Aqiba. He understood the book as a self-portrait of God and he was thought to be of the opinion that the book is not attributable to Solomon but to God himself 'Melekh she-ha shalom shelo', 'the king who owns peace', a literal interpretation of the Hebrew word 'schlomo'. This view was not directly attributed to Aqiba, though it did originate from his circle.[41] Aqiba also believed that this book was given to Israel on Mount Sinai as part of the theophany.[42] Accordingly, the description of the lover in the Song of Songs is meant to be a description of the divine figure as portrayed by Himself. This is unlike Ezekiel or other similar occurrences where God is usually described by a human being. Thus with this new and novel approach of understanding towards the Song of Songs, R. Aqiba regarded this book as the most sacred book in the bible and was quoted as declaring it 'the holy of holies'.[43]

The point of connection between the Song of Songs and Hekhalot mysticism lies in the most important treatise in the Hekhalot literature, known as 'Shiur Qomah', 'the measurement of God'. This doctrine, which was attributed to R. Aqiba and R. Ishmael, gives an anthropomorphic description of God and presents him as a supreme king. It describes the limbs of the divine figure and gives their measurements in millions parasangs.[44] In Hekhalot Zutarti when R. Aqiba arrives at the seventh palace and meets

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[41] Bammidbar Rabba, 11,7.
[42] G. Scholem, 'Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim', Appendix D, in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960).
[43] Mishna Yadaim, 3.
[44] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), p.36ff.

the 'king in his beauty', a series of sacred names were recited together with some phrases quoted from the well-known passage 5.11-16 of the Song of Songs where the description of the lover occurs.[45] Also, another fragment of this doctrine is incorporated in Hekhalot Rabbati which quotes almost all of the descriptive passage 5.11-16 of the Song of Songs.

This association between the Shiur Qomah doctrine and the book Song of Songs has suggested that the description of the divine figure in the Shiur Qomah text is based upon an elaboration of the verses 5.11-16 in the Song of Songs, with an added list of measurements and mystical names. This association seemed to have acquired an esoteric nature for the book in the second/third centuries CE.[46] This view was first suggested by Scholem and was supported by Leiberman.[47] The other point of connection between the Song of Songs and Merkabah/Hekhalot literature is the association of the Song of Songs with the mystical parable 'Four entered pardes'. On this occasion R. Aqiba in his successful ascent quoted verse 1.4 of the Song of Songs, 'The king brought me to his chambers'. This was understood to refer to the 'chambers of the divine chariot', which is another focal aspect of the mystical ascent apart from the Shiur Qomah. This expression frequently appears in the Hekhalot texts and was probably inspired by the Song of Songs.[48]

Therefore, in so far as Merkabah/Hekhalot mysticism is concerned, the significant role of the Song of Songs lies in the assumption that underneath its apparent erotic surface, the book embraces the inspiration of two of the most mystical aspects in Merkabah/Hekhalot mysticism, namely the king and his heavenly chambers. Accordingly, as Dan[49] rightly believes, the Song of Songs may possibly constitute one of

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[45] Merkabah Shelamah, 32a-33b.

[46] E. Urbach, 'The homilitical interpretation of Canticles', *Scripta hierosolymitana* 22, p.252.

[47] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), pp.34-42.

[48] J. Dan, 'The chambers of the chariot', *Tarbiz*, 47 (1978), pp.49-55.

[49] J. Dan, 'The religious experience of the Merkabah', *Jewish Spirituality* (London, 1986), vol.1, p.296.

the phases in the emergence of ancient Jewish mysticism. While the first phase was merely speculative and the third phase was an active mystical system represented by the Hekhalot literature and the Shiur Qomah doctrine, the second and intermediate stage in this process of development was represented by the new approach of understanding of the book of the Song of Songs. This was combined with the possible mystical practice traced back to the days of R. Aqiba and his companions, as preserved in the parable 'Four entered pardes'.

Therefore, it is possible to assume that the change towards active mystical endeavour took place as early as the school of Aqiba and was later developed by the circles of his followers during the second/third centuries into a whole system of active practice. In subsequent centuries in medieval Judaism in the twelfth/thirteenth centuries, this type of mystical system seems to have been regarded as a background to the Ashkanazi Hasidim movement in Germany and the early kabalah in Spain.[50]

[50] J. Dan, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Judaic Studies Programme, University of Cincinnati, 1984), p.16.

GROUNDS FOR RESTRICTION TO THE TEXT OF THE SONG OF SONGS

Mystical teachings of the Hekhalot/Merkabah tradition was at home at the very heart of the rabbinic communities. In fact it originated amongst them and was studied and taught by the circle of R. Yohanan for whom mystical teaching seemed to be important in his religious life and thus his name was accredited in the Talmud in this connection.[1]

In the second century, however, the study of the Merkabah was discouraged by the orthodox rabbinic circles and its teaching was hedged about with safeguards which reflected an attitude of unease about it. The Merkabah accounts, as already mentioned, express enthusiasm for the revelation of the glory of God, but apprehension is equally emphasised in so far as the dangers that may accompany the experience are concerned. Thus, the reading of the visionary parts of Ezekiel 1 which form the basis for mystical contemplation and mystical experience was prohibited in the synagogue.[2]

Enthusiasm represents the popular attitude of the Merkabah. Thus, Hekhalot hymns were attacked for the extravagant enthusiasm they show. Such an attack is expressed in the Talmud "He who multiplies the praise of God to excess shall be torn from the world".[3] Therefore, it is most probable that this popular side of the Merkabah gave free expression to enthusiasm embodied in the development of the tradition which was presumably oral. Consequently, its transmission, sometimes, contained miraculous details that accompanied the exposition of one or another of R. Yohanan's disciples.[4] Accordingly Mishnaic restrictions in Hag.2.1 states "the forbidden degrees may not be expounded before three persons, nor the story of creation before two, nor the chapter of the chariot before one alone, unless he is a sage that understands of his own knowledge".

According to the above ruling then it was forbidden to teach the work of the Merkabah

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1 T. Hag.. 13a.
2 J. Bowker, *The Targum and rabbinic literature*, 1969, p.38f.
3 Magilla, 18a.
4 J. Neusner, *Development of a legend*, 1970,p.170f.

in public or to initiate anyone into it unless he is a sage in his own right. Thus, the work of the Merkabah was not included in the normal teaching in Bet-ha-Midrash and it was also excluded from the synagogue teachings since the ruling in Mishna Megilla 4.10 forbade the use of Ezek.1 as a Haftarah.

It would appear therefore that Hekhalot/Merkabah teaching has no proper place in the public institutions of Judaism, as it was considered subject to misunderstanding and thus should be approached only by those of rigorous training in traditional law. Therefore, examples such as Elisha, already mentioned in Tos.Hag.2.3, whose end was in heresy, was to be taken as a warning against indulgence in mystical speculation of the Merkabah.

Nevertheless, despite the opposition, Merkabah teaching managed somehow secretly to be transmitted outside the mystic circles of the academies through an established master communicating the doctrine and its techniques to the inner circles of his disciples who had formed mystical circles of their own.[5] Also, prayers formulated in these circles sometimes managed to penetrate the established liturgy and likewise were opposed by the rabbinic authorities. It seems that the opposition was against the nature of their composition which, like the Hekhalot hymns, used multiplicity of praises and the duplicating of honorific epithets for the glorification of God. It was also thought that the monotony of their rhymes created a state of enthusiasm and ecstasy for the worshippers. Thus, R. Abbahu reports in the name of R. Lazar, "Wherever a worshipper has transgressed and said 'glorious in Majesty' instead of 'the holy God' he has not fulfilled his obligation, except if he substituted it for 'the holy God' in the New Year Liturgy and then only in Haftarah [additional prayer]".[6]

On the whole, it seems that the Merkabah teaching was a doctrine studied in secret, taught in secret and practised in secret.

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5 P. Alexander, *The Historical setting of the Hebrew book of Enoch*, JJS.28, 1977,p.167f.

6 E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, vol.1, (Jerusalem 1975.),p.123

The discussion in the next few pages is going to focus upon the objectionable element in the Merkabah text that led to its restriction.

Restrictions upon the Merkabah Text (Ezek.1)

The study of the divine chariot in Ezek. 1 seems to have given credit to those rabbis who were engaged in this study since they were regarded as authority in hidden natural lore. Thus, the rabbis of Pumbaditha academy were proud to claim that their leaders had transmitted both the legal and esoteric teaching of R. Yohanan B. Zakkai.[7] This, however, did not stop them imposing restrictions on the Merkabah doctrine which was primarily associated with Ezek.1. These restrictions created the impression that Merkabah teaching should be wrapped in secrecy. This attitude has been confirmed by Origen (184-253 C.E.). In his commentary on the Song of Songs, Origen states, "The custom of the Jews is that though their rabbis and teachers are to teach all the scriptures and their oral traditions to the young boys, they defer to later years the teaching of the following texts: the beginning of Genesis, the beginning and the end of Ezekiel and the book of the Song of Songs".[8] Jerome too has confirmed the same point as he was reported to have mentioned in some of his letters that there was a Jewish tradition which does not allow the study of the beginning and the end of the book of Ezekiel before the age of thirty.[9] Also T. Hag.13a has emphasised the importance of age in relation to the Merkabah study, it states "R. Yohanan said to R. Eleazar 'Come I will instruct you with the work of the chariot'. He replied: 'I am not old enough'. When he was old enough, R. Yohanan died. R. Assi then said to him: 'Come I will instruct you in the work of the chariot'. He replied: 'Had I been worthy I would have been instructed by R. Yohanan, your master'".

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7 D. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, (NewHaven 1980).p.182

8 G..Scholem *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (NewYork 1960). p.38.

9 G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, (New York, 1941), p.42 .

In another occurrence, T. Hag.13a expresses enthusiasm in relation to the study of this doctrine but at the same time indicates that it should be kept secret. It states, "R. Joseph was studying the work of the chariot, the elders of Pumbaditha were studying the work of the creation. The latter said to the former 'Let the master teach us the work of the chariot'. He replied: 'Teach me the work of creation'. After they had taught him the work of creation, they said to him: 'Let the master instruct us in the work of the chariot'. He replied: 'We have learnt concerning it'. Honey and milk under your tongue (S.S.4.11). The things that are sweeter than honey and milk should be under thy tongue".

It is obvious therefore that Merkabah doctrine was regarded with the utmost secrecy, and accordingly it was restricted as already stated in M.Hag.2.1. The rabbinic authorities seemed to be unwilling to permit for the general use of the synagogue the details of the Merkabah doctrine. Perhaps because it was known to have given rise to theosophic mysteries. Thus, this doctrine was guarded more carefully than the doctrine of creation, and therefore its discussion was not allowed unless in the presence of a sage.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that divergence of opinion on the Merkabah existed side by side before the prohibition of its study was imposed in M.Hag. 2.1. Thus we find while M. Meg.4.10 prohibits its reading in public, as it states "the portion of the chariot is not read as Haftara", Tos.Meg.3.34d on the other hand, permits such reading and states "the story of the chariot do they read it in public". Also, T.Meg.25a, 25b while discussing some problematic portions of the Bible as to whether they are permitted to be read or translated, ignores the portion of the chariot and shows no sign or reference to it as of a problematic nature.

Therefore, the very fact that permission was given by Tos.Meg.3.34d to read the Merkabah account suggests that it must have been restricted by some rabbinic authorities. On the other hand, the silence of the Talmud in this connection may imply that its prohibition was normative. Such an attitude seems to be in agreement with the tendency

that dominated the rabbinic circles at the beginning of the third century. This tendency was directed to withdrawing the work of the Merkabah out of public view.[10] Therefore the intention of the above ruling seems to keep secret the mystical doctrine of the Merkabah by keeping it out of the public view. This measure was perhaps designed to prevent potential speculation based on the text of Ezek. 1.

The important point in this connection and the most relevant to our discussion in relation to the Song of Songs later in this part, is to determine the crux of the Merkabah doctrine in the text of Ezek.1. T.Hag.13a relates the following account in relation to the extent of Ma'aseh Merkabah in Ezek.1:

An objection was raised: How far does the portion of the chariot extend? Rabbi said 'as far as the second and I saw'.[11] R. Isaac said: 'As far as Ḥashmal'[12] As far as 'and I saw' may be taught; thence forward only the heads of the chapters may be transmitted. Some however say as far as 'and I saw' the head of the chapters may be transmitted; thence forward, if he is a sage able to speculate by himself, yes, if not, no.

In the above account neither of the two rabbis seemed to have answered the question directly. In fact, in their answer both seemed to stress how far of the merkabah text was permitted to be taught rather than how far the text itself extended in Ezek.1. It is important though to notice that in their answer both rabbis seemed to agree that the permissible limit of teaching the text should not go beyond the end of Ezek.1.26. Accordingly, this means that the last two verses in Ezek.1., verses 27 and 28, which speak about the description of the deity on the throne and its surrounding glory, were not included in the limit set by them. Also, their answer suggests that beyond the line they have set there are other parts which are not permissible to be taught.

However, in another occurrence, T.Hag.13a reports a clearer and perhaps more explicit account as to the extent of the Merkabah text. This account is ascribed to R. Joseph talking to the elders of Pumbaditha academy: "...then they said to him we have

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[10] D. Halperin, *The merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven 1980), p.51.
[11] End of Ezek.1.26.
[12] Beginning of Ezek.1.27.

already studied therein as far as " and he said to me: son of man"..[13] He replied: "This is the very portion of the work of the chariot "

Thus, while R. Joseph outlines directly that the text of the Merkabah extends to the end of Ezek.1, which obviously includes verses 27 and 28, R. Isaac and Rabbai on the other hand, though indirectly, point to the same conclusion, but they have most certainly touched upon the focus of apprehension in the text which lies in expounding or contemplating Ḥashmal in verses 27 and 28,

In confirmation of this apprehension T.Hag.13a reports some relevant accounts which combine this point with the attempt of concealment of the book of Ezek. In one section T.Hag.13a reports: "But may one expound Ḥashmal ? Behold, there was once a child who expounded the mysteries of Ḥashmal and a fire went forth and consumed him. A child is different for he had not reached the fitting age'. Another section in T.Hag.13a reports:

The rabbis taught: there was once a child who was reading the book of Ezek. at his teacher's home and he perceived what Ḥashmal was, there upon a fire went forth from Ḥashmal and consumed him. So they sought to suppress the book of Ezek, but Hanania b. Hezekiah said to them: if he was a sage all are sages".

These two accounts, whether they are a piece of fiction or whether they are based on true events, do stress the esoteric/mystical character of the Merkabah on the one hand, and on the other hand, they confirm that contemplation of Ḥashmal in verses 27 and 28 in the text of Ezek.1 is the crux of the Merkabah text. These two verses speak of the anthropomorphic manifestation of the deity. Thus, their exclusion from the limit permissible for teaching by some rabbinic authorities, as previously discussed, accords with the general rabbinic tendency in this respect which avoids anthropomorphism.[14]

Spiegel,[15]in this connection, confirms the above point as he rightly believes that verses 27 and 28 are "the seat of danger" in Ezek.1. In fact the whole controversy in this chapter cited hinged on Ḥashmal , as to whether it should be excluded or included while teaching

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[13] End of Ezek.1.28.
[14] E. Urbach, *The Sages, their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem 1975), vol.1, p.152f.).
[15] S. Spiegel, "Towards Certainty in Ezek", *JBL*, 45 (1935), p.167.

or discussing the work of the Merkabah.

Spiegel is also right to believe that the attempt to withdraw or erase Ezek. 1 would have deprived others of its inspiring teachings. Therefore, by imposing prohibitions on the book would indicate that some of its parts are kept aside to be confined to the choicest few.[16]

This Mishnaic restriction on the Merkabah text had also left its mark on the Targum to Ezek. So it was included in the list of the forbidden Targumim since the description of the deity and throne of glory were matters sought to be concealed by the rabbinic authorities, particularly from the general public. Accordingly the Targum of Ezek. text was carefully worded as to what the Targumist might present in his paraphrase.[17] Therefore, while avoiding anthropomorphic interpretation with reference to the parts of the text related to the description of the deity as in verses 27 and 28, the Targum on the other hand speaks with mystical tone with reference to the Merkabah parts of the text. Thus, in so far as the crucial verses 27 and 28 are concerned, the Targum modifies the portrayal of the deity by substituting mild or vague expressions to the anthropomorphic sense on those verses by interpreting them as "an appearance of glory".[18]

Accordingly, it seems that the text of Ezek.1 was restricted on the ground that it might encourage undesirable speculations on the work of the Merkabah. This restriction lies sharply and heavily on verses 27 and 28 which represent the climax of the text.

Thus was the prevailing attitude among the rabbinic authorities towards the doctrine of the Merkabah and its implication upon the text of Ezek.1., particularly with relation to the anthropomorphic descriptions of God. This very point will be discussed in the following section in relation to the text of the Song of Songs.

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[16] S. Spiegel, "Ezek. or pseudo-Ezek", *Harvard Theological Review* 24 (1931), p.290.
[17] P. Alexander, "The Rabbinic List of Forbidden Targumim", *JJS*, 27 (1976), p.181f.
[18] S. Levy, "The Targum to Ezek", *HUCA*, 46 (1975), pp.140, 156.

Shiur Qomah doctrine and restrictions upon the text of the Song of Songs

In some earlier parts the present study had identified the text of the Song of Songs with the same mystical/esoteric category of Ezek.1. Likewise in the Song of Songs the crucial point in the text is the anthropomorphic concept of the deity. This concept is represented in the passage 5.10-16 which speaks of the detailed description of the lover in the Song who is identified with God. Both Scholem [19] and Lieberman believe that this passage is the basis for the Shiur Qomah doctrine. This view was supported by Loewe,[20] who adds in this connection that the term Qomah is derived from the Song of Songs 7.8 This may possibly explain the reason behind the inclusion of the Song of Songs in the list of restricted books together with Ezek.1 and the beginning of Gens. as mentioned above in Origen's statement.

According to Scholem,[21] the term Shiur Qomah embodies in its meaning God's majesty and beauty, His stature, His crown, His throne and His garment (the Haluq). The vision of the garment of light covering the glory (God) has the same effect upon the mystic since it arouses the same numinous qualities as the vision of the mystical body of God. The association of light with the vision of God seemed to have been, for some mystics, a way of moderating the audacity of the experience. Thus, some mystics reports having seen the 'light' or the 'splendour' of God as they were reluctant to claim publicly that they could actually see God.[22] The Shiur Qomah is the only text, among the treatises of the Hakhalot/Merkabah literature, which concentrates on the description of the divine body. It is the classical text of Jewish anthropomorphism. Beside the measurements and the names of the limbs of the divine body, there is a passage attached to this text in which its alleged authors, R. Aqiba and R. Ishmael, give assurances of a high religious status for

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[19] G..Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism* (New York 1960), pp.123-42; S. Lieberman, 'Mishnat hir ha- Shirim', appendix in Scholem's *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp.123-6.

[20] R. Loewe, "The divine garment and the Shiur Qomah", *HTR*, 58 (1965), p.153.

[21] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp.60f, 79.

[22] P. Chernus, "Vision of God in Merkabah mysticism", *JSJ*, 13 (1982), p.136f.

those who study this text and recite it. The passage reads:

R. Ishmael said: I and R. Aqiba are guarantors of this: that in this world the mystic is secure of a good life and in the world to come he may secure in a good name but only if he recites this text as Mishnah every day.[23]

These measurements and descriptions given in this text are beyond the comprehension of the human mind as they do not convey factual figures and descriptions. Therefore, the purpose of the text is to let the disciples appreciate that the divine body is beyond all knowledge. Thus, the list of the divine limbs is to be understood as mystical symbolism used by the disciple as a vehicle to attain mystical fulfilment.[24]

Scholem[25] and Lieberman had dated the text to the early stratum of the Christian era (2nd/3rd century). This date had been generally agreed upon by most scholars. However, Cohen[26] believes that this date may not necessarily apply to the text itself, rather to the genre of the anthropomorphic speculation of the deity as reflected in the Shiur Qomah text. He seems to argue in favour of a later date for the text as a result of inner Jewish development and thus suggesting the fifth century AD as an alternative date for the text. Also, Jewish scholars in the previous century regarded this text as a non-Jewish anthropomorphic treatise. Graetz,[27] for example, attributed the text to the late geonic period and believed it was composed as a result of Islamic influence.

In fact the anthropomorphic manifestation of the divine was a familiar tradition in the biblical era and among ancient Israelites. According to this tradition it was believed possible for certain individuals under certain circumstances to see God, who in his manifestation appears to them in human form which is believed to be the natural form for him to assume.[28] So Origen (d.245), in his homilies on Gen.1.13, seems to know about the

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[23] M. Cohen, *The Shiur Qomah* (University Press of America,1983), pp.222-3.

[24] J. Dan, "The concept of knowledge in Shiur Qomah", *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* (1979), pp.67-73.

[25] G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp.36-40; S. Lieberman, Appendix, pp.116-8.

[26] M. Cohen, *The Shiur Qomah*, pp.51 ff..

[27] H. Graetz, "Die Mystische literature in der gaonischen epoche", *MGWJ*, 8, 1859, pp.77f, 104f, 141f.

[28] J. Barr, *Theophany and anthropomorphism in the O.T.*, supp. to *VT*, 7 (1960), p.32f.

existence of this tradition amongst the Jews and the Christians of his time. He also believed that they might have derived this idea from biblical verses such as Isa.66.1 "the heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool", which suggest a cosmic dimension for the divine body.[29]

Also, this tradition seemed to have been widely known in the first century and was sometimes criticised and refuted in patristic literature. Some used to refer to it as "the Jewish tradition which believes that the father of all, the ungendered God, has head, feet, fingers and a soul just as a composite being".[30]

For the Hakhalot mystics this doctrine stems from the same mental climate of the Hekhalot hymns, and it is an indispensable presupposition of the mystic ascent to attain the presence of the divine.[31] As for the rabbinic circles of the time, though they were familiar with this doctrine yet some anti-anthropomorphic views were voiced among them and it was no surprise to find conflicting opinions on the subject inside and outside the Jewish camps. The controversy started from the Tannaitic time (first two centuries A.D.) where mystical speculation had reached a certain climax. The opposition was against those who sought the vision of God out of curiosity or for other reasons, such as to gain some material advantages. The rabbis therefore developed a new ideal in this connection; that is, respect for secrets and honour for God. Thus, those who were condemned by the rabbis were regarded as transgressors who did not respect the dignity of God.[32] Therefore, the trend to avoid anthropomorphic interpretation was thus found amongst the rabbis, such as R. Yohanan himself. He sought to transfer certain tasks to the angels in order to avoid corporeal expressions. He used this method in his explanation of verse 1.2 of the Song, "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth". There he

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[29] G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God", *HTR* 76 (1983), p.271f.

[30] Ibid.

[31] A. Altmann, "Moses Narboni's epistle of Shiur Qomah", in A. Altmann (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (1969), p.25f.

[32] P. Chernus, "The vision of God in Merkabah mysticism", *JSJ*, 13 (1982), p.126f.

believed that an angel brought the commandment from before the holy one and presented it to every Israelite, saying, "Do you accept this commandment? It contains so-and-so many laws...", and the Israelites answered, "Yes". Thereupon the angel kissed him on the mouth.[33]

Others in their adaptation of non-anthropomorphic interpretation transferred the role of angels to the commandment itself, which visited every Israelite and said to him, "Do you undertake to keep me ?", and he answered, "Yes", and straight away the commandment kissed him on the mouth.[34]

The Hebrew Book of Enoch may also be regarded as an example of such uneasiness about the Shiur Qomah speculation in the age of the Amoraim. There is a marked absence of the vision of God in the book. While the throne and its attendant angels are described in detail, the book speaks of no visualised manifestation of God on the throne. This attitude may rightly give the impression of some kind of censorship.[35] This impression is confirmed by some rabbinic views which deny that Enoch ascended into heaven without dying.[36]

Another example in this connection is to be found in the Apocalypse of Abraham. The absence of the anthropomorphic vision of God in the book has prompted the view, perhaps rightly, of the book as a polemic against anthropomorphism.[37]

Perhaps it is relevant to mention in this connection that the concept of "the body of truth" developed by the Valentinians is a similar example where the body of a divine angel is described using the alphabetical system.[38] Also the Magharians, a Jewish gnostic sect of 1st/2nd century CE, in their attempt to avoid anthropomorphic descriptions of

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[33] Canticle Rabbah, 1.2.2.
[34] Canticle Rabbah, 1.2.2.
[35] P. Alexander, "The historical setting of the Hebrew book of Enoch", *JJS*, 28 (1977), p.176.
[36] Gens.Rabbah, 25.1, see the opinion of R. Abbahu.
[37] C. Rowland, "The vision of God in Apocalyptic literature", *JSJ*, 10 (1979), p.151, fn.31.
[38] G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God", *HTR*, 76 (1983), p.280.

God, assigned these corporeal descriptions to an angel. This angel, they believed to have been created before the creation of the world, and who himself created the world.[39]

The El-Kesaite community of the 2nd century CE, was another sect in this connection who assigned corporeal descriptions to a couple of angels, male and female, the son of God and the holy spirit. They believed that the holy spirit is like Christ, but she is a female figure rising above the clouds.[40] Though in this case we have two angels instead of one, nevertheless the basic idea in all of these cases remains unchanged since all of them assume the human form of an angelic being while leaving God Himself formless.

These descriptions, names and figures in the Shiur Qomah text are used by the mystics to induce communion with the Godhead. The usual technique seems to be meditation on a certain aspect of the divine accompanied by the recitation of hymns. So depending upon the mystic religious and psychological orientation, one mystic may choose the aspect of the divine greatness while another mystic may choose the aspect of the divine beauty. Therefore, the information of the text together with the meditative technique which is the result of one mystic's own experience to attain communion with the divine is used by another mystic as a vehicle in his meditative attempt to attain the same goal.[41]

Biblical verses from the books of Isaiah, Psalms, Exodus, and 1 Chronicles are quoted in the Shiur Qomah text. However the Song of Songs was given a prominent position as the whole of Song 5.10-16 is included in this text.[42] Therefore, the Song of Songs was held in special esteem among the circles of the Tannaim and in particular among the followers of R. Aqibah who regarded the book as written by God and given to Israel by Him. They made use of it in their mystical endeavour to attain the divine presence.[43]

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[39] H. Wolfson, "The pre-existent angel of the Magharians and Al-Nahawandi", *JQR*, 51 (1960/61), pp.89-106.

[40] J. Baumgarten, "The book of El-kesai and Merkabah mysticism", *JSJ*, 17, (1986).p.220.

[41] M. Cohen,*The Shiur Qomah* (University Press of America,1983), pp.9, 168.

[42] Ibid., p.111.

[43] J. Dan, 'Mysticism in history, religion and literature', in J. Dan and F. Talmage (eds.),

Thus it seems as if the sanctity of the book depends upon this particular passage 5.10-16 for its possible association with the doctrine of Shiur Qomah. In this connection it as reported that R. Ishmael said, "When I recited this before R. Aqibah, he said to me, 'Everyone who knew this measure of our creator is certain of his share of the world to come.'"[44] Also, on the same subject of who has and who has not a share in the world to come, R. Aqibah was reported to have said, "He shall have no portion in the world to come whoever warbles the Song of Songs in a banquet hall and makes it into a kind of love-song".[45] Obviously it is secular love to which he is referring here. On another occasion, when R. Aqibah was told that fire flamed around Ben Azzai when he was expounding verse 1.10 of the Song, "Thy neck with string of beads", in reference to the study of the Torah, in his answer R. Aqiba hseemed to be hinting at the possible affinities between the Song of Songs and the merkabah doctrine as he turned and said to Ben Azzai, "Perhaps you were treating the secrets of the divine chariot".[46]

However, R. Aqibah was not the only one who perceived the Song of Songs with such esoteric/mystical nature. R. Zadekiah's account in this connection bears a mystic tone, as he states "The sages say that Canticles may be read according to its simple sense, but no profundity may be taught therein except to a judge or the head of the city".[47] Obviously the 'profundity' here, as Pope[48] rightly points out, does not refer to the simple allegory of God's love for Israel, but denotes some mystic/esoteric meaning. Others too seemed to have perceived mystical meaning in the Song. Josephus, for example, includes the Song among the books which he calls "hymns to God and instructions for life for men".[49] Origen, another example in this connection, not only extended the Jewish

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Studies in Jewish Mysticism (1982), p.4.

[44] S. Mussajov (ed.), *Merkabah Shelemah* (1921), p.386.

[45] Tos. Sanhedrin, 12.10.

[46] Song of Songs Rabbah, 1.10.2.

[47] E. Urbach, "The homitetical interpretation of Canticles", *Scripta hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), p.275.

[48] M. Pope, *The Song of Songs* (New York, 1977), p.117.

[49] "Against Apion", 1.8, F.N.C.

interpretation of the book as historical allegory representing the relationship between God and Israel into the relationship between Christ and the Church, but also developed mystical interpretation for the book by modifying the allegory into a spiritual love which refers to the mystical union between God and the human soul. He perceived the book as "the experience of the believing soul", and wrote in his commentary on the Song, "Blessed is he who enters the holy place but more blessed is he who enters the holy of holies; blessed is he who keeps the sabbath but more blessed is he who keeps the sabbath of sabbaths, so blessed is he who sings the holy songs, but more blessed is he who sings the Song of Songs".[50] Gregory of Nyssa, too perceived the mystical/spiritual interpretation of the book, and he thus says, "It is the soul as a spouse who enters into spiritual union with God".[51] Later, Theodore, in expressing his adherence to the mystical/spiritual sense of the book, writes, "There are some who do not admit that the Song of Songs has a spiritual sense, we must deal with the sacred scriptures as not to regard letters merely, but we must draw out the hidden spirit from the obscurity".[52] Even in later times, in the Middle Ages, the Song continued to be viewed in this mystical/spiritual sense. Thus we find Bernard of Clairvaux who found in the Song a fertile field for mystical endeavour states in this connection, "The unction and experience can alone teach the understanding of such a song".[53] Also, Gregory Nanzianzenus (born between 326 and 329) seemed to have transmitted the same tradition once related by Origen regarding the restrictions on the teaching of the Song, together with other biblical texts. Gregory's version of the tradition seems to be not only complementary to Origen's version in so far as to indicate the reason for such restrictions, but also confirms the mystic nature of these texts. His version of the tradition says,

The Hebrew sages relate that the Hebrews had an ancient law—and it is a wise and praiseworthy law—

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[50] C. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs* (London, 1857), p.51.
[51] Ibid., p.64.
[52] Ibid., p.66.
[53] Ibid., p.68.

according to which it is not permitted to people of all ages to study every book of the Bible. Since not every book is comprehensible to every person, it is also not of benefit to every person. On the other hand, they held that things whose meaning was hidden from an inexperienced person on account of their strange form, can do him harm; while certain books were permitted to all from the outset and had become the heritage of all, other books were made available only to those of twenty-five years of age and upwards. They are books under whose simple surface a mystic grace lies hidden.[54]

Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria (d.373), also seems to believe that the Song of Songs is a book of esoteric/mystical nature and should be confined to the hands of those who are eligible to understand its secret doctrines. Thus he writes, "Its doctrines are secrets and only those who are versed in allegory ought to study it".[55]

Judging from the above discussion, it is perhaps possible to suggest that those who voiced those accounts expressing their opinions and their views, explicitly or implicitly, in support of the esoteric/mystical nature of the Song, were most probably aware of its possible connection with the Shiur Qomah doctrine which could be the most probable reason behind the restriction of this book.

However, modern scholars such as Cohen[56] reject the view that there is a connection between the Song of Songs and the Shiur Qomah doctrine. He believes that there was no rabbinic prohibitions imposed upon the study of the text of the Song, since Origen's statement in this connection refers to this restriction as a custom observed by the Jewish community rather than a rabbinic ruling. But it is equally true that the rabbinic authority did not express any disapproval of this custom. This very point confirms the fact that the rabbinic authority if it was not publicly in total agreement with the community in the application of such stringency on the book, then at the very least in this connection the rabbinic authority was tacitly in favour of its application. Therefore Lieberman[57] is right to believe that this custom was agreed upon by the rabbinic authority too, though without their suggestions or instructions in the first place.

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[54] E. Urbach, "The homilitical interpretation of canticles", *Scriptahienosolv nitara*, 22 (1971), p.25, fn.14.
[55] C. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs*, p.62f.
[56] M. Cohen, *The Shiur Qomah*, p.19f.
[57] S. Lieberman, Appendix, in G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p.126.

Halperin[58]on the other hand, dismisses the suggestion that anthropomorphism was the objectionable point in both texts of the Song of Songs and Ezek.1, and eventually led to their restriction. He believes that the erotic nature of the Song was the objectional point that led to the restriction of teaching. As for Ezek 1, he believes that the case of this text is similar to that of the Hekhalot, in the sense that the objectionable point in both texts is not the aspect of anthropomorphism but rather the reference to the rainbow. He believes that in the Hekhalot text the appearance of the rainbow in relation to the Sar, the semi-divine prince, implied that he looked like a rainbow. In Ezek.1, Ezek. seemed as if he was bowing to the rainbow. Therefore, the rabbinic authority in order to preserve the purity of the people's faith applied some restricting measures upon the text.

Perhaps it may be possible in this connection to suggest that preserving the purity of the faith could have been the reason, or one of the reasons, behind restricting the text of the Song of Songs. If the horror of anthropomorphism, as Halperin believes, was not the objectionable point in the case of the Song of Songs, it may be possible to suggest here that it may have been the horror of dualism rather than the erotic nature of the text that led to its restriction. Aqiba's understanding of the book shares a common ground with its usual allegorical interpretation. Both treatments of the text identify the lover with God. However, in the usual allegorical approach while the beloved is identified with Israel or the church, R. Aqiba's approach on the other hand makes no identification of the beloved in the text. As previously mentioned, gnostic sects of the first and second century were aware of the Shiur Qomah doctrine. They used to ascribe all descriptions and measurements to an angelic/divine being in order to avoid anthropomorphic descriptions of God. The Valentinians, for example, ascribed these descriptions to a female figure. They believed that the female element is part of the divine that is involved in the created world. It is the fallible part of the Godhead which in order to be saved must reunite with

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[58] D. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot* (Tubingen, 1988), p.258f.

the male element.[59] The El-Kesaite sect, as already discussed, also described a female figure in their writings alongside the male figure.[60] It seems that these and other ideas were in circulation at the time, and were derived from various sources and sometimes, as Wilson believes, with little or no understanding of their original context.[61]

Therefore, in so far as the rabbinic authority is concerned, it would be completely out of line if the lover and the beloved in the Song of Songs were to be understood along the same lines of this male/female gnostic dualism. Surely it would constitute a greater threat to the purity of the people's faith than erotic language would do in this respect. It would be as

Baumgarten rightly states in this connection "as one who entered the Pardes, cut down its plants and attempted to root them in other orchards".[62] Particularly, unlike dualism, erotic language is not unknown in the biblical texts. Therefore, if this suggestion can be sustained, then there will be an important claim and a legitimate ground for imposing some restrictions upon the text of the Song in order to exclude ideas of this nature which conflict with strict monotheism, from being incorporated in the mainstream of faith as well as in the corpus of the mystical literature. However, it was not until later times, during the period of Kabbalism that parallel ideas of ancient gnostic dualism found their way into Jewish esoterism. This may have happened either independently,[63] or through the influence of eastern Judaised gnostic sources as in the case of Sefer ha-Bahir (13th century) which was the first work that contained the female element alongside the male one as symbol of the divine feminine power.[64]

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[59] J. Jervell, "Imago die Gen.1.26f in Spätjudentum", *der Gnosis und in der paulinisch en briefen (Göttingen, 1960), pp.161-3.*

[60] J. Baumgarten, op.cit.

[61] R. Wilson, "Jewish gnosis and gnostic origins", *Hebrew Union College*, 14 (1973), p.183.

[62] J. Baumgarten, op.cit., p.223.

[63] J. Dan, *G. Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York, 1987), p.140.

[64] G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1941), p.74f.

Going back to the original discussion, it seems that the rabbinic authority in so far as the possible association between the Shiur Qomah doctrine and the Song of Songs is concerned, had adopted a two-fold attitude in this respect. On the one hand, the rabbinic authority neither approved nor disapproved, publicly or otherwise, of R. Aqiba's attitude and understanding towards the book of the Song of Songs. On the other hand, while tacitly approving of the restrictions applied and practised by the community in relation to this book, the rabbinic authority preferred not to issue any formal rulings to that effect, thereby giving the impression that this book is treated as normative. Perhaps they thought that any formal ruling to restrict the study of this book would draw even more attention and maybe unnecessary enthusiasm to the association of this book with the Shiur Qomah doctrine which is the most popular mystical aspect of Merkabah mysticism.

However, the views of the rabbinic authority in this respect were reflected in the Targumic interpretation of the Song of Songs which made clear this possible association between the text and the Shiur Qomah doctrine. The Targumist in his treatment of the crucial passage of the Song 5.10-16 avoided every single anthropomorphic description. It appears, therefore, that indulgence in Shiur Qomah speculation proved unacceptable to rationalistic Jewish thought. This very attitude is clearly illustrated in the Targum treatment of the Song which is to be discussed in the following section.

Shiur Qomah and the Targum to the Song of Songs

The Targum was the first commentary on the Song of Songs which reveals an overall picture of how the Song is to be interpreted so as to illustrate the relationship between God and Israel in an historical allegory. When the Targum began to take shape, it was faced with the Christian interpretation of the text which inherited the Jewish allegorical interpretation and applied it to Christ and the Church. This type of interpretation was reflected in Origen's and Theodore's commentary on the book. On the other hand, they

were faced with the mystical tendencies among the Jewish circles pressing their ideas of interpretation to identify the description of the lover in 5.10-16 in the text with the description of the mystical body of God. Thus, finding himself fighting on two fronts, the Targumist geared his interpretation to emphasise the significance of the Torah, particularly Israel's possession of the oral Torah which seemed an ideal theme to solve the problem. So on the one hand the Targumist managed to play down the mystical tendencies put forward by devotees of Jewish mysticism, and to keep them out of the public reach. On the other hand, he managed to repudiate the Christian interpretation.[65]

In keeping with the basic allegory of the interpretation of the Song, the Targumist would be expected to replace the lover in the Song with God, and therefore to speak of the physical characteristics of the lover as belonging to God. Instead, the Targumist made reference to the law. Thus, in the treatment of verse 5.10 "my beloved bright and ruddy", the Targumist made clear that the cause of the divine ruddiness is the Lord's own scholarship. In this connection he had drawn the whole notion of the radiant garment of the Lord from the term .....He suggests that the wrapping of the garment is an indispensable preliminary to the Lord's study of the Bible and to His academic standing. In other words, the divine ruddiness is the outcome of God's rabbinic scholarship. However, the Targumist in his interpretation has retained the garment motif which is, as already discussed, part of the Shiur Qomah doctrine.[66] Loewe's[67] remarks seem to afford a convincing explanation in this connection. He believes that by the Targumist time,[68] the association between the description of the mystical body of God and the mystical garment of God had become an established convention, on the line of the Haluq, particularly among the mystic circles and perhaps secretly outside their circle. Accordingly, the

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[65] R. Loewe, "Apologetic motifs in the Targum to the Song of Songs", in A.. Altmann (ed.), *Biblical Motifs* (1966), p.195f.

[66] L. Schneckloth, *The Targum to the Song of Songs* (1977).

[67] R. Loewe, "The divine garment and the Shiur Qomah", *HTR*, 58 (1965), p.157f.

[68] Almost all scholars agree on the 7th or 8th century.

Targumist found it difficult not to retain this motif in the context of his interpretation. So he retained the motif but on entirely different lines which is appropriate in meaning, and which corresponds to the general tendency of the exaltation of the Torah. By so doing, the Targumist was able to repudiate the original mystical meaning of the divine garment. Therefore, the Targumist, in his treatment of the controversial passage of the text, 5.10-16, has eliminated the reference to the person of God. So his treatment in this connection was a follows:

The Song of Songs		*The Targum*
5.11	His head	His law
5.11	His locks	His words
5.13	His cheeks	His tablets of stone
5.13	His lips	Lips of the wise man speaking the law
5.14	His hands	The twelve tribes
5.14	His body	The twelve signs of the zodiac; the tribes
5.15	His legs	The righteous on the support of law
5.15	This is my lover	This is the mighty power of God
5.16	His palate	The law (the words of the law)

The only exception in this connection is the reference to the eyes. This is because God's eye is a well-known biblical expression[69] which can easily pass unnoticed.

However, while the Targumist in the above mentioned passage was trying to avoid human discription of God, he on other occasions in his interpretation ascribed human descriptions and human actions to God as follows:

The Song of Songs	*The Targum*
A) God as a man	
1.2 "let him kiss me…"	And he spoke to us face to face as a

[69] e.g.., Deut.11.12

	man who kisses his friend.
6.2c "to feed in the garden"	As a man who provides his beloved son with delicacies
6.2d "and to gather lilies"	As a man who gathers roses from the plain
B) God as an old man	
5.15 "his countenance is as Lebanon"	He is filled with love towards them like an old man
C) God as a young man	
5.15 "excellent as the cedar"	Like a young man strong and mighty as the cedar
D) God as handsome and beautiful	
1.16 "behold you are fair my beloved also pleasant"	The assembly of Israel answered before the sovereign of the world and said how handsome your holy shekinah
2.3 "Like the apple tree among the trees of the forest so is my lover among the young men"	Just as the citron is beautiful and praised among the barren trees and all the world knew it, so was the sovereign of the world beautiful and was praised among the angels when he revealed himself upon Mount Sinai.

Also, the Targum describes God as expressing human emotions. These emotions, though they were introduced in a biblical context, nevertheless obviously imply and anthropomorphic sense. The Targum speaks of the following emotions:

The Song of Songs	*'The Targum*
A) God's anger	
1.6 "My mother's sons were angry with me"	False prophets have been the cause of fierce anger of the Lord. When Israel went out of Egypt, wicked ones said: The water of the sea he is able to dry up, but the mud he is unable to dry up. At the very moment the anger of God burnt against them.
B) God's anxiety	
2.9 "Behold he stands behind our walls"	He saw the blood of the passover sacrifice...and he was anxious in the highest heaven.
C)God's desire	
7.11 "I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me"	Jerusalem said: All the time I walked in the way of the master of the world, He causes the Shekinah to dwell in my midst as his desire is towards me.

There are a few more examples related to other kinds of human emotions ascribed to God, such as God's will and particularly God's love which has been explicitly described in the Targum, as in verses 1.2; 4.9; 4.10; 5.15, and 8.7 Moreover, the Targumist, in his interpretation used human terms of relationship, adopting them from the Song itself, in describing the relations between God and Israel. Thus, in the Targum we find terms like "my sister" used in verses 4.9, 10, and 5.1, 2; "my beloved" used in verses 1.15; 2.10, 13; 5.2, and 6.4; and "my daughter" was used in verse 1.15.

Also, one more striking point in this connection is the fact that Israel, in the Targum, calls God "my lover" as in verses 2.10; 4.16; 5.8, 16; 6.1, 3, and 8.14. Therefore, it is clear that the Targum to the Song of Songs does not avoid anthropomorphism consistently and in details. However, it is important to mention in this connection that there was clear and apparent avoidance of anthropomorphism on the side of the Targumist in the treatment of the description of the lover in the Song, in verses 5.10-16, which is the crux of text.

Conclusion

The subject of Merkabah doctrine and practice seemed to be threatening to rational Jewish thought. It was therefore opposed by orthodox rabbinic circles who preferred to restrict its study to prevent potential speculation. Accordingly, Ezek.1, which is the basis of this doctrine, fell under such restrictions. However, it is important to note in this connection that the main controversy of restriction of this text lies in verses 1.27, 28, which speak of the vision of God in human form. Therefore the Targum to Ezek. avoided explicit anthropomorphic interpretation for those verses by using substitute expressions instead. This very point of anthropomorphic description of God repeats itself in more details in the text of the Song of Songs, verses 5.10-16 which speak of the description of the body of the lover who is identified with God. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Targumist treated this passage in the same manner he treated verses 1.27, 28 in Ezek.1. In fact, the Targumist while allowing himself to use anthropomorphic terms, expressions and descriptions in relation to God in other instances of the Song, on the other hand he clearly and completely avoided anthropomorphic interpretation to the person of God in this particular passage. So this deliberate avoidance of anthropomorphic language on the part of the Targumist confirms his awareness of the assumption that this passage is associated with the doctrine of Shiur Qomah, the most mystical aspect of Merkabah literature. Obviously reservation in this respect did not start with the Targumist

himself. In fact he was following the rabbinic attitude and approach towards such mystical tendencies which started to develop in earlier centuries. Therefore he too undoubtedly felt that mystical speculation of this kind was only safe in the hands of those experienced in these matters.

Thus it seems right to assume that mystical teaching of the Merkabah doctrine is the point of connection between the text of the Song of Songs and that of Ezek.I, while the text of Ezek.I is the basis of Merkabah doctrine. The text of the Song of Songs, on the other hand, is the basis of Shiur Qomah doctrine, the most mystical aspect of Merkabah literature. It is therefore possible to assume that the reasons behind the reported restriction on the study of the text of the Song are of the same nature as those reasons behind the restriction of the text of Ezek.I.

Perhaps it is right in this connection to agree with Dan[70] who believes that a combination between the detailed account of the divine mysteries described in Ezek.I and the detailed description of the divine figure in the Song of Songs would formulate a concept similar to that which is expressed in the Shiur Qomah text. This supposed association of the Song with the Shiur Qomah doctrine was expressed even more succinctly in the word of Blumenthal[71] when he states, "While the figurative context of the Shiur Qomah is in Ezek.1.27-28, its literary context is in the Song of Songs". Also, it is possible that Origen too was perhaps aware of this association between the Song of Songs and the Shiur Qomah doctrine, when he made his statement regarding restricted texts in the bible.

Therefore, we can perhaps assume that what we have in the Song of Songs is a quasi-mystical experience as a result of its association with the mystical parable "four entered pardes" on the one hand, and with the doctrine of Shiur Qomah on the other. Also, in so

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[70] J. Dan, "The Chambers of the Chariots", *Tarbiz*, 47 (1978), 49ff.

[71] D. Blumenthal,"Interpretation of Shiur Qomah text", in J. Dan and F. Talmage (eds.), *Studies in Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), p.167, fn.4.

far as the Shiur Qomah is concerned, it seems that the Song of Songs had developed Ezek's vision of the divine body in such a way intending to make popular and possible for every worshipper to enjoy, sing and share the experience despite the esoteric theme underlying the text. However, contrary to its supposed basic intentions, the text was made available only to the selected few. Considering the possibility of its mystical inclinations and associations, the Song of Song may be regarded as an ancient model or perhaps a prototype of Merkabah mysticism.

THE SONG OF SONGS AND MEDIEVAL JUDAISM

A. *The rise of intellectual influences*

Biblical exegesis until about the twelfth century was generally characterised by its tendency towards the Peshat method of interpretation; namely the explanation of the text in accordance with the linguistic connotation of the words. This method reached its highest point in commentaries such as those of Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Samuel ben Meir. Yet subsequent years brought forth exegetical writings of different characters which deviated to a large extent from the Peshat method of interpretation.

The factors that brought about this change from the accepted method are the two intellectual Islamic currents of philosophy and mysticism which became very influential in Jewish life of that age. Thus the interpretation of the Song of Songs, among other biblical exegesis and many other spheres of Jewish literary activity, came under the impact of the new trends to which it appeared to be beautifully suited.

In view of the importance of the influences and the impact they had on the interpretation of the Song, and indeed for a better understanding of their significance to that age, it might be appropriate first to give a general account of the rise and development of these two intellectual elements.

1. *Philosophy*

After the disappearance of the Hellenistic Jewish philosophy, a new philosophic movement did not penetrate Jewish intellectual life until the Middle Ages. Jews acquired Greek thought influenced by Islamic philosophy, for this time Jewish philosophy arose in the intellectual world of Islam. Thus in their adaptation of Greek thought, Jewish scholars depended heavily and primarily on the works of the Arab philosophers who were versed in Greek thought.[1] Also, while undergoing continuous development, Jewish philosophy throughout its duration which stretched to the end of the Middle Ages,

[1] I. Husik, *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York 1916), p.xx.

maintained its connexion with Islamic philosophy. In the early stages of its development, for example, scholars such as Saadya of the tenth century and Joseph al-Basir of the eleventh century, were among others who were influenced by the religio-philosophic ideas of the Islamic kalam.

Later in the course of its development, Jewish philosophy came under the influence of Neoplatonism and was very much indebted to the Arabic translation of Neoplatonic sources, as well as to the Islamic Neoplatonic writers such as the literature of Ikhwan al-Sala, "The pure brethren of Basra". This line of thought was adopted by scholars such as Moses Ibn Ezra (d.1139), the author of the philosophical treatise in Arabic entitled"The Garden"; also Ibn Gabirol (d.1070), whose writings enjoyed wide popularity and thus helped in the diffusion of Neoplatonism in Europe. Bahya Ibn Paquda (d.1100) is another famous name of the Neoplatonic school. He was a man of deep personal piety as well as a philosopher and had produced a highly popular ethical treatise in Arabic entitled "The duties of the heart".

In the same way, Jewish Aristotelians such as Moses ben Maimon (d..1204), and Levi ben Gershon (d.1344), understood the interpretations of Aristotle as taught by the Arab Aristotelians, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, whose translations and writing were often incorporated or depended upon in their work [2]

Gradually philosophy was regarded as the highest form of knowledge and consequently had a profound influence both on secular sciences and on the spiritual life of Judaism. Thus biblical exegesis as other aspects of religious literature, was subject to this influence and began to search for the deeper sense of the Bible in a philosophic approach.

Philosophic exegesis attempted to harmonise the teaching of the Bible with the current philosophical thoughts as a way of solving the problem in connexion with the

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[2]J. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism* (London, 1964), p.47ff.

interpretation of the text. This type of exegesis started at the time of Saadya Gaon (892-942), who laid its foundation. He believed that there is nothing in the Bible that contradicts the principle of reason, and his book *Kitab al-Amanāt,* "The book of creeds", was the first philosophical treatment of the doctrine of Judaism where he used the Arabs' philosophical method.[3]

This philosophical movement became more prevalent from the twelfth century onwards. Its development started from the time of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204). Although he was not a Bible commentator, yet in his work "Dalīl al-Hāi'rīn" ("The guide to the perplexed"), which was written in Arabic in about 1190, he dealt extensively with various portions of the Bible and with difficult verses trying to rationalise not only the story of creation and the prophetic visions, but also most of the laws and precepts. Similarly, many of his disciples and advocates found no satisfaction in the Midrashic exposition of the Bible with all its emphasis on national history and hopes. It was more satisfactory for them to find in many of the bible stories philosophic allegories depicting the struggle of man to attain perfection.

The increasing spread of Greek thought in Arabic translation together with the inclination for philosophic justification made questioning of accepted beliefs and practices a common phenomenon among all religious groups.[4] Thus this philosophic tendency was sometimes exaggerated in its application and was carried to such an extreme that it is sometimes considered to have stripped the Bible of its plain human teaching. Nevertheless, many kept within bounds and followed Maimonides' way in their rational understanding of the Bible.[5]

However, the philosophic movement did not pass without opposition. The main struggle of medieval Jewish thinkers was against the orthodox scholars and their circles,

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[3] W. Oesterly and G. Box, *A History of the Literature of Rabbinical and Medieval Judaism* (1920), p.255.
[4] S. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York 1958), vol.8, p.55.
[5] M. Waxman, *A History of Jewish literature* (New York, 1943), vol.2, p.24ff.

as the majority of these conservative leaders were believers of an age-old tradition which regarded philosophic speculation as unbelief, that is, leading to heresy.[6] Thus Maimonides, who belonged to the Aristotelian school of thought, was met with severe opposition in his attempt to reconcile Judaism with the philosophy of the age. Also, a great controversy raged among the Jews of the thirteenth century on the very right of philosophy to exist and against philosophic interpretation for its allegorisation of the text which, according to the opponents, dissolved the correct reality of biblical personalities and events.

The philosophic allegorists, on their part, denied the accusation that they wanted to substitute an allegorical interpretation for the primary historical meaning of the text, and claimed that their method sought to discover the inner dimension of meaning in these historical events.[7]

The strict talmudists had also shown dissatisfaction with the philosophic approach of interpretation. They thought that in his attempt Maimonides had subordinated religion to philosophy, and so they predicted the destruction of Judaism if the views of Maimonides were to gain the upper hand.[8] This bitter strife between the followers of Maimonides and their opponents reached a point in some communities, such as Spain and southern France, where the antagonists excommunicated each other, and later the height of the controversy results in the burning of Maimonides' work.[9]

With the death of Maimonides, the philosophic movement in Jewish circles began to decline. This decline was partly caused by the rise of the Kabbalah, as a production of the strife between the Maimonists and their opponents, and partly by the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, an event which brought the centre of Jewish learning there to an end.[10]

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[6] S. Baron, *op.cit.*, p.68.
[7] J. Guttman, *op.cit.*, pp.183, 187.
[8] H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (1919), vol.3, P.310ff
[9] J. Guttman, *op.cit.*, p.183.
[10] I .Husik, *Philosophical Essays* (Oxford, 1952), p.65.

Therefore, both Muslim and Greek thought played a considerable role in the development of Jewish philosophy and shaped its contribution throughout its duration in the Middle Ages.

2. *Mysticism*

The second intellectual current that can hardly be overlooked in this connexion is that of mysticism. The mystic influence of the Islamic environment within which Jews lived, took hold of the minds of some leading scholars and became an important factor in their spiritual life.

The development of sufism into a powerful movement attracted many minds dissatisfied with the results of philosophy. In the thirteenth century, the sufi movement in Egypt witnessed the height of its spiritual growth which was not without its influence amongst Egyptian Jewry. Thus, a mystical movement arose in Jewish circles dissatisfied with philosophy, and in their turn they drew extensively on the literature of the Muslim sufis, particularly that of al-Ghazali.[11]

the members of this movement called themselves Ḥasidim 'pietists'. The term "Ḥasid" was not a newly-employed title; in fact, it had been used by the ascetics of the Rabbinic age.[12]

The first who bore this title in the pietist movement of the Middle Ages was Rabbi Abraham he-ḥasid (d.1223), whose full name was Abraham Ibn Abi Rabi'a.[13] He seems to have been a prominent figure in the pietist movement for he was referred to by other members of the circle as "our master in the path of the Lord".[14] On other occasions he was referred to as "the head of the pietists".[15]

Little is known about the origin of the movement, and most of the information we

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[11] P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool* (London, 1981), p.4.
[12] S. Safrai, "The teaching of the pietists in Mishnaic literature", *JJS* 16, 1965, pp.15-33.
[13] N. Wieder, *Islamic Influences on the Jewish Worship* (Oxford, 1947), p.35ff.
[14] S. Rosenblatt (ed), *High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides* (New York, 1938), vol.2, p.290.
[15] P. Fenton, *op.cit.*, p.7.

have is derived from the works of Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237), who was a zealous member and a defender of the movement and a close associate of Abraham he-Ḥasid (d.1223).[16] In fact, both Abraham Maimonides and Abraham he-Ḥasid were not the originators of the movement, but rather had associated themselves with an existing circle of Ḥasidim who were identified as some kind of brotherhood calling themselves "disciples of the prophets", referring to the master-disciple relationship practised by the prophets.[17] Nevertheless, both Abraham Maimondes and he-Ḥasid helped in introducing into the synagogues the kind of liturgy which is inspired by the pietist motives.[18] David, Abraham Maimonides' son, who succeeded his father as leader of the Egyptian Jewry, and his brother Obadiyah, were both sympathisers of the pietist movement. Therefore the support the Maimonides family gave to this movement, particularly through the efforts of Abraham Maimonides since he was a political and religious figure in the community, helped the expansion of the movement within Egypt and abroad.[19] In this connection, Abraham's response, for example, mentions some inquiries from the pietist circle in Alexandria and also expresses some opposition by some communal leaders.[20] At the same time pietist circles seemed to have existed in localities outside Egypt, such as Jerusalem,[21] and Baghdad[22] as well as Damascus where Jewish pietists would gather around the sufi circle of al-Hassan Ibn Hud (thirteenth century) to study Maimonides' guide taught by him.[23] We are also told that the physician Abdul-Sayyid al-Israeli of Damascus (d.1315) used to have religious discussions with some sufi shaikhs before his

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16 P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments by Abraham he-Hasid the Jewish sufi", *JSS*, 25, 1, 1981, p.47.
17 G. Cohen, 'The soteriology of R. Abraham Maimoni', *PAAJR*, vol.35, 1967, p.76.
18 N. Wieder, *op.cit.*, p.31ff.
19 P. Fenton, *the Treatise of the Pool* (London, 1981), p.20.
20 S. Goitein, 'Documents on Abraham Maimon and his pietist circle' *Tarbiz*, 33, 1963/4, pp.184-6.
21 N. Wieder, *op.cit.*, p.57ff.
22 P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool, op.cit.*, fn.62.
23 . Goldziher, 'Ibn Hud the Mohammadan mystic and the Jews of Damascus', *JQR*, 6, (1893) pp.218-20.

conversion to Islam.[24]

Abraham Maimonides himself was a great admirer of the sufi mystics of Islam. In his work, *Kifayat al-Abidin*, 'The high ways to perfection', he maintains that the sufis were worthier disciples of the prophets of Israel than were the Jews of his time.[25] This work which aims to expound the highways that lead to communion with God, was very much influenced by the sufi doctrines, as it reflects deep inspiration of their literature and practice as well as their vocabulary. Its composition too, was on a plan similar to a sufi manual of al-Ghazali's *Ihya' ulum aldin*.[26] The work was based on two principles—that is, of fear and love of God. Fear of God is a stage through which a devotee had to pass in the process of his religious development towards the true love of God, followed by or leading to gnosis. These elements no doubt correspond to maḥafah "fear", mahabbah "love", and ma'rifah "gnosis", which are found in the works of sufis as aspects of devotion.[27]

However, despite his admiration for the sufi mystics, Abraham Maimonides in his efforts to gain support for the movement, presented the pietist doctrines, which were influenced by or borrowed from Islamic models, as restoration of earlier practices of ancient Israelites which had fallen into the hands of the sufi Muslims. Thus he always tried to justify his teachings by Jewish sources on the ground that Ḥasidut was not gentile but originally Jewish borrowed by the sufis.[28] He therefore states:

> You are aware of the ancient sages of Israel, whose traditions are not or little practised among our contemporaries, have now become the practice of the sufi of Islam on account of the antiquities of Israel...observe then these wonderful traditions and sigh with regret over how they have been transformed from us and appeared amongst a nation other than ours whereas they have disappeared in our midst. My soul shall weep because of the pride of Israel that was taken from them and bestowed upon the nations of the world.[29]

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[24] P. Fenton, *op.cit.*, fn.88.
[25] S. Rosenblatt (ed.), *op.cit.*, 1927, vol.1, p.50.
[26] G. Cohen, *op.cit*, p.83.
[27] A.J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London, 1950), p.37, 42ff.
[28] P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool* (London, 1981), p.8.
[29] *Ibid.*, p.8.

Furthermore, the pietists' circle not only believed that they were restoring an ancient Jewish doctrine, but that this doctrine was revealed to Adam and then passed on to the patriarchs. A few years later it was lost and was restored later to Moses who imparted it to Israel, and eventually it fell into the hands of the Gentile. This idea is clearly expressed by Obadyah Maimonides in his "Treatise of the pool", as he states: "After the patriarchs the bond was severed and the intercessor passed away until the sublimest of creatures, Our Master Moses, came and restored it through the will of God".[30]

Attraction to sufism in the thirteenth century was great, and therefore conversion to Islam continued to mount even among learned Jews such as Abu'l-Barakat, Samuel Al-Maghribi, and Isaac b. Abraham Ibn Ezra, who became a devotee of Muslim philosophy. In fact, sufi mystical sessions were often attended by Jews with the result that they embraced Islam. This is reported, for example, with regard to al-Qushair's sessions (d.1074) and continued as late as al-Sha'ran's sessions (d.1565).[31]

This tendency towards sufism was regarded by the traditionalist Jews as nihilism. Its impact, therefore, on Abraham Maimonides as a communal leader was also grave. Thus, in such a challenging time where neither Moses Maimonides' exposition of Judaism in his "Guide", nor Bahya's exposition in his "Duties of the hearts", seemed to be enough, as times had changed considerably since his father's days., Abraham appealed publically to the masses to join the special path of the pietists. Previously, this path was accessible only to those who were authorities in metaphysics; now it became wide open to all truly pious in the community since the spirit of the time and the environment had the aim for a much broader and wider audience. Therefore, in order to gain wider appeal, Abraham used a popular style in his work "High ways to perfection", which was of great need and urgency to the age and also served the purpose of attack upon mystical nihilism.[32] Thus

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[30] *Ibid*, p.8.
[31] S. Goitein, "A Jewish addict to sufism", *JQR*, 1953/4, p.38ff.
[32] G. Cohen, *op.cit.*, p.51ff.

Abraham Maimonides' efforts were highly acknowledged among the pietist circles, and he was held in high esteem among his contemporaries. He was sometimes described, among other things, as "the presence of God dwelling among us".[33] On another occasion, he was described as one "who had pushed the world out of his heart and was seeking God alone".[34]

In addition to Abraham Maimonides' work "High ways", sufi influence and penetration of sufi thought among Jewish circles was also displayed by the copying of some Islamic mystical writings into Hebrew characters for the interest of Jewish readers. These included al-Ghazali's spiritual autobiography, some of al-Sahrawadi's writings, and some of al-Hallaj's poems on the love of God.[35]

Another example in this connexion is the writings of R. Abraham he-ḥasid. His mystical commentary on the Song of Songs, to which reference will be made in a subsequent part of the present discussion, was inspired by sufi ideas and permeated with sufi terminology. He understood the book as an esoteric guide for the "lover" through his spiritual stages.[36] Other fragments of the same type were written by him; one is on the fear of God, the other is a commentary on Psalm 19, and the third one, which very likely originated from his circle if it was not also written by him, is on the knowledge of God. This topic was an issue of prime importance for many centuries in the discussion between the Mu'tuzilites and the Asharites, as well as between the Rabbinites and the Karaites.[37]

R. Obadyah's (1228-1265) book, "Treatise of the pool", "al-Maqalah al-Hawḍiyah", is another sufi-type work. It is a spiritual manual on the path to Godliness, where he quotes from Moses Maimonides' "Guide", Abraham Maimonides' "Highways", and

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[33] S. Goitein, "Abraham Maimonides and his circle", *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (1967), p.164.

[34] S. Gotein, "Documents on Abraham Maimonides and his pietist circle", *op.cit.*, pp.181-97.

[35] S. Gotein, "A Jewish addict to sufism", *op.cit.*, p.37.

[36] P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments by R. Abraham he-Hasid the Jewish sufi". *JSS*, 25, 1951, pp.47-72.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp.56, 68, 71.

some sufi sources without referring to any author by name.[38]

Another work of this category originating from the Egyptian pietist circle was published by Rosenthal[39]. It is an anonymous treatise entitled "The Way to Piety". the work is an example of deep penetration of sufic thoughts into the intellectual Jewish circles. It speaks about the stages of the soul on the path to piety which conform to the sufic stages on the way go God, such as cleanliness, separation, humility, fear. etc..The author had made use of different sufi works such as "Kitāb al-Luma^{c}" by al-Sarraj (d.988), al-Ghazali's "Iḥya" (d.1111), and al-Sahrawardi (d.1191), "Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq".

Traces of sufi influence were also found in the works of Spanish Jews. Bahya Ibn Paquda (second half of the eleventh century), for example, was the chief exponent of the ethics of the sufis as he was very much influenced by the ascetic order of the "Pure Brethren of Basra". His work, "Duties of the Heart" was completed in Saragossa in 1080, and was intended for the religious congregation to lead the path to the true worship of God. It was almost entirely composed on a plan of sufi manuals and gained wide popularity among Jewish readers of sufi notions as the truest expression of Jewish piety.[40] In his introduction to the Arabic edition of the book, A. Yahuda[41] has pointed out that many of Bahya's doctrines and quotations are borrowed from sufi literature, though Bahya does not make acknowledgement of their sources. Baron[42] too seems to hold a similar opinion about Bahya in this connexion as he traces back his words on the love of God which say, "Once love of God had filled their heart, they derive no pleasure from talking to people nor find any delight in their conversation"[43], to the words of the sufi

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[38] P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool, op.cit.*; G. Vayda, "The doctrine of R. Obadyah", *JJS*, 1955, pp.213-25.

[39] F. Rosenthal, "Judaeo-Arabic work under sufi influence", *HUCA*, vol.15, 1940, pp.433-84.

[40] A. Lazaroff, "Bahya's asceticism against its rabbinic and Islamic background", *JJS*, vol.21, 1970, pp.11-38.

[41] A.S. Yahuda (ed.), *Bahya Ibn Joseph Ibn Pakuda, Kitāb al -Hidayah* (Leiden, 1912).

[42] S. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol.8, (1958), p.117.

[43] Bahya's "Duties of the Hearts", 10.7.

Dhul-Nun Almisri (d.859). Also, Vayda[44] in his comparison of Bahya's ethical and religious doctrines with those doctrines of the sufis had demonstrated the degree of his dependence on sufi literature.

Similar interest in sufi literature is also found in "Mafteah ha-shemot" by Abraham Abulafiyah (d.1295), which demonstrates some influence of sufi practices.[45]

Other traces of such penetration of sufi influence into Jewish circles are testified by the following statement of Yosef Ibn Shalom Ashkenazi (fourteenth century), despite its negative sense, as he says,

> Consider attentively the foolishness of those of our fellow Jews who not only praise the Muslim faith—but when the Muslims profess their creed at prayer times in their mosques, these dim-witted Jews join them and recite "Hear O Israel". Furthermore, they highly commend the nation of Mohammed and consequently they and their children have become attached to the Muslims and they denigrate the holy father of Israel...I am even astonished that even the dignitaries of our community praise the Muslims and testify to the latter's faith in one god.[46].

Another example in this connexion, in the positive sense, is traced to as late as the seventeenth century in the work of Abram Gavison (1605) of Telemcen, who ended his Hebrew translation of one of al-Ghazali's mystical poems with the following statement: "I have translated the poetry of this sage for even though he be not of the children of Israel, it is accepted that the pious of the gentiles have a share in the world to come and surely heaven will not withhold from him the reward of his faith".[47]

However, like the philosophic movement, the pietist movement was also met with hostility which impeded its development. This new tendency which gained popularity and support among some Jewish circles, had at the same time evoked opposition against the pietists' movement in general and against Abraham Maimonides in particular, who was a leading figure in this circle and a nagid of the Egyptian Jewry. the attack against this movement was mainly from religious scholars and communal leaders who were

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[44] G, Vayda, *La théologie ascétique de Bahya Ibn Pakuda* (Paris, 1947).

[45] M. Idel, "Abraham Abulafya's Work and Doctrine", doctoral thesis, Hebrew University, 1976.

[46] P. Fenton, *the Treatise of the Pool, op.cit.*, p.8 and note 95.

[47] *Ibid.*, p.22.

attached to traditionalism and had therefore accused the pietists of being negligent in the observance of the rituals and of propagating false religious thoughts among the Jewish community.[48] Thus Bahya's ideas, for example in his book "Duties of the Heart", were regarded by orthodox scholars as speculations conflicting with firmly-established theology and tradition and should therefore be forbidden, particularly it was not easy for them to discard the fact that some of Bahya's thoughts could be traced to gentile sources.[49] To this effect, the pietists faced some restrictions which were attested by a letter of complaint from a follower of the movement in Alexandria, which reveals that the pietists there had been prevented from exercising their specific religious practices.[50]

On the other hand, other opponents of the movement combined their religious opposition with their political aspirations; they were hoping to secure the Nagidate from the Maimoni family and to restore it to Jewish families of Middle Eastern origin.[51]

Although the pietists insisted that their doctrine and practice were a revival of ancient Jewish doctrine, nevertheless, in their opponents' view, the new tendency with its new practice such as purification, prostration, vigil and fasting, withdrawal, ḍikr... was regarded as innovation as it was Muslim-inspired doctrine and therefore it was contrary to the established practice of Judaism. Accordingly, Abraham Maimonides was accused by his Jewish opponents of innovation before the Muslim authorities to which "bid'a" "unlawful innovation" was a serious accusation even in the case of non-Muslim communities under their protection.[52] Thus Abraham Maimonides, being a distinguished member of the pietist circle, felt required to defend the movement's doctrine against his opponents among the rabbis and judges. He therefore states:

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[48] S. Goitein, "A treatise in defence of th pietists by Abraham Maimonides", *JJS*, 16 (1965), p.1965.
[49] F. Rosenthal "Judaeo-Arabia work under sufi influence", *op.cit.*, p.439.
[50] S. Goitein, "Documents on Abraham Maimon and his pietist circle", *op.cit.*, pp.181-97.
[51] G. Cohen, "The soteriology of Abraham Maimoni", *op.cit.*, p.76.
[52] P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool*, *op.cit.*, p.12.

> It is not permissible to let judges and experts in religious law and their like, judge over ascetics and mystics without their having experience in the latter's way and knowledge of its relationship to and place within religion. Several texts in the Talmud testify that not every judge is pious and that the pietists are higher ranked than judges...he who strives constantly for public office and leadership and is full of pride and conceit is an enemy of the followers of those ways and is therefore not permitted to make decisions either for or against them, even if he possesses all the knowledge required in this matter. Our sages have said no man should judge one whom he loves or one whom he hates [(T.B. Kethubbot, 105b]. On the other hand, persons of the following description are qualified to judge these matters. Men of wide erudition, who among other knowledge are familiar with the science of these ways and their place within religion. People of strong religiosity whose fear of God is even greater than their learnedness; persons untainted by partiality, seeking the truth alone, as is laid down as a condition for judges in general that the should be god-fearing and men of truth.[53]

However, Jewish pietism in spite of its impact on Jewish thought, seemed unable to stand up to opposition from Jewish conservatism. Thus the movement started to decline and was reduced to a small circle of intellectual elite. This was coupled with the growth of the Kabbalah on the one hand, and on the other hand due to the decline of the Arabic language among the Jewish communities, which hampered the diffusion of their Judaeo-Arabic compilations.[54]

Nevertheless, the Jewish pietist movement of the Middle Ages was of great significance to Jewish spirituality as it formed a pre-Kabbalistic mysticism. Also, its rise and development represents the struggle of religious emotion against the dry rationalism of the age.

B. *The impact of Jewish medieval thought on the interpretation of the Song of Songs*

The above discussion has provided an idea of the spiritual and intellectual life in medieval Judaism, pointing out the influential elements which played a significant role in shaping it. In view of the above background, the present section will deal with the impact the above-mentioned influence left on on the understanding of the Song of Songs.

Following the Targum exposition of the Song which became dominant for some time, there was a gap in the exegesis of the book until Saadya's (892-942) interpretation. In essence, Saadya's interpretation agrees with that of the Targum, in the sense that he

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[53] S. Goitein, "A treatise in defence...", *op.cit.*, p.110f.
[54] P. Fenton, *the Treatise of the Pool*, *op.cit.*, p.24.

understood the book to relate to the history of the Jews from the Exodus to the time of the Messiah.[55]

Later the development of the intellectual atmosphere favoured the development of individualism in the sphere of theology, and with it came a turning-point in the theme of interpretation of the Song. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), who was influenced by Aristotelian thought, was the first to apply a new allegorical approach to the Song. He substituted the individual for the nation as the theme of the allegory of the Song, and was therefore regarded as the spiritual father of the commentators who followed his example and adopted the philosophical/spiritual approach in relation to the Song. In his writings, Moses Maimonides has made it clear that he understands the book to represent the spiritual love relationship between God and man, or between the active intellect and the soul, as philosophically expressed by him. Thus, in his "Code" in the chapter on "Repentance", he refers to the Song of Songs as follows:

> What is the love of God that is befitting? It is to love the eternal with great and exceeding love, so strong that one's soul shall be knit up with the love of God, and one should be continually enraptured by it like a lovesick individual whose mind is at no time free from his passion for a particular woman, the thought of her filling his heart at all times, when sitting down or rising up, when he is eating or drinking. Even intenser should be the love of God in the hearts of those who love him. And this love should continually possess them, even as he commanded us in the phrase "with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut.6:5). This, Solomon expressed allegorically in the sentence "for I am love sick" (Song of Songs 2:5). The entire Song of Songs is indeed an allegory descriptive of this love.[56]

In the last chapter of his "Guide", where he was describing real human perfection, Maimonides again refers to the Song of Songs and states, "You who forget your soul until her fairness of face is darkened because the physical faculties have gained sway over her, as is stated at the beginning of those poetical allegories which deal with this theme: "My mother's sons were incensed against me they made me keeper of the vineyard but my own vineyard I did not keep" (Song of Songs 1:6)".[57]

Moses Ibn Tibbon (thirteenth century), for example, acknowledges that in his

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[55] C. Ginsburg, *Song of Songs* (London, 1857), pp.35-8.
[56] J. Minkin, *The World of Moses Maimonides* (1957), p.188.
[57] Maimonides "Guide", 111.54.

interpretation of the Song, he had followed Moses Maimonides' line of thought. In his exposition of the book he recognises three stages for the soul's progress towards its union with the active intellect.[58], while Levi ben Gershon (d. 1344) has recognised 14 stages in the book in his description of the soul's struggle to reach its goal. Also he regards the book to be exclusively for those individuals who understand its aim and appreciate its value, as he states: "This guides the chosen few only towards the means of attaining happiness and for this reason its exoteric garb was not selected with the aim of benefiting the common people".[59]

Joseph Ibn Caspi (1200-1250) is another example of this type of exegesis of the book. He attributes the book to Solomon and interprets it as a mystical text representing the union between the active intellect, identified by the lover in the Song, and the receptive/human intellect, identified by the beloved in the Song. Also his interpretation finds four stages for the progress of the soul to reach its objective. These stages are marked by the adjuration phrases in the text. The principle of his interpretation recognises three types of text classification, as he says,

> Solomon composed three books which we possess and spoke in three different kinds of ways; the one in a plain manner, containing nothing beyond the obvious and literal sense, which is called "all silver". The second entirely symbolical, having no literal meaning whatever, but consisting of mere allegories and parables which is called "all gold". The third comprising both the figurative and the literal which is called "apples of gold" (underplates of gold). So Solomon wrote the three books—Ecclesiastes, which belongs to the first kind, the Song of Songs to the second, and Proverbs to the third.[60]

Also he warns against discarding these classifications, since it may result in interpreting the text in a manner contrary to the author's intention and consequently cannot be considered as a commentary on the text, rather an independent composition, as he states,

> Remember these distinctions and observe how we are in danger in every step to mistake in the law, hagiography, and prophets, one for the other...and this leads us to commit of two errors; we either put into the words a things which is false, or, to say the least, make the author say what he did not intend. In such a case our words can no more be called a commentary, but form a separate composition or a book for themselves. I only call that a commentary which thoroughly comes up to the design of the author of the

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[58] A. Halkin,"Ibn Aknin commentary on the Song of Songs", *JTSA*, Alexander Marx jubilee volume (New York, 1950), p.412.

[59] *Ibid.*, note 47.

[60] Translated by C.D Ginsburg, *Song of Songs* (1875), p.48.

book. The appearance, however, of each book of the Bible will indicate to a judicious, clear-headed and intellectual man, whether it belongs to the one or the other of the above-mentioned classes. We cannot here give rules whereby to test this; it is sufficient to say that truth is her own witness.[61]

Text classification seems to differ from one interpreter to another. While Ibn Tibbon, for example, agrees with Ibn Caspi's classification, Samuel Archivolbi, on the other hand, applies four types of classification. The simple discourse which is mainly concerned with observing the grammatical rules. Rhetoric discourse which aims to be persuasive and therefore not only observes the grammatical rules but also emphasises careful choosing of skilful and sounding words. Enigmatic discourse aims at producing allegory succinct in its nature, leaving the reader to solve its interpretation. Poetic discourse while observing the prior points, employs metre and rhyme also.[62] Immanual Frances followed three types of discourse. Prose represented by books such as the Pentateuch, Chronicles, Kings, Judges. The prophetical books, represent the rhetoric discourse, while the Psalms, the Song of the Sea and the Song of Deborah represent the poetic discourse.[63]

The meaning of the word "shir" is another point in this connexion. According to the understanding of medieval Arabs and Jews, "shir" meant "poem". A biblical shir, however, did not always follow this definition. Moses Ibn Ezra, for example, believed that "shir" not only means a poem but a song, a lament or a prose as in the Song of Song or Isaiah 5.1 "Let me sing to my beloved". Others, such as Moshe Ibn Tibbon and Juda Messer Leon, unlike Ibn Ezra considered the Song of Songs poetic composition due to its metaphorical form. Particularly, their criteria of"shir" were generally identified with three types of composition: metrical composition, non-metrical composition set to music, and figurative or metaphorical composition like the Song of Songs.[64] It is worth mentioning in

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[61] *Ibid*, p.48.
[62] A. Berlin, *Biblical Poetry through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Indiana University Press, 1991), p.32f.
[63] *ibid.*, p.33.
[64] *Ibid.*, p.34.

this connexion that because the Song of Songs was understood as allegory, it was sometimes placed under "mashal" discourse. This category, besides allegory, includes parable, comparison, metaphors and similes. Immanuel Frances, for example, regarded the Song of Song of "shir" and "mashal" because he was of the opinion that elegant prose employs metaphors and similes as much as any poetic composition. Ibn Tibbon, on the other hand, places the Song of Songs in the category of true poetry since it employs metaphors and images, distinguishing it from "mashal" discourse, which he defines as an expression not set to music, such as proverbs.[65]

The new individualistic-allegoric approach to the Song of Songs which was employed by Moses Maimonides and his advocates, had also found ready acceptance among the pietist circle who added their mystical overtone to it. Accordingly, the book rose to a prime position in the writings and exegesis of some of the prominent members of the circle.

In this connexion, Bahya Ibn Pakuda had made some references to the Song of Songs in his, already mentioned, mystic work entitled "Duties of the Hearts". In the section on "The true love of God", he writes,

As is said of a pious man who used to get up at night and say 'My God you have made me hungry and naked and you have put me in the darkness of night. But I swear by your power and greatness that were you to burn me with fire, it would only add to my love for you and my attachment to you'. This is similar to Job's saying (13:15), 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him', and the saying of the sages (Cant.1:13), 'My beloved unto me as a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts'. Our ancient sages said as a commentary upon this verse (Shabbat 88b): 'Even if he let me suffer bitterness like myrrh, nevertheless he rests between my breasts.[66]

On another occasion in the same section, he writes,

I have emphasised the supererogatory of night prayer although it is praiseworthy also during the day for several reasons. The first reason...sixthly, the night is the time when all lovers are left alone, and those dear to each other may find some solitude as it is said in Isa.26:9 "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, with my spirit within me have I sought thee earnestly..."; also in Cant.3:1, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth".[67]

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[65] *Ibid.*, pp.35, 89.

[66] Bahyah Ibn Pakuda's 'Al-Hidāya ilā Farāid al-Qulūb", "The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Hearts", trans. by Menahem Mansoor (London, 1973), p.428f.

[67] *Ibid.*, p.439.

In the section on the"Unity of God", Bahya makes another reference to the Song of Songs, when he says,

Then the scriptures turn to those duties of the members which involve only practice, and these are divided into three kinds in the verse. 6.8 in Deut. states, "And you shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house and upon they gates, the prayer on the hand, the prayer on the head, the prayer on the doorpost. All three are aids in remembering the Creator, the pure love and desire for Him, as said in (Cant.8:6) about how lovers keep their remembrance fresh, "Set me a seal upon thy heart as a seal upon thine arm, for live is strong as death..."[68]

References of mystical context to the Song of Songs were also made by Obadyah Maimonides in his previously-mentioned work, "The Treatise of the Pool", which is a mystical manual for the way to piety. The first chapter of the above-mentioned treatise urges man to abandon material pleasure in the interest of gaining spiritual perfection, as he states in this connexion, "Be attentive of the noble discipline and engage there in all your time, as it is said 'If a man would give all his fortune for love, no account would be taken of him'" (Song of Songs 8:7).[69]

In the second chapter, Obadyah urges the individual to strive for the truth without despair, in spite of the obstacles in his way, for this is the true purpose for man. In this context he refers to the Song of Songs and says,

...for all the obstacles shall be cast aside before him, especially if his desire for this state be constant and he remains unperturbed by worldly affairs, as it is said "I have put off my coat, I have washed my feet, how then shall I defile them" (Song of Songs 5:3). His sole attachment shall be his beloved to the skirt of his raiment will he only cling, as the sages said, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (Song of Songs 6:3).[70]

In the third chapter Obadyah talks about the true desire for this path that brings relief from material preoccupations, and that the adept has to prove himself able to proceed through it. Here he refers to the Song of Songs and says, "Hence upon being asked to occupy yourself with a worldly matter which concerns you, you will reply, on account of your (higher) preoccupations, 'let the world depend on others', as it is said, 'I am my

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[68] *Ibid.*, p.110f.
[69] P. Fenton, *the Treatise of the Pool.*, *op.cit.*, p.77.
[70] *Ibid.*, p.77.

beloved's and his desire is towards me'" (Song of Songs 7:11).[71]

In Chapter Nine of the treatise, Obadyah writes about man's rational soul that made him the choicest creature in the world. If it is treasured it will always be ready to perform good deeds and would accomplish them with great love. He again refers to the Song of Songs, and says, "You shall hasten with great love to accomplish any favour which your beloved shall request of you for love is as strong as death" (Song of Songs 8:6).[72]

In Chapter Eleven, while he talks about the preparation of the adept for this path which is a lifetime's task, where a man cannot simultaneously desire the world, he again refers to verse 8:7 of the Song, as he explains,

> For if thou weariest or indulgest thy fancy in some worldly object and thy lower soul induceth thee into [thinking] that this pursuit is possible whenever thou pleaseth to apply thyself thereunto, then thy soul hath lured thee into an absurd situation. Indeed thou will be likened unto him who says "I shall sin and thereafter I shall repent". For you know that were a man to prepare himself and devote his whole life to this aim until he had waxed old, he would ever pursue his quest because this state has no limit; if a man would give all the riches of his house for love, he would be utterly condemned (Song of Songs 8:7).[73]

Another reference to the Song of Songs is found in Obadyah's treatise in the section entitled "Exhortation". Here he advised the adept when achieving a particular state, to remain modest and to exercise dissimulation in the presence of the unworthy, as he states, "Employ dissimulation as the sage has said in a similar sense, 'I adjure you O daughters of Jerusalem...that you awaken not, nor stir up love until it wishes'" (Song of Songs 2:7).[74]

On another occasion of the treatise, in a section entitled "Observation". Obadyah makes another reference to the Song of Songs Rabbah. In this passage Obadyah draws attention to the understanding of the scripture and how to read it as a lover and a seeker rather than just a reciter. He also suggests using the doctrines mentioned in his treatise to help reach for a deeper meaning in the words of the scripture. In his explanation of the

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[71] *Ibid.*, p.79.
[72] *Ibid.*, p.90.
[73] *Ibid.*, p.96.
[74] *Ibid.*, p.107.

idea, he refers to the Song of Songs Rabbah 1:10, and says,

The sages alluded to this [procedure] in their statement in the Midrash, "How may the words of the Torah be described prior to their elucidation by Solomon? Her waters were deep and cool and none could drink therefrom. What did the discerning man do?Joining rope to rope and cord to cord, he drew from it and drank. Thus proceeded Solomon, joining one parable to another and one meaning to another until he penetrated the mysteries of the Torah".[75]

In Chapter Eighteen, which is a kind of conclusion to the treatise, Obadyah makes another reference to the Song of Songs when he writes,

There my son, take care to repulse the affairs of the body as much as possible for this will ease the restlessness that you will experience at the very beginning of your path. Upon being delivered from the snare of the body, the soul has been compared to a shred of silk that has fallen among the thorns: "As a lily among the thorns so is my love among the daughters" (Song of Songs 2:2).[76]

Lastly, in his final "Exhortation", we find yet another reference to the Song of Songs as he writes, "Despite frivolity and laughter, rather observe silence and speak not except out of necessity, eat not except indispensable food and sleep not unless overcome. All the while your heart should contemplate this pursuit and your thought be preoccupied therein as it is said 'I am asleep but my heart is awake'" (Song of Songs 5:2).[77]

The Song of Songs was also employed in the work of an anonymous author of the previously-mentioned mystical treatise "The Way to Piety".[78] On two occasions in the above treatise, the author expressed clearly that the Song of Songs is mainly a description of love expressed by the rational soul for God. Thus in Chapter 20 he states,

The pole of this book [Canticles] revolves about the stations and the states of the soul when it is walking in the way of God and reaches the highest level of the love of God, the light of the lights and the secret of secrets, and when it is longing for this goal. And because this is a subtle subject and a noble matter, the wise one [the author of Canticles] produced this in an enigmatic manner which the prophets and the wise men used to employ for important and concealed subjects and obscure and sublime matter. He put this into the form of the love of the concupiscent soul for one of the sensual objects of love of the created world.[79]

The second reference in this connexion is in Chapter 24, where he expresses himself in the following manner: "There is no doubt that the author of Canticles wanted to reach through the self of his soul and reason, the self of the real beloved whom the reason and

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[75] *Ibid.*, p.109.
[76] *Ibid.*, p.111.
[77] *Ibid.*, p.116.
[78] F. Rosenthal, "Judaeo-Arabic work under sufi influence" *op.cit.*, pp.433-484.
[79] *Ibid.*, p.446.

the soul desire and love. For the pole of the book in its entirety is the first beloved, and the love of the rational soul for Him on account of the recognition of His superiority and the longing for him and the walking towards him".[80]

In Chapter Nine of the treatise, in his definition of love, the author again refers to the Song of Songs, and writes, "Love is delight caused by imagination of the presence of the Beloved. Somebody has said love cannot be explained by words. It is said: love is a lit fire of God which rises over the heart, as in Canticles 8:6, 7".[81]

In Chapter Four of the treatise, the author refers to verse 3:1 of the Song, "By night I sought him whom my soul loves", together with verse 26:9 of Isaiah, "My soul yearned for you in the night", in the sense that in both verses the perception of God, the real beloved, is accomplished by the self of the soul.[82]

On another occasion in the same chapter, where he talks about the need to worship God with a perfect heart and a loving soul, he turned to verse 8:7 of the Song, "Many waters cannot extinguish love..." to illustrate the greatness of the love of God.[83]

In Chapter 26, the author refers again to the Song of Songs in connexion with the steps in the direction of illumination which are שחר "dawn", לבנה "Moon", חמה "sun", and finally the מלכות by which he meant the image of the detached reason (Song of Songs 6:4, 10).[84] The popularity of the Song of Songs and its importance among the mystical circles, went beyond making references to it as supporting evidence for their works, in fact its importance culminated in Abraham he-Ḥasid's mystical commentary on the book. Despite the brevity of this commentary, it stands as a good illustration of the Jewish pietists' understanding of the book as a guide for the adept along the path towards holiness, love and contemplation of ecstatic vision of God and communion with him.

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[80] *Ibid.*, p.446.
[81] *Ibid.*, p.459.
[82] *Ibid.*, p.479.
[83] *Ibid.*, p.479.
[84] *Ibid.*, p.480f.

Also, it is an example of sufi influence exegesis applied to the book. Abraham he-Ḥasid believes that the reason the book is considered as "the holy of holies" is because of "its extreme holiness since it is a means of attaining the ultimate and the final goal and because it leads to the spiritual realm through the practice of inward and outward holiness as well as through the extreme love of God and the delight in his recollection and holy names".[85] sufi influence, in the lines mentioned above, is apparent in the term "al-ghāya al-quswā", "final goal", in reference to the love of God. This term, as Fenton rightly mentions, is used in the same context by al-Ghazali.[86] On another occasion, talking about the "vision", Abraham he-Ḥasid states, "Whosoever desires to tread the path of the Lord which leads to his gates, if those gates be open to him, he will receive from him generous emanation by which he will perceive all that lies within the gates. A vision will take place and he will behold wondrous secrets and comely forms towards which he will long to draw nigh and with which he will desire to commune".[87] The term "mukashafa", "vision", is rightly traced by Fenton as a sufi term in reference to the lifting of the veil after a spiritual discipline.[88]

Also., Abraham he-Ḥasid believes that the Song of Songs is written by Solomon, as he states "The Sage [Solomon] at times refers to this vision of communion as 'bride' and at other times as 'love' whereas the seeker of this 'bride' and 'love' is called 'beloved'". Also in his comments on the title of the Song where the name of Solomon is mentioned, he says "It means that this Song was composed by Solomon, the son of David, in his extreme passion and love for God".[89] In the above lines, the seeker, "al-qasid", is a widely-used sufi term for the "aspirant". Also passionate love (ishq) is another widely-

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[85] P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments by R. Abraham he-Ḥasid the Jewish sufi", *JSS* 26 (1981), p.53f.
[86] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' ulum ad-din*
[87] P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments...", *op.cit.*, p.54.
[88] Ar-Risālah al-Qushairiyah, I, p.226.
[89] P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments...", *op.cit.*, p.52f.

known sufi term sometimes considered strong or exaggerated.[90]

In this connexion, another short piece of mystical commentary on verses 5-7-8 of the Song, which is thought to be written either by A. he-ḥasid himself, or a member of his circle,[91] the above-mentioned verses are understood as a reference to the spiritual torment of the soul when separated from its bond to attain spiritual transformation. Accordingly, the "watchmen" is a reference to the soul's faculties. "They smote me, they took away my mantle from me", is in reference to the spiritual torment of the soul being separated from its bond as well as from the delights of the body which is represented by the "mantle".[92]

Apart from the work of Abraham he-Ḥasid, the commentary of Ibn Aqnin (1160-1226) on the Song is another interesting work which represents the influence of medieval intellectual thought on the book. His commentary, which is entitled "Inkishāf al-asrār wa ḍuhur al-anwār", "The revelation of the secrets and the appearance of the lights", has been edited in Hebrew by A. Halkin (Jerusalem, 1964). It is best described as a philosophic/mystical compilation where the lover in the Song is identified with the active intellect and the beloved with the rational soul, both longing for each other to unite. As for the "daughters of Jerusalem", "the city guards", they, according to Ibn Aqnin, represent the various forces of the body and soul. He also believed that the purpose of presenting the idea of the book in an erotic form was to make it attractive to the masses.[93]

Throughout his commentary he offers three levels of interpretation. He starts with the literal rendering of the words, and goes on the midrashic interpretation drawn from the rabbinic exposition of the text. The third level, the philosophic/mystical, is the actual objective of Ibn Aqnin where he usually starts with "According to the view which we

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[90] Al-Risālah al-Qushairyah, II, p.615.
[91] P. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic fragments...", *op.cit.*, p.55.
[92] *Ibid.*, p.52f.
[93] A. Halkin, "Ibn Aknin's Commentary on the Song of Songs", the *Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1950), pp.409, 411.

favor".[94] Since his work also shows some familiarity with sufi compositions on love, which sometimes can be unavoidable, Ibn Aqnin was eager to emphasise that he is not introducing in his interpretation any form of unwarranted innovations. Thus he says, "Perhaps someone who is weak in learning, deficient in discrimination, and of slight intelligence, attacks and blames me for utilising philosophic statements, examples from the Arabic language and poetic stanzas".[95]

Though this may indicate that his work was regarded controversial on the other hand, scholars like Bahya bin Asher seemed to acknowledge Ibn Aqnin's interpretation of the Song and attributed it to " A philosopher of our faith" of Seville "[96]. Joseph ben Hayyun mentions Ibn Aqnin's interpretation of the Song in his own commentary on the Song of Songs and Immanuel Aboab is said to have appraised it as a wonderful composition[97]. Finally Ibn Aqnin himself was proud of his achievement as he says in his commentary " The inclusion of rich meaning in brief wording is a difficult task for a man to perform except in this eminent book..... so we thank our Lord who helped us to understand it and clarify its meaning which are concealed in theses words"[98]

Against the above background it seems possible to assume that the philosophic/mystical tendencies of medieval Judaism had found a good expression of itself in the exposition of the Song of Songs, and consequently helped to raise the book to a prime position among intellectual Jewish circles of the time.

A translation of selected parts of Ibn Aqnin's commentary on the Song of Songs from the original Judaeo-Arabic text of Halkin's Edition is attached as an appendix to the present study.

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[94] *Ibid.*, p.408.
[95] *Ibid.*, p.405f.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 417
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 419
[98] F. 57a

Conclusion

The discussion in the previous chapters seems to suggest or indicate that a mystical understanding or interpretation of the Song is a plausible assumption particularly it evolves from the very nature of the text which seems to share common themes and characteristics with ancient Jewish mystical literature. This assumption seems to explain the reason behind the restrictions placed on the text of the Song. It appears doubtful in this connection, to believe that the erotic nature of the book was the only reason behind its restriction. Particularly, it is also difficult to believe that the rabbinic authorities would agree to sanction the book in the first place knowing that the historical/ allegory interpretation or any other interpretation would not change the erotic form of the book which shall always convey an interpretation contradictory to their own. At the same time, being aware of the mystical associations of the book, the main concern of the rabbinic authorities seems to be more likely to secure an orthodox interpretation for the text hence closing the door in the face of any mystical interpretation, specially mysticism was regarded as an off-shoot doctrine and its tradition was shrouded with secrecy. Therefore it seems consistent with the rabbinic objectives to let the obvious characteristics of the book, namely its erotic nature, to appear as the objectionable feature and thus the main reason behind its restriction in order not to attract attention to the mystical nature of the text. This is perhaps for fear that it would be misused or misunderstood. Accordingly, the rabbinic tacit agreement on imposing some restrictions on the

book and their vague or indifferent attitude regarding the reasons behind these restrictions seems but consistent with their overall aim and objective.

As for the basic theme of the book it is best summarized as the pursuit of the "I" for the "Other" or the " Part" for the "Whole". The "I" in the Song is experiencing a sense of distance and separation from the "Divine" resulting in a state of anguish best described as a thirst for the absolute. On a basic level the uniqueness of Shulamith, the "I" element in the Song lies in her distinguished existence which is based upon the unity of three aspects of her character; that she is a poet, possessed (with love) and passionately (in love). Therefore this basic yearning of the "I" to be with the " Absolute" has been made conceivable within the realms of passion, possession and poetry as archetypal channels for communion with the divine. The present study reads in the Song a " hymn for love" and hopes to have contributed positively to its interpretation by drawing attention to its mystical and enigmatic nature and characteristics. With its mosaic nature combining simplicity, complexity and beauty, the Song is a unique and rich composition. It is indeed as Israel Abrahams[1] states " It is a Joy for ever, and a joy once for all"

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[1] Abrahams, Israel, *The Book of Delight. Philadelphia* 1912. p. 241

Appendix

Translated extracts from Ibn Aqnin's Commentary on the Song of Songs from the Judeo-Arabic text of A.Halkin's Edtion, Jerusalim 1964.

Introduction:

[Ibn Aqnin's general view of the Book]

1. I have set to myself an aim to make clear the contents of the verses of the Song of Songs in addition, to rabbis opinion already expressed, regarding its meaning. The intention of the book is far from being a mere expressions of passion, beauty and childish deeds. Such assumption is impossible in so far as this book is concerned. This is because the Song is the words of the Divine Spirit like the Psalms, Eccles. and the rest of the books of the prophets which were placed following his dignified book, so they had placed this book in the third position after the prophets. Our rabbis said " All the Scriptures are holy and the Song of Songs is the holy of holies"[1]. that is to make it popular.

[.....] therefore,we have known, that the purpose of using such expressions in its composition was to make it popular and to invoke inspirations for its reading. The multitudes shall start with a simple meaning of the book and when they get older they shall realise that it is inconceivable to believe that their celebrated example would have intended the simple meaning of the words. Also those who followed him amongst the prophets and the sages thought highly of it and encouraged its teaching. [.....]. The noble intentions of the inner meaning of the book would invoke contemplation. People would learn about it by the help of those who are able to explain its secrets as they use to say ask your father and he will tell you, ask your elders

they will tell you. Such was the approach of the Indians in their book which is called " Kalilah wa Dimnah" where its secrets lies in its dialogue which is conducted between birds and animals. Further more they illustrated the book with painting to encourage the multitudes to read and enjoy its myth until they are older and wiser and therefore able to start investigating the knowledge and wisdom inside it.

[about the rational soul]

4 As for the inability of the rational soul to reach this status[the status of the active intellect] because she [it] is enslaved to her desires the ḥasid in reproaching and warning the soul in this connection said "I have said you are like Gods and all of you are children of the most high nevertheless like human you shall die, like one of the rulers you shall fall"[1] meaning that in your creation he intended that your souls should be prepared and willing to obey the active intellect who by sheding his light upon it shall transform it into a stage nearer to him. So you shall become divine of eternal spirituality and everlasting happiness. This is because you have gained your freedom from the slavery of the desires and you were relieved from being mere substance. But instead you responded to your desire enslaved yourselves to them and thus you became slaves. Therefore like beast souls you were overtaken by destruction and this is what he meant by saying " like human you shall die" meaning to perish your rational souls as you perish your sensual souls. And when he said " like one of the rulers" he meant hear the body which guide it [soul].

[about the active intellect]

About that angel called the active mind, in this Diwan it is called .רע and יד , lover and friend because he reveals to the rational souls the ways of God which are lead to eternal bliss; for it is the duty of the loyal friend to guide his friend and to reveal to him all that which is best. And he calls the rational soul

רעיה and אחות, friend and sister, this is because she accepted from him whatever advice he forward to her. So she is loyal to him attached to him and totally devoted to his love.

[about the the interpretation of the rabbis, the plain interpretation and his own interpretationp

This Diwan has another interpretation where the expressions of
15 love and affections were used to signify the timed of redemptions, the redemption of Egypt and all that would happen to us in the days of the Messiah and these expression of separation were used to signify the times of slavery. Thus according to this second interpretation the frequently mentioned expression of דוד and רע are to refer to God almighty. Also the frequently mentioned terms of רעיה , אחות, כלה , are to refer to the assembly of Israel. This opinion was held by our rabbis as mentioned in the midrash as well as in their other teachings.

20. They said that Shir ha Shirim is praised as the Song of Solomon peace upon him and they interpreted the book as a dialogue between the blessed creator and the assembly of Israel and [vis -a- vis].[....] you need not think that these terms are not worthy of the creator, you are to know that we found similar usages in the books of the prophets: " I have desired you for myself
25 forever"[1], "and I saw that because she [Israel] has not been faithful I had put her away and given her the bill of divorce"[2]. [....] such was the opinion of the rabbis in their interpretation as
ל 4 they said " The Torah speaks in the language of man". This meaning we have explained in full details in book I of our composition entitled " Laws and Judgments". Also it [the Song of songs] has another interpretation which is [the plain
5 meaning of the text] together with the grammatical explanation of the words. [....] . Thus we have started with this type of interpretation because the apparent meaning takes precedence to
10 the hidden meaning. The second type of interpretation is the one held by our rabbis in the midrash and in the Talmud, we have

collected all of this and placed it second in order [after the plain interpretation]. The third interpretation is the purpose of our present compilation where we have interpreted דוד and עץ as terms reffering to the active intellect and כלה , אחות, רעיה as terms referring to the rational soul. We have found that this type of interpretation has never been employed by the formers nor that it was suggested by any one of them. We have place as last in the order because the first and the second [interpretations] were employed by those preceded us in time, whereas the third interpretation is as late as our time with respect to them. Also we have placed it last in accordance with the opinion held by our rabbis which says that the last is equivalent to the reward of all. Another reason in this connection is that the first two interpretation stand like an introduction to the third which is the object of this composition. For this reason we talked about it and described it first and placed it third. As Aristotle said in this connection first thought last done and last thought first done, so its [third type of interpretation] relation to it [first and second type of interpretation] is like the relation of the aim to the prelude which is written for the purpose of the aim. Thus being placed as last is considered first by right. The three types of interpretation are, indeed, to represent three types of forces existing in Man, which are the rational, the beastlike and the natural. The first interpretation is about the natural force,that is the simple and the obvious meaning of the word in relation to love, courtship and passion which is the manner of the sensuous force and its desire for the pursuit of pleasure. The second interpretation stands for the beastlike forces in its pursuit to liberate itself from slavery, to revenge from the enemy and to gain dignity and wealth which is the manners of the wrathful forces. This also applies to the meaning of redemption. The third interpretation stands for the rational soul in its quest for the truth and its attainment of virtues because of its desire for eternity and perfect happiness. Since the book has more than one meaning it was produced in this general form of expression

so that we may understand from it these three intention which represent the forces of the soul. Also because one form of reading is used for few purposes,we have therefore to cast away the inferior purpose and adhere to the nobel purpose.

Chapter I

The Opening Verse : " The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's "

ל 5

5 According to our interpretation, השלמה here is the active intellect. It was named השלמה since his deed is the fulfilment of peace,which the aspiration of rational soul by bestowing upon her of his enlightenment with which she will attain eternal life and ever lasting happiness where there will be no destruction or death. אשר לשלמה, refers to the commendation said by the angle named השלמה in praise of the virtues of the rational soul and the commendation she said in praise of him. So our interpretation is not contrary to the rabbis belief which says

השלמה is one of the names of God. This is [cont.]

10 to say that He himself is named by this name to indicate that He had made him privileged with this rank and status, as the rabbis said " his name as his master's". Thus this Song is the teachings of the active intellect about the rational soul and the teaching of the rational soul about the active intellect.

"Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth"

ל 6 According to our own interpretation, the rational soul has resembles the attainment of enlightenment from the active intellect to הדבקות, because of the pleasure gained by two lips through which knowledge is communicated from the teacher to the learner. Such is the pleasure of the rational soul where she resembled the attainment of her knowledge from the active intellect together with the pleasure she gained out of it to the enjoyment of the lover in kissing his beloved, as it was said

"he kisses the lips that answered rightly"[1].

So she informed us that she values this kind of pleasure to a degree similar to the value of kisses for the desiring soul. Though the object to which comparison is made usually greater than the object of comparison itself but here the object of comparison is greater than its comparitor. This is because she wanted to explain the unknown by means of the known and to make it equally known.Though in actual fact there is no resemblance or comparison between the two of them since one is mortal soon while the other everlasting. Even if there is any resemblance between the two of them it is but very faint. As for דמה it is added here for the purpose of turning those conceived matters which she gained into actually intelligible matters, similar to those separated from matter where the intellect, the rational and the intelligible are one.

"I am black but comely"

10

According to our own interpretation it is the rational soul addressing the active intellect telling him about the reason of her imperfection and about her inability to reach the stage of those souls separated from matter. This is because she was completely absorbed in the material world and was attached the indulgence of the bodily. Such misdeed and impurity had impeded her way and thus was her intention in saying " the sun blackened me" which a designation for the desires of the body and pain and suffering they inflict upon the souls following them.

Chapter III

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves
I sought him but I found him not"

ל 28 According to our view of interpretation it is the rational soul speaking and using the term נשמה in reference to the time when she was attached to the body and mixed with the darkness of hayuli. She resembled that darkness to darkness of night where it is impossible to catch sight and where sight is not clear without the help of a lamp. In a similar manner is "my state"

5 when attached to the body. "I am" in darkness and unable to realize any truth apart from that light reaching "me" from the active intellect and with what reached me of his light I wanted that my conceived matter to become refined and able to conceive that which conceived by by spiritual simple souls; those which are free of matters.But I was unable to achieve that. She has repeated נתעוררי twice because she had made two requests; the first is to be able to acquire intelligible matters and the second is to

10 attain the status of intellects; those separated from matter. But she was unable to achieve that , therefore she said נתעוררי ועוררי את האהבה . Also it possible that נשמה and נפש were used in reference to the time when she was ignorant, paying no attention to the acquisition of enlightenment from the active intellect. So she was unable to gain conscious perception and was therefore left with blind insight as she was idle to follow her pursuit. As the rabbis say in the connection " If a man says to you I laboured but did not find, do not believe; if he says I did not labour but I did find do not believe; but if he says I have laboured and I have have found, this do belive" Therefore נתעוררי ועוררי את האהבה, means that every reques

15 which is not accompanied by zeal and determination, apart from being attached to the leeches of the body, is but futile.

" I will rise now and go about the city
in the streets, in the broadways
I will seek him whom my soul loves"

K 29

20 [....] . According to our view of interpretation the rational soul used the term ע'ר in reference to the body as it is said " a little city and few men in it" [1]. As for שונקים she used this term in reference to arteries and veins. רחונות is used in reference to sensory organs; the heart, the brain, and the liver together with their subordinates among body organs. She searched these organs and their activities and found that they are concerned with the well being of the body. She asked them to help her to attain the utmost of her wishes, her lover; the intellect. But she found nothing with them upon which she can rely to reach her aim and to fulfil her wish because their attention is concerned with the well being of the body which consist of nothing but dark substance.

"Scarce had eye past from them, I found him whom my soul loves
I held him..... until I brought him into my mother's house"

K 31 According to our own interpretation this is to tell that the rational soul took into account the activities of the body organs as well
5 its guiding forces.[....] .When she knew that their only purpose is to look after the well being of the body, she realized the reason behind this; unless she discard them she would not
10 achieve her purpose.[.....]. As for אוכ , it refers to her force which led her to see his light [intellect] and to establish with him contact which is the source of her life in the other world and the source of happiness for her like the mother who is the source of life in this world.

Chapter V

" I sleep but my heart is a wake"
1 67

15 According to our won interpretation, it is the rational soul addressing the active intellect telling him though I was a sleep at the time I was attached to the body due to my need for it in this world, however my heart was a wake [....] thus prepared me to learn from the active intellect. Until [I] became ready and able to serve him. With his dazzling light upon me I became aware of the fact that sheer goodness is acquired from him only
20 through love by fulfiling hiswill and be guided by his light. When he knew that from me he made me capable and granted me of his abundance and enlightened my insight until [I] was able to comprehend him. To me he is like the sun giving light to the sense of sight with which we can see it [the sun]. Likewise, with the help of the light he granted me I shall be able to comprehend him. Later he commended her with four epithets;
68 my dove, my friend, my sister, my perfect one, this is because of the nobility and goodness he found in her. [....] and we have to say here that with those four epithets he ment to refer to four
10 among the forces of the soul, namely thought, recollection, imagination and desire.

" The watchmen that go about the city found me
They smote me, They wounded me."

71

5 [...] According to our own interpretation, מגינים and מגנים both used in reference to the forces and is used in reference to the body. מגינים, this in reference to forces protecting the body.[.....]. מגנים, this in reference to the five senses which bring to their leader in charge, namely the heart, the information gathered by the senses הרגיזו פצעוני meaning they have stopped her and prevented her from acquiring his radiant light and virtues. She resembled their cruel behaviour to the utmost pain she felt. Like amputation which causes separation, so they caused the separation between me and my lover.

"What is thy beloved more than any other beloved"

73

5 [.....] According to our own interpretation This is the subordinates of the rational soul answering her or ,[there is an] another meaning in this connection, it is in reference to souls who had been delivered from the depth of darkness and where separated from the bodies answering the rational soul,who is still attached to the body, wanting to know whether what she had received of his light is as much as she is longing for.

"My beloved is white and ruddy"

73

5 [.....]According to our own interpretation it is the rational soul disclosing to her companions the perfect characteristics of the active intellect whom she loved only through her knowledge of him and experience. She described him with two attributes [illegible] .As for [illegible],this is to describe his essence as being free of matter. As for . [illegible] . , this to indicate his sublimity and his highly elevated state.

" his head is as the most fine gold
his locks are black as raven"

74

20 According to our own interpretation, the rational soul has used [illegible] in her description of the active intellect because of his pure dazzling light. Also, this is to indicate that those intelligible matters which she acquired from him are as clear as pure gold. In addition to their perfection and originality they are also beautiful for the rational soul to decorate herself with.

"His mouth is most sweet
he is altogether lovely"

79 According to our own interpretation, the ration soul is telling that the teachings she received from the active intellect is sweet,pleasant, popular and as a whole it is noble.[.....] later she said זה דודי ורעי where she placed דודי before רעי to tell that at the beginning she was in love with him, later when she was enlightened by the abundance of his light he became aware of her excellence and thus he became as רע to her after he was דוד . So, that which he granted her earlier was out of generosity towards her while later it was an undertaking upon him to grant her from his light because she was worthy of it. So she placed דוד first because the purpose has been achieved.

Chapter VII

"Return, return Shulamith
Return, that we may look upon thee"

ב 93

20 According to our own interpretation, the active intellect is addressing the rational soul, commanding her not to be over indulgent in following her own desires and the desires of the body [....], חנה כך This is in reference to his uninterrupted care for her and to his perpetual flow of light on her if she will follow his path and will abandon desires. For this reason he placed the rational soul in a position where she would always be
25 able to receive his will.[.....] As for שוב תחזי, this is in reference to her addressing the active intellect, meaning [I] have reached the standard you required in so far as submission to
א 94 your will and as for perfection [I] have reached the utmost degree. As for כמחולת המחנים meaning my painful suffering to repress the desires of the body through the potential [I] acquired through your enlightenment and through the knowledge

I acquired from your guidance; These are my support against desire as I have to fulfil my obligation towards you.

"I am my beloved and his desire is unto me
Come my beloved let us go to the fields."
101

[....]. According to our own interpretation, this is in reference to the rational soul being passionately in love with active intellect for the enlightenment he bestowed upon her. She was aware That the knowledge she is yet to acquire is more than that which she has already obtained. She would not reach the state of perfection unless she is able to dispense with her organs, and she is unable to achieve this for as long as she imprisoned in the body. She used אתו in reference to separation from the body since there is no matter upper most in her mind than this and nothing shall prevent her achieving it. Thus she tells that by separation from the body [I] shall have the advantage of becoming attached to [you] and following [your] pursuit which is my purpose , my wish and my aim. But for as long as [I] am imprisoned within the body depending upon its organs, [I] shall enjoy only little of its pleasures in a degree only sufficient for living; this is because [I] need my organs as long [I] am attached to the body. This explains the words אם יתנך כאחי to indicate that wishing for a union with you cannot be achieved unless [I] abandon worldly pleasures and life luxuries with all its delight as enjoyed by city dwellers. Thus [I] should adjust my self by the type of life led by villagers who had abandoned the luxuries of life.

Chapter VIII

"Oh that you were as my brother
that sucked the breast of my mother"
104

25 according to our own interpretation, the rational soul declared her love for the active intellect and wished that his abundance would flow upon her for ever with a perpetual link similar to that between true brothers whose relationship has no disparity on both sides; father and mother. By these words she indicated that the forces of her body are following her example in abandoning desires.

"Who is this coming up from the wilderness
leaning upon her beloved"

111

15 According to our own interpretation, the active intellect is addressing the rational soul telling her that [you] have acquired perfect knowledge. This has become obvious since you have dispensed with your organs and become separated from the body within which you were imprisoned. Therefore you have reached the stage where there no barrier between you and me. Perhaps he ment that the eminent and the exalted stage she had accomplished as a result of renouncing the desires of the body had made her feel as if she had dispensed with her organs and departed from the body; she was like being in the desert. Though she was attached to the organs she felt
20 and imagined herself as separated from it. As for מדבר, this is in reference to her seperation from the organs of the body which is like the isolation of desert dwellers from the rest of the people. Thus how the rational soul was brought up to observe which is in accordance to his words "from the prey, my son, you are gone up"[1], meaning you were brought up upon the prey. as for מתרפקת על דודה. this is in reference to renouncing the desires of her organs. As a result she was favoured and was drawn nearer to God almighty who is דודה because she obeyed his orders and accepted his advice to [cont.]
25 follow whatever instructions she receive from him, as he said " take heed of him and hearken unto his voice, be not rebellious against him' [2].

"Set me as a seal upon your heart

as a seal upon your arm"

K 113

According to our own inward interpretation, it is the rational soul addressing the active intellect since she has become worthy in his eyes, as ,mentioned previously, therefore she is entitled to his care and attention and he should devote his heart entirely to her love without distraction So if she was [illegible], he would not be involved with any one else other than her and if she was as a bracelet on his arm, his endowment would be under her control. This is also a witty remark to the effect of his love upon her which left her so thin to the extent that he could, if he wishes, place her as a seal upon his arm. Such remark is similar to the poet's idea of thinness as expressed in the following verses:

J 113

"Love had left me with emaciated body
easily slips through the eyeball of a sleeping soul
but hardly catching his attention
The ring that once belong to me
now I can, if I wish, roll it as a belt around my waist".

[.....], later, she added telling him while she suffered emanciation during the times of rejection and separation, she also suffered emanciation during the times of union but ,this time, because of her passionate love for him. Thus her unique way of description is much more profound than the description of the poet. As for " Love is as strong as death" , this is to say that it is as hard as death which separates the soul from the body; so does your love which separated me from the desire of the body which can only be achieved by great effort and suffering. As for " Jealousy is cruel as grave", this is to say that she is jealous and concerned for him as she does not want to be separated from him. Later she indicated that her love for him stands for the love of God to the effect that she should upheld his advice and observe his words in the revealed book and act

accordingly. Thus [illegible] is used in relation to God almighty indicating her love for him.

" We have a little sister
If she be a wall, we will built upon her a torrent of silver"

ג 116

[.....], According to our own interpretation, this is the view of the active intellect in relation to the rational soul. He describes her as [illegible] because she followed his path and was anxious to be elevated to a high rank where she would become aware of the truth which she wished to attain only for his sake. Thus there is an affinity between both of them as the poet said:
"If we are of different descent
good breeding, instead of a mother
shall bring us together".
So when she wish to be in the same rank as his, he fulfiled her sought for desire and thus he said [illegible]. But he described her as [illegible] because she is nor as perfect as he is. She is little only in comparison to him rather than in the absolute sense of the word, as said " and God made two great lights"[1] which is in comparison to the stars. [....]. As for "Wall", this is

ג 117 used in reference to the rational soul in acquiring logical truth which enlightened her insight. It is also in reference to her acquisition of grace and righteous virtues. These qualities shall protect her from damage and shall grant her eternal happiness

ל 118 without being destroyed by death; resembling the fence which protect those under its shelter. [....], he resembled the state she is in to silver for its beauty and receptivity to colours thus placing her in the highest state of purity and beauty.

" I am a wall
and my breast like the tower thereof"

ג 119

According to our inward interpretation, the rational soul replies

to the active intellect telling him about her eminent virtues and her righteous conduct by following his path and avoiding the desires of the body. Or, perhaps she used ' wall" in reference to wisdom and the intelligible matters which she had acquired since they will shield her against damage and save her from
15 annihilation. She used "breast' in reference to the rational force because it looked after her and provided for her, enabling her to follow virtuous paths.

Epilogue

K 127

5 Perhaps someone somewhere who is of poor knowledge and perception, deficient in judgment will refute and criticize our [my] interpretation of this eminent book and the all the views and statements of philosophers mentioned together with examples form Arabic language and poetic verses which we included in. Such people may reject and prohibit publicly this this interpretation on the assumption that we have comitted an act of slander. Let the ignorant, the wheedless and then hypocrite know that the sages were already engaged in introducing interpretation of similar nature.

Notes:

Introduction:

1 1- Mishnah Yadaym 3.5

4 1- Psalm 82.9-10

2- Jer. 3.8

Chapter I

6 1- Jud. 9.13

Chapter III

29 1- Eccl. 9.14

Chapter VIII

111 1- Gens. 49.9

2- Exod. 23.21

116 1 - Gen. 1.16

פתיחה

1א [אנכשאף אלאסר]אר וסהור אלאנואר לי אני הצעיר יעקב בכמר
יצחק שכז
ל
קצדנא אן נבין מעאני [בואטן
אלפסוקים פי שיר השירים זאידא עלי אלמצמון] פי מא דהב אליה פיה [רבותינו
זל וחאשאה אן אראד אלעשק] ואל צבה וכלע אלעדאד [פאן הדא מחאל] פי
[הדא אלנשי]ד לאנה [מקול] ברוח הקדש מתל תלים וקהלת [וסאיר כתב אל
5 אנביא] אלתאליה לכתאבה אלעזיז פגעלוהא פי אלמנזלה אלתאלתה [בעד אל
אנביא] קאלוא רבו׳ ז״ל כל הכתובים קדש ושיר השירים קדש קדשים געלה
חביב [ולו ק]צד מקצד בה טאהר לפטה מא צאג להם ליגעלה מן גמלה אלכתב
אלמעצמה [ואכתר מן] סאיר אלכתובים הנאמרים ברוח הקדש לולא אן באטנה
שריף פאיק ומענאה [גליל] ראיק ולם יגח איצא עלי מא קאל פיה תעאלי הנה נתתי
10 לך לב חכם ונבון וקיל פיה ויחכם מכל האדם מאיתן האזרחי וגו׳ ומן קיל פיה
איצא ותרב חכמת שלמה מחכמת כל בני קדם וגו׳ אן יצע כתאבא יצף פיה
מחאורה וצף חב ותגזל בין עאשק ומעשוקה יכון תאליף חט פיה עלי אלפסוק
ולו אנזלנא גואז הדא עליה וחלילה לי מעשות זה לגנזה רבו׳ ז״ל כמא פעלו בספר
רפואות למא ראו מא דכל מן אגלה מן אלצרר פכיף בהדא אלדי הו אעטם צרר מן
15 דלך עלי אלשבאן פלמא וגדנאהם לם יגנזו אתו עא״ס וחטוא עלי תעלימה כמא
קדמנא עלמנא אנמא אקצד אכראג מעאנה בהדה אלאלפאט ליחבבה ללגמיע
וישוקהם אליה פאל גמהור יאכדון מנה טואהרה פאדא שדוא קלילא תפכרוא פי
עקולהם אן לא יגוז עלי מתאלהם עא״ס אנה קצד אלטאהר ען קשור אלפאטה
עלי אלאתיין בעדה מן אלאנביא ואל עלמא אן יעטמוה ויחטוא עלי תעלימה
20 בתדוינהם לה וגעלוה יותר מדברי קדש לולא אן לה בואטן שריפה פיכון דלך
דאעיא להם לתאמל בואטנה במסאילה מן יפהמהא להם וכמא קאל תע׳ שאל אביך
ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך ואלי הדא דהבת אלהגד פי כתאבהא אלמסמי דמנה וכלילה
אלגזתה במכאטאבאת בין וחרש וסיור וזאדת זיאדה באן צורתה ליחרץ עליה אלגמהור
ויתמתעון בכראפתה [ו]יסתלדון חתי תקוי עקולהם ויגדון פי אלבחת עלי מא
25 אנטוי תחתהא ען אלמעארף ואל חכם

אלאנסאן מנזלה אלשמס מן אלבצר, פכמא אן אלשמס תעטי אלבצר אלצו פיציר אלבצר באלצו אלדי אסתפאדתה מן אלשמס מבצרא באלפעל בעד אן כאן מבצרא באל קוה, ובדלך אלצו תבצר אלשמס בנפסהא אלתי הי אלסבב פאן אבצר אלמבצר באלפעל, ובאלצו איצא תבצר אלאלואן אלתי הי מראיה באלקוה מראיה באלפעל ויציר אלבצר איצא אלדי הו באלקוה בצרא באלפעל; כדלך אלעקל אלפעאל יפיד אלאנסאן שי ירסמה פי קותה אלנאטקה מנזלה דלך אלשי מן אלאנפס אלנאטקה מנזלה אלצו מן אלבצר פדלך אלשי תעקל אלנפס אלנאטקה אלעקל אלפעאל ובה תציר אלאשיא אלתי הי מעקולה באלקוה מעקולה באלפעל, ובה יציר אלאנסאן אלדי הו עקל באלקוה עקלא באלפעל ואלכמאל אלי אן יציר קריב ען רתבה אלעקל אלפעאל, פיציר עקלא בדאתה בעד אן לם יכן כדלך ומעקולא בדאתה בעד אן לם יכון כדלך פיציר אלאהיא בעד אן כאן היולאניא, פהדא הו פעל אל עקל אלפעאל ולדלך סמי אלעקל אלפעאל.

ען קצור אלנפס אלנאטקה ען הדה אלרתבה אדא כאנת מסתרקה לשהותהא
4א קאל אלולי מעירא | להא ומובכא אני אמרתי אלהים אתם ובני עליון כלכם אכן כאדם תמותון וכאחד השרים וגו׳ אראד אן אלמקצוד כאן בכלקתכם אן תכון נפוסכם מסתעדה מהיה ללקבול מן אלעקל אל פעאל חית יצירהא במא יפיץ מן נורה עליהא קריבה מן רתבתה פתכונוא אלאהין פי רתבה אלרוחאניין אלדאימון אלבקא ואלסעאדה אלסרמדיה דלך בחצול אלחוריה לכם מן עובדיה אלשהואת ואלכלוץ מן אלהיולא פלם תפעלוא דלך בל אטעתם אלשהואת ודכלתם תחת רקהא וצרתם עביד פלחקכם אל עטב כמא ילחק אלנפוס אלבהימיה והדא הו מעני קולה אכן כאדם תמותון. אראד פנא נפוסכם אלנאטקה כפנא נפוסכם אלשהואניה ויריד הנא בקו׳ וכאחד השרים קוי אלגסד אלמדברה להא.

ען הדא אלמלאך אלמסמי אלעקל אלפעאל אסלק פי הדא אלדיואן אסמה דוד ורע לאלהאמה ללנאסקה לדרכי ה׳ אלמוצלה להא ללסעאדה אלדאימה אד מן שאן אלצאחב אלמצאפי ארשאד צאחבה ואלהאמה ללכיראת. ויסמי אלנאטקה רעיה ואחות וכלה, ודאך לקבולהא מנה מא אלקי אליהא מן אלנציהה פהי מצאפיה לה ואדה פיה מנקטעה למחבתה. ולהדא אלדיואן שרח אכר ודאך אנמא עבר ענה בוצול ומחבה הי אוקאת אלגאולות גאולות מצרים וגירהא ומא יפעל מענא לימות המשיח; ומה עבר ענה בהגראן הי אוקאת אלשעבוד. פיכון עלי הדא אלתפסיר אלתאני

אלמראד הנא בדד ורע אל מתרדד אלמד הקב"ה, ואלרעיה ואלאחות ואלכלה אלמתרדדה והי איצא כנסת ישראל והדא מא דהבוא אליה רבו ז"ל פי מדרש חזית ופי גירה מן אקואלהם קאלוא שיר השירים המשובח שבשירים אשר לשלמה למי שהשלום שלו פגעלה מכאטבה מן אלבארי תעלי לכנסת ישראל ומן כנסת ישראל ללבארי. ולא תסתוחש מן הדא אלתפסיר פי שרתנא אן אלדוד ואל רע עבר בה ען אלבארי ועבר ען אלאמה בכלה ורעיה ואחות והדא לא יליק פי גאנב אל בארי גל דכרה, פלתעלם באנא וגדנא הדא פי כתב אלאנביא מתרדדא קאל תע' עלי ידי הושע עאס וארשתיך לי לעולם וקאל איצא ריבו באמכם ריבו כי היא לא אשתי ואנכי לא אישה וקאל איצא עלי ידי ירמיה עאס וארא כי על אחדות אשר נאפה משובה ישראל שלחתיה ואתן את ספר כריתותיה אליה וקאל עלי יד ישעיה עאס איזה ספר כריתות אמכם אשר שילחתיה וקאל | בימים ההם נאם ה' תקראי [לי] אישי ולא תקראי לי עוד בעלי, וכתיר מתל הדה אלמגאזאת לא אחצי עדדהא. פאלי הדא אלמעני דהבוא ז"ל בשרחהם הדא, ועלי מא קאלוא דברה תורה בלשון בני אדם. וקד שרחנא הדא אלמעני שרחא שאפיא פי אלספר אלאול מן תאליפנא אלמסמי חקים ומשפטים. ולה שרח אכר איצא והו תפסירה עלי אלפשט ותפסיר מא פיה מן אשתקאק אלפאטה ותלכיץ אנחאה ותצאריפהא.

פצארת לה תלתה וגה מן אלשרח: אלאול בחסב מוצועגא הו תפסירה עלי אלפשט כמא קלנא, והדא אלנחו מן אלתפסיר קד תכלמת פיה אלאואיל רצי אללה ענהם מן אהל אללגה ואלנחו מתל רבי' סעדיה גאון ז"ל ואבו זכריה יחיי בן דאוד אלפאסי נ"ע ואבו אלוליד בן גנאח אלחכים אלסרקצטי ואלנגיד ר' שמואל הלוי בן נגרילה ז"ל ואבו אברהם בן ברון ומ' יהודה בן בלעם ומ' משה בן גקטילה הכהן נ"ע וגירהם רחמהם אללה. פגמענא פי מוצועגא הדא מן אעראבה ומעניה בחסבמא אעטונא מא אלקואנין פי תואליפהם, ובדאנא בה לאגל סבק אלטאהר ללבאטן. ואלשרח אלתאני מא דהבוא אליה רבו' ז"ל פי אקואלהם פי מדרש חזית ומא וקע פי דלך פי אל תלמוד גמענאה איצא ורתבנאה בעד אלאולי. ואלשרח אלתאלת והו אלדי כאן מקצודנא בהדא אלתאליף מן אגלה הו מא דהבנא אליה מן תפסיר דוד ורע אנה עבר בהא ען אלעקל אלפעאל, ותפסיר כלה ורעיה ואחות

עבארה ען אלנאטקה. והדא אלמעני לם נגד אחד מן אלקדמא סבקנא אליה ולא לוח מנהא בשי. וגעלנא רתבה אכרא, לתקדם אולאיך באלזמאן, לאן אלשרח אלאול ואלתאני קד תכלם פיה מן תקדם קבלנא. ואמא אלשרח אלתאלת פהו מתאכר ענהא בקדר תאכר זמאננא ען זמאנהם, ולאגל איצא מא דהב אליה רבי ז״ל פי קולהם האחרון נוטל שכר כנגד כולם אכרנאה ואיצא אלשרחאן אלמתקדמאן כאלתוטיה להדא אלתאלת והו אלגאיה מן הדא אלדיואן ולאגל הדא קדמנא באלדכר ואלוצף ואכרתאה באלוצע, ועלי מא קאל ארסטו אול אלפכרה אכר אלעמל ואול אלעמל אכר אלפכרה, פנסבתה מנהא נסבה אלגאיה מן אלתוטיה אלדי געלת מן אגל אלגאיה, פתאכרה פי אלתרתיב תקדים פי חקה. ואנמא כאנת תלאתה באזא תלת אגנאס אלקוי אלמוגודה פי אלאנסאן, והי אלנפסאניה ואלחיואניה ואלסביעיה. פאלתפסיר אלאול באזא | אלסביעיה והו טאהר אללפט מן חב ותגזל ועשק והו מא תדאהב אליה אלשהואניה מן כל אללדאת. ואלתאני באזא אלחיואניה פי אלטלב אלחריה מן אלרק ואלאנתקאם מן אלאעדא ניל אל כראמה ואלתרוה והדא מא תדהב אליה אלקוה אלגצבאניה והדא פי מעני אלגאולות. ואלתאלת באזא אלנפסאניה והי אלנאטקה מן טלבהא מערפה אלחקאיק. וניל אלפצאיל ואלתכליץ מן אלתשבת מן אלדי תתשבת בה צואחבתהא רגבה מנהא פי אלבקא אלדאים ופי אלסעאדה אל כאמלה פלמא כאנת לה מעאני אכראג בהדא אללפט אלעאם לנפהם מנה הדה אלמקאצד אלתאלת אלתי תדהב אליה קוי אל נפוס אלתלת לאן מקרא אחד נדרש לכמה טעמים לנטרח מנה אל אדני ונלתזם אלאעלי, ועלי מא דהב אליה פי קולה פי קהלת ואתנה לבי לדעת חכמה ודעת הוללות וסבלות. תם קאל בעד דלך אני למא וקפת עלי טרפי אלנקיץ פצלת אעלי מנהם ואמתסכת ואטרחת אלאדני הו קולה וראיתי אני שיש יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות כיתרון האור מן החשך. וסמינא הדא אלכתאב אנכשאף אלאסראר וטהור אלאנואר. נסאל אללה תעלי אן יעיננא עלי תמאם הדא אלאמל ויעצמנא מן אלזלל ואלכלל ואן יופקנא פי אלעלם ואלעמל עמי עשו פאד קד כמלנא מא ראינא תקדמה פקד וגב אן נתלוא דלך באלשרח בעז״ה.

פרק א

פאתהה אלכתאב שיר השירים אשר לשלמה תפסיר שיר מדיח משתק מן
אז ישיר משה ואצאפתה שיר אלי שירים מבאלגה והדא מן שאן אללגה אלעבראניה
אסתעמאלה קאלוא מלך מלכי המלכים תעטים למלכה. קדש קדשים אי אעטם
20 רתבה פי אלקדשים וכדלך אדא אראדוא אלמבאלגה פי אלכסה ואלאנחסאט אצאפוא
איצא דלך אלאסם אלי גמעוה קאלוא הבל הבלים. עבד עבדים. וגמע אלמצאף
אליה אעלאמא באנה אשרף אנואעהא כלהא ויריד באשר לשלמה אלדי קאלוא
שלמה פי אללאם הנא פי לשלמה לאם אלנסבה נסב בהא אל שיר אלי שלמה קאילה
ומנשיה פי מחאורה אלחב.

25 ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבו ז"ל פאן שלמה הנא אסם מן אסאמי אללה תע' קאלוא
כל שלמה האמור בשיר השירים קדש וקאלוא | שיר השירים המשובח שבשירים
25ב המעולה שבשירים. אשר לשלמה רבן גמליאל אומ' מלאכי השרת אמרוהו שיר
השירים של מעלה ר' נתן אומ' הקב"ה אמרו אשר לשלמה למי שהשלום שלו והי
מחאורה בין הקב"ה ובין כנסת ישראל מנהא אליה ומנה אליהא.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן מן אלתפסיר פאנה יריד הנא בשלמה אלעקל אלפעאל ואנמא
5 סמאה בהדא אלאסם מאכוד מן פעלה לאנה מני אלנפס אלנאטקה אלשלום
באפאצתה עליהא מן אנוארה פתנאל בדלך אל סעאדה אלמתצלה ואלבקא אלדאים
פלא ילחקהא אלעטב ואלהנא. ויריד הנא באשר לשלמה אלמדאיח אלדי קאלהא
הדא אלמלאך אלמסמי שלמה פי וצף פצאיל אלנאטקה וצף אלנאטקה לה; וליס
תפסירנא הדא במנאקץ לקול רבו ז"ל אן שלמה אסם מן אסאמי אללה פקד קיל
10 פי אלכתאב אלעזיז כי שמי בקרבו יריד בקרבו עלי הדא אלמעני דאתה אי דאתה
מסמאה בהדא אלאסם אעלאמא אנה כצאה בהדה אלרתבה ואלמנזלה וקאלוא רבו'
ז"ל שמו כשם רבו. פיכון הדא אלשיר קיל בלסאן אלחאל קול אלעקל אלפעאל פי
אלנפס אלנאטקה וקול אלנפס אלנאטקה פי אלעקל אלפעאל ונסב אלכתאב אלאשרף
אל קאילין אמא עלי אלפשט פללדכר ואמא עלי מא קאלוה רבו' זל פלהקב"ה ועלי
15 אלתפסיר אלתאלת פללעקל אלפעאל.

הנא אני ואן כנת תחת סלטאן קדר פאני תחת יריעות שלמה אלדי הו צלה תעלי
כמא קאל פי כתאבה אל עזיז ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים וגו׳.
ואמא תפסירה עלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פאנהא מכאטבה מן אלנאטקה אלי 25
אלנפסין אלבהמתין אלשהואניה ואלגצבאניה קאילה להן...

10א ...פאגפלת אלנטר מן נפסי ואצדת בי אלטריק ומשקתהא פלא תחסב מא תרא בי
סו כלק ואנמא אנא פי נהאיה מן אלאעתדאל פי אלכלק וגמאל זיי כלק ומא אנגר
לי מן סו כלק אנמא דלך לאגתמאמי בזגרך וימכן אן יכון מראדהא בהדא אלאעתבאר
אנמא הו אן תעלמה אנהא מא אצחבת מן אצחאבה לא תנסיה לבלוגהא אלגאיה
5 והו אלאגתמאע בה ולדלך בדלת נפסי פי אלמלאזמה ללכרום מתוקעה ללקאיך
וראגיה אלאתצאל בך וימכן אנהא אראדת בנטרה את הכרמים שגלהא בהא וחבהא
איאהא ואהמאלהא נפסהא חתי חצלת פי מא חצלת מן תגיר אלשכל.

ואמא עלי מא פסרה רבו׳ ז״ל קאלוא בני אמי נחרו בי אלו המרגלים שגרמו
לי שני חרבין חרבן ראשון וחרבן שני אראדוא אלעצאה מן ישראל ודכרוא אל־
10 מרגלים עלי וגה צרב אלמתל לכונהם אול מן סבבו ללאמה מא סבבו מן אלעקאב
וכדלך כל כיתצא בהם פי מא אגרוא מן סלוק השכינה וחרבן הבית וגלות ישראל
וקאלוא פי שבוני נוטרה את הכרמים על ידי שלא זכיתי להוציא חלה ולשמור
יום אחד בארץ ישראל הרי אני מוציאה שתי חלות ומשמרת שני ימים בחוצה
לארץ ואראדוא בהדא אלמעני מא ארתפעת ענא מן אל מצות בסכאנהא חוצה
15 לארץ ואעתראנהא מן אלשכוך.

ואמא תפסירה עלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פהדא מכאטבה מן אלנאטקה בלסאן
אלחאל מעלמה ללפעאל אן נקצאנהא ען אלכמאל ותקצירהא מן אן תציר פי מנזלה
אלאנפס אלמפארקה אלי אלמואד אלגיר מחתאגה אליהא אנמא הו מן כותהא גארקה
פי אבחאר אלהיולי מתשבתה בעלאיק אלגסד ותלך אלשלמה ואלכדורה אלדי
20 עאקתהא והדא הו מראדהא בקולה ששזפתני השמש עבר ען שהואת אלגסד במא
תאול אליה חאל מתבעתהא מן אלאנפס מן אלאלם ואלעדאב אלמעבר ענה בגהנם
פסמאהא באסם דלך אלערק כמא סמת אלאטבא אמתלא בטן אלדמאג מן אבכרה
כדרה בדא מן אלצדע מן אגל אלצדע אלעארק לצאחבה ואלתרבס כדלך יערק להדה
אן תסחד ולאגל הדא אלערק סמית הדא אלדא אלחאל בה שחרות ואלמראד בה
25 סואד אלקלב וטלמת אלבצר ואנמא עברת הנא ען בגיהנם בשמש פלדלך מדהב
רבו׳ ז״ל פי קולהם אמ׳ ריש לקיש אין גהנם לעתיד לבא אלא הקב״ה מוציא חמה
210ב מגרתיקה ובה רשעים נידונין שנ׳ ולהט | אותם היום פכמא אן אלחראדה אלמתצירה

פרק ג

על משכבי בלילות בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו

בלילות אעלמת הנא צדוד מחבובהא ענהא וגדרה בהא וטנהא בה אלגמיל ואלמחבה פלם יצדק טנהא ותכרירהא לפט בקשתי אעל[א]מא בכתרת בחתהא עליה ושדה טלבהא לה.

ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבו ז״ל פאן כנסת ישראל למא אכטאת ואדתרת ואנקלבת עלי עקיבהא וצדר ענהא אלכפר בעד אלאימאן פתלהא בידי האומות פשבהת דלך כמן הו פי טלמה אלליל וליס לה נור במא יתהדי דלך מא צדר מנהא פי מעשיה הרעים פאנתגב ענהא באריהא והו קולהא בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו וקאל פי כתאבה אלעזיז כי לא אעלה בקרבך וקאל אלנבי עאס מעלמא להם אל תעלו כי אין ה׳ בקרבכם ויחתמל אן עברת בעל משכבי בלילות חצולהא פי אלגלות לא קדרה להא עלי אלאנתקאץ מנה לגהלהא בוגה אלכלאץ אלדי הו אלתובה פטמסט בצירתהא ען אלנטר פי חקאיק אלאמור פשבהת אלמסתלקי עלי פראשה באלליל פי אלטלמה פצארת עלי לזום פעלהא וטלבת מן באריהא אסתנקאצהא מן בלאהא פלם יגיבהא ואנהגב ענהא לתתבת ועידתה אלתי תועד בה פי מחכם תנזילה ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני פהי כמריץ יטלב אלאפאקה מן מרצה והו פי חאלתה תלך מקוי לאסבאב מרצה דאך פיתצאעף אלמרץ עלי מא הו וישתד וקאלוא איצא רבו ז״ל על משכבי בלילות זה לילי מצרים ויהי בחצי הלילה בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי זה הקב״ה ויהי בעצם היום הזה בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו עד שהגעתיו לים ושם מצאתיו זה אלי ואנוהו אראדוא ואן טהרת מעגזאת במצרים פכנא תחת סלטאנהם לא נמלך אנפסנא פלם נגדה באכתר מגותה לי מן קריעת הים באזאלתה סלטאנהם ענא ותמליכהם לנא פי דלך אלוקת מצאתיו]

28ב

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן אלתפסיר פעברת אלנאטקה בלילות ען מדה כונהא מצאחבה ללגסד מכאמרה לטלמה אלהיולי פשבהת תלך אלמדה בטלמה אלליל אלדי לא יבצר פיה צורה שי ולא יקף פיה עלי יקין מן רויה אלחס אלא באן יוקד מצבאח יסתנאר בה כדלך אנא פי צחבתי מע אלגסד פי טלאם לא אקף לה עלי חקיקה אלא במא יתצל בי מן נור אלפעאלי ומע מא יצלני מן נורה אראדת מן

תחצל מעקולאתי באלפעל תעקל מא תעקלה אלנפוס אלבסיטה אלרוחאניה אלמתבריה מן אלמאדה פלם ימכנני דלך והדא הו מעני קולהא בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו ואנמא כררת בקשה מרתין לכונהא טלבת מטלבין אלאול חצול אלמעקולאת להא ואלתאני אן תחצל פי מנזלה אלעקול אלמפארקה אלבריה מן אלמאדה פלם ימכנהא פלדלך קאל בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו וימכן אן אראדתהא בלילות ומשכב פי מדה כונהא גאהלה גאפלה גיר משתגלה בטלב אקתבאס נור אלפעאל לם יחצל להא תמיז פבקיה עמיה אלבצירהא לכסלהא ען אלטלב ועלי מדהב מא קאלוא רבותינו ז״ל אם יאמר לך אדם יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן יגעתי ומצאתי תאמן. ומעני בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו עלי הדא אלמעני ואלתאויל אן כל טלב יכון בלא נשאט ולא קוה עזימה אלא מתטבתה בעלאיק אלגסד לא יחצל מנה טאיל ען תבע שהואת אלגסד עבר בלילות ומשכב ויכון פי תפסיר לפטה בקשה עלי הדא אלתאויל אדאמה אלטלב מע תעלק באלשהואת אלקוי אלבהימיה לכן אלמעני אלאול אחב אלינא מן אגל תכריר אלבקשה פאן מענאהא עלי הדא אלתאויל אלתאני גיר מתמכן כתמכנה פי תאויל אלאול

אקומה נא ואסובבה בעיר בשוקים וברחובות אבקשה את שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו אקומה ואסובבה אפעאל מסתקבלה פי מכאן אלמאציה מתל אז ישיר משה במעני שר. תהומות יכסיומו. תהרוס קמיך תשלח חרונך אלדי הי כלהא במעני אלמאצי ואנמא פעלת דלך אללגה אלעבראניה לסר כפי דקיק הדלך אדא אראדת פעל מא קד פעל פי מא מצא וגב פעלה אבדא פאלמסתקבל פתסוגה פי סיגה אלאסתקבאל מתל תסביח משה ובני ישראל אעלאמא באן דלך כאן דאבהם | אבדא טול אעמארהם שכרא לאללה תע׳ עלי פעלה אלגמאל K29 מעהם פי גאולת מצרים ואשארה ללאתין בעדהם אן יקתאדוא בהם עלי גאולת מצרים וכדלך למא כאן פעל אללה תעלי באלסלמה אלפגאר מצרים אלאנתקאם מנהם כדלך פעלה בכל סאלם וגאיר יגור עליהם פלדלך אכרגה בלפט אלמסתקבל פקאל תהרוס תשלח תערוק יכסיומו ונרגע אלי מא כנא בסבילה פלמא אעלמתנא באן דאבהא אבדא אנמא הו טלב מחבובהא אכרגתה בלפט אלאסתקבאל פקאלת אקומה ואסובבה אבקשה וקולהא נא אעלאמא אן כאנת הדה אלאפעאל מנהא בתלטף ורגבה כמא קאל אלולי עאס אל נא רפא נא לה אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך וקאל תע דבר נא באזני העם וגעלהם ירגבוא מן מצרים אלעואדי. ושוקים גמע שוק ולם נגד אלואחד מנהא אלא פי לגה רבותינו ז״ל קאלוא שוק העליון שוק התחתון ורחבות גמע רחוב אכברת מע גדהא פי טלבה לם תגדה איצא מן דלך

ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבותינו ז״ל אנהא אראדת כנסת ישראל תוצלהא אלי
באריהא בטאעה אלרסול אלצאדק משה רבינו ע״ה פי קולה כה אמר ה׳ אלהי ישראל
שימו איש חרבו על ירכו וקאל ויעשו בני לוי כדבר משה ומע דלך לם יסכן גצבה
15 תע ענהם כמא קאל כי לא אעלה בקרבך וקאל הנה מלאכי ילך לפניך וביום פקדי
וכו׳ פהדא הו מעני בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו. וקאלוא איצא אקומה נא אלו ארבעים
מסעות אבקשה את שאהבה נפשי זה משה געלוא הנא את מכאן עם מתל את יעקב
את האלהים התהלך נח היה רועה את אחיו בצאן אם ישכם עושים חסד ואמת את
אדני אשר הכה את המדינית הדה כלהא במעני עם אשארו אלי תשפע משה רבינו
20 ע״ה פיהם ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה ומע הדא כלה קאל הנה מלאכי ילך לפניך
פלדלך קאלת בקשתיו ולא מצאתיו.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן אלתפסיר פאן אלנאסקה עברת בעיר ען אלגסד
כמא קיל פי קהלת עיר קטנה ואנשים בה מעט ועברת בשוקים ען אלמגארי כאלשראן
ואלאוראד ועברת ברחובות ען אעצא אלחסה אלקלב ואלדמאג ואלכבד וכואדמהא
25 מן אלאעצא אלאליה באנהא טלבת פי הדה אלאלאת ומא יצדר ענהא מן אלאפעאל
וגדתהא מעניה בצלאח אלגסד פטלבת מנהא אן | תבלגהא גאיה אמאניתהא והו
29ב מחבובהא אלפעאל פלם תגד פי דלך מא תעתמד עליה פי תבליגהא מקצדהא
ומראדהא לאן מקצד הדה כלהא אלענאיה במצלחה אלגסד אלמרכב מן היולי
אלכדרה אלמטלמה ותאמל וצף אללה תע פי כתאבה אלעזיז כי עפר אתה ואל עפר
תשוב נסבה אל אכתאף אלאסתקצאת ואתקלהא תם קאלת ואן וקד בלגת אלי
5 אלעלם באלפעל ואשרקת עלי אנוארה ודלך בוסאטה הדה אלאלאת ואסתעמאלהא
פאלמקצד אלדי הו גאיתי פאן תחצל מעקולאתי באלפעל לם יתמכן לי בהא אד
לא ימכן דלך מע צחבתהא ראסא אלא באטראחהא פלדלך קאלת בקשתיו ולא
מצאתיו אי לם נבלג הדה אלגאיה מתי טלבת דלך ענדהא

מצאוני השומרים הסובבים בעיר את שאהבה נפשי ראיתם אעלמת
10 הנא אנהא למא דארת פי אלאזקה ואלרחאב לטלב מחבובהא ולם יכפיהא דלך חתי
סאלת ענה אלחראס אלדי יטופון עלי אלמדינה לעל תקע מנהם עלי כברה פלם
תגד ענדהם נבא

אלאכלאץ להא בכל לב ובכל נפש פאלאם הי אלחכמה כמא סמאה פי מוצע אכר
אחות פקאל אמור לחכמה אחותי את וראדת בבית חפצהא ותחצילהא פי אלדהן
אלואעי להא ומעני דלך אן תחצילהא אלחכמה אעאנתהא עלי מחבתה ואלסלוך
בדרכיו וקאלוא רבותינו איצא ז״ל פי דלך עד שהבאתיו אל בית אמי זה סיני ואל חדר
הורתי זה אהל מועד שמשם נתחייבו ישראל ללמוד תורה והורתי מן ולהורות את 25
בני פבטאעתהא לה להדה אלאואמר אסתחקת חלול אלשכינה פי מא בינהם.

31א ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פתריד אלנאטקה בקולהא כמעט שעברתי מהם אנה
למא אעתברת אלאלאת ואפעאלהא ואלקוי אלמדברה ללגסד ולם תגד פי מקצודאתהא
כפאיה תבלגנהא אלי אראדתהא והי אלאתחאד באלפעאל כמא קלנא פלם יכון אלא
בעד תפרק אלאתצאל בינהא ובינהם פבלגת מקצדהא וצארת מעקולאתהא באלפעל
5 קריבה מן אל בריה מן אלמאדה והדא קולהא עד שמצאתי את שאהבה נפשי וימכן
אן יכון אלמראד בהדא אנה למא עלמת אן אלאלאת ואלאפעאל אלצאדרה ענהא
ואלקוי אנפסהן אנמא קצדהא אלענאיה באלגסד עלמת אן בגיתהא לא תחצל להא
במסאעתהא פגאלת בפכרהא אלי מא תבלג בה בגיתהא פעלמת אן מא ימכן דלך
אלא באסראחהא פכאן דלך סבב נילהא מקצדהא וקולהא כמעט אעלמת אן בגיתהא
10 ואלתהא פי אלחין בלא מהלה תם אנהא אעלמת אן תגבטת בתלך אלחאלה ולם
תכסל פיהא ולם תמלהא והו קולהא אחזתיו ולא ארפנו ואלמראד הנא באמי קותהא
אלתי וצלתהא אלי רויה נורה ואלאתצאל בה פהי סבב חיאתהא פי אלנשאה אלתאניה
וסעאדתהא כאלאם אלתי הי סבב אלחיאה פי אלנשאה אלאולי וארדאפהא הורתי
בעד קולהא אמי אעלאמא אן וגוד הדא אלחאל בתעב ושקא כמא קאל פי מוצע
15 אכר יוסיף דעת יוסיף מכאוב פלחקהא פי אלאתצאל בה מן אלתעב מא ילחק אלחאמל
מן אלתעב באלולד ואלשקא מן חין עלקהא אלי וקת ולאדתה ומן ולאדתה אלי תמאם
תרביתה ואשארת באנהא לא תנאל מן אלאפעאל מא תנאל מן אלפעאל אלא
באמאתת אלשהואת אלגסדאניה כמתל אלחאמל אלדי יתקל כתיר מן גדא אלאתהא
וינצרף אלי גדא אלנטפה וזאיד אלי דלך אן מא תנאלה מן אלגדא ולא ילד להא מתל
20 אסתלדאדהא בה קבל אלחמל ואלי הדא אשאר אפלאטון בקולה אלפלספה אגתמאם
ואהתמאם תנאיה באלמות אראד אמאתת אלשהואת ואנבא קאל אמי ולם תקל אבי
לאן אלאם אכתר שקא באלולד מן אלאב פלמא קד שקית בה כתירא פתחאפט בה

פרק ה

ההגלות הסודות

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן שרח אלבאטן פאן הדה מכאטבה אלנאטקה ללפעאל
קא..ה לה ואן כנת נאימה פי וקת צחבתי ללגסד בחאגתי אליה פי חיאה אלדניא
פאני קלבי מנתבה אלדי מן אגלו אעתד אל אליפי והו אלדם אלמצלח קוי אלכאדמה
לי פאעדני ללתעלים מן אלפעאל חתי צלחת לכדמתה ובסטע אנוארה אלבאחרה
עלי צרת עאפרה באן אלכיר אלמחץ אנמא נלחקה מנה מחבה מקתדיה בוצאי־
אה מהתדיה באנוארה ולמא עלם הדא מני מכנני ואפאץ עלי בפיצה ואנאר בצירתי
חתי אבצרתה פהו לי כאלשמס אלתי תעטי אלצו ללבצר ובדלך אלצו נבצרהא
פבנורה אלתי אפאץ עלי בצרתה. וקולה פתחי לי מענאה אקבלי וציתי וכוד בקוה
מא יצלך מני ועיה תם קרטהא בארבע אלפאט אחתי רעיתי יונתי תמתי למא טהר
לה מן נגאבתהא וצלאחהא פאמא אחתי פהו נסבה אלנגם והו אשתראכהא מעה פי
אלבסאטה אלרוחאניה תם תבע דלך בקולה רעיתי תקיה לאן מנתקד אלנסבה בינהמא
אנמא הי פי אלבסאט לא פי אלמערפה ותכון כנסבה יעקב לעשו וכמא קאלהלא
אח עשו ליעקב וכאן בינהמא מן אלבעד בינהמא לאנהמא טרפי אלנקיץ פלדלך
68א קאל רעיתי אראד | אן בינהמא נסבה פי אלמערפה ואנהא אקתבסת מן מערפתה תם
אעלם ואן כאן ומנה סרי אליהא אלמערפה פלא יטן אן בין מחבתהא פי ומחבתי
פיהא מן אלבין מא בין נורי ונורה באל תעלמון אני מגתבט במחבובתהא כאגתבאטהא
במחבתי לאני אהלת לכמאלהא פלמא כמלת כמל מקצדי והדא הו מעני קולה יונתי
אי מן אנא האים בקואהא פהי פאתנה לי בגמאלהא פיכון יונתי הנא משתק מן לא תונו
פמן שדה אלגראם בהא אנא מעני פי גמאלהא גאבן לי והי אסתעארה לפרט אלעשק
פי אלמעשוק תם זאד בקולה תמתי אעלאמא כלפי בחבהא געלני נצפהא במא ליס
פיהא בל ינבגי אן תעלמון אנהא כאמלה אלמחאסן לא ישוב חסנהא נקץ פלאגל
הדה אלמעאני אחתאג אלי הדה אלאלפאט אלארבעה. ולנא אן נקול אנה אראד בהדה
אלאלפאט אלארבעה לדכר ארבעה קוי מן קוי אלנפס אלפכר ואלדכר ואלתכיל
ואלנזוע. וקולה שראשי נמלא טל אשאר מן תעלימה להא פי חאל צחבתהא אלגסד
פיה בעד ונצב ושקא כשקא מן תעב מחבובה ווצל אלי מנזלה חדרכה פי טריקה ועק
לכנה יסיר והו מא עבר ענה בטל ולם יקול מטר לינבי בכתרה אלתעב ואראד
בלילה טלמה אלגסד וכדורתה אלתי צחבתה אלנאטקה פאשאר אן אלשקא אנמא
כאן למשיה אלי מנזלהא לילא מא שבה בה פיצא אלדי אפאץ עליהא פי מדה

אלזאילה עליהא ואראדת בהכוני פצעתי מא נאלהא מן אלמשקאת ואלציקאת
71ב אלעסימה | ואלשמדות אלצעבה אלתי יחדתונהא עליהא ואשארה ברדידי אלי זואל
רדאהא אלדי כאן יסתרהא הו כראב אלבית וארתפאע אלשכינה וזואל מלכהא
וארדת בשמרי החומות אלקאימין בנואים אלאמם אלמסתולין עליהם ושבהת
נואמיס אלאמם באלאסואר אלדאירה באלמדינה כמא אן אלאסואר תחפט אהל
5 אלמדינה מן אלאעדא כדלך נואמיס אלאמם חאפטה מן תעדי בעצהם עלי בעץ פאן
כל אמה תסתולי עליהא תסלב מנהא אלדכול פי נואמיסהא ואן תכרג ען אלכלל
ותלימא עלם מן מלכות ישמעאל ואדום מן מקצה כל ואחדה דתור ישראל ונסכהא.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פתריד בשומרים וסובבים אלקוי ותריד בעיר אלגסד
כמא עבר ענה פי מוצע אכר עיר קטנה פעברת ען אלשומרים קוי אלגסד אלחאפטה
10 לה במנזלה קוה אלנאמיה ואלגאדיה ואלארבע קוי אלכאדמה ללגאדיה והי אלגאדבה
ואלמאסכה ואלהאצמה ואלדאפעה וארד בסובבים אלחואס אלכמס אלמודיה אלי
רייסהא אלאעסם אעני אלקלב מא אדרכת מן מחסוסאתהא וארדת בהכוני פצעוני
עוקהם וצדהם להא ען אקתבס אלנור אלמנירהא ואקתנא אלפצאיל ושבהת פעלהם
בהא דלך לצרב מעה שג אשארה באן הדא אלפעל מנהם בי מולם פי נהאיה באן אלבצע
15 מפרק אלאתצאל כדלך הם פרקוא אתצאלי ביני ובין מחבובי וכמא אן אלפצעים תחתאג
אלי סביב יעאלגהא כדלך הדא אלפעל יחתאג אלי עלאג והו זואל אלסבב אלמסבב
ללמרץ ודאך אן נהגרהם ונכלע טאעתהם וארדת ברדידי בהאי וגמאל אלמעארף
אלחאצלה לי מנך וארדה בקולהא שמרי החומות אלקוה אלחאפטה אלמנבעה
מן אלחאסה אלרייסה אלתי פי אלקלב אלתי תעטי אלקוה ללאעצאב אלמנבעתה
20 אלי אלאעצא מן אלדמאג פתעטי אלחס ואלחרכה לגמיעהא פי אן תחס מן שאנהא
אן תחס ממא יכצהא ואן תתחרך אלחרכה אלאראדיה בתאליף אלקוה
אלנזועיה וקוה אלאנבסאט ואלאנקבאץ אלתי בה תצלח אלחרארה אלגריזיה
אלמנבעתה פי אלשראיין אלי גמיע אלאעצא ואלאוראד אלמנבעתה מן אלכבד
לתסקי כל עצו ותחע עליה מא יחתאג אליה מן אלדם ויכון בה גדאוה ואלאנתיאן
25 וכואדמהא לבקי אלגרע פי אלאשתגאל מע הדא זואל עני רדידי אלמתקדם אלדכר
ואנמא שבה אלדי דכר פי אלאול לשומרי העיר לשבההם להם לאן מנאפעהא
72א באפעאלהא לא יתעדי דואתהא לאן | כל עצו באלקוי אלדי פיה יגתדי וינמי כמא
תפעל שומרי העיר פי חראסתהם אהל מדינתה כילא יתעדי בעצהם עלי בעץ ואלקוי

ועלי מא דהבנא נהן אליה פהו גואב כואדם אלנאסקה ללנאסקה בלסאן אלחאל
או עלי אלמעני אלאכר גואב אלנואסק אלדי תכלצוא מן אבחר אלהיולי ופארקוא
אלאגסאד ללנאסקה אלמצאחבה ללגסד פארדן יעלמאן הל אנכשף להא מן נורה
במקדאר תשוקהא אם לא וימכן אנהן אראדן בקולהן מה דהך מדח עלי סביל
אלתעטים אי מא אגל מחבובך מא אגלה מא אעטם שאנה ואנמא כרן הנא מה
דהך מדח מרתין אראד בדלך אלתעטים אלכתיר פיכון אלמעני מא אעטם מחבובך
ומא אדראך מן מחבוב וכמא תפעל אלערב פי מתל הדא אלמעני כתיר וימכן אן
יכון אלגרץ פי אלתכראר אנארה בצירתהא חתי כאן מנהא אלאלתהאם אליה תם
בדלך אלאלתהאם אסתמרת מנה אלחקאיק ואלמעארף אלעקליה פסעדת ותכלצת מן
אלעטב פכאן מנה אלפצל פי אלבהאה ואלגאיה.

דודי צח ואדום דגול מרבבה אגאבתהן צח צאפי ביאץ פי חמרה והו
מן דואת אלמתלין אצלה צחח מתל טח אלדי אצלה שחח והו נעת ללדוד אלמתקדם
אלדכר ודגול מרבבה מרתפע מתל ארתפאע אלדגל אי אלעלם ואראדת בקולהא
מרבבה אנה אטהר מן אלרבבה אלדאירה חולה פוצפתה בחסן אלמזאג ואלאעתדאל
בכון אלאסתקצאת אלארבע אעתדאלת פיה ואן אלקוה אלמולדה כאנת פיה קויה
ואלמאדה כתירה פכאנת אעצאה כתירה פי אלכמיה חסנת אלכפיה.

ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבותינו ז"ל פאן כנסת ישראל למא סאילוהא אלאומות אי
עלה אוגבה להא אחתמאל מא תחמלה מן אלטעבוד מנהם פגאובתהם אן אלעלה
אלתי אוגבת אלי דלך טבחו של הקב"ה יתעלה טמו פבדאת תצף בעצהא מנהא
מן כתיר ואן כאנת לא תחצא כי רבו מארבה ואין להם מספר פאראדת בצח ואדום
מא יטהר מן אכתלאף אפעאלה פי חק מכלוקאתה פעברת בצח אחסאנה וגודה
273ב למחביה אלסאלכין פי טאעתה ועברת באדום ען אלעקובאת אלחאלה באלעצאת
אלטלמא קאלוא לאמר לכם קצת טבחו צח לי במצרים ואדום לי במצרים צח לי
ופסח ה' על הפתח ואדום ועבר ה' לנגוף את מצרים אדום בעולם הזה וצח לי לעולם
הבא צח לאומות בעולם הזה ואדום לה לעולם הבא ומעני דגול מרבבה עטמתה
וגלאלה קדרתה עלי גמיע מכלוקאתה באלקוה ואלבקא ואלעזה ואלסלטאן.

ועלי מא דהבנא נהן אליה פאן אלנאסקה אכדת פי תעריף צאחבתהא בכצאל

אלפעאל אלכאמלה ואנהא לם תחבה אלא ען מערפה בה וכברה פאבתדאת וקאלת צח
ואדום וצפרה בצפתין צח ואדום אמא צח פאראדת בה צפה גוהריתה פי כונה
ברי מן אלמאדה ואראדת באדום סמוה ורפעתה עלוא כעלוא כרה אלנאר עלי סאיר
אלאסתקצאת ועברת ען אלנאר בלונהא ויכון אדום הנא שקרה ואשארה כונה ען
אלעאשר צדר וגחדה כמא בינא פי צדר כתאבנא הדא וימכן אן אשארת באדום ען
ענאיתה באלנפס אליפהא אלדם ושקיקתה כמא קאל תע כי הדם הוא הנפש
פסמתה בהא תם אתבעתה בנעת תאלת להא באלאצאפה אלי אלנפוס קאלת דגול
מרבבה אי אשכאצהא עלי כתרתהא הו אעלאמהא ומן אגלה ארתקת ואנמא אכרג
הדא אלנעת בלפט מפעול לם יסם פאעלה אשעאר אן לה צאנע געל פיה תלך
אלקוה ופצלה בה.

ראשו כתם פז קווצותיו תלתלים שחורות כעורב אלמעני פי כתם
פז וכתם ופז בסקוט ואו אלעטף כמא קאל שמש ירח עמד זבולה אלמראד שמש
וירח פיכון אלכתם גיר אלפז אלא אנהא נוטין מן אלדהב ורבמא כאן אלמדהב פיה
כאלמדהב פי אדמת עפר וגירה מן אצאפה אלשי אלי נפסה הדא אלמוצע הו אבתדא
אלפסוק ומן אלאול אלי הנא בעד הדא אלדי הו וכעצם השמים לטהר כתם קיל פיה אנה
אלגוהר וקיל פיה אנה אלדהב לקול אלעבראניון בכתם סהר לא תסולה ואלכאלץ
הו גיר אלמגשרש ואלגוהר לא יגש ומא אסתדל בה צאחב הדא אלקול אלתאני ליס
בדליל לאן קולה הנא טהור יריד בה צפאיה ונקאה כמא קאל וכעצם השמים לטהר
וקווצותיו דואיב שערה וקד פסרנאה פי מא תקדם ורבמא אראדת בה עוארצה
74א והלתלים | רבאתי אצלה תלתל ותפסירה מתראכם שערה בעצה אלי בעץ פכמיתה
כתירה וכפיתה הסנה והו קולה שחורות כעורב דל פי כתרתה עלי חראס מזאג
אלדמאג לאן מאדה אלשער הי אלבכאר אליאבס יכרג מן מסאם אלבדן וינדפע
פידפע בעצה בעצא אלי כארג ויתצל בעצה בבעץ ולא ינקטע ולשדה חראראתה
ויבסה כאן לתה אסד וגרצהא הנא אן תצף מחסאנה פשבהת ראסה אלי אלגוהר או
אלדהב כמא אן הדין אשרף אלגמאדאת ואעזהא כדלך אלראס אשרף אלאעצא

אחד נדרש לכמה טעמים וראדוא אן מא מן אלפאטה לפטה אלא והחסהא מעאני
וכדלך גמלוא פי רסום אלכתאבה מנהא מן קרי וכתיב וחסר מלא ונקדים ופרשיות
סדורות פתוחות וסתומות ונקטהא באלטבעה מלכים ופסוקי טעמים וגיר דלך כלהא
תחתהא מעאני גלילה אלקדר עטימה אלכטר וימכן אטארת אלי אפעאלהא מע אלאמה
פי חאל כונהא פי אלטאעה מתל מא פעל מן אלנסיות במצרים ועל הים ובמדבר
ועל ידי משה רבינו עאס ופתחתה אלבלאד על ידי יהושע עאס ומא כאן להא מן אלעז
ואלסלטאן פי זמן דוד ושלמה רצי אללה ענהמא פטבה דלך לעזה אלכתם ואלפז
ואטארת בקוצותיו מא תועדנא מן אלעקובאת פי וקת אלעציאן ומא הל בהמא רבנא
מן כתרתהא ועטמתהא פעברת בקוצותיו ען אלצרות בקוצות כמתל מא קיל פי
אלכתאב אלעזיז לטכים בעיניהם ולצנינים בצדיכם ועברת ען כתרתהא בתלתלים
ען ודאה כפיתהא בקולהא שחורות ושבהת סואדהא בסואד אלעורב אשארה באן
לא ירתגי לסואיהא טאל מא הי מתמאדיה עלי אלמעאצי ולאגל הדא אלתשביה
בעוף טמא אלדי ליס ימכן טהרתו כדלך מתי בקיה אלאמה פי אתבאע שהואתהא
אלבהימיה וכלעהא סלטאן סאעה באריהא לם תתכלק ממא הי פיה.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן אלתפסיר כאן אלנאטקה אראדת בוצף אלפעאל
בכתם פז לצפא נורה אלבאהר ואן אלמעקולאת אלואצלה אליהא מן לדנה כאמלה
צאפיה לא ישובהא שי כמתל אלדהב אלכאלק ומע צחתהא וחקיקתהא גמילה חסנה
תתזין בה אלנאטקה כזין אלשער אלפאחם אלסואד אלראס ואלעארצין דלך אלגמאל
לא יכאף עליה זואל ען חאלה וקד ימכן אנהא אראדת בסואד אלשער טלמה אלנפוס
וכדרה מתבעה שהותהא אלגרקה פי אבחר אלהיולי ועבר ענה בקוצות ואשארה
אן הדה אלנפוס כתירה פקאלת תלתלים אעלמת באן אלהלאכאת לא תחצי ואלכאלצה
רפאע מקדארהא והו אלדי עבר ענהא בראש יריד אלדי געלהא כמא : קיל נאם ה׳
75א לאדוני שב לימיני. וימכן אנהא אראדת אן אלעקליאת אלמתצלה מנה אלתי הי
באלקצד אלאול לא ימכנהא אלעבארה ענהא אלא בקשור אלאלפאט ובהא יוצל
אלי ארואח אלמעאני פהי אלקוצות והי שחורות ואלמעקולאת כתם פז.

עיניו כיונים על אפיקי מים רוחצות בהלב יושבות על מלאת

שבהת עיניה בתאלת אלחמאם אדא כאנת עלי גדראן למאא פוצפתא הנא בתלאת
אוצאף אלאול מנהא על אפיקי מים אראדה קוה אלרוח אלבאצרה פיהא וחרכתהא
כלפינין אדא נטרת אלי אלמא אלצאפי תמתד ותלטף רוחהא אלבאצרה. ואלתאני

79א עלי אליקין בהא ועלי אלעלם באנהא לא יגוז ולא ימכן גירהא אצלא מן גיר אן
נדרי מן אול אלאמר כיף חצלת לנא הדא ולא מן חצלת הדלך מתל כל תלתה
פהו פרד וכל ארבעה פהו עדד זוג וכל מא גז לשי פהו אצגר מן דלך אלשי
וכל גמלה פהי אעצם מן גזהא. וכל מקדרין כל מקדאר מנהא מסאוי למקדאר
5 ואחד פדאך אלמקדארין מתסאויאן ואשאבה הדה אלמעקולאת אלאולי ונקול
איצא כמא אן אלדהב יצל אליהא ואלי הדא אלוקת לם נקף עלי כיפיה אלתוצל
אליה כדלך אלמעקולאת חצל לנא ולא נעלם מן אין חצלת וקולהא מראהו כלבנון
אראדת כמא אן גבל אללבנון משהור מן אגל סמוה ולזום אלתלג עליה כדלך
נור אלפעאל משהור מעלום דאים אלפיץ מנה אלי אלנאטקה וקולה בחור כארזים
10 אראדת אנה לא ילחקה אלהרם ולא יכיל פיה אלדהר ואלי הדא אלמעני אשאר בן
סירא פי רסאלתה אלמרמוזה אלתי סמאהא חי בן יקצאן פאנה נחא פיהא הדא
אלנחו מן אלתעלים.

חכו ממתקים וכלו מחמדים זה דדי וזה רעי בנות ירושלם

הנכה חלאוה אי רצא בה חלו גמיע אנואע מן לדאת וגמלתה מחאסנה מתמנאה
15 הדלך כמא וצפת מחאסנה עלי אלתפציל תם אגמלת וקאלת ובאלגמלה פליס פי
כי אלא חסן מנסר ומכבר תם קאלת להם הדה אלמחאסן ואלמחאמד הי כיפיאת
דחי אלדי בהא יתמיז מן גירה והו אלצאחב אלדי חלפת לכם עליה חית מא
וגדתמוה תכברוה במא לקית מן אגלה מן אלשקא ואלתעב פחק עליכן אן תוסעוני
מדדא פי חבה מן אגל מא וצפת לכם מחאמדה.

20 ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבו׳ ז״ל פאן כנסת ישראל עברת באן כל מא וצלהא ען
באריהא מן אואמרה ונואהיה כלהא לדידה עדבה מתמנאה ענדהא כמא קאל אלולי
פי וצפהא הנחמדים מזהב ומפז רב ומתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים אראדת בכלו
מחמדים מא פעל מעהא מן אותות ומופתים במצרים ועל ים סוף ובמדבר ובכניסתו
לארץ ובבנין בית הבחירה תמנאהא אלאמם פחק לי אן נפכר בפצאיל רבי עלי
25 ואחסאנה אלי יא מעשר אמם אלעאלם למא כצני בה מן דונכם ואראדת בירושלם
אלעאלם אלדי כלקה עלי | נהאיה אלכמאל.

279ב ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פאן אלנאטקה אכברת באן תלקין אלפעאל להא חלו
ולדיד ומחבוב ומעשוק ובאלגמלה גמלתה פאצל ואפאצה נורה עליהא מחאמד
כלהא מתמנאה פפצלת מהאמדה פי מא תקדם גמלתהא הנא בקולה וכלה מחמדים
תם קאלת זה דדי וזה רעי קדמה לפטה דוד עלי לפטה רע אעלמת אנהא כאנת

פרק ז

התגלות הסודות

יפהמא פקאלת אנא כאללאעבה בין מיראנין מתי אסעתכם עאצית כאלקי ומתי אסעת כאלקי עאציתכם פאנא כמא קיל פי אלמתאל אוי לי מיצרי אוי לי מיוצרי וימכן אן אלמראד במחולת המחנים אני לם אכף מנכם ואן תעצבתם עלי פאן אללה יעצני עליכם כמא קאל ויעקב הלך לדרכו ויאמר יעקב כאשר ראם מחנה אלהים זה ויקרא שם המקום ההוא מחנים פיכון מחנים עלי הדא אלתפסיר גמע לא תתניה מתל המזלג שלש השנים על אבן אחת שבעה עינים אלדי הו גמע לא מחאלה.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן אלתפסיר אלבאטן פאן אלפעאל יכאטב אלנאסקה ויאמרהא באן לא תסרף פי טאעה הואהא ושהוה אלגסד וכרר עליהא אלוציה מרתין עלי מא אמרנא פי אלכתאב אלעזיז הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך אכרגה בלפט אלמצדר פקאל הוכח לוקתה עלי אלכתרה ואראד בקולה ונחזה בך אתצאל ענאיתה בהא ואתצאל נורה בהא אדא אתבעתה ועצאת אלשהואת ואן פסר מן עלי אלקראר פוצפהא עלי אלדואם פי אלקבול מנה אעלמהא אן קבולהא מנה כיר כלה ואן נורה יפיק עליהא ואן קולה ונחזה בך וקולה מה תחזו מכאטבה מנהא ללפעאל אי אני עלי מא תריד מן טאעתיך ופי נהאיה מן אלכמאל והו קולהא | מה תחזו בשולמית ואכרגה בלפט אלגמאל ללתפכים כמא קאל כי אלהים קדשים הוא ואראדת בקולהא כמחולת המחנים אני מענאה עלי קמע שהואת אלגסד במא אכתסבתה מן קוי אנוארך ובמא אכתסבתה מן אלמעארף מן הדראתך לי פהי לי אעואן עלי אלהוא ואנא מלאומה לך.

94א

מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת נדיב חמוקי ירכיך כמו חלאים מעשה ידי אמן פעמיך קדאמך חמוקי ירכיך תזאהק כצריך אי צמורהא חלאים כרז ופי כלאם רבותינו ז״ל אין הקומץ משביע האומן ואין חבור מתמלה מחליתה ואראד בדלך אלאעכאן ואומן צאנע וליס פי דברי הקדש מתלה ואמא פי כלאם אלהכמים ז״ל פכתיר ויריד אן תלך אלכרז מנטמה בעצהא אלי בעץ אלדי הי שבה אלאעכאן מתכנה צנעה צאנע מתיקן אלצנאעה ואראד בבת נדיב בנת אלגליל משתק מן נדיבי עמים.

ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבותינו ז״ל פהו וצף אלבארי תעלי לכנסת ישראל פי אתכאלהא עלי באריהא ומשיהא במדבר בארץ ערבה ושוחה בארץ ציה וצלמות

גיר מחוסה ולא ראגעה אלי מצאמר כדלך כנסת ישראל גיר אן אלשדה תערף אנהא
לפלאן מולאהא ומתי שא וקף עלי חדתהא כדלך כאנוא ישראל פי דלך אלוקת
לם תכון להם רסום יקפון ענדהא גיר אן דעותהם לטאעה באריהם מסתגיבון להא
מתי דעאהם להא לבה בקולהם נעשה ונשמע תם קאלת נלינה בכפרים אשארה
מנהא בוקופהא ענד מא סמעת אלעשר דברות ואמתתאלהא איאהא פעברת ענהא
בכפרים באלאצאפה אלי שדה אלתי כאנת פיהא אול גיר עאמרה פכדלך כאנת
הי כאליה מן אלמצות פלמא אלעשר דברות תעמרת בעץ אלעמראן פתשבהת
באלכפר אלמעמר אלגיר מרתב ולא מחדק פאשארה טאלבה אלכאמל פי אלתתדין
ואן תציר כאלמדינה פי גאיה אלרתבה ואלתחדיק דלך בתכמיל משפטי התורה
וחקיה ויכון אנהא אשארה בנלינה בכפרים טאעה גמהור אלאמה פי קולהא נעשה
ונשמע בנסבתהם מן אלכאצה והם אלעארפון אלכאמלון אלעקל אלמחדקון נסבה
אלקרי מן אלמדן פיכון אהל אלקרי גיר מחדקון ולא אהל רתבה ולא עיש לדיד הני
כאהל אלמדן פי רתבה עישהם ואתקאן מאאכלהם ומשארבהם פטלבת מן באריהא
אן יכון בסבב מבאדה אלגמהור אלי טאעתה אן יחטאוא ענדה ויחל סכנתה
בינהם ואן כאנוא גיר כמאל ולא עארפין בה פכפאהם תצמימהם עלי טאעתך.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאטן פאן אלנאסקה תעשקת באלפעאל
למא פאץ עליהא מן נורה ועלמת אן בקי להא מן אלמעארף אכתר ממא עלמת
אן כמאלהא אנמא יכון באסתגנאיהא ען אלאתהא ואן טאל מא הי מסגונה פי אלגסד
לא ימכנהא דלך פעברת ען מפארקה אלגסד בשדה חית לא ישגלהא ענה שאגל
ולא יעוקהא עאיק פקאלת לה אן אלמנפעה באלפראג הי אלמוצלה אלי אליך
התי נלחק לך והדא הו בגיתי ומנאי ואמלי לכן מא דמת מסגונה פי אלגסד מכתלטה
מע אלאלאת מתשבתה בהא פאנמא נאכד מן לדאתהא קליל במקדאר אלכפאף
מן אלעיש בסבב אלאתי אלתי אנא מחתאגה אליהא מא דמת פי אלגסד והדא הו
מעני קולהא נלינה בכפרים אשאר באן מתי אראדת אלאגתמאע בך פלא ימכן דלך
אלא בתרך אללדאת ורפאהה אלעיש ואלתפנק פיה מתל אהל אלמדן באל אציר
102א האלי מתל אהל אלקרי פי תרכהם רפאהיה אלעיש יאנמא קאלת נלינה אשארה
אן אגתמאעהא מעה יכון לילא ולם תקול מא תדל בה עלי אן אלאגתמאע יכון
נהארא אשארה לטיפה באן אתצאלהא וטפרהא בה ליס הו אתצאל חקיקי בחית
לא יכון בינהמא חאגז בל אנמא הו קריב מן אלאתצאל חקיקיה לאן אלאגתמאע
באלליל יחתאג פיה אלי מניר יסתצי בה וחיניד תמכן אלרויה בין אלמתחאבין
ואלאלתדאד באלנטר פי אלאשכאץ אלחסאן דלך אלנור לא מחאלה אקל אסתנארה

מן צו אלנהאר פכדלך אסתנארתהא באנוארה פי מדה כונהא מסגתה פי אבחר אלהיולי מחתאגה אלי אלאתהא גיר גניה ענהא פליס נורהא צאפי כצפאיהא פי וקת פראקהא אלגסד פאעלמת אלנאסקה אן כלמא אסתלדת בשי ונאלת מנזלה סלבת מא הו אעלי מנהא ומעני הדא אלפסוק אן אגתמאעי בך בשדה נרי אשארה בעד פראקהא אלגסד לא יצח לי אלא מביתנא פי אלכפרים אלדי עברת בהא ען אלאגסאד פאדא חצל לי מן אנוארך פי מדה צחבתי אלגסד ואנמא מן גבל שמאתה כמתל אהל אלכפרים חיניד ימכן אלכלה בך בשדה.

נשכימה לכרמים נראה אם פרחה הגפן פתח הסמדר הנצו הרמונים שם אתן את דודי לך

למא קאלת פי מא תקדם גלינה בכפרים אעלמתה אן להמא פאידה פי אללינה בכפרים אכר אן יטלעוא עלי אלגנאת אלמחדקה בכפרים לעל פרחה הגפן והו אן תכרג קצבאן גדד ותורק ויטהר פקאח אלכרם והו אול חמלה ומלך תסמי אלערב ותקול ללנור אלכרם והו אול חמלה וכדלך תסמי אלערב ותקול לנואר אלכרם פקאחה וקד שרחנא פי מא תקדם ופתחה פי מעני אלאנפעאל ושרחה אנפתאח והי לפטה רבאעיה והנצו הרמונים נואר אלרמאן ואצלה מן מעתל אלעין ומעני הדא אלפסוק אנהא אעלמתה אן אדא כאנת אלכרמים בהדה אלחאלה פי וקת נזהתהא פתנשטה ותוצלה אלי מחבתהא וחיניד לא תבאלי ען אחד.

ועלי מא דהבוא אליה רבותינו ז״ל פאן למא חצל ללגמהור מא חצל להם מן אלמערפה פי וקת כונהא מטבהה בשדה תם תזיידת חתי צארת פי חאל שבהת אלכפר כמא שרחנא פי מא תקדם סלבת מן באריהא מא הו אכתר באן תכמל להא אלתורה ותתחדק פי מערפתהא פקאלת נסלע | עלי טבקאת אלאמה ומנאזלהא 102ב
ואן כרם אלא ישראל שנ׳ כי כרם ה׳ צבאות בית ישראל הל חצלוא מסתעדין לקבול אלעלם פרתבתהם ג׳ טבאק פריחת הגפן ופתיחת הסמדר והנצת הרמונים באזא ג׳ מנאזל למה התורה אול דלך תחציל תורה שבכתב ותגרהא פי מכארג אחרפהא ומערפה טבטהא ואנחאיהא ותצאריפהא ושרוחאת טואהרהא והו אלדי עבר ענה בפריחת הגפן והו טהור אלאגצאן ואלאוראק ואנמא שבההא באלאגצאן ואלאוראק לאנהא טאהרה מתלה וקראת סואר אלתורה והי אלאוראק ואלאגצאן

כארגה ען מוסנהא ויכון אנהא אראדת בקולהא בחוץ אן תטהר מחבתהא ותעלן בהג וקולה לא יבחו לי לא יקדרון יכדבוני פי דעואי באלאתצאל בך ואן אשתגאלי באלתורה הו רצאך לטהור איאתך ומעגזאתך לי פלא תסתכף בי אלאומות עלי אתבאע אואמרך ותציאנהם ואבאחה אלנפוס וניל משקאתהם.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאטן אן אלנאטקה אטהרת חבהא ללפעאל ותמנת אן פיצה לא ינקטע ענהא בל יכון דאים אבדא מתצל כאתצאל קראבה אלאכה אלאשקא אלדי ליס בינהמא מבאינה לא מן גהה אלאב ולא | מן גהה אלאם ואשארה בדלך אלי אן קוי גסדהא מנטאעה להא פי תרך אלשהואת ומן גהה אלנטק ואלמשאבהה ללפעאל מתשבתה בה ואשארת בבחוץ אדא חצלת מתארפהא באלפעל ואסתגנאת ען אלאתהא וצארת כאנהא כארגה ען אלגסד והו אלדי אשארת אליה בחוץ פתמנת אן תצל אלי קריב דרגתה פי אלבסט ועדם אלתרכיב מתלה ומפארקה אלגסד וכמא אן אצאפה אלאכה ואחד ללמצאפין ואלאסם להמא ואחד בתואצי והו אלאכה ליס ואחד מנהמא אולי ואקרב בהא מן אלאכר כדלך הדה אן נכון מתצלה בך כאן אנת ואנא שי ואחד לא תכון אסמיתך אולי בך מני בל אנתי אנא ואנא אנת ולהדא אלמעני אשארה בקולהא כאח בכאף אלתשביה ולא תסמני אלאחה ואלחקיקיה אד הדא תמניא בעידא בל גיר ממכן ותבר בנסיקה ען לדה תלך אלמנזלה בחצול אלאתצאל בה וארادת בלא יבוזו לי ען קואהא אלגסדאניה פי מדה אחתיאגהא אליה פקאלת אד כנת נבעד שהאתהא ולא נאכד מנה אלא קלילא במקדאר אלכפאף וכנת מתמניה אבדא מפארקתהא פכאנת תקול נראך מע תבאעדך מחתאגה אלי ואנת כמא יקאל פי אלמתל תדמני ותצכני פאדא אסלעוא אלי מא בלגת אליה מן אלנעים ודלך לאגל פראקהן עברוני פי אלבעד.

אנהגך אביאך אל בית אמי תלמדני אשקך מיין הרקח מעסיס רמוני

אנהגך אסוקך אלאלף ללמתכלם ואצלה נהג ואלכאף מכאטבה אלמפעול וכדלך אביאך אלאלף ללמתכלם ואלכאף ללמכאטב אלמפעול והו מעתל אלעין אצלה בוא ותלמדני ראגע אלי אלצמיר אלאמה אלמתקדמה אלדכר תעלמני כיף כדמתך ותאדבני בסרק ברך ויין הרקח אלכמר אלעטר ורקח נעת ליין ויין נכרה ורקח תערף בהא אלמערפה ודלך גאיז פי אללגה אלעבראניה מתל הרים הגבוהים ועסיס מסטאר מן דואת אלמתלין אצלה עסיס רמוני מכאן רמונים כמא קיל מריבי עמי

הבלתך אמך אראד עלקת בך אמך וקולה שמה חבלה ילדתך אראד פי אלמוצע
אלדי עלקת בך תם ולדתך וקצד בהדא אעלאמא להם כמא אן פי שעבוד מצרים
כנתם פי נהאיה אלדאלה וכרגתם מנהא אלי ארפע דרגאת אלעז כדלך אדא כנתם
פי זמאן אלגלות תולתם ען מא אנתם בסבילה מן אלעציאן צרתם פי ארפע
מנזלה וכרגתם מן אלשעבוד וכמא קאל תעלי הן לא קצרה יד ה׳ מהושיע כי אם
עונותיכם היו מבדילים.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאטן פאן אלפעאל כאטב אלנאטקה
מעלמא להא אנמא חצלת מערפתך כאמלה וטהרת מן אגל אסתגנאיך ען אלאתך
ופראקך אלגסד אלדי כנת מסגונה פיה וצרת פי אלמדבר חית לא חגאב ביני ובינך
וימכן אן יריד מא חצל להא פי אבעאדהא לשהואת אלגסד מן אלסמו ואלרפעה
פצארת כאנהא תכלת ען אלאתהא ואנפרדת ענהן כאנהא פי אלמדבר פסאפרת
ענהא בפכרהא וראיתהא ואן כאנת סאכנה בינהן ואראד במדבר אבעאדהא אללדאת
ואנפצאלהא כמתל בעץ סאכן אלמדבר מן אלנאס ועלי הדא אלתדביר נשו הדה
אלנאטקה ויכון אכתקה מקולה מסרף בני עלית אי נשאתך עלי אלטרף ותעל אחד
מגוריה וילמד לטרף טרף אדם אכל ויריד במתרפקת על דודה אי באבעאדהא שהואת
אלאתהא חצל להא הדא אלתדליל ואלקרב מן אללה תעלי והו דודה לקבולהא
אמרה פי ווציתה להא אן תתבעני פי כל מא נאמרהא בה והו קולה תע השמר
מפניו ושמע בקולו אל תמר בו וקד ימכן אנה אראד בדודה ען נפסהא וכמא
קלנא פי תפסיר טאהר הדא אלפסוק ויריד בקולה תחת התפוח אעלאמהא אנמא
111ב חצלת להא | הדה אלמנזלה אלרפיעה אלא מן פיצי עליך נאב כראיחה אלתפאח וטיב
טעמה וגמאל מנטרה אלדי שבהת אנת דודי בה כמא קולת כתפוח בעצי היער
כן דודי בין הבנים פלמיזך איאה במא אטהרת לך מנה סעדת וקולה שמה חבלתך
אמך אראד מא וצל אליהא מן אלנור אבצרתה בבצירתהא ואכרגתה מן אלקה
אלי אלפעל התי מכטת בה וולדתה ואטלק עלי רויתהא הדא חבל אי לא יכרג
מן אלקה אלי אלפעל אלא בשקוה כשקוה אלאם באלולד הו אכתר מן תעב אלאב
ואמא כרר הנא הדא אלמעני מרתין פקאל שמה חבלתך אמך שמה חבלה ילדתך
למעני יעלמנא אן אלקוה אלדי שקת בה ואכדתהא אלחבל מן אגלה הי נפסהא

ובאמן כמא קאל ואהבת את ה׳ אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדיך וקאלוא
מפי הסמתה לכדו בכל לבבך בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר הרע ובכל נפשך אפי׳
הוא נוטל את נפשך בכל מאודיך בכל ממוניך דא בכל מאדיך בכל מדה ומדה
שהוא מודד לך בכל הוי מודד לו בכל מאד מאד ואשאר לה אן הדה אלאהבה לא
תכון אלא בקה עצימה וגהד ושקא והו קולה כי עזה כמות אהבה תם קאל להא
קשה כשאול קנאה אראד עדאוה יצר הרע שנברא באדם שמבקש להורידו לשאול
פלא ישיר אליה אלא בכלע אלטאעה וימכן אנה אראד בדלך גירה אלאומות בישראל
אלדי ישלבון הלאכהם בזואלהם ען אלטאעה ועלי כלי אלתפסירין אלעדאוה
קויה.

ועלי מא דהבנא נהן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאטן פאנה כטאב אלנאטקה ללפעאל
לכא כאטבהא פי אלפסוק אלמתקדם כמא דכרנא באנה יחק להא אלתדלל עליה
ויחק להא אן יעני בהא אכתר ואן יצרף קלבה אליהא ולא ישתגל אלא בהא פאדא
כאנת כחותם על מחדקה לא ילתפת אלא להא ואדא כאנת איצא כדמלג אלדראע
תכון עטאיתהא כלהא בידהא ואשארת איצא אשארה לטיפה מא דכרהא מן חב
הביבהא חתי אנהא אעלמתה אנהא צארת מן אלנחול אנה אן אראד יגעלהא כחותם
על לבו ועל זרועו אמכנה דלך והדא הו מא תדהב אליה אלשערא פי אלנחול פי
קולהם. קאל אלטאער. |

2113ב אנחלני אלהב פלו זג בי פי מקל אלנאים לב ינתבה
וכאן לי פי כא מצא כאתם אלאן לו שית תמנתקת בה
ותבעתהם שערנא נ״ע פקאל
בשרי דל מאד מאה בתרם ואם יושלך בעין ישן היזח
והותבי אשר היה לידי עלי מתני למהגרת ומזח

וזאדת עלי מענאה בלזומהא איאה פדרכהא אלנחול פי וקת אלוצאל פאן וצף
אלנחול והדא אלנחול פי וקת אלוצאל מן שדה אלגראם פהדא אלוצף אבלג מן וצפהם
בכתיר פוצפת אלנאטקה מא הי פיה מן אלגראם בהדא אלמעני אלגריב ואראדת בעזה
כמות אהבה אן הדה אלמהבה אלקויה צעבה כצעובה אלמות אלמפרק בין אלנפס

לארץ במעני בארץ ונפלו לפניכם לחרב מתל בחרב ולם יריד באחות לנו אכתה
כן אגל מא קלנא פי קולהא כאח לי ואנמא אראד קראבה פקט ואלעבראניה תפעל
הדא מתל קול אמנון ען אכת אבשלום אכיה תבא נא תמר אחותי וימכן אנה אראד
באחות אכת חקיקה לכן אראד בדלך אן מחבתהא לא תנקטע לכנה לם יתמנא אן
תכון אחותו.

ועלי מא פסרוא רבותינו ז"ל פאן אלבארי תעלי סמא אלאמה אחות עלי מא
אצלנא פי מא תקדם כמא סמאהא אשת וסמי אשכאצהם בנים פאראד בהדא אלמעני
אן בעץ אלאמה אלדי וצלוא מבבל לבנין בית המקדש ולם יטלע אלכל מא תבין
פי עזרא אלא אלמתנדבין וסמהא קטנה לעדמהא אלמלך וכונהא תחת טאעה
מלך פרס פהי קטנה באצאפתהא אלי חאלתהא פי בניאהא בית ראשון בימי שלמה
כמא קאל ורבים האבות והזקנים אשר ראו את הבית הראשון ביסדו זה הבית
בעיניהם בוכים קול גדול ואשאר בשדים אין לה מעשים טובים כמא וצפהם נחמיה
בקלה אלדיאנה פקאל ראיתי ביהודה דורכים גתות בשבת כמתל זמן בית ראשון
וימכן אן אראד בשדים שתי לחות הברית אלתי עדמת פי בית שני לאן אלארון
קד כאן גנזוה פי אכר בית ראשון למא שערוא באלכראב וימכן אנה וצפהא באל־
קטנות למא עדמת אלחמשה דברים אלתי כאן יפצל ביהא בית ראשון עלי מקדש
שני ואראד ביום שידובר בה מתי עירת בהדה אלאמור כמא וצף פי עזרא מן
תעייראת | אלאומות להם פי קולהם מה היהודים האמללים עושים וטוביה העמוני 116ב
אצלו ויאמר גם אשר הם בונים אם יעלה שועל ופרץ חומת אבניהם ומא נאלהם
מא נכד פי וקת סעאיה אלכותים פי צרכהם ונמהם בהא ענד מלך פרס ותעטילהם
בניאן אלבית כמא קיל באדין בטילת עבידת בית אלאהא די בירושלם והות בטלא
עד שנת תרתין לדריוש מלך פרס פאלי הדה אלאחואל אשאר בהדא אלפסוק.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה פאנה ביאן מן אלפעאל פי אמר אלנאסקה פוצפהא
באחות לתבעהא איאה וחבהא אלתרקי אלי דרגה אלעלו ומערפה אלחק אלדי
לא תצל אלא מן אגלה פבינהא ובינה נסבה וקראבה כמא קאל אלשאער אן נכתלף
נסבא יולף בינא אדאב אקמנאה מקאם אלואלדה. ופעל דלך למא תמנת אן תכון

התגלות הסודות

לא תקי עליהא ותמנע ען אדיתהא ותסתרהא מתל אלחומה אלצעיפה יסירה מתל סתרת אלבאב ללדאר ומנעהא פנגזיהא קלילא ונתיבהא יסירא וכמא קאלוא רבותינו ז״ל כל צדיק וצדיק נותנין לו מדור לפי כבודו והו דלך אלנקש פי אללוח ונסבה זיהא הדא אלאול נסבה אלכשב מן אלפצה ומכן אנה אראד אנהא לם תכון להא מעשים טובים נגלהא ען בלאדהא ונפרקהא כמא פעל טיטוס הרשע פי בית שני אלדי קתל אכתר אלאמה וכרב אלמקדש ואלבלאד ופרקהם איצא הנא שרקא וגרבא וגנובא ושמאלא פי אלספן פלהדא אשאר בלוח ארז ויכון משתקא מן אל תצר אל מואב והצר לך בכל שעריך יצרו צעדי אונו.

ועלי מא דהבנא נהן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאסן פאנה אראד בחומה מא אכתסבת הדה אלנפס אלנאסקה מן מערפה אלחקאיק אלעקליה ומא אסתנארת בצירתהא מנהא ומא אכתסבת מן אלכלוקיאת אלגמילה אלפאצלה והדה מכנה עליהא ואקיה להא מן אלעסאיב ואן לם ידרכהא אלפנא ומסתעדה אלסעאדה אלאבדיה מתל אלסור | אלדי הו ואקי למן פיה מן אלסכאן כמא אחסן תכביהה להא בחומה פאן 118א
וגדת עלי הדה אלצורה פקד סעדת לא מחאלה בקרבהא כן אלמלכות פתנאל פי אלדאר אלאכרי אלגמאל ואללדה מא לם תרי מתלהא פי חיאתהא ולא תתמתעת בהא פישבה דלך באלפצה לגמאלהא וקבולהא אלאנואר פהי הסנה אלמנסר ראיקה פי אעלי אלמראתב והדא הו מראדה בקולה נבנה עליה סירת כסף אי למא חצלת מעארפהא באלפעל חאלת ען עלאיק אלגסד וען שהואתה אסתחקת אלמנזלה אלעאליה פי אלנשאה אלתאניה. ואמא אן כאנת מעארפהא נאהיה צעיפה ואתבעת שהואת אלגסד סריעה אלחצול פי קבול אלאפאת אלוארדה עליהא מתל אלכשב אלדי הו סריע אלקבול ללחרק כתיף לא יקבל אלנור פיפני ויתדם והדא הו קולה ואם דלת היא אי מעדה ללפנא תם קאל פאדא כאנת עלי הדה אלצפה פאנא נזידהא אלאמא עלי אלאמהא ונצאעף להא אלעדאב והדא אלמעני הו אלדי עבר ענה בלוח ארז ודלך לכא כאנת כאלדלת סריעה אלאנפעאל ללעסל וקבול אלאעראץ מן חרק ותכסר ודלך לתבעהא שהואתהא ועדולהא ען וציה אלפעאל פאנא נזידהא מן עדאבהא מן אגל אפעאלהא אלסו אלדי אכתארתהא פתכון מאדה עדאבהא אזיד ונכאלהא אעכב כמא אן דלת אדא זיד עליה לוח אסרע פי אשתעאל אלנאר פיהא ודאמת מדתהא אכתר פאן אלדלת לו כסרת ופצלת אגזא אגזא צגארא לאחתרקת

התגלות הסודות

מן אלנביאים פי תעלים אלגמהור והם אלחכמים ז״ל אלדי כאנוא פי דלך אלוקת
וכמא קאלוא רבותינו ז״ל חכם עדיף מנביא לאן אלנבי יחדי אלרסאלה חסב מא
תלית עליה ואלחכם יתפקה כלאם אלנבי פלאגל הדא אלוגה פצלה וכדלך אלנביא
לי סיל פי פקה רסאלתה לאגאב לכן פקה אלנבוה מן גיר נבי אגרב מן פקהא מן
נביא וקד תכלמנא פי הדא פי מא תקדם מן הדא אלכתאב באבסט מן הדא אלקול
ואלי הדא אלמעני קצדה בקולהא ושדי כמגדלות אי אנהם משהורון ענד אלגמהור
כשהרה אלמגדלות בחאסה אלבצר ללכל כאצה ועאמה ואן כאן חגי זכריה עלו
לירושלם וחצוא ישראל עלי בניאן אלמקדש בימי דריוש אכר מלכי פרס פאנהם
2119ב לם ידומוא מעהם אנהם מאתוא קבל וצול עזרא הכהן | לירושלם ואנמא דאמוא
מעהם אלחכמים פלמא עלם מנהא תעלי דלך נאלת חטוה ענדה ומהד להא ארבע
מיאה סנה ועשרין סנה זאד עלי מדה בית ראשון עשרה סנין וקאל פיה גדול
יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון אמר ה׳ צבאות ובמקום הזה אתן שלום
ואנמא קאלת כמוצאת שלום מן אגל מא כאן פיהם מן אלגמהור עלי גיר אלקואם
כמא קאל נחמיה בן חכליה ראיתי יהודים דורכים גתות בשבת וקאל מבני יוידע
בן אליאשיב הכהן הגדול חתן לסנבלט ובניהם חצי מדבר אשדודית ואינם מכירים
לדבר יהודית פלאגל מא כאן פיהם מן הולאי אלאשראר קאלת כמוצאת ולם תקול
מוצאת.

ועלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה מן תפסיר אלבאטן פאנה גואב אלנאטקה ללפעאל
פאעלמתה במא עליה מן אלכלוקיאת אלפאצלה ואלסיר אלהסנה ואקתפאיהא
אתארה ואבעאדהא כהואת אלגסד ועברת ען דלך באני חומה וימכן אנהא עברת
ען אלחכמה ען מא חצל להא מן אלמעקולאת בחומה לאנהא מגנה לאנהא מכלצה
לדידה מן אלעטב ואלפנא כמתל אלחומה עלי חאויהא וען אלאכלאק אלפאצלה

חתימה

אכברנא אלחכים אבו אברהם בן מוריל רחמה אללה אנה אכברה אלחכים אבו אלחסן בן קנמיל רחמה אללה וקאל אני דכלת עלי אמיר מן מלוך אלמראבטין פוגדה ענדה מביבא יהדיא כרג ען באלנא מן כאף יעראף והו יפסר לה שיר הכירים עלי טאהר לפטה מן אלגזל פאנתהרת דלך אלטביב ושתמתה בחצרה אלמלך וקלת ללמלך הדא רגל גאהל גבי לא ידרי מן שריעתנא ועלומהא שיא ולם יפהם מקצד סלימאן בן דאוד צלי אללה עליהמא ומראדה בהדא אלכתאב ואן הדא אלכתאב עטים אלקדר אכרגה באלאלפאט טאהרהא גזליה בבאדי אלנטר ואדא תעקבת אלנטר אלמסתקצי טהר מן תחתהא מן אלמעאני אלגריבה לא יאבהון אליהא ולא יתפטנון למכנונהא אלא אלראסכון פי אלעלום דוו אלקראיח אלפאיקה ואלהכמה אלראיקה וקررת פי נפס אלאמיר הדא אלמעני ובינת לה מקצדה וגרצה בהדא אלכתאב ואזלת מן נפסה תוחשה ממא אלקי אליה אלטביב אלגאהל אלגבי
127א וקלת לה כיף יכון מתל סלימאן בן | דאוד עאס ושגל נפסה בהדא אלמקצד אלדני אלסכיף ונזלת ענדה הדא אלכתאב פי אלמנזלה אלעאליה אלתי הו פיהא ועטמה ענדה הכמה סלימאן עאס וכאן עלי ידיה פי הדא אלמעני מן קדוש השם עטים.

ולעל טאען יטען עלינא ממן הו צעיף אלעלם רדי אלתמיז קליל אלמערפה וינקד פי מא אתינא בה פי שרח הדא אלכתאב אלשריף מן אקואל אלפלאספה ומן אללגה אלערביה ואלאביאת אלשעריה ויתקשף מן הדא ויתחרא ענה וימנע גואהרי אן פעלנא הדא אפתיאת פליעלם אלגאהל ואלמראי אלגאפל אן אלחכמים

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מה המים מגדלין את הצמחים כך דברי תו מגדלין כל מי שהוא עמל בהן. אי מה המים מבאישין בקנקן יכיל אף דברי תו כן תל יין מה יין כל זמן שהוא מתישן בקנקן הוא מטביח הילך כך דברי תו כל זמן שהן מתישנין בגופו שלאדם הוא מטביח הילך. אי מה המים אינן נכרין בגוף אדת כן תל יין מה היין נכר בגוף כך דברי [תורה] נכרין בגוף מי שהוא עמל בהן והן עצמן מראין עליו באצבע. אי מה יין מחריב את הגוף יכול אדת כן תל דבש מה הדבש מתוק אף דברי תו מתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים. אי מה הדבש יש בו קצרים יכול אדת כן תל חלב מה החלב לבן ונקי כך דברי תו נקיים לא יתרכנה זהב וזכוכית. אי מה החלב מפיל ומרדים יכול אדת כן תל דבש וחלב תהה לשונך כל זמן שחלב ודבש מעורבין אין מזיקין את הגוף אלא מרפאין אותו כך דברי תו שנ ולכל בשרו מרפא. ואומ רפאות תהי לשורך וג.

ואנה למא קאלת כנסת ישראל ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כאן אל גואב מן הקב"ה כי טובים דודיך מיין. וקאל איצא פי דודיך אנה ראגע עלי ישראל אעלמהם כיארה להם מן בין אלאמם אלסבעין לאן יין שבעים ואנמא עבר ען אל אמות ביין אעלאמנא באנהם תאבעין לשהואתהם מכבלי אלעקול מתל סכארי אלכמר וכקר שכרו ולא מיין תעו ולא שכר פכאן קו כי טובים דודיך מיין גואבא לקו ישקני מנשיקות פיהו פלאתבאעהא לה אכתארהא הו צפה כקו פי כתאבה אלעזיז את ה' האמרת היום
6א וה' האמירך היום וג וקאל איצא כי חלק ה' עמו.

ותפסירה עלי מא דהבנא נחן אליה אן אלנאסקה שבהת וצול מא וצלהא מן אנואר אלפעאל בנשיקות הפה הדלך אנה למא כאן אסתעמאל האתאן אלגראחתאן הדה אללדה ובהאתאן אלגראחתאן יתוצל אלעלם מן אלמעלם ללמתעלם, והי לדה אלנאסקה. פשבהת וצול אלמעארף מן אלעקל אפעאל אליהא ואלתדאדהא בה כאלתדאד אלמחב בנשיקות מחבובה, וכמא קאל פי מוצע אכר שפתים ישק משיב דברים נכוחים. פאעלמתנא אן מנזלה הדה אללדה ענדהא במנזלה אלנשיקות ענד אלשהואניה, ואן כאן ואל משבה בה אעסם רתבה ואכמל מנזלה מן אלמשנה אבדא פהנא אלמשבה אעסם מנזלה מן אלמשבה בה וארפע. ואנמא אראדת אן תבין אלאכפא באלאשהר ליחצל מערפתה ואד אחאטה בה מתל מערפה דלך אלאשהר ופי אלחקיקה לא נסבה בינהמא ולא שבה ולא מקאיסה לאנצראם הדא