

DECONSTRUCTING THE BIBLE

Abraham ibn Ezra's
Introduction to the Torah

Irene Lancaster

DECONSTRUCTING THE BIBLE

This book represents the first attempt by a single author to place the great Spanish Jewish Hebrew Bible exegete, grammarian, philosopher, poet, astronomer, astrologer and scientist, Abraham ibn Ezra, (1089–1164) in his complete contextual environment. It charts his unusual travels and discusses changes and contradictions in his hermeneutic approach, analysing his vision of the future for the Jewish people in the Christian north of Europe, rather than Muslim Spain. It also examines his influence on subsequent Jewish thought, as well as his place in the wider hermeneutic debate.

The book contains a new translation of ibn Ezra's *Introduction to the Torah*, written in Lucca, northern Italy, together with a full commentary.

Irene Lancaster is Fellow in Jewish Studies at the Centre for Jewish Studies, Department of Religions and Theology, Manchester University, where she teaches Jewish political, social, religious and cultural history. She is particularly interested in the relationship between mediaeval Jewish philosophical and hermeneutic trends and contemporary literary textual approaches.

To my daughters, Kalela and Esther.

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns today
(Robert Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra': XVIII)

First published in 2003
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

Transferred to Digital Printing 2007

© 2003 Irene Lancaster

Typeset in Sabon by LaserScript Ltd, Mitcham, Surrey

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN10: 0-7007-1574-6 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0-415-44444-6 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-7007-1574-9 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-415-44444-6 (pbk)

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>A note on terminology</i>	xiii
<i>Map: The travels of Abraham ibn Ezra</i>	xv
<i>Introduction</i>	xvii
1 The biography of Abraham ibn Ezra	1
<i>Ibn Ezra in Rome</i>	2
<i>Ibn Ezra in Lucca</i>	6
<i>Ibn Ezra's remaining sojourn in Italy</i>	10
<i>Ibn Ezra in Béziers (Provence)</i>	11
<i>Ibn Ezra in Narbonne (Provence)</i>	12
<i>Ibn Ezra in 'Rodus'</i>	13
<i>Ibn Ezra in England</i>	17
2 A history of the scholarly work on ibn Ezra	22
<i>Supercommentaries</i>	22
<i>Religious and philosophical reaction to ibn Ezra</i>	25
<i>Scholarly work on ibn Ezra</i>	31
3 Classical and mediaeval Jewish approaches to text	36
<i>From Bible to Mishnah</i>	36
<i>Mishnah to Talmud</i>	47
<i>Talmud</i>	50
4 Early Christian hermeneutics	55
<i>The Church Fathers till Jerome</i>	57

<i>Patristic hermeneutic approaches to the Hebrew text</i>	58
<i>Augustine</i>	60
<i>Christian exegesis from Augustine to Bede</i>	60
<i>Christian exegesis from Bede to the Victorines</i>	61
5 Muslim hermeneutics	64
<i>Al-Kindi (ca. 790–866)</i>	65
<i>Al-Razi (864–925/32)</i>	68
<i>Al-Farabi (ca. 870–950)</i>	69
<i>The debate between Matta and al-Sirafi (932)</i>	74
<i>The Ash'arites</i>	77
<i>Ibn Sina (980–1037)</i>	79
<i>The Brothers of Purity (Ikwan al-Safa)</i>	84
<i>Al-Ghazali (1058–1111)</i>	88
<i>Sufism</i>	90
<i>Ibn Bajjah (Avempace: died 1138/9)</i>	91
<i>Ibn Tufayl (1100–85/6)</i>	93
<i>Ibn Rushd (Averroes: 1126–98)</i>	95
6 The Karaites	101
<i>An analysis of the major Karaite thinkers</i>	104
<i>Anan ben David (eighth century)</i>	104
<i>Benjamin al-Nahawandi (830–60)</i>	105
<i>Daniel al-Kumisi (ninth–tenth centuries)</i>	106
<i>Jacob al-Kirkisani (early tenth century)</i>	107
<i>Salmon ben Jeroham (tenth century)</i>	110
<i>Jafet ben Ali (late tenth century)</i>	112
<i>Hasan ben Mashlach (tenth century)</i>	115
<i>Ben Zuta (tenth–eleventh centuries)</i>	115
<i>Joseph the Blind (Joseph ha-Ro'eh al-Basir: early eleventh century)</i>	119
<i>Jeshua ben Judah (Abu al-Farag Furkan ibn 'Asad: late eleventh century)</i>	119
7 The Ge'onim	122
<i>'The great sages ... Yeshivah scholars in Muslim realms'</i>	125
<i>Isaac Israeli (855–955)</i>	126

<i>Sa'adiah Gaon (892–942)</i>	127
<i>Shmuel ben Hofni (died 1013)</i>	134
<i>Sherira Gaon (ca. 906–1006)</i>	138
<i>Hai Gaon (939–1038)</i>	139
8 Introduction to the Torah: Translation and commentary	142
<i>The text</i>	142
<i>The present translation and commentary</i>	142
<i>Translation</i>	143
<i>Introductory prayer and commentary</i>	143
<i>Path One and commentary</i>	145
<i>Path Two and commentary</i>	148
<i>Path Three and commentary</i>	158
<i>Path Four and commentary</i>	162
<i>Path Five and commentary</i>	171
9 Ibn Ezra's philosophical grammar	176
<i>Notes</i>	186
<i>Bibliography and further reading</i>	205
<i>Index of works cited</i>	217
<i>Name index</i>	221
<i>Subject index</i>	224

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people without whom this book would not have seen the light of day. Firstly, I should like to thank Ruth Ghadiali, my marvellous neighbour in the Liverpool days, who kept open house for my younger daughter, Esther, when I started the research. I owe a great deal to Noel Boaden, who knew I had it in me. I must thank Roland Goetschel for introducing me so many years ago to Moshe Idel. It was Moshe who gave me the idea. Oliver Leaman was most encouraging. Emanuel Silver and Jonathan Broido read the translation and made many useful suggestions. In addition, Emanuel shared his expertise in manuscripts and editions, whereas Jonathan explained some of the mediaeval mathematics and science. Paul Marshall read through the typescript at an early stage and made pertinent comments about chapter lay-out. My father-in-law, Gabriel, made some helpful stylistic suggestions.

To my husband Les, I owe nearly thirty years of heated and lively debate. I have gained from his profound knowledge of the newish psychological fields of transpersonal and consciousness studies. Here he has blazed an ibn Ezra-like trail by being the first scientific psychologist to bring a thoroughly Jewish flavour to what was thought for so long to be a uniquely Buddhist domain.

However, the greatest debt of all I owe to my late parents: to my mother for giving me my love of languages; to my father for teaching me how to argue; and, most of all, to both for surviving the Holocaust.

'Rabbis' and traditionalists

The general terms 'rabbis' and 'traditionalists' refer to those Jews who regard the Oral Torah as equivalent in sanctity and importance to the Written Torah. I use the term 'Orthodox' only when referring to a particular Jewish trend within modernity. It would be anachronistic, as well as misleading, to use modern terminology when referring to the classical and mediaeval periods. The term 'Rabbanites' refers to the traditionalist advocates of Oral Torah, who opposed sectarians, such as the Karaites. It is important to bear in mind that the 'traditionalists' were often radical and non-literal in both social and exegetical matters, whereas secessionists could be conservative.

'Islam', 'Muslim' and 'Arabic'

I use the term 'Arabic' to refer to a specific language. The terms 'Islam' and 'Muslim' thus refer not only to the religion of Allah, but also to a specific culture.

'Sephardi' and 'Ashkenazi'

These terms refer to the culture of the Jews living under the domains of Islam and Christianity respectively.

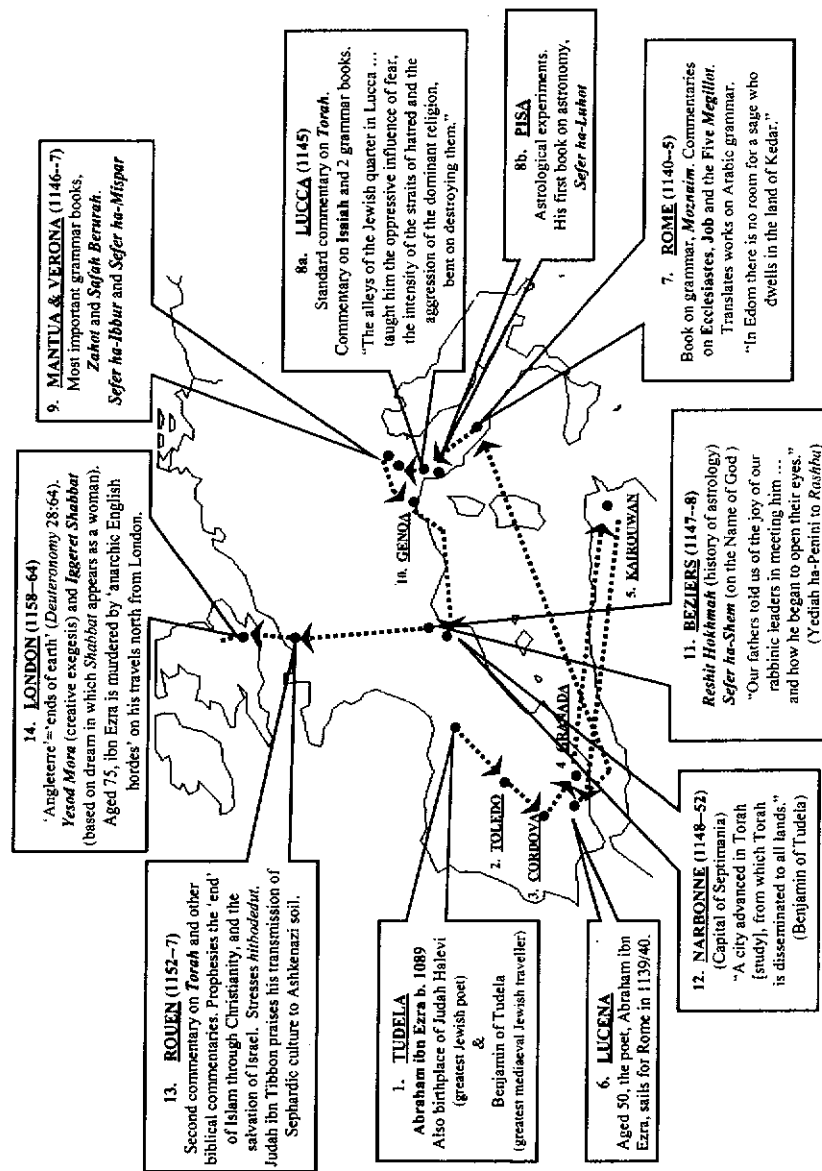
Dating

I use the traditionally accepted non-denominational terms CE (the Common Era) and BCE (before the Common Era).

Transliterations and translations

Transliteration in Arabic follow Fakhry 1983, without diacriticals. Hebrew transliterations follow general custom and usage. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Hebrew, French, German and Spanish are my own.

The travels of Abraham ibn Ezra: an intellectual journey (1089-1164)



INTRODUCTION

Ibn Ezra is one of the most complicated of the great Jewish exegetes whose commentaries on the Torah (as Pentateuch) have become part of the Jewish traditional canon. This book sets out to show that one of the difficulties faced by readers in elucidating Ibn Ezra's views stems from his multifaceted approach. Ibn Ezra's biblical exegeses are also philosophical investigations, which display an expertise in sciences and mathematics never yet equalled in the genre. Then there is his particular penchant for 'grammar', a term that has also caused problems for all would-be interpreters of Ibn Ezra. If we mix all these ingredients together, we end up with a concoction which I have termed 'philosophical grammar', a phrase first coined by the modern philosopher, Wittgenstein. Ibn Ezra's approach is thus neither purely linguistic, nor purely philosophical, nor yet traditional, but involves a heady mix of disciplines. It is impossible to examine his exegesis without also bearing in mind his philosophical views, and vice versa. Too many studies of Ibn Ezra have adopted the stance most suited to the academic penchant of the analyst, resulting in an unacceptable one-sidedness in assessments of the man.

My book tries to remedy this lacuna, at least in respect of one of Ibn Ezra's major creations, the *Introduction to the Commentary to the Torah*. For the sake of brevity, this title will be shortened to *Introduction to the Torah*, or simply *Introduction*. The book is divided into nine chapters.

The first chapter is a biographical outline of the last period of Ibn Ezra's life, when Ibn Ezra left his native Spain and travelled through Italy, Provence, northern France and England. The Jews in these countries, for whom Ibn Ezra composed his many prose works, were Ashkenazim, most of whom had never encountered the heady mix of grammatically-based exegesis, philosophy and

science which ibn Ezra offered them. I detail ibn Ezra's journeys and describe the major prose works he composed in each town he visited. I contrast and compare these different works, especially in relation to the *Introduction*, written relatively early on during his odyssey. I also trace the recurring themes, as well as the developments in ibn Ezra's thought, and record the responses to his work from the different Ashkenazi communities encountered.

The second chapter describes the fascinatingly diverse ways in which ibn Ezra has been received by his various readers. I start with the 'supercommentaries' on his own commentaries, continue with religious reaction, both positive and negative, and end with a short outline of the scholarly work on ibn Ezra. Emphasis is placed on the political context in which views on ibn Ezra have been aired. Assessments are always biased by current fads, which may, of course, lead to misunderstandings and exaggerations. In this chapter I also analyse some of ibn Ezra's terminology and highlight the philosophical side of his exegesis. I demonstrate how ibn Ezra studies have aided general Jewish studies research and helped to provide a platform for dialogue with non-Jewish exegetical and philosophical approaches.

In the third chapter I analyse Jewish approaches to biblical and post-biblical religious literature. In this chapter I also introduce some of the latest theories in hermeneutics. I assess their relevance to ibn Ezra and, more importantly, the relevance of ibn Ezra's approach today.

The fourth chapter constitutes an overview of early Christian approaches to the text, in the light of ibn Ezra's attack on Christianity in *Path Three* of his *Introduction*. I examine reasons for ibn Ezra's attack on Christian allegory at a time when this approach was decreasing in significance in Christian exegesis. This leads to an analysis of the nature of Christian anti-semitism, which ibn Ezra handles with brilliant linguistic panache. Simultaneously, I point out ibn Ezra's fears concerning the over-allegorising tendencies of his own Sephardi co-religionists, which threatened to divide the Jewish community.

The fifth chapter delineates some of the possible major influences on ibn Ezra from Muslim thinkers, mainly through intermediaries such as the Karaites and Ge'onim, which are the subject of the following two chapters. I analyse the extent to which Ezra's exegetical approach resembles Muslim hermeneutics, and how he uses these theories in order to demarcate a unique niche for himself. I also delve into some of the Muslim philosophical views

which impacted on his own work. I examine Muslim ideas on 'plain' and 'figurative' interpretations of the sacred text, delineating parallel Jewish developments, and ibn Ezra's place in this scheme. I emphasise ibn Ezra's originality in equating Muslim mediaeval views on memory and the brain with Jewish views on tradition. Lastly, I illustrate ibn Ezra's multi-levelled approach.

The sixth and seventh chapters, which deal with the Karaites and Ge'onim respectively, relate to *Path Two* and *Path One* of the *Introduction*. I contrast ibn Ezra's negative attitude to both groups, as manifested in his *Introductions*, with his positive attitude to individual commentators from each group elsewhere in his oeuvre (mainly in his *Commentaries on Exodus*). I give detailed examples of such individual exegeses. I suggest reasons why ibn Ezra adopted such differing attitudes in the two types of literature. I also highlight similarities in style and exegesis between the Karaites and ibn Ezra, and similarities in philosophical and socio-political views between the Ge'onim and ibn Ezra.

The eighth chapter of this book comprises an original translation of the *Introduction* with a commentary following each translation. I hope that by providing the reader with an intellectual background to ibn Ezra's ideas, they will approach this chapter well prepared for some of the succinct, mysterious and sarcastic comments that ooze from every part of his five circular paths.

The fifth path is ibn Ezra's own, and in the ninth, concluding, chapter, I expand on what I mean by 'philosophical grammar'. This chapter looks to the future of hermeneutics, analyses the drawbacks of certain contemporary approaches and suggests the prime role that a revisited ibn Ezra might offer to today's exegetes. If the book has a moral, it must be that prejudice brings negativity in its wake. For too long, we have eschewed the 'objective', historical, rational, scientific and grammatically accurate. Now is perhaps the time to reintroduce some of these spurned approaches, in order to balance the 'sexier' 'midrashic' appeal of the subjective, open-ended, frivolous and circular. I conclude by suggesting that in ibn Ezra's *pshat* approach we have a strong hermeneutic contender for the twenty-first century.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made:
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust
 God: see all nor be afraid"
 (Robert Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra': 1)

Abraham ibn Ezra is one of the most highly regarded, yet misunderstood, of biblical exegetes. In Jewish tradition his *Commentary on the Torah* is regarded as second only to Rashi's¹ in popularity, and yet he is often underestimated as a mere 'grammarian', or advocate of the 'literal' meaning of the text. This book aims to demonstrate that far from being a 'literalist', ibn Ezra was interested in 'secret meanings'. He also espoused Aristotelianism, and was the first Jewish exegete to posit the conjunction of thinker, thinking and thought as the goal of man's desire to know God.² Most importantly, ibn Ezra's curious mix of disparate approaches, which he termed 'grammar', is of relevance in modern hermeneutic debates. This biography presents an overview of ibn Ezra's life, emphasising evidence linking his other writings to the *Introduction*.³ Brief accounts of the political situation of each place he visited are also included wherever possible.

Abraham ibn Ezra was born in 1089 in Tudela in the northern Spanish province of Navarra.⁴ His education was typical for a well-educated Spanish Jew of his time, being rounded and many-faceted. Ibn Ezra would have been immersed from an early age in the study of Jewish sources, including Torah, Hebrew poetry and linguistics, as well as Arabic poetry, linguistics, science and philosophy. It is important to note that ibn Ezra's native language was Arabic, not Hebrew. In 1115, when ibn Ezra was twenty-six years old, Tudela

was conquered by the Christians, which affected the status of its Jewish inhabitants.⁵

Very little is known of ibn Ezra's life in Spain, except that he travelled extensively in both Muslim and Christian areas, including Toledo (which had become a Christian stronghold in 1086, three years before his birth), Cordoba and Lucena. He also visited north Africa, a major centre of Jewish studies at this time, passing through Granada. Ibn Ezra was very close to the great poet, Judah Halevi, who was also born in Tudela and who often shared his travels. Other friends included the philosopher, Joseph ibn Zaddik and the poet, Moses ibn Ezra (no relation). During his travels, ibn Ezra encountered many Jewish communities, some harbouring refugees from the fighting between Christians and Muslims.

Much of ibn Ezra's poetic oeuvre was written during this early period, when his main domicile was the Iberian peninsula. Many poems were addressed to his benefactors in these communities, and often refer to the problems encountered by the Jews who found themselves in the midst of the two more powerful religions. It appears that ibn Ezra did not himself witness the Muslim Almohad invasion of the peninsula from North Africa, nor its effect on his older contemporaries, such as Moses ibn Ezra and Halevi. Nevertheless, he was fully aware of all the repercussions such tensions engendered.

In about 1140 we suddenly find ibn Ezra leaving Spain for Rome, and embarking on the 'second period' of his life.⁶ He travelled widely through Christian Europe, until the year of his death, 1164. Various reasons have been given for his departure, including the Almohad threat, famine, poverty, marital difficulties, illness and betrayal. There may also have been pressure on ibn Ezra to convert to Islam, which led to his emigration to a Christian country, despite his negative feelings towards Christianity. Another possible reason was the inner urge to educate the Jews of Ashkenazi Europe, whose literary and analytical traditions were different from those of Sephardi Spain and North Africa.⁷

Ibn Ezra in Rome

Ibn Ezra was fifty when he left the Spanish town of Lucena as a well-known poet and philosopher.⁸ From there he travelled to Rome 'in a troubled spirit',⁹ alone and impoverished. As well as his 'strong pedagogical urge', his fears regarding the impending decline of Spanish Jewry and his desire to safeguard its cultural knowledge

led him 'to take upon himself the role of planting her heritage on the living soil of the Jewish communities in Christian Europe.'¹⁰ There, economic necessity forced him to tutor the sons of his wealthy benefactors. He wrote mainly for these students.

Ibn Ezra arrived in Rome shortly after the struggle of Pope Innocent II, with the 'antipope', Anacletus II (1130-8), who had been of Jewish origin. When greeted by a Jewish deputation on his entry into Rome, between 1138-9, Innocent had praised Judaism's 'Holy Law', but condemned the 'religious practice and ... faulty interpretation of the Jews,' not realising, perhaps, the link in Judaism between textual interpretation, Law and religious practice. In addition, the 'convocation of a great "ecumenical" council in 1139, the year after Anacletus' death', caused widespread consternation among the Jews of Europe. Although 'no anti-Jewish canons were adopted'¹¹ on this occasion, the atmosphere into which ibn Ezra immediately entered must have been extremely tense.

According to the famous Jewish traveller and fellow townsman of ibn Ezra, Benjamin of Tudela, Rome was the chief city of the 'kingdom of Edom', comprising about two hundred distinguished Jewish families, who did not even pay the usual special Jewish tax. Some of the Jews were actually in papal service. Two appeared to have had unlimited access to the papal household, including the contemporary head of the yeshivah (religious seminary).¹²

Despite earlier scholarly views to the contrary, Rome was a highly respected Talmudic centre.¹³ This fact is relevant to the debate surrounding ibn Ezra's two *Torah Introductions*, written in Italy and northern France respectively. For instance, Nathan of Jehiel, who had been the head of the yeshivah before ibn Ezra's arrival in Rome, had written a lexicon of the Talmud and midrashim,¹⁴ in which he had explained all the Talmudic terms, as well as their etymology. He had, in addition, been a fine linguist, having studied Aramaic, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Persian, as well as Hebrew.

Nathan had quoted from the Ge'onim¹⁵ and other earlier, as well as contemporary, authorities, utilising the learning of the three chief Torah centres of the day: Babylon (Iraq), Kairouan (North Africa) and Mainz (Germany). However, Nathan had been unaware of the pioneering work of Arabic-speaking Hebrew scholars, such as Judah ibn Hayyuj, relating to Hebrew grammar.¹⁶ It was, therefore, one of ibn Ezra's goals to educate the Jews of Italy in this field. Roth states nevertheless that Nathan's 'great talmudic

dictionary ... bears testimony to the wide rabbinic learning and linguistic range of educated Roman Jewry at this time.¹⁷

Levin describes the combination of wealth and yet foreboding that ibn Ezra encountered in the Jewish community of Rome, at a time when the Second Crusade was imminent. This feeling was aggravated by the sense of claustrophobia experienced in the narrow alleyways of the Jewish quarter of the town.¹⁸ Nevertheless, ibn Ezra stayed in Rome for five or six years, making contact with noble Jewish families, and writing poems in their honour. His style of poetry was very different from that of the Italian Jews, being replete with the idiom and scientific accuracy of the Spanish School. Another of ibn Ezra's favourite devices was to pun on the name of the person to whom the poem was addressed, as in the case of Menahem,¹⁹ one of his patrons. This device was also used in the *Introduction*.

It was here in Rome that ibn Ezra wrote *Moznaim*,²⁰ the first of several works on Hebrew grammar. He prefaced it with a detailed introduction, reviewing the work of previous grammarians.²¹ Bacher calls it 'the oldest grammatical document in the history of grammar'.²² Levin refers to its scientific methodology and precision. The aim of this work was not novelty. As with ibn Ezra's subsequent grammar books, it was rather a manual written 'to give to Jews who do not understand Arabic the knowledge and understanding of the system of grammar established one hundred years previously by Judah ibn Hayyuj and his followers. ...'²³

In Rome, ibn Ezra translated three works on Arabic grammar by ibn Hayyuj and Judah ibn Gikatilla.²⁴ He also composed the first of his Bible commentaries, *Ecclesiastes*, in which he immersed himself in textual exegesis, insisting on precise interpretations and uncompromising reliance on grammatical rules. His excellent memory assisted him in quoting from the relevant sources, as he had been unable to carry books with him from Spain. Ibn Ezra also introduced philosophical and scientific ideas into his biblical exegesis. He endeavoured to unite all the various disciplines, in order to justify his view of the Bible as a self-contained unit. This was the approach ibn Ezra was to adopt in most of his biblical commentaries, including that on the Torah.

The *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* is critical of the poetic style of the early Palestinian religious poet, Eleazar ben Kallir,²⁵ who wielded great influence on the Italian school of Hebrew poetry.²⁶ In ibn Ezra's opinion, Kallir's *piyyutim* (liturgical poetry) contained inappropriate linguistic forms, an insensitive use of Talmudic

language and words of foreign origin. Ibn Ezra found Kallir ungrammatical in his application of biblical words and insensitive to the rhymes and sounds of the Hebrew letters. Above all, he condemned Kallir's use of midrashic and aggadic idiom, which took the biblical sense beyond the *psbat*.²⁷ In contrast, ibn Ezra praised the Babylonian Gaon, Sa'adiah, for omitting such perceived errors from his poetry.²⁸

Ibn Ezra also broke new ground in declaring that no sage, however ancient in origin, and therefore worthy of reverence and respect, is immune from criticism and re-evaluation.²⁹ Here ibn Ezra anticipates his stance in his *Introduction to the Torah*, where he states: 'I shall be no respecter of persons when I explore the Torah text, but shall thoroughly, and to the best of my ability, seek the grammatical [form] of every word'.

Ibn Ezra also anticipates his *Commentary on the Torah* by announcing at the opening of his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* that 'a man cannot attain the rung of awe [of the Creator] until he ascends the ladder of wisdom and it is built and established on understanding.'³⁰ Ibn Ezra regards the means as being as important as the end. Only by 'ascending' the ladder, does one begin to 'build' it. In other words, only by leading a committed life does one's own life begin to take shape in the way one would desire. In the *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, ibn Ezra hints that one needs to be knowledgeable in order to gain true understanding. He also recommends brevity in biblical exegesis. Both these themes are developed in the *Introduction to the Torah*.

Ibn Ezra's second biblical commentary was that on *Job*, which he introduced by reiterating his view that 'the majority of the commentaries of the early writers on this book are not [written] according to grammatical criteria.'³¹ Some, moreover, are [written] by the midrashic method'. Ibn Ezra's own approach involves defining each word, including technical difficulties, according to *psbat* interpretations and the most up-to-date laws of grammar. Only then does he explain 'the essence of the meaning.'³² Nevertheless, despite his resolve, ibn Ezra himself occasionally succumbs to more detailed, long-winded explanations, a trait he abhors in others.

According to Fleischer, ibn Ezra completed his literary achievement in Rome with his *Commentary on the Five Megillot*.³³ The reaction of the Jewish scholars in Rome to the grammatical, yet philosophical and scientific, approach of ibn Ezra was one of astonishment. Ibn Ezra had introduced them to a totally novel

approach, embracing many different disciplines under the title of 'exegesis', whilst demanding precision and self-discipline in poetry. In one of his own poems, ibn Ezra was to say generally of his stay in Italy that 'in Edom there is no room for a sage who dwells in the land of Kedar'. His meaning is that the Jews of Christian Europe did not wish to accommodate the new ideas of the Muslim-influenced Jews from Spain.³⁴

Ibn Ezra was aware of the general accusations of heresy aimed by Jews in Christian lands at the Spanish Jewish scholars. These must have increased his sense of geographical and cultural isolation and alienation. In addition he was totally dependant on his hosts for financial support. He had obviously reached an impasse in Rome and, immediately after completing the *Commentary on the Five Megillot*, he left to continue his life of perpetual travel. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that ibn Ezra's emphasis on 'paths' and 'movement' in the search for God, not to mention the 'circle' imagery of the *Introductions*, is a reflection of his own wanderings.

Ibn Ezra in Lucca

In 1145 ibn Ezra travelled north to Lucca, a six-day journey from Rome. It is possible that, in addition to the negative reasons for this move, ibn Ezra may, whilst still in Rome, have received an invitation from Jewish scholars residing in Lucca. Alternatively, he may just have thought that he might find much-needed financial and emotional support there.³⁵

Before 1000 CE an important Jewish community had existed in Lucca.³⁶ It is even possible that, as early as the ninth century, a Talmudic academy had been founded there by the prestigious Kalonymus family. Lucca's Talmudic fame was such that it had influenced the academies of France and Germany, which were the Ashkenazi heart-lands of the time. This environment stimulated ibn Ezra in his scientific endeavours,³⁷ whilst he, in turn, enhanced the town's reputation. In the mid twelfth century there were around forty Jewish families in Lucca, consisting of some two hundred people. Nevertheless, it could not compare in stature with the much bigger Jewish centre in Rome.³⁸

It was in Lucca that ibn Ezra wrote the *Commentary on the Torah*, including its *Introduction*, which is the subject of this book. Although the later, French, version was longer, this earlier composition is regarded as the standard version. It is more

complete and accessible to the general reader, being included in the authoritative interpretative canon, *Mikra'ot Gedolot*.³⁹

Levin compares ibn Ezra's approach in his *Commentary on the Torah* to his earlier comments on *Ecclesiastes*. Once again ibn Ezra emphasises the importance of grammatical accuracy in revealing the true, i.e., *pshat*, meaning of a word or phrase. He is devoted to disciplined and succinct language. However, he is also prone to digress on matters of philosophic or scientific interest, refusing to accept that any subject or opinion is exempt from debate. We shall see that this tendency does not prevent him from criticising others for the same trait. Occasionally, ibn Ezra appears to engage in what we would now call 'biblical criticism'.⁴⁰ In such cases, however, ibn Ezra's language is veiled and allusive, rather than direct. This could be out of reverence for the holy writings, fear of his Italian patrons, or because he genuinely believed that only the 'wise' would be capable of understanding such truths.

Although a detailed dissection of the *Introduction* occupies us later on in the book, an overview will be given here, in order to set it in its chronological and geographical context. Ibn Ezra discusses five alternative approaches or paths to God, Who is designated as the centre of a circle. As we have seen with the *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, no authority is exempt from criticism or fresh examination, as ibn Ezra commences his analysis of these paths.

The Ge'onim, representatives of the first approach, are criticised for wordiness and deviations from the text. The Karaites of the second path are the butt of ibn Ezra's biting sarcasm, for they did not adhere to the traditional teachings laid down in the Oral Torah, the lynch-pin of the traditional form of Judaism espoused by ibn Ezra. The Christians, depicted in the third path, are attacked for treating biblical passages as allegories, even when perfectly reasonable simple explanations are called for. Ibn Ezra certainly does not dismiss the mystical approach, but contends that words can have both a straightforward and mystical meaning simultaneously. He thus implies that a multi-levelled approach to the text is possible, and sometimes to be welcomed. The fourth, midrashic, path is espoused by the majority of Ashkenazi thinkers of the day. Ibn Ezra concedes that these rabbis must be respected, but proceeds to ridicule aspects of the midrashic approach which are plainly contradicted by science and common sense.

The fifth path is ibn Ezra's own, the direct path to God. This path demands a knowledge of grammar, science and all contemporary secular subjects, as well as insight into Written and Oral Torah. For

ibn Ezra, such comprehensive knowledge is essential if a seeker wishes to fathom the depths of the hidden meanings embedded in the biblical texts.

In Lucca ibn Ezra decided to write a commentary on all the biblical books.⁴¹ He obviously regarded each commentary as part of a whole, because he refrained from discussing points he had already made in earlier commentaries, or which he intended to make in later commentaries.⁴²

Levin characterises ibn Ezra's next commentary, that on *Isaiah*,⁴³ as fearless, and its allusions as less veiled than those to be found in the *Commentary on the Torah*. Here, ibn Ezra discusses the subject of prophecy, reading into the prophetic utterances the roots of his own philosophic and scientific system. Ibn Ezra's view of prophecy has links with the mediaeval Aristotelianism which was popular among Muslim, as well as Sephardi Jewish thinkers, including Rambam, who may well have been influenced by ibn Ezra. Ibn Ezra believed that the prophetic capacity is endowed by nature, but is implemented only when the endowed individual also has a prophetic mission. Naturally the prophetic gift brings the prophet nearer to God. Nevertheless, ibn Ezra did not claim that God could be known in Himself, but only through His works, a view taken up and expanded by Rambam.⁴⁴

Levin also suggests that ibn Ezra's sympathy for the negative historical reality depicted in the book of *Isaiah*, aspects of which he had already discussed in his *Commentary on the Torah*,⁴⁵ was influenced, at least partially, by his own experience of the repressed existence of the Jewish community:

[T]he alleys of the Jewish quarter in Lucca . . . taught him the oppressive influence of fear, the intensity of the straits of hatred and the aggression of the dominant religion, bent on destroying them.⁴⁶

Ibn Ezra also polemicalised against christological interpretations of *Isaiah*,⁴⁷ as well as questioning those popular Jewish interpretations of the book which he regarded as historically inaccurate.⁴⁸

In Lucca, ibn Ezra also wrote *Sefer ha-Yesod*, the second of his grammar books. It was ibn Ezra's custom to write books for his pupils, which he then gave to them without retaining a copy. When someone else in a different town requested a book on the same subject, he was thus compelled to write another. His intention was not to write anything new in his later grammar books, but to amass

all the grammatical rulings which had been transmitted in Arabic to as large an Ashkenazi readership as possible. Nevertheless, new ideas do appear in each of his grammatical works.⁴⁹

In a poem which may have introduced the work, ibn Ezra states that '*Sefer ha-Yesod* [*The Book of Roots*] will reveal to you every secret [*sod*] of the language of the Hebrews'. This rhyme is reminiscent of the pun-filled prayer with which he begins his *Introduction to the Torah*. It provides evidence that ibn Ezra did indeed believe that the 'secret' of the Hebrew language was embedded in its philological 'roots', which could be revealed only by an expert such as himself.

It is probable that another work of grammar, *Sfat Yeter*, was written at the end of ibn Ezra's stay in Lucca. Unlike *Sefer ha-Yesod*, however, this work was later mentioned in the supercommentaries on ibn Ezra's works by Tov Elem, Motot and Profiat Duran. It disappeared shortly after the beginning of the fifteenth century, but was rediscovered in the nineteenth century. This book is sometimes also known as *The Defence of Sa'adiyah Gaon*.⁵⁰

In the book's Introduction, ibn Ezra states that trying to understand the biblical text without being an expert in grammar is like 'banging your head against a brick wall'.⁵¹ He uses a similar expression in *Path Three*, when depicting the Christian, allegorical, approach to the text,⁵² although, in the present case he is attacking the poet, Menahem ibn Saruq, a contemporary of ibn Labrat.

In *Sfat Yeter* ibn Ezra also opposes those who think, like ibn Saruq, that a biblical text can be interpreted in many different ways, when in fact there is only one true meaning. He concedes that the ancient rabbis added or 'drew out' meanings, sometimes by use of *asmakhta* (biblical support) and sometimes by *drash* interpretations. He reminds the reader, however, that for these same rabbis a central axiom was that 'no text can be deprived of its *pshat*'.⁵³ He cites the early Aramaic commentator, Onkelos, as one of those who knew the grammatical rules better than contemporary Jews, and is therefore permitted to add midrashic meanings when he deems it necessary. From these examples it can be seen that *Sfat Yeter* contains similar ideas and phraseology to the *Introduction*.⁵⁴

It is probable that at this date ibn Ezra succeeded in carrying out some astrological experiments and also wrote his first book on astronomy, *Sefer ha-Luhot*.⁵⁵ A second version of this book, composed some years later in Provence, enhanced the reputation of ibn Ezra as a major player in the history of astronomy. As with his books on grammar, ibn Ezra was able to educate the Jewish

communities in Christian Europe about a subject which until then had been available only to Arabic speakers. The same urge to educate which had encouraged ibn Ezra to migrate to Italy in the first place persisted in his desire to introduce different examples of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Muslim Spain to his varied and attentive audiences.

The inhabitants of northern Italy must have been astonished at this biblical exegete, philosopher, grammarian and poet, who also displayed expertise in scientific subjects. In contrast to the hostility he attracted in Rome by the novelty of his approach, in the Lucca area ibn Ezra appears to have been ably supported by one or more admirers, and was able to complete one of his great masterpieces, the *Commentary on the Torah*.⁵⁶

Ibn Ezra's remaining sojourn in Italy

Ibn Ezra moved north-east to Mantua in 1146, where he wrote his most important grammatical work, *Sefer Zohot*, which crystallised everything he had written previously on the subject. He added a section on the quantitative metres of Spanish Hebrew poetry, giving examples and explaining their Arabic origin.⁵⁷ He was to write another grammar book, *Safah Berurah*, in Verona, between 1146 and 1147, because one of his students, Solomon, asked him to do so. In *Safah Berurah* he listed the place of origin of all his previous grammar books. At this time ibn Ezra wrote *Sefer ha-Ibbur*, which discussed the fixing of the Jewish calendar,⁵⁸ and *Sefer ha-Mispar*, a book on arithmetic, which included *excursi* on grammar.⁵⁹

After residing for seven or eight years in Italy, in 1147 ibn Ezra decided to leave. By this time he had gained an insight into the mentality of the Italian Jews and had taught them as much as he could of Sephardi culture. Nevertheless, he had also experienced disappointment, alienation and poverty on his travels, and could not think of any one place as his permanent home.

Levin describes his stays in various places as stop-gaps between the essential task, that of travel. Ibn Ezra had a restless personality, as well as being in constant need of financial support. He was also proud, and resented the disrespect occasionally shown to him by people he regarded as ignorant. There was a great difference between the small Italian communities and the large, dynamic cities of Spain. Although he was uncertain of how successful he had been in Italy, ibn Ezra influenced it permanently. Sometimes, however,

his physical and spiritual turmoil prevented him from thinking clearly and impeded his capacity for creativity.

As well as these personal problems, we should also take into account the external factor of the Second Crusade, which had already affected the communities of Germany and France. The fact that the seat of the Church was in Italy may have contributed to ibn Ezra's decision to leave, although the Italian Jews were, ironically, spared the fate of their co-religionists in France. Although the terror bred from far-off rumours caused great anxiety, ibn Ezra was now to move to some of the very lands in which the Crusade had already wreaked havoc, so that he might complete many of his masterpieces.⁶⁰

Ibn Ezra in Béziers (Provence)

Fleischer⁶¹ discusses the various routes that ibn Ezra could have taken on his journey to Provence. He thinks that ibn Ezra travelled by boat, either from Venice, which would have entailed a long journey around Italy or, more likely, from Genoa, on the west. Ibn Ezra probably reached the Provençal town of Narbonne and travelled on from there to Béziers, arriving in 1148. Ibn Ezra had already been in contact with the Jews of this region whilst residing in Spain or Italy.⁶²

According to Benjamin of Tudela, who visited a few years later, there were a number of Jewish scholars residing in Béziers. Ibn Ezra wrote *Sefer ha-Shem* for two such scholars and an astronomical text-book, probably *Reshit Hokhmah*, for a third.⁶³ The sympathetic and liberal intellectual atmosphere prevalent among the Jews of Provence may have contributed to the success of the scientific, mathematical, astronomical and astrological works he wrote in this area.

Jews are known to have lived in Béziers from before the tenth century. The synagogue was built at about the same time as ibn Ezra's arrival in the town. Jews lived in both parts of the city, which was divided between the count and the bishop. Béziers is infamous for its organised onslaughts against the Jewish population during the Easter period, which included the stoning of the Jewish Quarter.⁶⁴ The town was known as 'the little Jerusalem' and its fame increased as a result of ibn Ezra's residence.

The first book ibn Ezra wrote in Béziers was probably *Reshit Hokhmah*, which is divided into ten chapters. It contains a detailed description of every aspect of contemporary astrological science,

including references to earlier work gathered from Babylonian, Persian, Indian and Greek sources, starting with Ptolemy. At that time astrology was regarded as a branch of astronomy and formed an important part of the scientific Muslim Spanish cultural heritage, which Ibn Ezra desired to transmit to the Jews of Provence.

As with his other works, *Reshit Hokhmah* was written in an organised and systematic fashion. It demonstrated expertise in both astronomy and astrology. Although he completed this book in record time, Ibn Ezra immediately set to writing a further six books on astronomy, containing his own, fresh, ideas. This creative spurt may have been motivated by the curiosity of the people of Béziers, his own enthusiasm, or both. He caused consternation in his readers because, in line with his custom, he wrote everything from memory.⁶⁵

Ibn Ezra's next work, *Sefer ha-Shem*, dealt primarily with the ineffable four-letter name of God. In Jewish tradition this name consists of the Hebrew letters *yod*, *heh*, *vav* and *heh*, the correct pronunciation of which is unknown. *Shem* means 'name'. It is used in specific circumstances as a circumlocution for the name of God Himself. In addition, the book's eight chapters also discussed outstanding grammatical problems, as well as testifying to Ibn Ezra's mathematical, philosophical, astronomical and astrological skills. As always, he endeavoured to unify these disciplines, in order to depict a holistic world-view, corresponding to the 'oneness' of God.⁶⁶

Ibn Ezra in Narbonne (Provence)

Narbonne is about sixteen miles from Béziers, and Ibn Ezra stayed there for a short time until 1152. It was the capital of mediaeval Septimania and has the earliest written evidence of Jewish residence in France, dating from 471. The town was taken from Muslim hands in 759. According to legend, its Jewish residents helped the Christians in the eviction of the Muslims. As a reward they were granted the right to elect a 'Jewish king'. There was a princely Jewish dynasty in Narbonne, which dated from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Between 1134 and 1143, however, political clashes took place between Narbonne and Toulouse, resulting in Jewish emigration from Narbonne.

According to the *Sefer Kabbalah*, a historiography by Ibn Ezra's younger Spanish contemporary, Abraham Ibn Daud, in 1143 there

were two thousand Jews resident in Narbonne. Benjamin of Tudela records the existence of three hundred Jewish families, or about one thousand five hundred inhabitants. In 1163 the Jewish population was attacked by Spanish crusaders, but was protected by both the religious and secular Provençal authorities. Benjamin calls Narbonne 'a city advanced in Torah [study], from which Torah is disseminated to all lands'.⁶⁷ Benjamin mentions that a scion of the Kalonymous family was the leader of the community, and also names the head of the yeshivah. Ibn Ezra had therefore reached a town with a proud, though oppressed, Jewish history, famous for its learning. Here Ibn Ezra probably wrote his astronomical work, *Ta'amei-ha-Luhot*.

Ibn Ezra's stay in Provence proved to be one of the most fruitful periods of his life. The scholars in this area were much more understanding of Spanish culture than the Italians, as there had already been considerable intellectual interchange between Spain and Provence. In Italy Ibn Ezra had felt the necessity for psychological self-sufficiency. Here he found true friendship.

In fact, two generations after his death, the poet, Yediah ha-Penini ben R. Abraham of Béziers, extolled Ibn Ezra by name in the famous 'Letter of Apology' sent to Rabbi Solomon ben Adret, the Rashba. This important rabbi had been angered by the study of so-called 'external wisdom', or philosophy, by the Jews of Provence. Yediah demonstrated that in every generation Jewish sages had studied these sciences. Of Ibn Ezra specifically he states: 'our fathers told us of the joy of our rabbinic leaders in meeting him as he passed through, and how he began to open their eyes.'⁶⁸

Why then did Ibn Ezra leave for northern France? One of his reasons may have been rumours about the Almohad destruction of the Jewish communities of Spain, together with their culture. He may have felt an increasing urgency to implant all the seeds of this culture in as many Ashkenazi lands as possible. This might also explain his emphasis on different aspects of this culture in different areas. Ibn Ezra now found himself in the Kingdom of Anjou, which at that time embraced the whole of the northern part of France, from the Pyrenees to Normandy. He reached 'Rodus' in 1152.

Ibn Ezra in 'Rodus'

For a long time there was considerable debate about exactly which town in Normandy constituted 'Rodus', but the majority opinion has opted for Rouen.⁶⁹ Jews had lived in Rouen from at least the

early eleventh century. It was one of only two French towns whose Jewish inhabitants were forced to accept baptism or death during the time of the First Crusade. After that date Normandy belonged to England, whose ruler, William Rufus, treated these forced converts well. During the twelfth century the Jews of Rouen, unlike other Norman Jews, were placed under the authority of a local bailiff. A number of London Jews owned houses in the Jewish Quarter of Rouen, whilst some Jews of Rouen had debtors in England. It is thus easy to understand why ibn Ezra eventually left Rouen for London.

Ibn Ezra was very ill when he arrived in northern France, where he was tended by Rabbi Moses ben Meir. He vowed that if he recuperated he would write a second *Commentary on the Torah*.⁷⁰ The only parts extant are a few fragments on *Genesis*, together with the *Introduction* and the entire *Commentary on Exodus*. This *Second Introduction* mentions ibn Ezra's sick-bed vow and describes the same five exegetical methods already discussed in the *Lucca Commentary*. However, in Rouen ibn Ezra changes both order and emphasis, reversing the position of the Ge'onic and Christian paths. He starts with a detailed negative exposé regarding Christian allegorical exegesis, but downplays his criticisms of the Ge'onim. No doubt context played a large part in ibn Ezra's change of emphasis.

The *Second Commentary on Genesis* also differs from the earlier version. It contains a preface on fine points of grammar and etymology, followed first by a grammatical and then by an exegetical commentary. The earlier version did not make this sharp differentiation.⁷¹

The *Second (Standard) Commentary on Exodus* is longer than that on all the other four books of the Pentateuch put together. Although it often agrees with statements made in the *First Commentary*, there are occasional contradictions between the two.⁷² In this second commentary, ibn Ezra emphasises that the mysteries of the soul cannot be comprehended before one fully understands the workings of the body and the practice of the mitzvot.⁷³ His stress on the activity known as *hitbodedut* has led to speculation that ibn Ezra practised a form of meditation.⁷⁴ The commentary also discusses Israel's role in the astrological framework. It expresses the view that, in exceptional circumstances, the power of prayer is capable of moving God to overturn Israel's 'fate'.

Ibn Ezra was more fearful of the 'Arabic Galut' (forced diaspora) than that of Christendom, because he thought that the

destruction of Jewish culture in Spain would hasten the 'end' in the Messianic sense. At this time he was subject to apocalyptic astrological visions regarding the destruction of 'the Kingdom of Ishmael', through the defeat of the Almohads by their Christian enemies. He also prophesied that 'light' would finally come to the Land of Israel.⁷⁵ He refers to this 'light' towards the end of *Path Four* of his *First Introduction*.

Ibn Ezra's next work, the *Second Commentary on Daniel*, was written in October 1155, immediately after his own visionary experiences.⁷⁶ He describes this commentary as 'succinct, with riddles and ... mystical meanings', comprehensible only to those who 'understand the roots'.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, he also declares that his commentary will be written 'according to grammatical criteria'. It is the juxtaposition of the grammatical and the mystical that makes ibn Ezra such a unique writer, as we will see below. This commentary is also consistent with his other works in its rational treatment of miracles, together with philosophical asides.⁷⁸ Ibn Ezra's descriptions of redemption may be connected with his apocalyptic visions of the contemporary political situation.

An important view expressed in this commentary, and which relates to the *Introduction to the Torah*, is that the appointed Jewish festivals, the *mo'adim*, had been fixed in the past by dependence on early prophecies. All the future *mo'adim* had been determined in exact detail⁷⁹ and written down many years before, but after Daniel's time. This approach to the *mo'adim* may explain the anger expressed by ibn Ezra towards the Karaites in *Path Two*, for daring to interpret the festivals according to their own calculations, which do not follow Oral Torah.⁸⁰

Another unusual feature is that, unlike most previous commentaries on *Daniel*, the 'fourth kingdom' is interpreted as referring to the present time and not to Daniel's age, and is identified as the kingdom of Islam rather than Rome/Christianity. It is obvious that ibn Ezra's own visions of Judaism's redemption through Christendom played a part in this interpretation, and is further proof of his belief that the Messianic Age was nigh. It is even possible that he identified himself as a modern-day Daniel, come to liberate his people from their cultural servitude.

It is probable that the *Second Commentary on Esther* was written immediately after the *Commentary on Daniel*.⁸¹ It provided ibn Ezra with an appropriate biblical context, the first recorded attempt of mass genocide of the Jews, from which to expound on his own ideas on the imminent spiritual destruction of the Jewish people.

Ibn Ezra had already written a *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in Italy. The *Second Commentary*, produced in Rouen, consists of three sections. These can be described as grammatical, literary and allegorical.⁸² In the third section Ibn Ezra responds positively to the midrashic and aggadic stories of the rabbis, in order to depict the higher aspirations of the *Song*. This unusual stance contrasts sharply with his customary view of midrashic interpretations, but can perhaps be explained by the exceptional history of *Song of Song* exegesis in Jewish tradition.

In Rouen Ibn Ezra also wrote a *Second Commentary on Psalms*. It was written very quickly, although it is the most detailed of all his commentaries. In it he expounds his scientific and philosophical opinions at length, relating his theory of the cosmos both to divine miracles and also to the soul's efforts to return to her source. In this commentary Ibn Ezra relies on ideas expressed in some of his earlier works, but refrains from allusions and produces writing of great lucidity. He identifies closely with the poetry of the *Psalms* and emphasises the book's ethical message. Once again, Ibn Ezra provides much aggadic detail, as well as grammatical explanations.

The *Standard Commentary on the Minor Prophets* was completed soon after the *Commentary on Psalms*.⁸³ It was probably the last of Ibn Ezra's works to be written in Rouen, and is extremely succinct. Ibn Ezra briefly discusses each prophet and tackles the text from a grammatical point of view. As in the previous commentary, he devotes some space to the subject of ethics. For instance in his comments on *Hosea* 6:3, he uses his favourite metaphor of the 'ladder of wisdom' to describe the soul's ascent to God.⁸⁴

Ibn Ezra was highly respected by those Jews in northern France whom he encountered during his five-year stay. As we have seen, during his sojourn in Rouen he wrote a second, and often longer, version of his Bible commentaries, in contrast to the astronomical and astrological works composed in Provence. Nevertheless, the commentaries incorporate the fruits of all his scientific research. In addition, they were influenced by his own visions and fears for the future of Judaism in an antagonistic world.

How was Ibn Ezra accepted by French Jewish scholars? We know that he was admired by Rabbenu Jacob Tam (1100–71), Rashi's grandson, considered 'the greatest [Talmudic] scholar of the generation'. The two exchanged letters, although we have no proof that they actually met. They both wrote works entitled *Sefer-ha-Yashar*, the title Ibn Ezra gave to his own *Standard Commentary*. It

is recorded that Ibn Ezra asked Rabbenu Tam a halakhic question regarding the dating of Pesach.⁸⁵

There is controversy as to whether Ibn Ezra met Rabbenu Tam's elder brother, Shmuel ben Meir, the Rashbam (1080/5–1158/71),⁸⁶ to whom he wrote poems of praise, whilst strongly disagreeing with aspects of his biblical exegesis.⁸⁷ Ibn Ezra feared that Rashbam's approach to *pshat* interpretation might lead to infringements of the halakhah. Ibn Ezra regarded the safeguarding of the halakhah at all times as the lynch-pin of Jewish interpretation, whereas those biblical exegetes who were also, like Rashbam, Talmudic experts, were willing to 'experiment' a little more with the biblical text.⁸⁸

To assess the impact of Ibn Ezra's achievement in France, we only have to study the tribute paid to him by the translator, Judah ibn Tibbon,⁸⁹ a few days after Ibn Ezra left the country for England. As a translator himself, Ibn Tibbon was particularly impressed by Ibn Ezra's role as the first Hebrew populariser of grammar books written in Arabic. Rashi and Rashbam, on the other hand, relied on the inaccurate earlier works of Ibn Saruq and Ibn Labrat. Now, because of Ibn Ezra's translations, French Jews were able to utilise the linguistic advances made by the Sephardi Jews.⁹⁰

Ibn Ezra in England

One of the most puzzling questions in Jewish intellectual history is why Ibn Ezra should have come to England? The answer may well lie in the contemporary cultural and financial links between the Jews of Normandy and England, described above. However, other reasons may have been equally important for Ibn Ezra. In many ways England could be considered as prime virgin territory for the implanting of Sephardic cultural seeds at the end of one man's very long life. In those days 'Angleterre' was regarded as being at the 'edge of the earth',⁹¹ and was therefore of great interest to someone of Ibn Ezra's evangelical and messianic mentality.

Ibn Ezra arrived in 1158, having crossed the Channel by boat with a group of companions. He quickly found himself pupils in London. Most London Jews had arrived in England from Rouen with William the Conqueror. Henry I encouraged them to stay by granting them a charter through which they had freedom of movement, without having to pay tolls or customs. They had permission to be tried in their own law courts and swear the oath on a Torah scroll. However, the anarchy which ensued during the

subsequent reign of Stephen (1135–54) harmed the Jewish community. It was during this period that the 1144 Norwich blood libel occurred, the first such defamation in European history.⁹² Nevertheless, Stephen protected the Jewish community throughout the Second Crusade.

When ibn Ezra arrived in England, Henry II (1154–89), the first of the Angevin kings, was on the throne, ruling both England and large parts of northern France. By this time Jews had been barred from guilds and forbidden to hold land. They now became authorised money-lenders, under total control of the king. Their welfare depended on his stability and his need for their financial support.⁹³ At this time the community attracted many settlers from both Europe and North Africa.⁹⁴

Ibn Ezra composed various works for the Jews of England, including *Yesod Mora*,⁹⁵ written for Joseph ben Jacob. It was completed in only four weeks. Like the *Introduction to the Torah*, this work examines approaches to the biblical text. However, in *Yesod Mora*, the emphasis is on the mitzvot. Ibn Ezra states that if one correctly understands and practises the mitzvot, his soul may eventually reach the divine realm.

According to ibn Ezra, the correct use of secular subjects, such as philosophy, science and astrology, is essential for a true understanding and correct practice of Jewish law. Ibn Ezra found justification for all these areas of study in the biblical text itself. Using his favourite metaphor of wisdom as the ladder ascending to God, he argues that those who do not understand the mitzvot should obey them nevertheless, if necessary in a child-like fashion.

It is particularly interesting to compare *Yesod Mora*'s descriptions of the four kinds of one-sided researchers with those discussed in the two earlier *Introductions to the Torah*. In *Yesod Mora* ibn Ezra starts by criticising the massoretes for their emphasis on preservation of text, rather than creativity in analysis. In his *Introduction*, on the other hand, the massoretes are criticised for their adherence to midrashic rather than common-sense explanations.

In contrast to the two earlier works, ibn Ezra also criticises the grammarians for non-creativity. This volte-face is astonishing in the light of ibn Ezra's earlier championing of the grammatical approach. It may be that towards the end of his life he realised that most people did not understand 'grammar' in his original esoteric way, and was hoping to set the record straight by pointing out the drawbacks of the every-day grammatical approach.

In *Yesod Mora* ibn Ezra's criticises the Karaites in more measured tones than in the *Introductions*.⁹⁶ He also praises Talmudic scholars for their legal expertise and general secular knowledge, but condemns their use of midrashic explanations. He also criticises experts in the law of torts, whose 'knowledge has no intrinsic spiritual significance.'

It can therefore be seen that in England ibn Ezra once again altered his emphasis towards various approaches to the biblical text. In his first *Introduction*, he had been sarcastic and polemical in attack, whilst praising his own 'grammatical' method, which he attributed to the ancient sages. In the *Second Introduction* he changed the order of attack, starting with the dangers of Christian allegory and ending on an innovative note, by offering to teach the present-day sages the rules of grammar. He thus admitted that most of the Ashkenazi rabbis were uneducated in this method.

In *Yesod Mora*, he imitates the *Second Introduction* by placing his categories in ascending order of worthiness, commencing now with the massoretes and ending with the Talmudic scholars. However, in *Yesod Mora*, ibn Ezra's attitude to the various exegetical approaches is also much more balanced than earlier in his life. He accentuates creativity rather than the mere acquisition of exegetical tools. This emphasis was already apparent in his earlier works, but is spelled out in much more detail here. It could be argued that each of his three attempts to define a perfect textual approach represents a development in his thought.

On the other hand, it is possible that, at the end of his life, ibn Ezra decided to accentuate the transcendent power of creative imagination over grammatical accuracy, in order to pinpoint the way in which he felt that textual exegesis should be carried on after his death. This shift in emphasis is especially highlighted in his fifth path, which aims at self-perfection through knowledge of God's mitzvot and understanding of His deeds. In the two *Introductions* this path had consisted of adjuring the reader to obey the perfect *Bet Din*, rather than their own interpretations. It could, therefore, be argued that by the time ibn Ezra wrote *Yesod Mora*, he had internalised his concept of the *Bet Din*.

Ibn Ezra's last major work was *Iggeret Shabbat*, written in 1159. It was composed in the form of a letter, starting with a poem, purporting to be written by Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) herself, personified as a woman. Ibn Ezra describes himself as having received this 'letter' in a dream. 'Shabbat' admonishes him for having in his possession an exegetical work whose contents

encourage her desecration. Ibn Ezra states that he wakes from his dream on Shabbat and realises that the damaging work belongs to a pupil who has left it with him. This work includes a commentary on *Genesis* 1:5 which could lead to a definition of the word 'day' which is totally opposed to the halakhic definition. Angrily he tears up the book, even though this act itself constitutes a desecration of Shabbat!⁹⁷

Simon contrasts ibn Ezra's real anger towards the book's author, the Rashbam, with his frequent sarcastic sallies against 'heretics', such as Hivi al-Balkhi, Karaites such as Anan,⁹⁸ and those he really wishes to protect, such as ibn Janah, Sa'adiah Gaon, ibn Labrat, and, occasionally, even himself.⁹⁹ Ibn Ezra's concern that the term 'day' should be properly interpreted is already made clear from his *Introduction to the Torah, Path Four*, and constitutes a large part of his determination to define calendrical dates correctly.

No doubt ibn Ezra was particularly infuriated by the Rashbam's interpretation, because he was a leading Ashkenazi rabbinic authority who, like ibn Ezra himself, espoused the *pshat* approach to the text. Unlike the Rashbam, however, ibn Ezra wished to subsume both halakhah and Oral Torah under his definition of *pshat*.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Ezra may have feared that, on reading this book, the average person might be tempted to celebrate Shabbat at the 'wrong' time. Rashbam was quite happy to separate biblical from legal exegesis, as was pointed out above.

It is somewhat ironic that ibn Ezra's final work is a quasi-poetic dream interpretation, resulting in a major difference of opinion with the leading French legal and biblical scholar of the day. This stance, however, sums up the man: lonely, without female company (note his personification of Shabbat), fiercely protective of the divinity of textual interpretation and eerily prophetic as to the future of exegesis, together with his own mythological status as the archetypal 'Wandering Jew'.

Mystery surrounds the exact place of ibn Ezra's death.¹⁰¹ In the nineteenth century Graetz took a 'midrashic' approach to ibn Ezra's life. In his opinion, ibn Ezra retraced his steps in a most complicated manner just before the end of his life. There are traditions that he died in Rome, Tudela, Calahorra, or even Palestine. However, Fleischer, ibn Ezra's most respected biographer, thinks that he was fatally attacked by 'anarchic English hordes' in a forest north of London, whilst conducting yet another journey to pastures new.

Common sense, or a *pshat* approach, including documentary evidence, would favour Fleischer's view. An old man, aged seventy-

five, who had never retraced his steps before, would be more likely to stay in his country of residence, rather than embark on a dangerous sea journey. Moreover, fifty years after his death, Rabbi Moshe ben Hisdai reported that the Jews of England had informed him that ibn Ezra had died there. If so, ibn Ezra died as he had lived, on the road, or as the Hebrew word '*derekh*' expresses it, on the straight path towards God.¹⁰²

NOTES

1 THE BIOGRAPHY OF ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

- 1 Rashi is the acronym for the northern French biblical exegete and Talmud commentator, Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040–1105). See E. I. J. Rosenthal, 'The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture', in 'The Study of the Bible in Medieval Judaism', in Lampe (ed.) 1969: 267. For the role of Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman, or Nahmanides: 1194–1270) in ibn Ezra's inclusion as part of the authorised Jewish interpretative canon, see Twersky, 'Introduction', in Twersky (ed.) 1983: 4.
- 2 This concept, usually attributed to Rambam (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, or Maimonides: 1135–1204), will be discussed below.
- 3 The Second Commentary was written in 'Rodus', probably Rouen, Normandy, in 1153.
- 4 For controversy surrounding ibn Ezra's exact birthplace, see Abramson 1970: 397–8. For the arguments about his birth and death dates, see Fleischer, below, although as recently as 1993 Sarna reiterated the alternative dates of 1092 and 1167 respectively. See Sarna, 'Abraham ibn Ezra as an Exegete', in Twersky and Harris (eds) 1993: 1. For his death date, see H. Beinart, 'España y el Occidente en los Días de Abraham ibn Ezra', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 38.
- 5 *Ibid.*: 28–9. For ibn Ezra's reaction to this transfer of political power, see Levin 1969: 13–14.
- 6 Comparisons are often made between Halevi's departure, together with ibn Ezra's son, Isaac, from Spain for Palestine in 1140, and ibn Ezra's departure for Rome in the same year. See Levin 1969: 17. E. Silver, 'New Light on Abraham ibn Ezra's Early Life from Analysis of his Exegesis and other Prose Works', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 317.
- 7 See Levin 1969: 23. Beinart, 'España', *op. cit.*: 1990: 25–38. Silver, 'Early Life', *ibid.*: 319.
- 8 Fleischer 1929/30: 353.
- 9 *Be-nefesh nibhelet*. See Silver, citing Levin, 'Early Life', *op. cit.*, 1990: 320.
- 10 For Hebrew, see Levin 1969: 23. Silver, 'Early Life', *op. cit.*, 1990: 319.
- 11 See Baron 1952–83 (iv): 10–12. For the comparative tolerance of the popes towards the Jews, see Roth 1948: 193.
- 12 Benjamin visited between 1160 and 1165, when the demography would have been similar to that thirty years earlier. 'Edom' is the general term used in Jewish tradition for both ancient Rome and Christendom, which is seen, negatively, as Rome's immediate spiritual successor. For ibn Ezra's description of his findings in Rome, see Levin 1969: 343, n. 76, 24, 345, n. 79.
- 13 Simon 1991: 149–151. S. Reif, 'Abraham ibn Ezra on Canticles', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 243–4. Compare with Friedlaender 1877b: 143–4, 165.
- 14 Jewish Law and Jewish lore, respectively.
- 15 I discuss the influence of the Ge'onim on ibn Ezra in Chapter Seven.
- 16 See H. Shai, 'Abraham ibn Ezra's Hebrew Commentary to the Bible and Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Commentaries and Grammars', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 309.
- 17 Roth 1948: 245.
- 18 Levin 1969: 24.
- 19 The word means 'comfort' in Hebrew.
- 20 An acronym of the title, *Moznai-Lashon Ha-Kodesh (Balance of the Holy Tongue)*.
- 21 See Levin, 1969: 25. Sarna, 'Exegete', *op. cit.*, 1993: 7.
- 22 Cited in Levin 1969: 25, 346, n. 82. Original in German, translated into Hebrew.
- 23 Levin 1969: 346, n. 82. Also see n. 83.
- 24 See Shai, 'Hebrew Commentaries to Commentaries', *op. cit.*, 1990: 309.
- 25 See Carmi 1981: 14–15, 89.
- 26 *Ibid.*: 16, 24, 33.
- 27 *Ibid.*: 34. Levin 1969: 25, 346, n. 87. J. Yahalom, 'The Poetics of Spanish Piyyut in Light of Abraham ibn Ezra's Critique of its Pre-Spanish Precedents', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 390–1.
- 28 For Sa'adiyah's attitude to poetry, see Carmi 1981: 21–3.
- 29 See Levin 1969: 25, 346, n. 88.
- 30 Levin 1969: 25. Ibn Ezra makes similar remarks about the Karaite, ben Zuta. Also see Fleischer 1929/30: 222. Friedlaender 1877b: 33ff, 168, n. 1.
- 31 *Al dikduk ha-lashon*. Normally translated as 'etymology', but in my opinion the phrase implies a whole structure, based on sound grammatical roots.
- 32 *Ikar-ha-inyan*. See Levin 1969: 26.
- 33 See Fleischer 1933/4: 79. The five *Megillot* are the biblical books: *Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Lamentations* and *Ruth*.
- 34 See Levin 1969: 26, 346, n. 92.
- 35 See Fleischer 1933/4: 78.
- 36 Levin 1969: 346, n. 96, citing Roth.
- 37 See Baron 1952–83 (iv): 26.
- 38 Levin 1969: 26.
- 39 This is the Hebrew version of the Bible, printed together with all those commentaries acknowledged as belonging to the 'canon' of biblical exegesis in Jewish tradition.
- 40 Levin 1969: 27.

- 41 Commentaries on the biblical books: *Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Ezekiel, Proverbs, Ezra, Nehemiah* and *Chronicles* are mentioned in various parts of his *Commentary on the Torah*, but are not extant. See Sarna, 'Exegete', *op. cit.*, 1993: 4, 22, ns 8–16.
- 42 See Levin 1969: 27, 347, n. 100 for the following examples. In the *Commentary on Isaiah*, ibn Ezra refers to his previous commentaries on the *Minor Prophets* (Rome), *Ezekiel* (no longer extant) and *Psalms*. Simon 1991: 145–9, 260, n. 18, supports Fleischer's suggestion that the latter was written in either Rome or Lucca before the commentaries on the *Torah* and *Isaiah*.
- 43 Probably written in 1145. See Simon 1985: 270.
- 44 Friedlaender 1877b: 51–7. *Idem* 1877a: 62, 66. *Idem* 1873: 164, 177. For Rambam's view of prophecy, see Leaman 1990: 39–64.
- 45 Levin 1969: 347, n. 101.
- 46 Free translation of Levin 1969: 27. Simon 1985: 270 describes ibn Ezra's similar attitude to Muslims.
- 47 Eg. *Isaiah* 48–65. See Levin 1969: 347, n. 103. Simon 1985: 269.
- 48 Levin 1969: 28, 347, n. 104. Simon 1985: 271.
- 49 See Fleischer 1933/4: 79–81. *Sefer ha-Yesod* is no longer extant.
- 50 See Fleischer 1933/4: 82. Sirat 1985: 352–5. For discussion, see Simon 1991: 149, 264, n. 39. Also see Fleischer 1925/6: 165–8.
- 51 For text, see Allony 1984: 85, lines 10–11.
- 52 For biblical allusion, see *Isaiah* 59:10. The verb actually means 'to grope'.
- 53 *Ain mikra yotze midai-pshuto*. This idea is discussed in more detail in later chapters.
- 54 See Fleischer 1933/4: 83–4. L. Glinert, 'The Unknown Grammar of Abraham ibn Ezra. Syntactic Feature of Yesod Diqduq', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 129–36.
- 55 Discovered only in the twentieth century by J. M. Millás. See Levin 1969: 347, n. 107, 348, n. 127; Baron 1952–83 (viii): 362–3, n. 38. Sarna, 'Exegete', *op. cit.*, 1993: 26, n. 120.
- 56 For ibn Ezra's possible stay in Pisa, see Fleischer 1933/4: 79. Levin 1969: 28. Also see Baron 1952–83 (iv): 26.
- 57 Levin 1969: 28; Yahalom, 'Poetics', *op. cit.*, 1990: 392.
- 58 Ibn Ezra discusses this subject as part of his attack on the Karaites in *Path Two* of the *Introduction*. Also see Sarna, 'Exegete', *op. cit.*, 1993: 26, n. 117.
- 59 *Ibid.*: n. 119. Fleischer 1931/2: 290; Baron 1952–83 (viii): 352, n. 12.
- 60 Levin 1969: 29–30. Simon 1985: 270. Beinart, 'España', *op. cit.*, 1990: 35.
- 61 Fleischer 1929/30: 353–4.
- 62 *Ibid.*: 356.
- 63 Rabbi Abraham, Rabbi Isaac ben Judah and Rabbi Jonathan ben David respectively. See Fleischer 1929/30: 356–7. Levin 1969: 30, 347, n. 118.
- 64 See Baron 1952–83 (iv): 55–6. By 1160, this practice was replaced by a cash payment to the bishop and an annual tax. It is likely that ibn Ezra would have witnessed the stoning.
- 65 See Levin 1969: 348, n. 122. Baron 1952–83 (iv): 177, 365–6, n. 43.

- 66 See Levin 1969: 31. For the importance of cosmology in *Sefer ha-Shem*, see Y. Z. Langermann, 'Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of Abraham Ibn Ezra', in Twersky and Harris (eds) 1993: 61–5.
- 67 Translation of extract quoted in Fleischer 1929/30: 356. Also see Levin 1969: 31.
- 68 Translation of Fleischer 1929/30: 298. See Sirat 1985: 274–7. Beinart, 'España', *op. cit.* 1990: 35.
- 69 See Fleischer 1929/30: 38–43. Simon 1985: 147.
- 70 This is known as the *Long* or *Alternative Commentary* and was written in about 1153. See Simon 1985: 148.
- 71 See Friedlaender 1877b: 146.
- 72 See Fleischer 1930/32: 218.
- 73 Correct, legally sanctioned, therefore religious, behaviour. See Levin 1969: 32.
- 74 *Hitbodedut* means 'act of isolating oneself', 'meditation' and 'intense concentration'. The concept was already used in the Hekhalot mysteries practised by the Merkabah mystics in the first centuries CE. For *hitbodedut* in ibn Ezra see Idel 1988a: 105ff, 128, 142, n. 8, 161, n. 119. For the influence of ibn Ezra's interpretation of *hitbodedut* on Geronese Kabbalah, see Wolfson 1994: 296.
- 75 See Levin 1969: 33. Fleischer 1930/32: 291–2.
- 76 Simon 1985: 146.
- 77 See Levin 1969: 33, 349, n. 142. Friedlaender 1877b: 189.
- 78 See Levin 1969: 349, n. 143. Friedlaender 1877b: 102.
- 79 Levin 1969: 33–4. The phrase in the *Second Introduction, Path Four*, 'as a book laid down and abandoned', refers to a hidden wisdom known only to the early rabbis, and may also relate to this idea.
- 80 See Langermann, 'Astrological Themes', *op. cit.*, 1993: 38–9.
- 81 Fleischer thinks it may have been written later, in England. See 1930/32: 222.
- 82 See Rosenthal, 'Exposition', *op. cit.*, 1969: 267–8. Fleischer 1930/32: 223. Simon 1985: 146. Reif, 'Abraham ibn Ezra on Canticles', in Díaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 243.
- 83 For date, see Simon 1985: 146. The second recension has also been discovered and published by Simon, together with this standard version. *Idem* 1985: 259, n. 7, 300.
- 84 Friedlaender 1877b: 167. It is possible that ibn Ezra also wrote *Sefer Yesod-ha-Mispar* and *Sefer Ha-Ehad* in Rouen. The first is a grammatical work. See Fleischer 1930/32: 290. Baron 1952–83 (viii): 352, n. 12. Simon 1965: 113. The second is a mathematical work, which Fleischer thinks may have been written in Italy.
- 85 Fleischer 1930/32: 294–5.
- 86 *Ibid.*: 295–6. Japhet and Salters 1985: 12.
- 87 See Levin 1969: 37. Simon 1965: 130–8. Japhet and Salters 1985: 48, n. 124.
- 88 See Weiss Halivni 1991: 26–8, 48, 81–2, 169, although in our view he is biased in favour of Rashbam's *pshat* approach, to the detriment of ibn Ezra.
- 89 1120–90. See Sirat: 1985: 69, 81, 113, 213.

- 90 See Fleischer 1930/32: 297–8. I have discussed ibn Ezra's negative view of ibn Saruq above.
- 91 See *Deuteronomy* 28:64. The view that the phrase *ketze ha-arets* was an allusion to England was based on a mistranslation of the word 'Angleterre' as 'angle (or edge) of the earth'. This phrase was used to good effect by Menasseh ben Israel in his appeal to Oliver Cromwell in 1650 to allow the Jews back to England, and thus hasten the advent of the Messiah. See Méchoulan and Nahon 1987: 84, 139, 143, 151.
- 92 See Baron 1952–83 (iv): 135–6.
- 93 *Ibid.*: 75–8.
- 94 *Ibid.*: 80. Margolis and Marx 1927: 384–6.
- 95 See Simon 1991: 200–11. For date of composition see Fleischer 1928/9: 256.
- 96 For instance, here he concedes that the Karaites know the Bible extremely well.
- 97 The verse reads: 'And God called to the light day and to the dark He called night. And the evening and the morning: day one.'
- 98 See Chapter Six on the Karaites and also ibn Ezra's *Introduction, Path Two*.
- 99 See Levin 1969: 40. For the seriousness with which ibn Ezra regarded the Rashbam's 'misinterpretation', see Simon, 'Ibn Ezra's Harsh Language and Biting Humor: Real Denunciation or Hispanic Mannerism', in Diaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 325–34.
- 100 For Rashbam's exegetical approach and ibn Ezra's changing opinion regarding the correct definition of 'day', see Simon 1965: 106, 110ff.
- 101 For correct date of ibn Ezra's death, in 1164, see Friedlaender 1877b: 201–2. Fleischer 1928/9: 250, 256. As ibn Ezra was seventy-five at the time of his death, he must have been born in 1089.
- 102 See Levin: 1969: 41–2. Beinart, 'España', *op. cit.*: 1990: 38.

2 A HISTORY OF THE SCHOLARLY WORK ON IBN EZRA

- 1 Simon, 'Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries', in Twersky and Harris (eds) 1993: 86.
- 2 Friedlaender 1877b: 213. Sirat 1985: 344, 477. Simon, 'Interpreting', *op. cit.*, 1993: 98, 119, 124, n. 18.
- 3 Simon regards ibn Tibbon as the most important and influential thirteenth-century supercommentator. Ibn Tibbon also translated al-Batalyawsi's *Arabic Book of Intellectual Circles*, which has many similarities with the work of ibn Ezra.
- 4 Simon, 'Interpreting', *op. cit.*, 1993: 111. For a fascinating account of the nineteenth century's unfairly negative reaction to this stance, epitomised particularly by Graetz, see *idem* 126–7, n. 43.
- 5 Simon, 'Interpreting', *op. cit.*, 1993: 119–21.
- 6 For Krinsky and Netter, see Simon 1976a: 646–7.
- 7 See Harris, 'Ibn Ezra in Modern Jewish Perspective', in Twersky and Harris (eds) 1993: 130. Spinoza's view was based on ibn Ezra's contention that Moses could not have written parts of the *Torah* (*Pentateuch*).

- 8 *Ibid.*: 134–6, 162, ns 18–20. Weiss Halivni 1991: 29–30 describes Mendelssohn as 'paraphras[ing]' ibn Ezra's *Paths Four and Five*. He concludes that Mendelssohn preferred ibn Ezra's exegesis to that of Rashbam precisely because the latter's 'love of peshat has caused him occasionally to deviate from the truth'.
- 9 Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 136.
- 10 *Ibid.*: 131: '... Ibn Ezra ... emerged as the darling Jewish exegete of various modern Gentile Bible critics.'
- 11 See Weiss Halivni 1991: 20, 31, 152.
- 12 *Ibid.*: 32, 187, ns 26, 29.
- 13 See Harris, *op. cit.*: 130, 160, n. 6, 140, 163, n. 26.
- 14 See Weiss Halivni, *op. cit.*: 178, n. 25.
- 15 Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 139.
- 16 *Ibid.*: 140, 162–3, n. 25. Weiss Halivni 1991: 32–3.
- 17 Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 140–3, 164–5, ns 29–36.
- 18 According to Weiss Halivni, Sofer was 'attracted to peshat but suppressed it', because of his fear of Hellenism. Also see Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 141: '[T]o Sofer a natural, monosemic exegesis deprives the biblical reader of the ability to discern the uniqueness of the biblical language, which is capable of bearing many meanings'.
- 19 For differing approaches to biblical research, see Simon, 'Interpreting' *op. cit.*, 1993: 126–7, n. 43. *Idem* 1965: 138. P. Morris, 'A Walk in the Garden: Images of Eden' and 'Exiled from Eden: Jewish Interpretations of Genesis', in Morris and Sawyer (eds) 1992: 23–7, 118–22.
- 20 Graetz' work was published in 1874 and popularised in ten editions up to 1930, the date of the English translation, *History of the Jews*. See Silver, 'New Light on Abraham ibn Ezra's Early Life from Analysis of his Exegesis and other Prose Works', in Diaz Esteban (ed.) 1990: 319–20.
- 21 Fleischer has been quoted extensively in Chapter One. According to Silver, 'Early Life', *op. cit.*, 1990: 318: '... Fleischer ... single-handedly turned a new leaf in our overall view of Abraham ibn Ezra', initiating study of his prose works in order to discover reasons for his travels.
- 22 Prijs and Simon have rectified the errors based on Bacher's suppositions.
- 23 For details, see Prijs 1973: vii, n. 6. Baron 1952–83 (viii): 362–3, ns 38–9.
- 24 See Sirat 1985: 11–12. Langermann, 'Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of Abraham Ibn Ezra', in Twersky and Harris (eds) 1993: 28–85.
- 25 Prijs 1973: vii, n. 2.
- 26 Olitzky 1890: 99–106. Also see Sirat 1985: 426.
- 27 Ibn Ezra's commentary on this work is unfortunately not extant.
- 28 Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 144, 165, ns 39–41.
- 29 See Guttman 1964: 327. Harris, 'Modern Jewish Perspective', *op. cit.*, 1993: 144–5, 150.
- 30 Harris, *ibid.*: 158.
- 31 Guttman 1964: 329–33. Kreisel: 1994.