

GRAMMATICAL REMARKS
IN *THE COMMENTARY OF ABRAHAM IBN EZRA*
ON *QOHELET* *

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As is well-known, Abraham Ibn Ezra's Biblical commentaries train his knowledge of astronomy, astrology, philosophy, grammar, and other subjects on the interpretation of the Biblical text. Of all these disciplines, he regards Hebrew grammar as the most important vehicle for the establishment of the meaning of a word or a verse. Therefore, his commentaries are full of grammatical theories, which were further developed in his subsequent grammatical works.

In his commentary on Qohelet, Ibn Ezra makes numerous grammatical remarks. Some are directly connected with the meaning of the text of Qohelet, but others are longer excursuses about grammar unconnected to the meaning of Qohelet.

This article will analyze Ibn Ezra's grammatical theories in his commentary on Qohelet against the backdrop of other works and the theories of earlier grammarians ¹.

PRONUNCIATION OF THE HEBREW CONSONANTS

In his commentary on Qoh 5:1, Ibn Ezra introduces a long discussion on the language of religious poems, especially those by

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¹ For the text of Ibn Ezra's Commentary on Qohelet, cf. M. GÓMEZ ARANDA (ed.), *El comentario de Abraham Ibn Ezra al libro del Eclesiastés*. (Introducción, traducción y edición crítica), Madrid 1994. In the cases of Biblical quotations, I have translated them according to Ibn Ezra's explanations, but sometimes I have used the translation *The Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version*, Oxford 1989 (henceforth *NRSV*).

Eliezer ha-Qallir. Ibn Ezra criticizes the use of the rhyme in Eliezer ha-Qallir's poems, mentioning some of the rhymes which he does not agree with, and thus making some remarks about the pronunciation of the Hebrew consonants.

Ibn Ezra rejects the rhyme הַר and נְחָר which appears in one of Eliezer ha-Qallir's poems ². He says that if the reason for this rhyme is that ה and ח belong to the guttural letters, then «the ח and the ע could have rhymed with them» ³. Ibn Ezra also remarks the rhyme ב and ו in a poem by Qallir between לְוִי and נְבִיא ⁴, claiming that if the rhyme ב and ו is possible, a rhyme with מ and פ would also be possible, because they belong to the same group of consonants ⁵. And, he adds,

therefore, the [number of possible] rhymes would be five, according to the classification of consonants with regard to their pronunciation.

This classification appeared for the first time in the *Sefer Yēširā* ⁶.

² For an annotated text of Ibn Ezra's commentary on Eliezer ha-Qallir's *piyyūfīm*, see also J. YAHALOM, *Poetic Language in the Early Piyyut*, Jerusalem 1985 pp. 185-196 [in Hebrew]. Yahalom was not able to find this rhyme among Qallir's poems, but he found a rhyme ה and ח in another of his poems; cf. p. 192. For the complete text of this poem, cf. M. SACHS (ed.), *מחזור ליום כפור*; חלק רביעי; מחזור ליום כפור, Breslau s.d., p. 311. M. Sachs describes this poem as an acrostic of the words יום כפורים. Ibn Ezra also criticizes the language of the *piyyūfīm* in his *Safā Bērūrā*, but in this case, he pays attention to morphological structures not to question of pronunciation, cf. E. RUIZ GONZÁLEZ (ed.), *Safā Bērūrā de Abraham Ibn 'Ezra'* (Introducción, traducción y edición crítica), Madrid 1994 [unpublished dissertation] (henceforth *SB*), vol. I, p. 15*, vol. II, pp. 58-61.

³ The process of weakening in the pronunciation of the ח, and its subsequent confusion with the pronunciation of the ה, took place in Palestine, probably under Greek influence; cf. J. YAHALOM, *Op. cit.*, p. 192. For a discussion about the process of weakening in the pronunciation of the guttural letters, cf. A. SÁENZ-BADILLOS, *Historia de la Lengua Hebrea, Sabadell* s.d., pp. 92-93, 175, and W. WEINBERG, «Observations About the Pronunciation of Hebrew in Rabbinic Sources», *HUCA* 56 (1985) 117-143.

⁴ For the text of this poem, cf. J. YAHALOM, *Op. cit.*, p. 193. Yahalom remarks that a process of interchanging ה and ו took place in Palestinian Hebrew, as it is evident from old manuscripts coming from this area, like some manuscripts of the Mishnah. For the process of interchanging ו and ב in Rabbinical Hebrew, cf. A. SÁENZ-BADILLOS, *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁵ In his *Sefer Šahōt*, Ibn Ezra names the group formed by the consonants ב, ו, מ, נ and פ with the expression אותיות השפה «labial letters»; cf. C. DEL VALLE (ed.), *Sefer Šahot de Abraham ibn 'Ezra* (Edición crítica y traducción), Salamanca 1977 (henceforth *Šahōt*) pp. 160-161.

⁶ The five groups are אוחהייע /בומייק /גיכייק /דלטניית /זסצרייש, cf. *Sefer Yēširā* 4:3 and W. BACHER, *Die Anfänge der hebräischen Grammatik*, Leipzig 1895, pp. 20-23. About

In addition to that, Ibn Ezra criticizes the rhyme η and η from a different point of view. He says that,

if the justification for rhyming η and η is that they look alike, then one may also rhyme τ and τ ; and in addition to that, we can find in the Bible [the cases] η עאָל (Num 2:14) and η עאָל (Num 1:14), η דָּוָד (1 Chr 1:7) and η דָּוָד (Gen 10:4).

In his *Sefer Şahôt*, he also criticizes this usage of rhyme,

some say that η פּוֹד is like η פּוֹד because they are similar in shape, like η עאָל (Num 2:14) and η עאָל (Num 1:14), but this is absolutely incorrect ⁷.

In this remarks we observe how Ibn Ezra uses irony to ridicule the use of rhyme.

Ibn Ezra also rejects the rhyme between η שִׁפְטִים and η פְּתִים in one of Qallir's poems, although he says that τ and η have the same place of articulation ⁸. In fact, Ibn Ezra cites some biblical words in which τ is used instead of η , such as η צַדִּיק «we will justify ourselves» (Gen 44:16), *hitpa'el* from η צַדִּיק, or η נָצַטְדָּבוּ «we took as our provision» (Josh 9:12), *hitpa'el* from η צַדִּיק, and η נִצְטָרוּ «they disguised themselves» (Josh 9:4), *hitpa'el* from η צַדִּיק ⁹.

The rhyme η וֹם, η פְּדִיוֹן and η עֲלִיוֹן in a poem by Qallir is also criticized by Ibn Ezra ¹⁰. He thinks that this is an inappropriate

the grammarians before Ibn Ezra who used the concept of the place of articulation as a criterium to classify the Hebrew consonants, cf. *SB*, vol. II, pp. 63-65 note 2.

⁷ According to his explanation, these are two different names for the same person; cf. *Şahôt*, pp. 464-465.

⁸ According to the classification of the consonants in the *Sefer Yēširā* 4:3, τ and η belong to the group formed by the consonants τ , τ , η , η and η , which are pronounced «with the middle of the tongue and with voice». In his *Sefer Şahôt* (*ed. cit.*, pp. 160-161), Ibn Ezra names this group η אותיות הלשון «letters of the tongue».

⁹ The emphatic τ is used here instead of η , because in these three cases, the roots begin with the sibilant τ ; cf. W. GESENIUS, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. As Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. KAUTSCH, Oxford 1910², p. 149. In his *Sefer Şahôt* (*ed. cit.*, pp. 222-223), Ibn Ezra says that τ is used instead of the η of the *hitpa'el*, so that τ could be clearly pronounced.

¹⁰ It must be noticed that final η was pronounced like final τ in Palestinian Hebrew in Eliezer ha-Qallir's time. For a discussion of this matter, cf. H. YALON, «Zur palästinischen Aussprache des Schluss -m wie n», *MGWJ* 77 (1933) 429-430.

rhyme, although he admits that there are some cases in the Bible where נ is used instead of מ, such as תיין (Job 24:22) and חטין (Ezek 4:9). In addition, he remarks that the rhyme is inappropriate, because the radical מ of יום is not equivalent to the non-radical נ of עליון and פדיון, which come from עלה and פדה. Ibn Ezra then proceeds to define the purpose of rhyme as follows,

the point of rhyme is to be pleasant to our ears, and to make us aware of the identity of the terminal sounds.

As is frequent in Ibn Ezra's style, he employs irony to ridicule Qallir's method of rhyming,

perhaps he has a sixth sense so that he can feel that מ sounds like נ, although they do not have the same place of articulation ¹¹.

Ibn Ezra's irony continues in his criticism of Qallir's rhyme by citing the rhyme עושר and תעשר, that is, the rhyme of the sibilants ש and ש. He affirms that «this is inappropriate, unless the worshipper is an Ephraimite» ¹².

These remarks about Qallir's rhymes indicate that Ibn Ezra was accustomed to the standards of the Spanish rhyme, which were different from those followed by Qallir ¹³. They also show that the pronunciation of Hebrew in Spain in Ibn Ezra's time was different from that of Palestine in Eliezer ha-Qallir's time, especially the pronunciation of the guttural letters and final ם. On the other hand, they show that Ibn Ezra followed the classification of consonants as appeared in *Sefer Yěšîrâ*.

¹¹ According to the *Sefer Yěšîrâ* 4:3, מ belongs to the group of those letters pronounced «between the lips with the tip of the tongue», like ו, ב and פ; whereas נ belongs to the group formed by ד, ט, ל, נ and ת.

¹² According to the Bible, the Ephraimites pronounced ש like ש (Judg 12:5-6).

¹³ J. YAHALOM, *Op. cit.*, p. 192, and B. HRUSHOVSKI, השיטות הראשיות של החרוז, העברי מן הפיוט עד ימינו, *Hasifrut* 2 (1971) 721-741, especially pp. 738-741. B. Hrushovski says that in Ibn Ezra's time, the rhyme in the Spanish Hebrew poetry was based on the last syllable of the verse, not on the morphology of the word or on the stress. According to him, this rule was different from those in other languages, because of the importance given to the consonant preceding the last vowel.

THE HEBREW CONSONANTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

In his comments on Qoh 7:27, Ibn Ezra classifies the Hebrew consonants from a different point of view. There he explains that the consonants are classified into two groups: radical consonants and servile consonants¹⁴. He maintains that the servile consonants can be added to a word, but the radical ones can only be added in the reduplicated words, such as שְׁחַחְרוּרְתָּ «dark» (Song 1:6), from שחר; in this word the radical consonants ח and ר are duplicated¹⁵. In his *Šafâ Bērûrâ*, Ibn Ezra develops his theories on the reduplication structures of the Hebrew words, and he mentions this word as an example of the reduplication of the second and the third letters of a root¹⁶. The classification of consonants into radical and servile was common to all medieval grammarians from Saadia Gaon onward, and it reflects the importance to distinguish between the letters which constitute the root of a word and those which have a function in the word.

In connection with the servile character of the Hebrew consonants, in his comments on Qoh 4:12, Ibn Ezra affirms that when ו is added to a noun, it has a paragogic function, such as (ל)מַעֲיָנוּ «a spring of water» (Ps 114:8) or בְּנוּ «son» (Num 24:3,15), that means

¹⁴ In his own words, «the servile consonants are כשתיל אב המון (= like the shoot of the father of a multitude)». As it was common in medieval grammarians' works, in this mnemonic formula the author's name appears; «the father of a multitude» is Abraham, according to Gen 17:5, «no longer shall your name be *Abram*, but your name shall be *Abraham*; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations». This formula also appears in his *Sefer Šahôt* (ed. cit., pp. 172-173), and he remarks that it is like his own name. For a study of Ibn Ezra's mnemonic formulae, cf. W. BACHER, *Abraham Ibn Ezra als Grammatiker*, Budapest 1881 (henceforth *Grammatiker*), pp. 57-58; «Les signes mnémoniques des lettres radicales et serviles», *REJ* 16 (1888) 286-288 and *SB* vol. I, p. 59*, vol. II, pp. 235-239.

¹⁵ He mentions in his *Sefer Šahôt* that half of the consonants are always radical, and half of them are either radical or servile, cf. *Šahôt*, pp. 170-173. The radical consonants are קט צה גוע ספרד. W. Bacher remarks that the first word of this mnemonic formula refers to the epithet given to the poet, הקטן, and the last one is the name of his homeland, Spain; cf. *Grammatiker*, p. 57. About this question, see also *SB* vol. II, pp. 68 and 239, and *Sefer Mo'znayim*, cf. W. HEIDENHEIM (ed.) מאזני נישון הקדש להחכם הגדול ר' אברהם ב"ר מאיר הספרדי המכונה בן עזרא נ"ע, Offenbach 1791 (henceforth *Mo'znayim*), p. 3a.

¹⁶ *SB* vol. I, p. 59*, vol. II, p. 240. See also his comments on Lev 13:49 and Song 1:6, cf. H. J. MATHEWS (ed.), *Abraham Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Canticles*, London 1874, p. 4 (2 of the translation).

that the word has the same meaning without it¹⁷; but when ן is added to a verb, it is usually considered a pronominal suffix, like in יתקפו «he attacks him» (Qoh 4:12)¹⁸. In his comments on Qoh 7:14, he insists on the paragogic function of the ן in words such as על דברתי (Ps 110:4), מלאתי (Isa 1:21), רבתי (Lam 1:1) and so on¹⁹.

With regard to some peculiarities of the Hebrew consonants, it is worth noting Ibn Ezra's remarks on the assimilation of some of them, because they reflect his tendency to compare Biblical Hebrew words to their equivalents in Aramaic and Rabbinical Hebrew. In his commentary on Qoh 10:1, he refers to the assimilation of the ן in the word מרע and נרע, both from the root נרע²⁰. This assimilation is indicated by the *dages* in the ן. About this matter, Ibn Ezra includes a long commentary on Qoh 9:11 on the assimilation of the ן at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word. He gives emphasis to the assimilation of the ן in the imperfect of פ"י verbs, as is evident by the *dages* in the second radical in the following forms: נישא, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע; but he also remarks that the ן appears in the participle of these verbs: נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע, נישע²¹. After that, Ibn Ezra mentions the word שתי as an example of the assimilation of the ן in the middle of a word; according to him, the *dages* in the ת reflects the assimilation of the ן of the word שתי, from the root שנה²². Ibn Ezra also observes that the ן is missing in בת and in עת, because they are from בנה and ענה²³.

¹⁷ Ibn Janah had already made this remark regarding בְּנוֹ (Num 24:3,15) in his *Sefer ha-Riqmā*; cf. M. WILENSKY (ed.), יונה אבן גינח, ספר הריקמה (כתאב אללמט) לרי יונה אבן גינח, Jerusalem 1964, p. 69 (henceforth *Riqmā*).

¹⁸ In his *Sefer Şahôt* Ibn Ezra also mentions these examples in order to distinguish paragogic ן from ן indicating the suffix for the third person masculine singular, cf. *Şahôt*, pp. 212-215. About the functions of the ן at the end of a word, see *SB*, vol. I, pp. 25*, 27*-28*, vol. II, pp. 90-91, 95-100.

¹⁹ *Riqmā*, p. 77.

²⁰ Ibn Janah's *Sefer ha-Şorašim*, cf. W. BACHER (ed.), *Sepher Haschoraschim: Wurzelwörterbuch der hebräischen Sprache von Abulwalid Merwan Ibn Ganah (R. Jona)*, Berlin 1896, (henceforth *Şorašim*), s.v. נרע.

²¹ This theory had already been widely explained by Judah Hayyuj; cf. W. NUTT (ed.), *Two Treatises on Verbs Containing Feeble and Double Letters by R. Jehuda Hajug of Fez*. Translated into Hebrew from the Original Arabic by R. Moseh Gikatilla of Cordoba, to Which is Added the Treatise on Punctuation by the same Author translated by Aben Ezra, London - Berlin 1870 (henceforth *Treatises*).

²² Jonah Ibn Janah had already pointed out that שתי and שני are from שנה and that the ן is missing in שתי, feminine form of שני, cf. *Şorašim*, s. v. שנה.

²³ These examples of the assimilation of the ן are also mentioned in his *Sefer Şahôt* (ed. cit., pp. 240-241). Jonah Ibn Janah had already remarked that the ן of בנה is missing in the word בת, cf. *Şorašim*, s. v. בנה.

Ibn Ezra bases his opinion about the lack of ך in the word עָרָה on Rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic, because in Rabbinical Hebrew there is עֲרֹהָ, and in Biblical Aramaic עֲרֹהָ (עֲרֹהָ) (Ezra 4:10,11; 7:12)²⁴. He also refers to Aramaic to prove that the ך of the word אָרָה is missing in the word אֲרָהָ, because in Aramaic it is אֲרָהָ. The same explanation is made by Ibn Ezra with regard to the word חָטִים, which is חֲטִיָּן in Aramaic²⁵. In his *Šafā Bērūrā*, he refers to Arabic to prove that the ך is assimilated in the word אֲרָהָ. In this case, the question of the assimilation of the ך is used by Ibn Ezra to demonstrate that there are grammatical similarities among Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, and to justify the comparison of the Hebrew language with the other two in order to establish grammatical rules.

The lack of some consonants for reasons of pronunciation is analyzed by Ibn Ezra in several places in this commentary. The lack of the letters ת or ד in some words is mentioned by Ibn Ezra in his comments on Qoh 7:27. There, he explains that when the ת of the pronoun for the second person masculine singular is added to the ת of the root, the latter is missing, as in נִכְרַתָּ «you may cut» (Deut 20:20) from כָּרַת. It is worth noting that in his commentary on Hos 2:13, Ibn Ezra states that this is due to the difficulty in pronouncing two of the same consonants in one word, and for this reason, one of them is dropped²⁶. Ibn Ezra also explains that the ת of the root שָׂרַת is missing in the word מְשַׂרְתָּ (1 Kgs 1:15), because the ת of the feminine is added, and the ר has a *pataḥ* to indicate that it is feminine and make it different from the masculine form מְשַׂרְתָּ (Num 11:28, Josh 1:1)²⁷. This theory was later developed in his grammatical works²⁸.

²⁴ M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targum, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, New York 1967, s. v. עֲרֹהָ; cf. also Ch. J. KASOWSKI, אוצר לשון התלמוד, Jerusalem 1964, s. v. עֲרֹהָ.

²⁵ Ibn Janah had already considered חָטִים from the root חָטַט, and based his assumption on the equivalent word in Aramaic; cf. *Šorašim*, s. v. חָטַט.

²⁶ A. LIPSHITZ (ed.), *The Commentary of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra on Hosea*, New York 1988, pp. 30, 35-36; cf. also U. SIMON (ed.), *Abraham Ibn Ezra's Two Commentaries on the Minor Prophets*, Ramat Gan 1989, vol. I, p. 38 [in Hebrew].

²⁷ The same explanation about this word appears in his *Sefer Šahōt* (ed. cit., pp. 182-183). Jonah Ibn Janah had stated that מְשַׂרְתָּ is a feminine form from שָׂרַת, but he had remarked that the correct feminine form should be מְשַׂרְתָּהָ, because in his view, the sign of feminine is lacking in מְשַׂרְתָּ, and besides, the vowel of the third radical has been displaced to the second radical; cf. *Šorašim*, s. v. שָׂרַת and *Riqmā*, p. 385.

²⁸ *SB* vol. I, pp. 20*, 31*, vol. II, pp. 73, 110-111. See also *Šahōt*, pp. 182-183 and *Mo'znayim* 33a.

With regard to the word תַּחֲאָ, Ibn Ezra says that the ט of תַּחֲאָ is dropped because the ת of the feminine is added. According to Ibn Ezra, the reason is that the places of articulation of ת and ט are very close to each other²⁹. This explanation is also mentioned in his *Safā Bērūrā*, *Sefer Şahôt* and *Sefer Moʿznayîm*³⁰.

A concept that was widely extended in medieval commentaries and grammatical works was the concept of interchangeability of consonants. This means that one can establish the meaning of a word by changing a consonant for another one. The medieval exegetes used this method to varying degrees. For example, Menahem ben Saruq and Jehudah Hayyuj applied this method to the consonants י, ה, ו and א, and to ו and שׁ. Other grammarians such as Saadia Gaon and Dunash ben Labrat used this method more extensively.

Ibn Ezra is very cautious in using this method. In his comments of Qohelet 9:11 and 12:5, he affirms that the only letters to be interchanged are י, ה, ו and א. In this commentary, we observe that he does not admit the interchangeability of ו and שׁ because he does not agree with those who interpret לַחֲכָם 'fool' as לַחֲכָשׁ 'intelligent' (Qoh 10:6), and חֲכָמָה 'intelligence' as חֲכָמוֹת 'foolishness' (Qoh 1:17). However, in his later works Ibn Ezra is not very consistent with this theory, and admits the interchangeability of ו and שׁ. In his *Sefer Moʿznayîm*, he even admits the interchangeability of מ, נ and ת³¹.

MORPHOLOGY

In several commentaries Ibn Ezra refers to the difference between transitive (or causative) and intransitive verbs. According to him there are verbs intransitive in the *qal*-conjugation which become transitive or causative in the derivative ones. In his *Sefer Şahôt*,

²⁹ In *Sefer Yěšîrâ* 4:3, it is said that ת and ט belong to the group of consonants pronounced «with the middle of the tongue and with voice». In his *Sefer Şahôt* (*ed. cit.*, pp. 182-183), Ibn Ezra also mentions the opinion of those who affirm that תַּחֲאָ is not from תַּחֲאָ 'one' but from תַּחֲאָ 'brother', but he rejects this opinion.

³⁰ *SB* vol. I, p. 84*, vol. II, pp. 323-325; *Şahôt* pp. 170-171, 180-183, and *Moʿznayîm* 13a.

³¹ *Moʿznayîm* 3a. About the question of the interchangeability of the Hebrew consonants, cf. *SB* vol. I, pp. 45-51.

after saying that the verbs are classified into two groups, Ibn Ezra describes this difference as follows:

the first group is constituted by the intransitive verbs (פועל עומד), and this means that the action of the subject does not affect another [part of the sentence], but it remains in itself, like קָם, עָמַד; and יָשָׁב; the second group is constituted by the transitive verb (פועל יוצא), that is, the action of the subject *comes out* (יֵצֵא) to another and does not remain in itself³².

He also adds that some verbs intransitive in *qal* become transitive in the derivative conjugations, like הִקְיִים, *hif'il* from קָם, הִעָמִיד, *hif'il* from עָמַד and הוֹשִׁיב, *hif'il* from יָשָׁב³³. This remark stresses the importance of distinguishing the meanings of roots in their different conjugations, and proves that Ibn Ezra is very precise and consistent in practicing this theory. He says that הִגְדַּלְתִּי is intransitive in Qoh 2:9, because it is in *qal*, and therefore, it means «I became great», but in Qoh 2:4 הִגְדַּלְתִּי has a transitive meaning, because it is in *hif'il*, and so it means «I made great works»³⁴.

In his commentary on Qoh 1:8, we observe how Ibn Ezra applies this concept to the interpretation of this verse. Ibn Ezra disagrees with those who interpret the word יָנַעִים with a transitive meaning, that is, 'to cause weariness', because according to him, the verb יָנַע is intransitive in *qal*, and it is in *piel* where it acts as a transitive verb, as in «do not make the people toil (תִּינַע) up there» (Josh 7:3). Ibn Ezra explains that in Qoh 1:8 יָנַעִים means that the things are useless by themselves, because they lack the Divine Will and the necessary strength, therefore «nobody can tell anything about them»³⁵.

Ibn Ezra also insists on the difference between transitive and

³² *Šaḥôl*, pp. 306-309 and *Mo'znayim* 43ff. For a discussion on this matter, cf. *Grammatiker*, pp. 123-126 and L. PRIJS, *Die grammatikalische Terminologie des Abraham Ibn Ezra*, Basel 1950, pp. 110 ff.

³³ *Šaḥôl*, pp. 308-309. For the use of this terminology in the works by Judah Hayyuj and Moshe ha-Kohen ibn Chiquitilla, cf. L. PRIJS, *Op. cit.*, p. 111. See also *SB* vol. I, pp. 32*-34*, vol. II, pp. 115-122, and *Mo'znayim* 43b.

³⁴ Ibn Janah had remarked the transitive meaning of גָּדַל in *hif'il* as different from that in *qal*; cf. *Šorasim*, s.v. גָּדַל.

³⁵ Ibn Janah considered that in this verse the adjective is used instead of the active participle of the verb, and he said that it should have been יָנַעִים, that is, in *piel*; cf. *Riqmâ*, p. 328.

intransitive verbs in his commentary on Qoh 6:2. According to his explanation, the root חסר has an intransitive meaning in *qal*, 'be lacking of something' or 'be in want of something', and he specifies that it requires a construct state to inform what kind of things someone is lacking of, as in «am I lacking of (חָסַר) madmen?» (1 Sam 21:16), and «they are not lacking of (חָסַר) all that they desire» (Qoh 6:2)³⁶. In his explanation of these verses, Ibn Ezra adds the preposition מן to the verb חסר, and we deduce that this verb is considered by Ibn Ezra as one of those verbs which need a preposition to introduce a complement. This theory was later developed in his *Šafâ Bērûrâ*³⁷. In his comments on Qoh 6:2, Ibn Ezra also affirms that this root has a causative meaning in *pi'el*, 'to cause to be lacking' or 'to deprive', as in «you have made them a little less (תִּחַסְרוּהוּ) than the divine beings» (Ps 8:6). As Ibn Ezra explains, this verse means that God made human beings a little less perfect than divine beings; in addition to that, he rejects the opinion of those who interpret תִּחַסְרוּהוּ as a verb with two objects (direct object and indirect object), because, according to this interpretation, the verse would mean «you deprived him of the divine beings»³⁸.

Ibn Ezra also refers to the difference between הַכָּשֶׁר and כָּשֶׁר in his commentary on Qoh 10:10. הַכָּשֶׁר is an *hif'il* form from כָּשַׁר, and so it has a transitive meaning, 'to give success to someone', and this is the meaning in Qoh 10:10, wisdom is more advantageous than all the sufferings, because «it gives success to the human beings», and guides them rightly, preventing his power to weaken. On the other hand, in *qal*, כָּשֶׁר has an intransitive meaning, 'to be useful', as in «the thing is useful (וְכִשֶּׁר)» (Esth 8:5).

In connection with the concept of transitiveness of the verbs, it is important to notice that Ibn Ezra considers that every transitive verb has always a direct object, although it is omitted in the sentence. In his explanations, Ibn Ezra provides a direct object when a transitive verb occurs without it. In his commentary on Qoh 2:3, he says that the verb נוֹהֵג in «my mind guides (נוֹהֵג) with wisdom» has a transitive meaning and that the implicit direct object is «its affairs», and thus the verse means «my mind guides its affairs with wisdom».

³⁶ The same examples appear in *Šahôṭ*, pp. 312-315.

³⁷ *SB* vol. I, pp. 32*-33*, vol. II, pp. 117-118.

³⁸ With regard to the root חסר, Ibn Janah observed that it can act as a transitive or intransitive verb in *qal*, but it is always transitive in *hif'il*; cf. *Šorašim*, s.v. חסר.

The same explanation is made up with regard to *מְעַטוּ* (Qoh 12:3); it has a transitive meaning and its implicit direct object is *הַמְחִיכָה* ‘the grinding’. The verse thus means that the women who grind decrease (*מְעַטוּ*) their grinding (*הַמְחִיכָה*) until they stop working³⁹. One of the most important exegetical methods in Ibn Ezra’s commentaries is the ellipsis, as a means of explaining difficult biblical passages by supplying the words that are missing from the text⁴⁰.

The possibility of a verb of having two objects (direct and indirect objects) is pointed out by Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Qoh 2:21. He says that the word *יִתְּנֶנּוּ* is a transitive verb with two objects in this verse, and it means, «he will give his part (direct object) to him (indirect object)», as in «since you have given the land of the Negeb (direct object) to me (indirect object)» (Josh 15:19, Judg 1:15). In his commentary on Qoh 11:6, he clearly remarks that the verb *הִנְיָח* does not have two objects in all the Bible, and therefore, *אַל תִּנְחַן יָדְךָ* means «your hand must not leave the sowing», being *תִּנְחַן* the predicate of *יָדְךָ*, and it is in feminine because *יָד* is feminine, following the rules of grammatical agreement. *אַל תִּנְחַן* can be considered as the second person masculine singular with the meaning «do not let», but in this case in Ibn Ezra’s view, two objects would occur, «hand» and «sowing», and the verse would mean «do not let your hands stop the sowing», and according to Ibn Ezra, this is not possible⁴¹.

The peculiarities of the different verbal conjugations are also discussed by Ibn Ezra in this commentary. He distinguishes between the *qal*-conjugation and the rest of them, which are called *בְּבִדָּה* «heavy» conjugations. He refers to the *piʿel* as «the heavy conjugation with *dageš*» or «the verbal conjugation with *dageš*», and to the *hifʿil* as «the heavy added conjugation»⁴².

³⁹ Ibn Ezra’s explanation is different from the traditional interpretation of this verse, «the women who grind cease working because they are few (*מְעַטוּ*)», cf. *NRSV*, p. 690. For more on transitive verbs without direct object in Ibn Ezra’s works, cf. *Grammatiker*, p. 125.

⁴⁰ Cf. M. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra*, London 1877, vol. IV, pp. 131 ff, and *SB* vol. II, p. 30 note 1.

⁴¹ Modern translations of this verse interpret *תִּנְחַן* as the second person masculine singular from *נָחַן* with the meaning «do not let your hands be idle» or «do not hold back your hand».

⁴² About this matter and the influence of Judah Hayyuj’s terminology, cf. L. PRIJS, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-61. See also *SB* vol. II, pp. 71, 72, and 134.

In his commentary on Qoh 2:20, Ibn Ezra refers to the punctuation of the «heavy» conjugations; he states that the *pi^{el}*-form שִׁנְאֵל should have a *dagesh* in its second radical, because the א is not one of the guttural letters, and these are the only letters which omit the *dagesh* in the *pi^{el}* conjugation⁴³. He also marks the omission of the *dagesh* in the second radical of the form בִּקְשָׁה (Qoh 7:28), *pi^{el}* from בָּקַשׁ.

In some other commentaries, the morphological structures of the verbal conjugations are discussed. In his commentary on Qoh 2:10, Ibn Ezra compares two defective *hif^{il}* forms: נִימְצָל (Num 11:25), *hif^{il}* from נִצַּל, is like חִזַּק (Isa 27:5), *hif^{il}* from חִזַּק, because in these two forms the characteristic י of the *hif^{il}* conjugation is omitted⁴⁴.

In his commentary on Qoh 12:5, he says that when a verbal root begins with ט or שׁ, a metathesis between ט or שׁ and the characteristic ת of the *hitpa^{el}* occurs in this conjugation, as in נִשְׁתַּבַּל (Qoh 12:5), *hitpa^{el}* from טַבַּל, מִשְׁתַּוֵּל (Exod 9:17), *hitpa^{el}* from טַוַּל, and מִשְׁתַּוֵּל (Isa 59:15), *hitpa^{el}* from טַוַּל⁴⁵.

In his commentary on Qoh 12:5, Ibn Ezra mentions Judah Hayyuj's theory that every verb has a tri-consonantal root, and verbs like קָם or שָׁב have a second radical consonant which is י⁴⁶. This second consonant appears in «[the command of Queen Esther] fixed (קִיַּם) these practices of Purim» (Esth 9:32); the word בִּיָּה and the verbal form בִּיָּהֵב prove that the second radical consonant of בָּה is a י. Ibn Ezra remarks the similarities between the verbs בָּה and קִיַּם: בִּיָּה is like «whether they sit or rise (וְקִיַּמְתֶּם)» (Lam 3:63), because in both cases the י appears; «you have discerned (בִּיָּה) my thoughts» (Ps 139:2) is like «you have risen (קִיַּמְתָּ)» (2 Sam 12:21). It must be

⁴³ For a discussion on the punctuation of the *pi^{el}* in verbs with guttural letters, cf. *Šaḥōt*, pp. 414-415 and *SB* vol. I, pp. 39*-40*, vol. II, pp. 143-147. This remark was observed by Hayyuj in his comments on the root שִׁנְאֵל, cf. *Treatises*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Judah Hayyuj had already observed that נִימְצָל is in the «heavy» conjugation; cf. *Treatises*, p. 19 (23 of the translation).

⁴⁵ This was already remarked by Ibn Janah; cf. *Riqmā*, p. 191.

⁴⁶ Judah Hayyuj was the first grammarian who demonstrated that the Hebrew root system was actually tri-consonantal, and that there are some verbs with a י or י as the second root consonant, which sometimes is missing. For more information on this matter, cf. A. SÁENZ-BADILLOS and J. TARGARONA BORRÁS, *Gramáticos Hebreos de Al-Andalus (siglos X-XII). Filología y Biblia*, Córdoba 1988, pp. 95-108 and D. SIVAN, «Biblical Hebrew Roots and Quiescents According to Judah Hayyuj's Grammatical Works», *HUCA* 60 (1989) 115-127.

noticed that Ibn Ezra does not reject Hayyuj's explanation in this commentary, but in his *Sefer Šahôt*, he claims that these verbs are bi-consonantal⁴⁷. This question is widely studied in his *Šafâ Bērûrâ*. In this work, he presents the theories of Judah Hayyuj, Ibn Chiquitilla, and Shemuel ha-Nagid who consider that these roots are tri-consonantal. Ibn Ezra rejects all of their arguments and defends that they are bi-consonantal⁴⁸.

In his commentary on Qoh 10:4-5, Ibn Ezra points out the similarities between ל"יה and ל"יא verbs; he asserts that the word מְרַפֵּא (Qoh 10:4) is an active participle of the «heavy» conjugation of רפה, being א instead of ה⁴⁹, and it means «that who abandons (מְרַפֵּא), leaves great sins» and it is referred to the one who leaves power. With regard to the word יוֹצֵא (Qoh 10:5), he says that, although its third radical letter is an א, it follows the analogy with ל"יה verbs; he also remarks that «a heifer that tramples (אָדָּשָׁה) [on the grass]» (Jer 50:11) is a similar case⁵⁰. In his *Šafâ Bērûrâ*, he also studies the similarities between ל"יה and ל"יא verbs⁵¹. The question here involved is that, according to Ibn Ezra's opinion, the א and the ה belong to the group of consonants (י, ה, ו and א) which can be interchanged.

In his commentary on Qoh 3:18, Ibn Ezra explains that the second radical of duplicated verbs is not dropped in the *pi'el*, and therefore, the verbal form לְבַרְךְ is not from ברר, because the *pi'el* infinitive of this root with this pronominal suffix should have been לְבַרְרְךְ; but Ibn Ezra considers that לְבַרְךְ is the infinitive form from ברה with the pronominal suffix for the third person masculine plural, and its meaning is «from among those He chose». He explains that God chose some people from among all the generations on earth⁵². The repetition of the first radical in the word קִלְקַל (Qoh 10:10) proves that this form is from קלל, as Jonah Ibn Janah and Judah Hayyuj had already pointed out⁵³.

⁴⁷ *Šahôt*, pp. 332-346; cf. also *Grammatiker*, pp. 76-79, 87-95.

⁴⁸ *SB* vol. I, pp. 47*-54*, vol. II, pp. 184-214.

⁴⁹ This had already been noticed by Jonah Ibn Janah; cf. *Šorašim*, s.v. רפה.

⁵⁰ The similarities between ל"יה and ל"יא verbs had already been studied by Judah Hayyuj, and before him, by Saadia Gaon and Menahem Ben Saruq; cf. D. SIVAN, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁵¹ *SB* vol. I, pp. 47*-48*, vol. II, p. 187.

⁵² Ibn Janah considered this word from the root ברה with the meaning 'to choose'; cf. *Šorašim*, s.v. ברה.

⁵³ *Šorašim*, s. v. קלל and *Treatises*, p. 116 (135 of the translation).

On explaining Qoh 7:16, Ibn Ezra mentions the different interpretations of the verbal form תְּשׁוּמָם. According to him, it is a *nif'al* form from שָׁמַם, and the *dageš* in the שׁ indicates the assimilation of the נ of the *nif'al* conjugation. In addition to this explanation, he rejects the opinion of those who consider this word as an *hitpa'el* form and the *dageš* in the שׁ indicating the assimilation of the ת of the *hitpa'el*. In Ibn Ezra's view, the *hitpa'el* form from שָׁמַם should be תִּשְׁתּוּמָם⁵⁴.

Ibn Ezra also makes in this commentary some explanations on the structure of the Hebrew words, making connections between those having the same structure. In his commentary on Qoh 1:3, he explains that יִתְרוֹן has the same structure as זִכְרוֹן. He sometimes remarks that when two words have the same structure, they are derived from the same type of verbs; this is the case of רָעוּת and רָעוּן (Qoh 1:14), which have the same structure as דְּמִיוֹן and דְּמִיּוֹן, because they are derived from לִיּה verbs⁵⁵. In his explanation on Qoh 7:26, he affirms that the structure of מְצוּדִים is the same as that of מְרוּמִים, because both are derived from עִיּוּ or עִיּוּ verbs⁵⁶. He also states that מוֹתֵר (Qoh 3:19) has the same structure as מוֹשֵׁב, because both are derived from פִּיּוּ verbs using ו instead of י⁵⁷.

In his commentary on Qoh 9:12, Ibn Ezra lays a great stress on words having a *pu'al*-participle structure without preformative מ (except in the case of מוֹעֵדָת), but they are actually *qal*-passive participles; i.e., they have a *pu'alim* structure, but they are *pa'ulim*. Ibn Ezra mentions the different opinions about this matter of the grammarians who preceded him, and his comments can be considered a compendium of earlier opinions on this matter. Judah Hayyuj said that the words are the following four: «and the bush was not consumed (אֶכְל)» (Exod 3:2), «if you see me as I am being taken (לְקַח) from you» (2 Kgs 2:10), «lame (מוֹעֵדָת) foot» (Prov 25:19), and «snared (יִקְשִׁים) at a time of calamity» (Qoh 9:12). Hayyuj consi-

⁵⁴ Judah Hayyuj claimed that תְּשׁוּמָם was an *hitpa'el* form from שָׁמַם, and it should be תִּשְׁתּוּמָם, cf. *Treatises*, pp. 118-119 (138 of the translation). For a discussion of the duplicated verbs by Hayyuj, see pp. 102-105 (119-121 of the translation). About Ibn Ezra's theories on the duplicated verbs and their morphological structures, see *SB* vol. I, pp. 58*-66*, vol. II, pp. 231-262.

⁵⁵ דְּמִיּוֹן and רָעוּן are derived from רָעָה, and דְּמִיוֹן and רָעוּת are derived from דָּמָה; cf. *Treatises*, pp. 73, 94-95, and *Sorašim*, s.v. רָעָה and דָּמָה.

⁵⁶ מְצוּדִים is from צוּד and מְרוּמִים is from רוּם.

⁵⁷ מוֹתֵר is from יִתֵּר and מוֹשֵׁב is from יָשַׁב; cf. *Treatises*, pp. 31-32.

dered that אָכַל and לָקַח should actually be אָכוּל and לָקוּחַ according to their meaning; with regard to יִקְשִׁים, Hayyuj said that it should be יְקוּשִׁים, as in Jer 5:26⁵⁸. Jonah Ibn Janah added a new case, «the boy who will be born (הַיּוֹלֵד)» (Judg 13:8), which should actually be הַיְלִיד, as in 1 Kgs 3:26. Shemuel ha-Nagid rejected these interpretations, because according to him, the ה of הַיּוֹלֵד is in place of the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר, as in הַהוֹלֵלָה «that was renowned» (Ezek 26:17)⁵⁹. According to Moshe ha-Kohen Ibn Chiquitilla, as quoted by Ibn Ezra, these cases are only four. Ibn Chiquitilla includes הַיּוֹלֵד (Judg 13:8) in his list, but מוֹעֵדָה (Prov 25:19) is not included; the reason for this exclusion is that מוֹעֵדָה belongs to the group of intransitive verbs, whereas יִקְשִׁים, אָכַל, הַיְלִיד, and לָקַח belong to the group of the transitive ones. Regarding to מוֹעֵדָה, Moshe ha-Kohen Ibn Chiquitilla claimed that the *šúreq* was instead of *hôlem*, and therefore it should have been מוֹעֵדָה⁶⁰. Ibn Ezra simply cites these opinions, but he does not give his own; he only says that יִקְשִׁים is an adjective. This theory is also mentioned in his *Šafâ Bērûrâ*, *Sefer Šahôt*, and *Moʿznayîm*⁶¹.

The structure of the segolate nouns is discussed by Ibn Ezra in this commentary. On commenting Qoh 1:2, he explained the changes of vocalization in the segolate nouns when used in the construct state. He says that the word הַבֵּן does not belong to the same group as אֶרֶץ, because הַבֵּן changes its vocalization in the construct state, הַבֵּן, but אֶרֶץ does not change. He also adds some examples of nouns belonging to the group of אֶרֶץ but changing their vocalization in the construct state: «the chamber of (חֲדָר) your bed» (Exod 7:28,

⁵⁸ *Treatises*, p. 17 (19-20 of the translation).

⁵⁹ J. and H. DERENBOURG, *Opuscles et Traités d'Abou 'l-Walid Merwan ibn Djanah (Rabbi Jonah) de Cordoba*, Amsterdam 1969, pp. 15-17. For Shemuel ha-Nagid's opinions, *ibid.* pp. XL-XLI. Ibn Ezra criticizes Shemuel ha-Nagid's interpretation, because the ה of הַהוֹלֵלָה cannot be considered as being instead of the relative אֲשֶׁר, since there is no other similar case in all the Bible; cf. L. LEVY, *Reconstruction des Commentars Ibn Esras zu den ersten Propheten*, Berlin 1903, (henceforth *Reconstruction*), p. 11.

⁶⁰ As is quoted in Ibn Ezra's *Sefer Šahôt*, Moshe ha-Kohen Ibn Chiquitilla was of the opinion that it is possible to know if a verbal form is *qal* or *pu'al* according to its transitivity, because in *qal* the verb is transitive, but it becomes intransitive in *pu'al*; therefore, the four cases mentioned above should have a *qal*-passive participle structure, because they have a transitive meaning; cf. *Šahôt*, pp. 450-451; cf. also *Grammatiker*, pp. 99, 106.

⁶¹ *SB* vol. I, p. 40*, vol. II, pp. 146-147, 173; *Šahôt* pp. 450-453, and *Moʿznayîm* 47b-48a.

2 Kgs 6:12), «shut your doors (דָּלְתֶיךָ)» (Isa 26:20), and «pouring out your wrath (תִּמְתֵּךְ)» (Hab 2:15), these are the construct states from דָּלַת, דָּלַת and תִּמַּת.⁶²

In his commentary on Qoh 2:17, Ibn Ezra writes about the words with a plural structure and a singular meaning, such as נְעוּרִים, חַיִּים and זְקוּנִים. He remarks the importance of considering חַיִּים as a singular noun and not as a plural adjective in Qoh 2:17. According to this assumption, the verse means «I hated life», but not «I hated living beings». On commenting Qoh 6:8 and Qoh 10:19, he also insists on the possibility of considering חַיִּים either as a plural adjective or as a singular noun⁶³.

In his explanation of Qoh 10:1, Ibn Ezra states that it is possible to distinguish if a word is an adjective or a noun according to its vocalization; he explains that יָקָר 'precious' is an adjective in Qoh 10:1, but יְקָר 'preciousness' is a noun either in absolute or construct state, and both are different from יֶקָר that is the adjective in the construct state. Ibn Ezra cites some verses as example: «and their eyes see every preciousness (יְקָר)» (Job 28:10), a noun in absolute state, «and the splendor of (יְקָר) his pompous majesty» (Esth 1:4), a noun in construct state, and «one who is cool in spirit (יֶקָר רֵיחַ) has understanding» (Prov 17:27), an adjective in construct state⁶⁴.

The lack of grammatical agreement between the different parts of the speech is indicated by Ibn Ezra in several commentaries. In his long digression of Eliezer ha-Qallir's *piyyûḥim* on Qoh 5:1, he says that in one of Qallir's poems, שׁוֹשֵׁן is used in masculine with an adjective in feminine, אִוִּימָה. He criticizes this use and says that שׁוֹשְׁנָה should have been used instead. In his commentary on Qoh 11:2, he insists on the lack of agreement between the subject נָעָה in feminine and the predicate יִהְיֶה in masculine; he does not say what form should have been used instead, but he simply mentions a similar case, «if a young woman (נְעֻרָה בְּתוּלָה) is (יִהְיֶה) engaged»

⁶² In his *Safâ Bêrûrâ*, Ibn Ezra studies the grammatical structures of the segolate nouns, and he mentions the same examples; cf. *SB* vol. I, pp. 68*-69*, vol. II, pp. 266-268. In his *Sefer Şahôṭ* (ed. cit., pp. 282-285), he also distinguishes between the group of אָרַךְ and the group of הִבֵּל. See also *Mo'znayim* 29a. This question had already been discussed by Ibn Janah; cf. *Riqmâ*, p. 225; cf. also *Grammatiker*, p. 81.

⁶³ This is also discussed in his *Şahôṭ*, pp. 272-273; cf. also *Grammatiker*, p. 84.

⁶⁴ Jonah Ibn Janah had already pointed out the difference between יֶקָר in absolute state and יְקָר in construct state; cf. *Riqmâ*, pp. 139-140.

(Deut 22:23)⁶⁵. In Qoh 10:12 the lack of agreement between the subject and the predicate is stated by שְׂפֵתוֹת כְּסִיל «the lips of the fool» in plural and תִּבְלַעְנוּ «consumes him» in singular, as in «dead flies (זְבוּבֵי מוֹת, pl.) spoils (יִבְאֵשׁ, sing.)» (Qoh 10:1), and «the sun [and] the moon (pl.) stands still (עָמַד, sing.)» (Hab 3:11). In his commentaries to these two latter verses, Ibn Ezra explains that the plural subjects actually means «each one of them», and therefore, it requires a singular predicate⁶⁶.

According to his commentary on Qoh 11:5, we must assume that Ibn Ezra considered that the agreement between an adjective and a noun must be indicated by number, gender and definite article. He affirms that in בְּרֵצוּ הַמְּלֵאָה (Qoh 11:5), הַמְּלֵאָה is a noun, and it means «the full woman», i.e., «the pregnant woman», because if it were an adjective of בְּרֵצוּ «in a womb», the latter should have been בְּרֵצוּ, i.e., with the definite article indicated by the *pataḥ*, because הַמְּלֵאָה has the definite article.

The vocalization of the ה functioning either as the definite article or as the interrogative particle is remarked by Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Qoh 2:19 and on Qoh 3:21⁶⁷. According to his explanations, this is a question of great importance for the meaning of the verses. On commenting Qoh 2:19, he says that,

the interrogative particle ה is always with *hatef-pataḥ*, but if it stands before *šewā mobile*, it is with *pataḥ*.

The same rule appears in his *Sefer Šaḥōt*⁶⁸. He also affirms that the interrogative particle ה takes *pataḥ* if it stands before א, ח, ה, ע or ר, but in most cases it takes *qameṣ*; in his commentary on Qoh 3:21, he says that the ה functioning as the definite article takes *qameṣ* before the guttural letters and the ר, but it sometimes takes

⁶⁵ *Grammatiker*, p. 85. In his explanation of Gen 1:14, Ibn Ezra points out that there is a tendency toward uniformity when a word is employed frequently, and so תְּהִיָּה or אֲהִיָּה, is more frequent than תְּהִיָּה as would be expected; cf. H. N. STRICKMAN - A. M. SILVER (trans.), *Commentary on the Pentateuch. Genesis (Bereshit)*, New York 1988, p. 38, note 106.

⁶⁶ *Grammatiker*, p. 134.

⁶⁷ Although he does not mention the case of Qoh 3:21, Ibn Ezra deals with this subject in his *SB* vol. I pp. 85*-86*, vol. II pp. 325-330, and *Šaḥōt*, pp. 186 ff.

⁶⁸ *Šaḥōt*, pp. 186-187.

pataḥ before *ו*⁶⁹. In the case of *וְהָיָה*, Ibn Ezra says that the *ה* with *segôl* could either be the definite article or the interrogative particle, and although it should have taken *qameṣ*, it takes *segôl*,

because the word could not have been pronounced properly, since the *ה* is followed by two *qameṣim*⁷⁰.

In his commentary on Qoh 3:21, Ibn Ezra lays great stress on explaining that the first *ה* of *וְהָיָה* is the definite article, not the interrogative particle, because it stands before a guttural letter and takes *qameṣ*; the *ה* of *וְהָיָה* is also the definite article, because the following *ו* has a *dageš*, as is usual in the case of the article. Had it been the interrogative particle, Ibn Ezra says, the *ה* should have taken *hatef-pataḥ* and the *ו* should not have taken *dageš*. According to Ibn Ezra's explanation, the verse means «who knows that the human spirit is the one who goes upward (*וְהָיָה*) and the spirit of animals is the one that goes downward (*וְהָיָה*) to earth?» Ibn Ezra adds that very few people know the difference between these two kinds of spirits. Had the *ה* of *וְהָיָה* and *וְהָיָה* been the interrogative particle, it would have cast doubt on the statement that the human spirit goes toward God, whereas the spirit of animals goes downward to earth; in this case, the verse would mean, «who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to earth?». Ibn Ezra's remark is of great importance, because one of his most remarkable philosophical ideas is here involved; that is, that the spirit of human beings goes up toward God when the bodies die. He finds in this verse a grammatical basis for this theory, and his comments on this prove that his interest of being consistent and precise in his grammatical observations is more than a mere interest in Grammar, it is a way of basing Philosophy on Grammar.

Some remarks concerning the use of the comparative and the superlative are found in his commentary on Qoh 1:2. There, he explains that,

⁶⁹ Also *Ṣaḥôṭ*, pp. 188-189.

⁷⁰ According to Ibn Ezra, the *ה* of *וְהָיָה* is the interrogative particle in Qoh 2:19, «who knows whether they will be wise (*וְהָיָה*) or foolish?», but the definite article in Qoh 2:14, «the wise (*וְהָיָה*) has his eyes in his head».

a noun in the construct state followed by the plural of the same noun is used to indicate the superlative [in Hebrew].

הַבֵּל הַבָּלִים (literally «vanity of vanities») means «the most important vanity». He also adds some examples of this construction: מֶלֶךְ מְלָכִים (Ezek 26:7) «king of kings», i.e., «the most important king», and עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים (Gen 9:25) «servant of servants», i.e., «the lowest servant»⁷¹. In his commentary on Qoh 1:2, he also states that מ is used to indicate a comparison and is used instead of יוֹתֵר «more», as in «more than all (מְכֹל) who had been before me in Jerusalem» (Qoh 2:7), and «I have more understanding than all (מְכֹל) my teachers» (Ps 119:99). In his commentary on Qoh 3:18, Ibn Ezra refers to the use of עָ to indicate a comparison and says that sometimes it is omitted in comparisons, as in «they are animals» (Qoh 3:18), which means «human beings are like animals (כְּבַהֲמוֹת)». This very explanation appears in his commentary on Qoh 5:1 regarding to the verses «for the Lord your God is a devouring fire» (Deut 4:24), which means «He is *like* a devouring fire», and «for the Lord God is a sun and a shield» (Ps 84:12), which means «He is *like* a sun and a shield». Ibn Ezra insist very much in this point, because he wants to emphasize that one cannot use the epithets «sun», «shield» or «fire» to refer to God in the liturgical poems; one must use the name «God» or «the Lord» instead⁷².

In his explanation of Qoh 9:2, he affirms that this comparative ע sometimes appears in both parts of the comparison, as in כְּטוֹב כְּחוֹטֵא and it means «as are the good, so are the sinners, and vice versa»; he also mentions some examples in which this construction occurs: «as with the slave, so with his master (כְּעֶבֶד כְּאֲדוֹנָיו)» (Isa 24:2); according to Ibn Ezra's explanation, it means that the slave is like his master and vice versa, i.e., Scripture emphasizes that there is no difference between them. He adds more examples: «I am as you are (כְּמוֹנִי כְמוֹךָ)»; my people are like your people (כְּעַמִּי כְעַמְךָ)» (1 Kgs 22:4, 2 Kgs 3:7), and «darkness is as light (כְּחֹשֶׁךְ כְּאוֹר)» (Ps 139:12)⁷³.

⁷¹ *Grammatiker*, p. 117; cf. also W. GESENIUS, *Op. cit.*, p. 431.

⁷² More examples of the omission of the comparative ע can be found in *SB* vol. I p. 42*, vol. II, pp. 162-163.

⁷³ In his commentaries on Isa 24:2 and Ps 139:12, Ibn Ezra explains that this use «is a way of simplification»; cf. M. FRIEDLÄNDER (ed.), *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah*, London 1873, p. 41 (108 of the translation). About the use of this expression in Ibn Ezra's explanations, cf. L. PRIJS, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

In his commentary on Qoh 4:12, Ibn Ezra writes about the pronominal suffixes; with regard to יתקפו (Qoh 4:12), he says that the pronominal suffix ם is joined directly to the end of the verb, but in other cases it is joined by ן or ה, as in תתקפהו (Job 14:20) ⁷⁴.

SYNTAX

Syntactical remarks are also found in this commentary on Qohelet. In his explanation of Qoh 8:3, Ibn Ezra mentions some Biblical verses in which a remarkable syntactic structure takes place; this is the case of the use of two verbs, one after the other, being the second one of them subordinated to the first one. Ibn Ezra explains that these two verbs must be related in either two ways: by the relative ׃ or using the second verb in infinitive. In Qoh 8:3 it is written אל תבהל מפניו תלך, and according to Ibn Ezra's interpretation, it means «do not be hasty *so that* you go (לך) from him» or «do not be hasty *to go* (ללכת) from him». ונדעה נרדפה (Hos 6:3) means «let us know *that* we follow after (שנרדפה)...» or «let us know *to follow* after (לרדוף)...». אל תרבו תדברו (1 Sam 2:3) means «do not exceed *in what* you talk (שיתדברו)» or «do not exceed *to talk* (לדבר)» ⁷⁵.

As it has been shown in this article, Ibn Ezra considers that it is very important to follow the rules of the Hebrew grammar in order to interpret the Biblical text, and he tries to be very precise and consistent in his grammatical analyses, and therefore, he always cites parallel verses to prove his statements. This preciseness in the application of grammatical rules is more remarkable when philosophical ideas are involved in a passage, because Ibn Ezra considers Hebrew Grammar as the basis for his Philosophy.

We may also observe that he had a great knowledge of the theories of the grammarians who preceded him, and some of his commentaries can be considered a summary of these ones.

He based his theories about the morphology of the Hebrew words, especially that of the irregular verbs, in those formulated by Judah Hayyuj and Ibn Janah, and his explanations of the roots of

⁷⁴ About the pronominal suffixes joined by ן or ה, cf. *Šahōt*, pp. 214-217.

⁷⁵ S. R. Driver says that to translate this construction into English, the most common way is to translate the first verb as an adverb; cf. S. R. DRIVER, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Book of Samuel*, Oxford 1913, p. 24.

the words are very similar to those by Ibn Janah in his *Sefer ha-Šorašim*.

The commentary on Qohelet was the first important work that Ibn Ezra wrote in his life, and therefore, he had not still written any of his grammatical treatises ⁷⁶. The interest that Ibn Ezra lays on grammar in the rest of his commentaries is also great, but it is remarkable the amount of grammatical theories developed in this commentary, even when they do not have a direct relationship to the meaning of Qohelet; in my opinion, it proves that Ibn Ezra was eager to write a grammatical treatise when he wrote this commentary, and so his commentary on Qohelet can be considered a preparation for a grammatical work. Not too much time would pass until he began to write it.

⁷⁶ At the end of the commentary he wrote the date in which it was finished: 1140. For a chronological list of Ibn Ezra's works, cf. *Reconstruction*, pp. XVIII-XIX.

RESUMEN

Abraham Ibn Ezra considera que el estudio de la gramática hebrea es el método más importante para establecer el significado literal de una palabra o de un versículo bíblico. Podemos encontrar sus teorías gramaticales no sólo en sus obras específicas de gramática, sino también en sus comentarios bíblicos. En su *Comentario a Qohelet*, Ibn Ezra hace numerosas observaciones sobre la pronunciación y peculiaridades de las consonantes hebreas, la morfología de nombres y verbos, algunas estructuras sintácticas específicas y otras similares. En este artículo, se examinan estas teorías en conexión con las obras gramaticales de este autor y con las opiniones de los gramáticos anteriores, sobre todo Juda Hayyuy y Jona ibn Yanah.

SUMMARY

Abraham Ibn Ezra considers the study of the Hebrew grammar to be the most important tool for establishing the literal meaning of a word or a Biblical verse. We find his grammatical theories not only in his grammatical works, but in his Biblical commentaries as well. In his *Commentary on Qohelet*, Ibn Ezra makes numerous grammatical remarks dealing with the pronunciation and peculiarities of the Hebrew consonants, the morphology of nouns and verbs, some peculiar syntactical structures, and the like. In this article, these grammatical theories in connection with Ibn Ezra's other works and with the theories of earlier grammarians, including Judah Hayyuj and Jonah Ibn Janah, are examined.