

Ibn Gabirol was gayer than you think



Isaac Montagu



יצחק אבן מר שאול

צבי חשוק

צְבִי חֲשׁוֹק בְּאַסְפִּמְיָה / יִצְרוּ רַב עֲלִילָה
וְהַמְשִׁילוּ וְהַשְׁלִיטוּ / עָלַי כָּל [חַי] וְכָל חַיָּה.
יִפֶּה תוֹאֵר כְּיָרִיחַ / עָלַי קוֹמָה יִפְהַפְיָה,
וְתִלְתְּלִיו כְּאַרְגָּמָן / עָלַי רֶקֶה פְּנִינָה.
כְּמוֹ יוֹסֵף [בְּצוֹרָ]תוֹ / וּבִשְׁעָר – אֲדוֹנִיָּה,
[יִפֶּה] עֵין כְּבֶן-יִשְׂרָאֵל / הֶרְגָנִי כְּאוֹרֵיָה,
וְגַם הַשִּׁיק כְּלִיּוֹתַי / וְלִבִּי אֵשׁ פְּנִימָיָה,
בְּעֶבְרוֹ בִּי עֲזָבָנִי / חֲסֹר לֵבָב וְתַשְׁיָה.
בָּכוּ עַמִּי, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה / וְכָל אִיָּה וְכָל דָּיָה!
אֶהוּב נִפְשִׁי קִטְלָנִי – / הִזָּה מִשְׁפָּט פְּלִילִיָּה?
שׂ..... וְלֹא רִיחַם / עָלַי לִבִּי וְלֹא חַיָּה
וְנִפְשִׁי לוֹ מְאֹד חוֹלָה / וְגַם תּוֹעָה וְהוֹמָיָה
וּמִדְּבָרָיו עָלַי לִבִּי / כְּמוֹ מָטָר עָלַי צִיָּה.
דִּלְגִי מִבְּאֵר [שַׁחַת] / וְאַל אֵרֵד לְתַחְתֵּיתָה!

Gazelle desired in Spain,
wondrously formed,
Given rule and dominion
over every living thing;
Lovely of form like the moon
with beautiful stature:
Curls of purple
upon shining temple,
Like Joseph in his form,
like Adoniah his hair.
Lovely of eyes like David,
he has slain me like Uriah.
He has enflamed my passions
and consumed my heart with fire.
Because of him I have been left
without understanding and wisdom.
Weep with me every ostrich
and every hawk and falcon!
The beloved of my soul has slain me—
is this a just sentence?
Because of him my soul is sick,
perplexed and yearning.
His speech upon my heart
is like dew upon parched land.
Draw me from the pit of destruction
that I go not down to hell!

As translated in Norman Roth, "Deal Gently with the Young Man': Love of Boys in Medieval Hebrew Poetry of Spain." *Speculum* 57 (1982), 20–51. Copyright 1982 by The Medieval Academy of America.

Further Reading

Cole, Peter. *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950–1492* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Lowin, Shari. *Arabic and Hebrew Love Poems in Al-Andalus* (Routledge, 2014).

Shemuel haNagid

אָהי כּפֹר לְעֹפֹר קָם בְּלַיִל / לְקוֹל כְּנוֹר וְעוֹגְבִים מְטִיבִים
אֲשֶׁר רָאָה בְיָדִי כּוֹס וְאָמַר / "שְׁתֵּה מִבֵּין שְׁפָתַי דָּם עֲנָבִים!"
וַיֵּרַח כְּמוֹ יוֹד נִכְתָּבָה עַל / כְּסוֹת שַׁחַר בְּמִימֵי הַזְהָבִים.

I'd give everything I own for that gazelle
who, rising at night to his
harp and flute,
saw a cup in my hand
and said:
"Drink your grape blood against my lips!"
And the moon was cut like a D,
on a dark robe, written in gold.

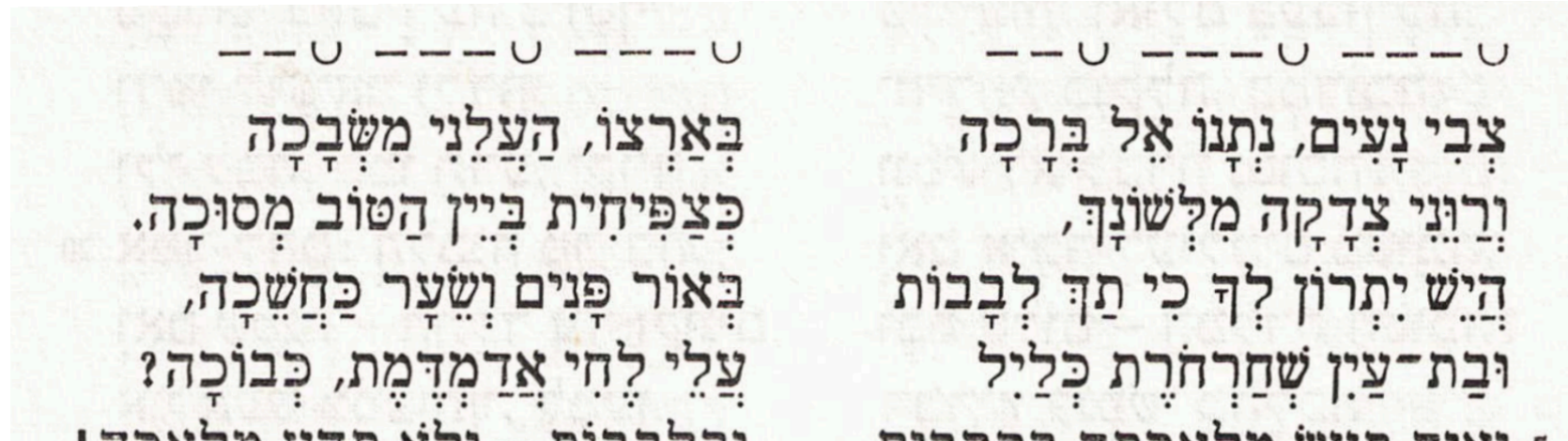
אָמַת כִּי צָבִי לֹקֵט וְרָדִים בְּגִנָּה – אֶהְבֵּתִיו, לָכֵן עָלִי תִשְׁלַח חֲרוֹנָה,
 וְלוֹ תַחֲזוּהָ, אֶת שְׂאֵה־בִתּוֹ, בְּעֵינֶיהָ – אֲזִי שִׁחֲרוּף אוֹהֶבֶיהָ וְאִינָהּ.
 אֲשֶׁר שָׁח: רִידָה נָא לִי דָבֶשׁ מִנְחִילָה! עֲנִיתִיו: תָּנָה לִי אֶת דָּבֶשׁ מִלְּשׁוֹנָהּ.
 וְקִצֵּף וְאָמַר לִי בִזְעָף: הִנֵּחֲטָא לֹאֵל חַי? עֲנִיתִיו: בִּי, אֲדוֹנִי עֲוֹנוֹהָ!

“In fact I love that fawn,
 cutting roses in your garden—
 which is why I’ve earned your wrath.
 If you could see him,
 the others would never find you.”

“Scrape me some honey
 from your hive,” he said.
 “I’ll have mine from your tongue,”
 I replied. Then he bristled
 and said to me, sullen:

“And sin before the living God?”
 “The sin’s on me,” I answered, “my lord.”

My friends, hear my poem; my soul,
 you know, clings to the fear of God.
 And its meaning is like that of Solomon's
 "My beloved is radiant" and "eyes like pools."



Lovely gazelle, heaven-sent blessing
 on earth,⁽¹⁾ remove me from the snare.⁽²⁾
 Satisfy me with beneficence⁽³⁾ from your tongue,
 like a jar⁽⁴⁾ filled with good wine.
 What advantage have you that you crush hearts,
 with shining face and dark hair,
 And roving⁽⁵⁾ eye, black as night,
 on ruddy cheek?
 How do you ply your craft upon the feelings

Shelomo ibn Gabirol

I will be a ransom for the gazelle of love,
in whom all who grieve find happiness;⁽¹⁾
Whose cheeks are like white marble,
and ruddy [as though] anointed with the blood of lovers.⁽²⁾
The fruit of his lips⁽³⁾ are like swords
and his eyes like arrows to the heart.⁵⁷

- (1) Even those who sorrow rejoice in him.
(2) For want of a better word; the Hebrew word *hosheq* was coined by the medieval poets (from *hesheq*), analogous to Arabic '*ashiq*' (from '*ashiq*', '*ishq*').⁵⁸ Both the Hebrew and the Arabic mean, basically, "to join together"; hence, "passion, lust." The topos of the martyred lover was standard in Arabic poetry.
(3) Speech (Isa. 57.19), not "teeth" as Jarden thought; his soft speech "slays" lovers, as do his glances.

Say to him whose hair embraces his cheek:⁽¹⁾
How can noon embrace the morning!⁽²⁾
Do not consider it a sin to Agur⁽³⁾ in saying
That beauty is vanity and grace a lie.
It is sufficient that your cheeks testify the truth,
For the deeds of God are unfathomable.⁵⁹

- (1) Dark hairs have begun to appear on his cheeks.
(2) A contradiction; i.e., how can he be both a youth and an adult?
(3) Solomon (Prov. 30.1), a hint also to the poet's name.

— — — — —
אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ כָּל מְתִי יִגּוֹן שְׂמֵחִים
כָּאֵלוּ הֵם בְּדָם חוֹשֶׁק מְשׁוּחִים
וְעֵינָיו בְּלִבְבוֹת כְּרִמָּחִים.

— — — — —
אֵהִי פְדִיּוֹן לְעַפְרֵי הָאֲהָבִים
אֲשֶׁר יִדְמוּ לְאַבְגֵּי שֵׁשׁ לְחֵיָיו
וְנִיבָיו מְשַׁפְּתָיו פְּשָׁלָחִים

— — — — —
אֵיכָה יַחֲבֹק צְהָרִים בְּקָר!
כִּי הַיָּפִי הֶבֶל וְהַחַן שֶׁקֶר
כִּי אֵין לְמַעֲשֵׂי הָאֱלֹהִים חֶקֶר.

— — — — —
אָמְרוּ לְמִי חֲבֹק שֶׁעָרוֹ לָחִיו:
אֵל תִּחְשַׁב עוֹוֹן לְאַגּוּר בְּאָמֹר
דִּי כִי לְחֵיָיָהּ יַעֲרִידוֹן בְּאָמֶת

— — — — —
 וְצִוּוּ אֹרֶךְ אֵלֶיךָ
 מֵאֵלֶיךָ וְדָרְךָ כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ מִמְּעוֹנָה
 וְאִם אֵין - רַפְּאֵלִי נָא, רַפְּאֵל נָא!
 רַפְּוֹאָה אֵין לְכָל מַכָּה יְשָׁנָה
 טְרִיָּה הִיא וְאֵין לָהּ כִּי כְּשָׁנָה!
 כִּיּוֹם פְּרוּד, וְאֵל תְּבוֹא רִנָּה
 „עַלִי תְדַכְּאֵר מִן אֱהוּי בִיאָנָה.”

— — — — —
 מְחַצְנִי אֲשֶׁר כִּימָה רִבִּידוֹ
 בְּפִתְחוֹ לִוְלָאוֹת עֵדִיו יִגְלֶה
 עֲנִיתִיהוּ: קָחָה נַפְשִׁי וְאַשְׁקֵט,
 הַשִּׁיבֵנִי בְּמִתְקֵי פִיו וְאָמַר:
 5 - הַמִּכְתִּי יְשָׁנָה הִיא, יְדִידִי?
 הַשִּׁיבֵנִי: שְׁתֵּה כּוֹסִי, וְשִׁיר לִי
 וְשִׁירָה לִי, יְדִידִי, בְּעֶרְבִית:

He wounds me, whose necklace is the Pleiades⁽¹⁾
 and whose neck is [white] like the light of the moon.
 In opening the loops of his mouth⁽²⁾ he reveals
 the light of his pearls⁽³⁾ like the sun from its abode.
 I answered him: “Take my soul and slay [it];
 or if not, heal me, please heal!”
 He replied with the sweetness of his mouth:
 “There is no cure for an old wound.”
 “Is my wound old, my friend?
 It is fresh — not more than a year old.”
 He answered: “Drink my cup, and sing to me
 as on a day of parting, let there be no exaltation.”
 And my beloved sang to me in Arabic:
 “In memory of the man whose appearance I love.”⁶⁶

— — — — —
 וסַעֲיֵף הָדָם נָטַע חֶשֶׁק בְּרַעֲיוֹנָיו
 חָשׂוּק, וְכַהֲוִישָׁק דָּלוּ מְאֹד מִתְּנָיו
 תִּשָּׂא לְכַבֵּד לוֹ - יִשָּׂא לָהּ עֵינָיו
 כִּי כַהֲמוֹת יוֹנָה אֶהְיֶה לְמוֹל יוֹנָיו
 כֶּסֶף, וְהִדְבֵּר דְּבוּר עָלַי אֶפְנִיו
 זָהָב, וּמִי יִתֵּן אִמָּץ בְּרַמּוֹנָיו!

— — — — —
 אָמִיר, אֲשֶׁר הָאָמִיר לְבִי בְנִצָּנָיו,
 עוֹמֵד כְּעַמּוּד שֵׁן, יָפָה בְּעֵינַי כָּל
 סוּר אֶהְיֶה מִבֵּין מַהֲלָבוֹת: כִּי
 בָכוּ מִתִּי חֶשֶׁק עָלַי - וְלֹא בָכוּ,
 5 לָחִיו כְּתַפּוּחֵי זָהָב בְּמִשְׁכָּפוֹת
 דָּדָיו כְּרַמּוֹנֵי זָהָב מְחֻשְׁקוֹת

Branch⁽¹⁾ who has exalted⁽²⁾ my heart with its blossoms,
 and bough of myrtle which passion⁽³⁾ has planted in its thoughts,
 Standing as a pillar of ivory, lovely in the eyes of every
 lover, and like a lover very poor are his gifts.⁽⁴⁾
 The secret of love he understands from the hearts: when
 you raise your heart to him, he will raise his eyes to you.⁽⁵⁾
 Lovers have wept for me, but have not [truly] wept;
 for like the cooing⁽⁶⁾ of a dove I will moan before his eyes.⁽⁷⁾
 His cheeks are like apples of gold in a setting
 of silver, and a word fitly spoken.⁽⁸⁾
 The moon is shamed when it sees the light
 of his cheeks, and the sun sets in his face⁽⁹⁾
 His breast is like golden pomegranates fastened with silver;
 would that I could suck his pomegranates!⁶⁷

- (1) *Amir* ("upper branch," sometimes "treetop"), also an Arabic name and so could hint at the name of the boy. Boys were often referred to as "branch" in Arabic poetry because of their grace and leanness.
- (2) *He'emir*, according to Ibn Janah, *Shorashim* (s.v. *amr*) means "exaltation, lifting up." Indeed, he says "therefore the upper branch is called *amir*," which exactly shows the intent of the poet; note the paronomasia here. In Arabic *amara* has as a meaning "command, exercise power over," while *amir*, of course, means "ruler, military commander." Thus, on a secondary level of meaning, the boy has ruled over the poet's heart.
- (3) As earlier noted, *hesheq*, under influence of Arabic *'ishq*, has a stronger meaning than biblical "desire, love."
- (4) There is the possibility of a double meaning in the second hemistich: *dallu* can mean "poor" (from *dal*) and *matenaw* "his gifts," in which case the meaning is that he is very sparing in giving satisfaction to his lovers. However, *dallu* proper means "wave, swing" (from *dalal*) and *matenaw* can as easily be a form of *matenayim*, "loins, waist" (e.g., 1 Kings 2.5). The meaning then would be: "and like a lover (passionate one) his loins (or waist) swing(s)." The thin-waisted boy, compared to a myrtle branch undulating in the wind, is common in Arabic.
- (5) When you raise your heart, hoping to have him, he will "raise his eyes" haughtily. The first hemistich is somewhat obscure, and I am uncertain as to the translation.
- (6) Actually, "moaning" (a dirge); cf. Ezek. 7.16.
- (7) *Yonah* as "eyes": Song of Songs 4.1; because of his beauty.
- (8) Prov. 25.11. This quotation of a full verse from the Bible is unusual and not very effective poetically.
- (9) This line appears only in Schirrmann's edition. It may be a substitute for the above line because of the problem I noted.

Moshe ibn Ezra

תַּאוֹת לִבִּי וּמַחְמַד עֵינַי – עֹפֵר לְצַדִּי וְכוֹס בִּימִינִי!

רְבוּ מְרִיבֵי – וְלֹא אֶשְׁמַעם,
בּוֹא, הַצֵּבִי, וְאֲנִי אֶכְנִיעֵם,
וְזָמַן יִכְלֵם וּמוֹת יִרְעֵם.
בּוֹא, הַצֵּבִי, קוּם וְהִבְרִיאֲנִי, מִצּוֹר שְׁפַתְךָ וְהַשְׁבִּיעֲנִי!

לָמָּה יִנְיָאוֹן לִבִּי, לָמָּה?
אִם בְּעִבּוֹר חֲטָא וּבְגִלָּל אִשְׁמָה
אֲשָׁגָה בְּיָפֶיךָ – אֲדַנִּי שְׁמָה!
אֵל יֵט לִבְבְּךָ בְּנִיב מַעֲנֵנִי, אִישׁ מַעֲקָשִׁים, וּבּוֹא נִסְנִי.

נִפְתָּה, וְקָמְנוּ אֵלַי בֵּית אָמוֹ,
וַיֵּט לְעַל סִבְלִי אֶת שַׁכְמוֹ,
לִילָה וַיּוֹמֵם אֲנִי רַק עֲמוֹ.
אֶפְשֵׁט בְּגָדָיו – וַיִּפְשִׁיטֵנִי, אֵינֶק שְׁפַתָּיו – וַיִּנְיָקֵנִי.

כַּאֲשֶׁר לִבִּי בְּעֵינָיו נִפְקַד,
גַּם עַל פֶּשַׁעִי בִּידּוֹ נִשְׁקָד –
דָּרַשׁ תְּנוּאוֹת וְאָפּוֹ פָקַד,
צָעַק בָּאֵר "רֵב לָךְ, עֲזָבִנִּי, אֵל תִּהְדָּפְנִי וְאֵל תִּתְעַנִּי!"

אֵל תִּאֲנַף בִּי, צָבִי, עַד כֹּלָה,
הַפְּלֵא רְצוֹנְךָ, יְדִידִי, הַפְּלֵא,
וַיִּנְשֶׁק יְדִידְךָ וְחִפְצוֹ מֵלֵא!
אִם יֵשׁ בְּנִפְשְׁךָ חַיּוֹת – חַיִּינִי, אוֹ חִפְצְךָ לַהֲרֹג – הֲרַגְנִי!

Desire⁽¹⁾ of my heart and delight of my eyes —
A fawn⁽²⁾ beside me and a cup in my hand!

Many admonish me, but I do not heed;
Come, O gazelle, and I will subdue them.
Time will destroy them and death shepherd⁽³⁾ them.

Come, O gazelle, rise and feed me⁽⁴⁾
With the honey of your lips, and satisfy me.

Why do they hold back my heart, why?
If because of sin and guilt,
I will be ravished by your beauty — God is there!⁽⁵⁾

Pay no attention to the words of my oppressor,
A perverse man — come and try me!
He was enticed, and we went up to his mother's house,
And he gave his shoulder to my burden.⁽⁶⁾

Night and day I was only with him.
I undressed him, and he undressed me;
I sucked his lips and he sucked mine.⁽⁷⁾
When I left my heart as a pledge in his eyes,
The burden of my guilt was also weighed in his hand.

He sought enmity,⁽⁸⁾ and inflicted his anger,⁽⁹⁾
And angrily cried, "Enough; leave me!
Do not force me, and do not entice me."

Do not be angry with me, gazelle, to destruction —
Extraordinary is your will, my dear, extraordinary!
Kiss your beloved and fulfill his desire.

If it is in your soul to give life, revive me —
Or if your desire is to kill, kill me!⁷⁶

(7) Literally, "he sucked me" (*yanaq*, which only means "suck"); however, I have no reason to believe that it means anything other than kissing.

El'azar ben Ya'akov haBavli

לה איצ' [א פי אלרייס עז אלדולה בן] אבי יעקוב

צבי חמדה [י] פה תאר ונעי [ם] / [אשר פניו כזהר] הרקיעים
ולו עין והיא בעלת [כשפים / ולא יגה] כשפיה קמיעים
אשר פלח בחץ חשקו כבידי / [וקרע את סגור] לבי קרעים
ואולם אש אהביו נשקה [בי / ולא יכלו לכבותה ד] מעים
ושפך את מררתי לארץ / [קדח אש אהביו בין] צלעים
יריבון בי ודבריהם בלב [י / כמה] לומות וחבורות פצעים
ושחט מלחיו דם ענבים / ומר [קו] והשקני גביעים
ואין מרפא למחלתי לבד כי / בדניאל תמים שכל ודעים
נגיד עם אל אשר תוכו כפרו / ובזממיו עצי חיים נטועים
טהור לב מראות ברע ועין / מחונן דל ועובר על פשעים
שלחו אל לחבש נשבר [י] לב / והורות את נבוכי לב ותועים
ולשביע בצחצחות רעבים / ולר [פ] א עם ביד [י] מים [נ] גועים
ועץ שדה בכל ש [נה יבכר / ונדבתו] תבכר לרגעים
ולילות כתבו לו את [ידיהם / והימים למאוייו] רצועים
יקוו אל צרי פיהו נגופים / [ויוחילו לטל] כפיו זרעים
ושם מקדש מע [ט ביתו ומדרש / לחכמי] דת ועם בטוב ידועים
ולפורשים [אשר מאהבה הם / ומיר] אה אכל ל [א] אל צבועים
ועת בוא א [ורחים אל אהלו אם / רעבי] ס יה [יו יצ] או [ש] בעים
בכל מז [עד לאיש ערך בגדים] / וב [ר] לחם ו [מזון] לו קבועים
יהו כימי מתושל [ח ימותיו / וחיי אוי] ביו יהיו גרועים
בעוד ע [ומדה בחוג גלגל] אדמה / וגלגלי זבול נד [י] ס ונעים

This poem was also composed by him for the leader 'Izz al-Dawla b. Abū Ya'qūb:

Lovely gazelle of beautiful appearance and pleasant one whose face has the brightness of the heavens,
whose eye is filled with magic; a magic that does not illuminate the amulets,
whose love splits with an arrow my liver, and widely opens my heart,
as much as the fire of his love kisses me, tears cannot extinguish it,
and he spills my gall upon the earth, as the fire of his love is between my ribs,
people compete with me and their words are in my heart like the blows and bruises of wounds,
and he squeezed from his cheeks the blood of grapes, and from his saliva, and he gave me goblets to drink,
there is no cure for my illness, only to be with Daniel, perfect in wit and knowledge,
the prince of the people of God whose inside is as his outside, and in his intentions trees of life are planted,
the pure-hearted does not witness misery; his eye favours the poor and overlooks transgressions,
God has sent him to bind up the broken-hearted and to guide the confused and perplexed,
to satiate the hungry in barren places and to heal the people in plague-stricken days,
the tree in the field bears early fruit, and his charity bears fruit in moments,
and nights write their hands for him, and the days depend upon his desires,
afflicted ones hope for the healing of his mouth, children expect the dew of his hands,
and he has turned his house into a little sanctuary [synagogue] and a house of study for the sages of faith and people who are known by their goodness,

and for expounders of love and of respect but not for hypocrites,
at the time that guests come to his tent, if they are hungry, they go satisfied,
at any time for the well-dressed man and the destitute, bread and food are set ready,
may his days be like the days of Methuselah, and may the life of his enemies be reduced,
as long as the earth stands in the circle of her cycle, and the cycles of heaven rotate and move.

[illegible]

הוּא אֱמֵנוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
 וְעַתָּה עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁאֵין לָנוּ פָּאָרָה
 וְהַיְיִם גְּמֵעַת אֲדֻלְמָאִין
 בְּלֹשׁ כָּל גְּמֵעַת אֲדֻלְמָאִין וְאֲדֻלְמָאִין
 וְאֲמִידִית עֲנִידֵהוּ סְאִכְרֵהּ וְקִיָּא שְׁמֵהּ
 אֲבִיִּיתָא מִן אֲדֻלְמָאִין תְּנִיבָהּ סְנֵעִים
 אֲבִיִּיתָא ^{וְהַיְיִם} קֹדֶשׁ אֲפִתּוֹנִי עָלֵי
 יֵינִי וְנִיבָהּ טִיבִית אֲבִיִּיתָא וְלֹא
 תִּפְתָּן לְאֲדֻלְמָאִין בְּעֲדֻלְמָאִין בְּחִסְרֵן
 אֲלֹקֵי אֲפִתּוֹנִי פִּי שְׁמוֹתֵינוּ
 וְאֲתִנְחָא בְּדִאֲרֵךְ כָּאֵן מִהֲאִינוּ
 עֲקֵלְנָא וְאֲלֹחוֹ וְתַנְצֵר כִּי גִנְחָא
 חֲצֹאֵן אֲלֹחוֹ אֲרָאן אֲלֵנִיבָהּ בִּינֵינֵינוּ

Were you to see the prince of the doe-eyed at the summit of Mount Sinai,

You would say: "blessed be the One who created him."

The light of his face outstrips that of the crescent moon, affixed in the heavens,

All of the young gazelles are enamored of him,

His nose is as delicate as a sword's cutting edge,

He is a skilled youth—I am astounded by his attributes,

His eyes are a cup of wine that wash over me,

And mesmerize my recalcitrant heart,

His lips are like rubies chiseled with the letters *alif*, *ba*, and *jim*,

His mouth tastes sweet like pomegranates and basil—a cure for every ill,

His teeth are as lustrous as pearls [text damaged]

His neck is that of a gazelle who has wandered off, alone, a fugitive,
who disturbs all of the gazelles [with his beauty].

He has amazed all of my brothers and has given me drink,

I spent the night with him, drunk,

And he said: "O poet from among the forgetful" [i.e., mankind],

Wake up! Morning has risen! Speak precisely about my religion,

And stir the best of minds from their slumber,

Do not pay attention to the other gazelles, who censure me,

For I am like Joseph in beauty.

הַיְדַעְתֶּם יְדִידַי הַצִּבִּי בָּרַח מִמְּלוֹנַי מָתִי יָשׁוּב מֵעוֹנַי
 יִגִּיד לָכֶם בְּרוּבִי אַחֲרֵי נָשָׂא לִבִּי אֵיךְ אִשָּׁא מֵעַצְבִּי
 לֹא יָדַע בַּעַת שֶׁהֶעֱלָה עִמּוֹ כָּל-שִׁשּׁוֹנִי עַל מִי נָטַשׁ יְגוֹנִי
 צַר לִי עַל נְדוּדוֹ סוּר מֵעָלִי כְבוֹדוֹ אֹר יִפְעֶתוּ וְהוֹדוֹ
 אֵי לַיִּמִּים שִׁפְתָּיו יִטְפוּ נֹפֶת עַל לְשׁוֹנִי וְעֲנֻקָּיו עַל גְּרוֹנִי
 חֲנוּתִי אֵיךְ שִׁכְחָם שִׁעֲשׂוּעֵי אֵיךְ זִנְחָם וַיִּדְּדוּת בֵּין בְּנֵי חָם
 הִרְאָה לִי וְאַמּוֹן עַת אֲשֶׁר מוֹפְתָיו שֶׁת בְּמוֹנִי וַיּוֹצֵא אֶת-הַמּוֹנִי
 קָרַע יָם סוֹף לִפְנֵי הִרְאָה אוֹרוֹ לְעֵינַי דִּבֵּר דּוֹדָיו בְּאַזְנִי
 וְלַחֲדָר אוֹהֲבֵי סָר אֵלַי חֵין קוֹל פֶּעַמּוֹנִי וּלְרִיחַ קִנְמוֹנִי
 עֲבָרֵי חֻקִּים וְעֲדוּת הָעֶבִיר מִמֶּנִּי יְדִידוֹת נִכְבְּדוֹת וְחִמּוּדוֹת
 הָשֵׁב לִי שִׁשּׁוֹן יִשְׁעֶךָ וְאִם עָבַר רֹאשׁ זְדוֹנִי נָא הָעֶבֶר עַת עוֹנִי
 רַבּוֹת מִיּוֹם נְדוּדֶךָ נִשְׁאַתִּי עַל כְּבוֹדֶךָ וּבְכָל-זֹאת אֶעֱבֹדֶךָ
 עַד עוֹלָם לִיצֵאת מַעֲמָךְ אֵין רְצוֹנִי אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶת-אֲדוֹנִי

Hayda'tem Yedidai

Tsevi poetry, named after the characteristic trope of a *gazelle*, is a genre of homoerotic Hebrew love poetry that was ubiquitous amongst medieval Sefaradi poets – Ibn Gabirol, Yehudah haLevi, the Ibn Ezras, all the famous names were authors of it. Even some later poets such as Shabazi continued the tradition. Much of it is secular; but in this beautiful example by Spanish paytan *Yitshak* ibn Ghiyyath, halfway through it becomes clear that the masculine object of desire and praise is in fact Hashem. This sits without contradiction alongside the many piyyutim that play with love between God and Yisrael, or female and male aspects of the Divine, and this piyyut was designated a *pizmon* for Pesah. This shows the lack of division between the queer creative work and the religious lives of these figures central to the Sefaradi tradition.

Do you know, my friends – the *gazelle* who fled my chamber? When will he return to my dwelling?

My cherub shall tell you, after he took my heart, how can I lift myself from sorrow? He didn't know at the time, that with his rise arose all my joy. Upon whom can I leave my pain?

It hurts me when he wanders – he's taken away his glory, the light and brightness of his splendour. Where are the days his lips dripped nectar on my tongue, and his necklace adorned my throat?

My grace, how can he forget, my plaything, how can he have rejected my companionship, when there is love between Ham's children. He showed to me and to Ammon [Egypt] His wonder upon my embitterers, and He brought out my people!

He split the Sea of Reeds before my face, showed His light to my eyes, spoke His love in my ears, and in the room of my lover He turned to the graceful chime of the bell, and the scent of cinnamon.

Transgression of laws and statutes, this has broken me from love – from honour and treasure. Return the joy of Your salvation to me and if there are transgressions on my wicked head, please, break my wrongdoing.

Your days of wandering have been long, since I have held your glory. On all of them I will be Your servant, Until the whole world leaves Your people wantless, I love my master.



Hayda'tem yedidai, Hatsevi yarah mimlonai, Mat'ai yashuy me'onai

Yagid lakhem berubbi, Aharé nasa leyavi, Ékh esa ma'atsavi, Lo yada' ya'et shehe'elah 'imo khol-sesoni, 'Al mé natash yegoni

Tsar li 'al nedudai, Sur mé'alai kheyodo, Or yif'ato vehodo, É leyamim sefatav yitfu nofet 'al leshoni, Ve'anakav 'al geroni

Hano'ai ékh shekha'am, Sha'ashu'ai ékh zana'am, Viydidut ben yené Ham, Hor-ah li ve-Ammon 'et asher mofetav shaf yemonai, Vayotsé et hamonai

Kara' Yam Suf lefanai, Her-ah oro le'énai, Dibbér dodav ye-osnai, Vela'hadar ohavi sar eli hin kol fa'amonai, Ule'rah kinmonai

'Oyri hukim ve'edot, He'evir mimeni yedidot, Nikhbadot vahamodot, Hashéy li seson yish'akha ve-im 'ayar rosh zedonai, Na ha'ayér 'et 'avoni

Rabbot miyom nedudekha, Nasati 'al keyodekha, Uykhol-zot e'ovadekha, 'Ad 'olam letsét me'imekha én retsoni, ahavti et adoni