



The Concept of 'Grammatical Words' as Reflected in the Works of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra

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Abstract

The group of grammatical words¹ used by Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra in his writings overall² includes the words *'bl* "but", *'wlm* "but, however", *'hr* "after", *'k* "but, only", *'kn* "indeed", *'l* "to", *'sl* "at", *'sr* "that", *b* "in", *byn* "between", *bšbyl* "for", *hws* "except", *šm* "not yet", *k* "as, like", *kbr* "already", *kmw* "like", *kn* "so, thus", *kpy* "as, like", *l* "to", *lbd* "alone", *lkn* "therefore", *lm'n* "for the sake of/so as to", *mn* "from", *ngd* "against", *nwkh* "in the face of", *'bwr* "in order that", *'d* "until, up to", *'l* "on", *'m* "with", *qwdm* "before, previously", *rq* "only", *twk* "within", *tht* "under" and *tmwr* "in the place of".³ Ibn Ezra did not use the grammatical terms prevailing in modern Hebrew, such as *mylym dqdwywt* 'grammatical words', *mylwt yhs* 'prepositions', *mylwt hybwr* or *mylwt qyšwr* 'conjunctions', etc., but sorted these words into groups that he labelled *'bdym* 'slaves', *mlwt 'nyyn* 'words of matter' and *'wttyw* 'nyyn' 'letters of matter', *mlwt šm* 'words of sense' and *mlwt dbq* 'words of adhesion'. These terms appeared in his writings as the topic and context required. Examination of Ibn Ezra's works shows that by these terms he meant the words that constitute a third word class, neither nouns nor verbs. This class includes prepositions (independent and clitic), conjunctions, adverbs and interjections. The definitions change from one work to another, as do the groups of words that the labels refer to, so that some grammatical words may belong to more than one group according to Ibn Ezra's definitions.

Introduction

The present essay is concerned with one of the delicate grammatical issues in the study of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra's language, and redefines the concept 'grammatical words' as reflected in Ibn Ezra's writings overall. The definition of this concept was based on an investigation of all of Ibn Ezra's writings: (1) translations from Arabic into Hebrew;⁴ (2) original compositions, including Ibn Ezra's grammars;⁵ (3) biblical exegesis.⁶ It was found that Ibn Ezra touched on the subject of grammatical words only in the following works: *yswd dqdwy* (*Yēsōd diqdūq*),⁷ *m'zny lšwn hqdš* (*Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš*),⁸ *spr šhwt* (*Sēper šahōt*),⁹ *sph brwrh* (*Sāpāh bē'rārāh*),¹⁰ *spr spt ytr* (*Sēper sēpat yeter*),¹¹ the commentary on the Pentateuch,¹² and the commentary on Ecclesiastes.¹³

The results of the examination enable to delimit the concept both by distinguishing it from the other word classes and by comparing it to similar groups of words with which it shares common items. The article starts with a brief overview of the life and works of Abraham ibn Ezra and with the definition of 'grammatical words' in the scholarly literature. The main part of the article presents in detail the research findings showing how the concept of grammatical words is reflected in Ibn Ezra's language, focusing on the various grammatical definitions this word class was given in all his writings.¹⁴ The definition of each label used by Ibn Ezra includes the list of words classed under that label, the rules governing their appearance in phrases, determination, vocalization, inflection, form in genitive constructions, etymology, derivation, function etc., in all contexts. Presented in detail, these explanations remove all vagueness from the definition and delimitation of the concept of 'grammatical words' in the language of Ibn Ezra.

1 'Grammatical words' is the term chosen in this study to designate the group of words that are neither nouns nor verbs but constitute a third word class, which includes prepositions and conjunctions of all sorts.

2 That is, in the three bodies of his work: translations from the Arabic, works that are essentially original Hebrew compositions, and biblical exegesis.

3 This study will not be concerned with the use of the grammatical words in Abraham ibn Ezra's writings but with Ibn Ezra's definition of these words and the list of words included in that group. On the use of grammatical words under the influence of Arabic see at length Kizel (2013).

4 The grammars of Judah Hayyuj: *spr 'wttyw hnh* (*Sēper 'Ottiyōt hannōah*), *spr p'ly hkpl* (*Sēper po'ālē hakkepel*) and *spr hñqwd* (*Sēper hanniqūd*). Ibn Ezra's translation of these works was edited by Dukes (1844).

5 Such as the books *yswd mspr*, *kly nhwšt*, *h'hr*, *h'wlm*, *h'ybwr*, *h'smym*, *yswd mwr*, *hmspr*, *hšm*, *r'šyt hkmh*, *'grt hšbt*, but as will be noted below, evidence was found only in the five books *yswd dqdwy* (*Yēsōd diqdūq*), *m'zny lšwn hqdš* (*Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš*), *spr šhwt* (*Sēper šahōt*), *sph brwrh* (*Sāpāh bē'rārāh*) and *spr spt ytr* (*Sēper sēpat yeter*). Edition details will be given below.

6 All the exegetical works ascribed with certainty to Ibn Ezra were examined in the course of the research, but evidence was found only in the commentaries on Genesis and on Ecclesiastes. Edition details will be given below.

7 Allony 1984. Allony maintains that this work is only an introductory chapter to a larger book that has been lost (*ibid.*: 66–67).

8 Heidenheim 1791.

9 Lippmann 1827.

10 Lippmann 1839. This work is also found in Wilensky 1978: 46–82.

11 Lippmann 1843.

12 More specifically the second commentary on Genesis [*br'šyt šyṯh 'hrt*] (Weiser 1976, I).

13 Gomez Aranda 1994.

14 For the purpose of defining and delimiting the concept of 'grammatical words', all the references that Ibn Ezra made to the grammatical behaviour of this word class in all his writings were collected and sorted.



Abraham ibn Ezra

Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) was born at the end of the 11th century in Tudela, in an area of Islamic Spain that was under Christian rule.¹⁵ Ibn Ezra was a poet, grammarian, translator, exegete and philosopher. An outstanding medieval thinker, he also interested himself in astrology, mathematics and astronomy. In the early stages of his writing career Ibn Ezra travelled all over Islamic Spain and was associated with the Jewish circles in Andalusia, where he composed a large body of secular poetry. In later years he travelled in lands such as Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Following the conquest of Spain by the Almohads,¹⁶ Ibn Ezra fled to Christian Europe, arriving in Rome in 1140, at the age of fifty.¹⁷

At that time Ibn Ezra began writing many works, and thus he is counted among the Hebrew writers of the period following the expulsion from Spain. Ibn Ezra introduced the Jews of Italy to Sephardic poetry, which they adopted with enthusiasm and adhered to for many years, gradually abandoning the style of the *piyyūṭ* (liturgical poetry). To be able to assimilate the Andalusian culture, the Jews of Christian lands needed texts written in Hebrew, including new scientific treatises. Ibn Ezra was the first to author Hebrew texts on a variety of subjects for the Jews of Provence and Italy, and in his writings transmitted the Sephardic culture in original Hebrew compositions.¹⁸ He translated from Arabic the grammars of Rabbi Judah Hayyuj and other authors, and also wrote biblical commentaries.¹⁹ His literary work spanned approximately twenty-five years. Whereas little has survived of his literary output in Spain, most of the works he wrote in Christian Europe have been preserved, and through them his extensive literary activity may be appraised. The many upheavals in Ibn Ezra's life make it difficult to determine the chronological order of his works' composition and publication.²⁰

Ibn Ezra's language derived largely from biblical Hebrew, in which he saw a literary standard and a primary linguistic source. Aside from the forms and terms that he himself coined, he preferred biblical Hebrew words to Mishnaic Hebrew ones.²¹ His writing is characterized by language purism, and he strove to avoid as much as possible direct loans from Arabic and even words originating from Arabicized Hebrew.²² He repeatedly criticized the exegetic methods relying on rabbinic *midrašim*, voicing his opinion that such interpretation was unproductive and unoriginal.²³ Many researchers investigating Ibn Ezra's exegetic style have noted that his writings tend to be vague and inconsistent.²⁴ It appears that the language of Ibn Ezra's commentaries is ambiguous.²⁵

The grammatical issues discussed in Ibn Ezra's writings have been described by Bacher.²⁶ Del Valle Rodriguez has also investigated Ibn Ezra's grammar²⁷ and published a critical edition of *Sēper šahōt*.²⁸ Prijs' dictionary of the grammatical terms in Ibn Ezra's writings²⁹ was favourably reviewed by Ben-Hayyim for its contribution to the understanding of the grammatical concepts in Ibn Ezra's writings.³⁰

Bacher holds that the writing of Ibn Ezra was unremarkable and uninnovative, merely giving the legacies of Judah Hayyuj and Jonah ibn Janah a new setting in Hebrew.³¹ Chomsky agreed with him in asserting that Ibn Ezra formulated in Hebrew the concepts of Hayyuj and Ibn Janah.³² Tene, too, similarly ascribes to Ibn Ezra the role of promulgating the Hebrew grammar of Hayyuj and Ibn Janah's school of thought, determining that his works are a summarization of the work

15 Most researchers agree with Fleischer as to the year of Ibn Ezra's death. See Fleischer 1929 and Shirman 1997: 14.

16 In the opening of his commentary on Lamentations Ibn Ezra writes that he fled Spain "by reason of the oppressors". See Fleischer 1932: 98.

17 Ibn Ezra mentions the year of his arrival in Rome in his remarks on his flight from Spain. He writes as follows in the opening of his commentary on Ecclesiastes: *wm'ršw nprd / 'šr hy' bsprd / w'l rwmy yrd / bnpš nbhlt* ("And he departed from his land / That is in Spain / And went down to Rome / With affrighted soul"). The year of its composition appears at the end: 4900 according to the Jewish calendar, that is 1140 C.E.

18 Fleischer 1932: 97–100.

19 Pagis 1976: 62–64.

20 Mondschein 2000.

21 Sela 2001.

22 Kohn 1922: 95–102.

23 Mondschein 2004: 137–150.

24 Levin 1985: 21. It should be noted here that examination of his writings shows Ibn Ezra's style to be characterized by digressions on other issues, usually grammatical issues such as *primae Nun* defective verbs, verb stems (*binyanim*) and verb classes, geminate verbs, weak verbs, noun patterns, masculine and feminine forms, genitive constructions, metathesis, and adjectives.

25 Mondschein 2004: 137–150. Charlap, too, has studied Ibn Ezra's linguistic concepts from a critical comparative perspective. In her thesis she examined the grammatical issues Ibn Ezra concerned himself with in his grammatical writings and biblical commentaries (Charlap 1995).

26 Bacher 1882.

27 Del Valle Rodriguez 1977a.

28 Del Valle Rodriguez 1977b.

29 Prijs 1950. Prijs also published in 1973 a commentary to Ibn Ezra's commentary to Genesis chapter 1.

30 Ben-Hayyim 1950.

31 Bacher 1882. Bacher was the first to publish an extensive study of Ibn Ezra's grammatical work.

32 Chomsky 1957.

of other scholars from the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain.³³ It seems that Allony thinks so too, though he surmises that Ibn Ezra was mainly influenced by the ideas of Ibn Janah, which he frequently quotes and alludes to in his writings.³⁴

It appears that Ibn Ezra adopted the thinking of the Andalusian grammarians of the 11th century, in particular that of Hayyuj, of Ibn Janah, of Samuel HaNaggid (Samuel ibn Nagrilla) and of Moses ibn Jiqatilla (Moses HaKohen). Yet he does not refrain from formulating his personal opinion.³⁵ While discussing various issues Ibn Ezra often mentions the scholars who discussed them before him, occasionally giving their names explicitly and expressing the esteem he has for them.³⁶ It is thus apparent that Ibn Ezra had great respect for R. Eleazar Kalir,³⁷ R. Saadia Gaon, Menahem ben Saruq,³⁸ R. Moses ibn Jiqatilla, R. Judah bar David,³⁹ Dunash ben Labrat,⁴⁰ R. Samuel HaNaggid and R. Jonah. Yet Ibn Ezra does not always mention the Sephardi grammarians by name, and on occasion he indicates his source only vaguely: “there was a scholar in France”, “a wise man”, “another man who said”, “said one of the scholars of this age”, “some say, the philosophers”, “the translators”, “others”.

In presenting his exegetic ideas Ibn Ezra provided extensive explanations and few examples, which required his readers to be fully versed in all the details and grammatical issues in connection with the verses in question in order to understand his commentaries. In the introductions he wrote to his grammars and commentaries he appealed to the “educated”, “wise of heart”, “men of truth”.⁴¹ He discussed linguistic minutiae and attempted to resolve morphological and syntactical difficulties presented by forms and phrases that had been ignored by previous grammarians.⁴²

2 The Concept of ‘Grammatical Words’

Grammatical words, also called ‘structure words’ and ‘function words’, form a relatively closed group in the language. In Hebrew they are also frequently referred to as ‘words of relation’, a term that properly designates prepositions only, due to the blurring of the boundaries between prepositions and other grammatical words, such as conjunctions — a consequence of the fact that prepositions occasionally serve as conjunctions.⁴³

The greatest of the medieval grammarians, R. Jonah ibn Janah, mentions in the introduction to *Kitāb al-luma’* (in Hebrew translation *Sēper hāriqmāh*) “the words of sense and the nouns that are not derived of verbs”. In chapter 1 Ibn Janah notes that the words in Arabic and in Hebrew are divided into three parts of speech, which are nouns, verbs and ‘words of sense’ (*mlwt ṭīm*) such as *gm* “also”, *ky* “because/that”, *rq* “only”, *k* “but, only” and so on.⁴⁴ He later elaborates, stating that “the words of sense are tools and ties without which no connection is made”⁴⁵ and that it is impossible to build a sentence with a word of sense and a noun alone or with a verb and a word of sense. He additionally asserts that “words of sense do not combine with each other [...] since each of the two is a connector and there is nothing in the sentence that the one word might connect, let alone the two”.⁴⁶ In chapter 4 Ibn Janah asserts that the ‘letters of sense’ (clitic prepositions) are “that which points to the matter in another”, like *l* “to”, *l* “on”, *ky* “because/that”, *gm* “also”, *rq* “only”, *k* “but, only”, to which he later adds the words *lm’n* “for the sake of/so as to”, *blty* “besides”, *bwr* “in order that”.⁴⁷

The importance of delimiting and defining the concept of ‘grammatical words’ is felt in the writings of Ibn Ezra, where he addresses this issue in various contexts though it leads him to digress from the topic at hand. In the following pages I shall attempt to characterize Ibn Ezra’s conception of this group of words, as evidenced both indirectly by his language itself and directly by his references to the matter.

3 Findings

33 Tene 1971.

34 Allony 1984.

35 Cf. Sáenz-Badillos 2001. Sáenz-Badillos believes that the mere fact that Ibn Ezra translated the works of Hayyuj attests to the appreciation in which he held that grammarian.

36 Ibn Ezra held the Sephardic grammarians in high regard and was wont to quote their words, particularly in his grammar books.

37 “The *piyyūṭim* of Rabbi Eleazar Kalir, may he rest in peace, contain four difficult things, most of his *piyyūṭim* being riddles and parables” (Commentary on Ecclesiastes 5:1).

38 “And Rabbi Menahem ben Saruq the Sephardi has also written a book wherein good words are found” (Commentary on Ecclesiastes 9:11). Ibn Ezra always mentions Menahem ben Saruq among the first grammarians, even if he does not agree with all his judgements. For a comparison between Ibn Ezra’s judgements on grammatical matters and Menahem ben Saruq’s opinions see Sáenz-Badillos 2001: 245.

39 Commentary on Ecclesiastes 9:11.

40 “And the father of nobles, HaLevi ben Labrat, Maghrebi from the city of Fes, also answers them with true words” (*Mō’znē lēšōn haqqōdeš*, 89). It is evident from his words, however, that he does not appreciate Dunash’s criticism of his teacher Saadia Gaon. It also appears that he does not always agree with him on grammatical matters, for instance on the classification of the letters *d* and *ṭ* as ‘servant letters’, the plural of personal nouns and the issue of linear word formation.

41 For instance in his introductions to the works *spr šhwṭ*, *sph brwrh* and *kly nḥwšt* and to his commentaries on Ecclesiastes and on Isaiah.

42 Netzer 1994: 1–21.

43 For details on these terms see Nir 1979: 16; Sarfatti 1978: 36; Lyons 1968: 435.

44 Wilensky 1928, Ch. 1, 30.

45 *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, 33.

46 *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, 35.

47 *Ibid.*, Ch. 4,41–42; Ch. 6, 47.

3.1 The definition of the concept of 'grammatical words' in the writings of Ibn Ezra

Grammatical terms such as *mylwt yḥs* (prepositions, literally 'words of relation'), *mylwt ḥybw*r (conjunctions, literally 'words of connection') or *mylym dqdwywt* (grammatical words), prevalent in modern Hebrew, do not appear in Ibn Ezra's writings. Bacher has noted that he labels such words as *'bdym* 'slaves', *mlwt 'nyyn* 'words of matter' and *'wtywt 'nyyn* 'letters of matter', *mlwt ṭ'm* 'words of sense', and *mlwt dbq* 'words of adhesion'. These terms appear in his writings as the topic and context require.⁴⁸ Charlap devoted a chapter of her study to prepositions, discussing their position in the sentence, their meaning and their syntactical roles. Her discussion does not, however, include a detailed examination of the concept of grammatical words as reflected in Ibn Ezra's writings overall.⁴⁹

The present research shows that in Ibn Ezra's original writings on grammar, the definitions of the grammatical words vary from one work to another. In *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* these words are termed 'slaves' (*'bdym*), 'servants' (*mšrtym*) and 'words of matter' (*mlwt 'nyyn*).⁵⁰ In *Yēsōd diqdūq* they are labelled 'words of adhesion' (*mlwt dbq*) and in *Sēper šahōt* 'words of sense' (*mlwt ṭ'm*).⁵¹ Some of the terms presented above appear in the introduction to the second commentary on Genesis as well, where Ibn Ezra writes: "every tongue is divided into three facets: noun [...], verb [...], and the third part words of sense and adhesion [and] matter, or letter[s], such as *mn* ["from"], *gm* ["also"], *rq* ["only"], *b* ["in"], *k* ["as"], *l* ["to"], and also the *w* ["and"] to join the matters".⁵² This definition by Ibn Ezra is in line with the definition given in *Sēper hāriqmāh* by R. Jonah ibn Janah, who labelled the third word class 'words of sense' (*mlwt ṭ'm*), including under this label those words that Ibn Ezra mentions.⁵³ Elsewhere he discusses the declension of these words and their syntagmatic behaviour: he asserts that some words are in singular form and others in plural form, and that some words may combine with others, as in the case of *k'l* "according to" (Isa. 59:18)⁵⁴ and *lm'n* "for the sake of/so as to" (Job 19:29), while other words, such as *'k* "but, only", *'yn* "(there) is not" and *gm* "also", cannot combine in such a way and are not declined.⁵⁵

Ibn Ezra repeatedly mentions the grammatical words' various functions and the flexibility in their meanings, which he sees as two qualities serving the writer's needs. The grammatical words' syntagmatic rules emerge from his discussion of other topics, such as prefixation and suffixation,⁵⁶ the vocalization of grammatical words, the occurrence of grammatical words before verb forms, particularly verbs in the past tense,⁵⁷ the combination of grammatical words with nouns, the rules of genitive construction, the occurrence of grammatical words in construct or absolute form, singular and plural.⁵⁸

3.1.1. The 'slaves'

According to Ibn Ezra, the term 'slaves' (*'bdym*) refers to the clitic prepositions *b* "in", *k* "as", *l* "to" and *m* "from" alone: "The slaves are the letters added before it, at the beginning of the word, and are not primary and their sign is *b-k-l-w-m*".⁵⁹ This is in contrast to the terms 'words of matter' (*mlwt 'nyyn*), 'words of sense' (*mlwt ṭ'm*) and 'words of adhesion' (*mlwt dbq*) that cover the words belonging to the third word class, namely the words that are neither nouns nor verbs. In his opinion "the slaves serve in initial position with word[s] of matter, nouns and verbs, and they are *b-k-l-w-m*, as in: *bl' ywklw* (Lam. 4:14), *kl' hyw* (Obad. 1:16), *wl' bh h'* (Deut. 6:10 [23:6]), *ll' dbr* (Amos 6:13), *mbly ykwlt h'* (Num. 14:16), as well as with the word *šr* ["that"]".⁶⁰ Immediately afterwards he retracts this generalization, holding that "the slaves [...] therefore do not serve as do all words of matter, such as *l* ["to"], *rq* ["only"] and *k* ["but, only"]; though we have found *wysm ll'* (Job 24:25), we do not say *kl'*".⁶¹ At the end of his book *Yēsōd diqdūq* Ibn Ezra states:

b-k-l-m, these four are for matters, for the [letter] *bet* is for a vessel, therefore it is called so; the *kap* is for a likeness, therefore it is called so; the *lamed* is the essence of instruction; and the *mem* is like the plural in the way of the language, and its meaning is like *mh*m ["from them"], a thing derived from other things. And in truth, like the case of the parts from

48 Bacher 1882: 72.

49 Charlap 1995: 168–183.

50 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 11b–13a, 38a–39b. In that book, Ibn Ezra lists the various classes of Hebrew grammatical terms, and researchers therefore see it as a dictionary of grammatical terminology. See Bacher 1882: 72 n. 4.

51 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 105–107 ; *Sēper šahōt* 32b–34b.

52 Introduction to the second commentary on Genesis, 10.

53 *Sēper hāriqmāh* Ch. 4, 41.

54 The biblical references are given here as provided by Ibn Ezra. Some of the references he gives are mistaken, in which case the correct reference is added in brackets.

55 Ibn Ezra talks of words that combine with what he calls *knwym*, by which he probably means prepositions. *Yēsōd diqdūq* 105–107.

56 For instance: "And the [letter] *yod* is found added [= superfluous] at the end of the word, as in *hmgybyh* (Ps. 113:5) [...] and with word[s] of matter such as *bly* ["besides"] and *zwly* ["except"]: you may see that it is said *ky 'yn bltk* (1 Sam. 2:2)" (*Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 15b).

57 "And should a grammarian say, how does the [letter] *lamed* join a verb in the past, there being no such case? The answer is that the *bet* and the *lamed* are equal" (Commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:18).

58 For instance: "Some words of matter do not occur in the construct, such as *šr* ["that"], *rq* ["only"], *'k* ["but, only"] and *gm* ["also"], and there are some that do, such as *'hr* ["after"]: you say *'hry* ["after me"], *'hryk* ["after you"] in the plural, and the singular construct is not found; and there are some that are found in both manners, such as *ṭht* ["under"]: it is said *ṭhtywt* ["lower", here as an adjective] (Josh. 15:19), and *ṭhtny* ["under me"] is an exception" (*Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 30a).

59 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 3a.

60 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 11b–12a.

61 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a–b.



the whole.⁶²

Ibn Ezra refers in that book to the rules of vocalization of this group of letters, stating that

b-w-k-l, these alone are set in one way, with a mobile *šewa*, as I mentioned about the word *šm'wn* ["Simeon"]. Not so the [letter] *mem*, for it is always set with a *hireq* or a short *qamaṣ* [= *šeré*] with the letters 'ḥ-h-'r. But the *waw* alone is read as an *'alep* vocalized with a *šuruq*, as I have mentioned. And if a mobile *šewa* follows the letters *b-w-k-l*, they are all vocalized with a *hireq*: *kr'wbn* (*kirē'ūbēn*), *lr'wbn* (*lirē'ūbēn*), except for the [letter] *waw* as I have mentioned.⁶³

3.1.2. The 'servants'

Ibn Ezra included in the 'servant' group — in contradistinction to the 'slaves' and the 'words of matter' — the clitic prepositions *b-k-l-m*, the letters 'y-t-n used as prefixes in the imperfect conjugation, and the letters *š-w-h* (subordinating conjunction, coordinating conjunction and definite article, respectively), which may be prefixed to verbs and nouns:

One half of the letters of the sacred tongue are primary [...] and one half of the letters are sometimes primary and sometimes servants, and the sign is *k-š-t-y-l 'b h-m-w-n*, as is my name [*'b hmwn* 'father of a multitude' being a reference to the Biblical Abraham]. And since the [letters] *'alep* and *he* are light on the tongue they were set as servants, not so the *het* and the *'ayin*, which therefore remained primary.⁶⁴

Ibn Ezra also noted in *Yēsōd diqdūq*: "*b-k-w-l-m*, these are the signs of the servants, they are at the beginning, as in *bšm'wn* ["in Simeon"], *kšm'wn* ["like Simeon"], *lšm'wn* ["to Simeon"], *wšm'wn* ["and Simeon"]". Further on in that book he mentioned this term while discussing "the ten formatives for nouns and verbs": "And since the signs *'alep mem* are among the servant letters, I shall state how each and every letter serves".⁶⁵ Ibn Ezra also states: "The servants are the letters that are sometimes radical and sometimes added, and they are *š-w-h b-k-l-m 'y-t-n*".⁶⁶ In *Sēper sēpat yeter* he remarks: "And the Gaon further said that the servant letters are half of all the letters. And R. Adonim said that the *ṭ* and the *d* are servants too, which is contrary to the opinions of all the earlier and latter grammarians."⁶⁷ Ibn Ezra further defines each servant letter:

The 'Alep

Always the speaker's sign of for himself, it is set at the beginning of the word in all verb stems (*binyanim*), as in *'rdwp* ["I will pursue"], *'syg* ["I will overtake"]. *'Alep* is also found at the head of the word replacing *he*: *'thbr yhwšpt* [for *hthbr*] (2 Chron. 20:35) and is quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script] at the end of the word as the mark of the feminine instead of *he*, as in *qr'n ly mr'* [for *mrh*] (Ruth 1:21 [1:20]) [...] It is also found added at the beginning of the word, as in *b'zrw'k* [for *bzrw'k*] (Jer. 32:21); and inside the word, as in *wh'znyhw nhrwt* [for *whznyhw*] (Isa. 19:6); also found replacing the geminate letter, as in *bz'w nhrym* [for *bbzw*] (Isa. 19:10 [18:2]). And it is found added in final position, as in *w'tyqyh* [for *w'tyqyh*] (Ezek. 41:15).⁶⁸

The Bet

Serves in initial position, as in *bhrby wbqšty* (Gen. 48:22) and replacing a *mem* [in a partitive meaning], as in *whnwt bbsr wblhm* (Lev. 8:32).⁶⁹

The *bet* serves in initial position in two known ways, one is [locative] as in *bbyt 'hd* ["in one house"] and the other [partitive] as in *whnwt bbsr wblhm* ["and the remainder of the flesh and the bread"]. And sometimes *bet* replaces *b'bwr* [in the sense of "about, concerning"], as in *whw' nḥš ynḥš bw* (Ge. 44:5) [...] and it is not as in *bhlwm adbr bw* (Num. 12:6), for here the prophet becomes as a tongue for the Lord ["in dream I speak through him", instrumental]; and this is right in my view, but many said it means 'in dream I speak with him' [comitative]. And sometimes *bet* is added [= superfluous] in the beginning, as in *br'šwnh* (Gen. 13:4), for it is written *r'šwnh ns'w* (Num. 2:9); and so also *b'trm* ["before"], there is no distinction between it and *trm*. [...] But the *bet* of *br'šyt* ["in the beginning"] is not added in my opinion because it has a meaning; and there are many words without *bet*, such as *ššt ymym*.⁷⁰

And a *bet* is found with a past verb, which is an exception: *bhkyn lw dwd* (2 Chron. 1:4). [...] The *bet* serves in initial position with all nouns, like the *lamed*, and does not serve at the end.⁷¹

The He

In *Yēsōd diqdūq* and *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* Ibn Ezra lists several grammatical functions of the letter *h*, of which the principal are:

62 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 163-164.

63 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 162-163.

64 *Sēper šahōt* 14a-b; cf. *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 31: Ibn Ezra indicates that the letter *reš* cannot be omitted, being one of the letters called 'kings' (*mlkym*) for the reason that they do not 'serve': *h, ṭ, g, z, ' , š, d, q*. He adds that the term 'servants' includes the letters *k, š, ṭ, l, y, ' , b, h, m, w, n*.

65 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 98. Ibn Ezra refers here to the letters' function as verbal prefixes.

66 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 3a. Ibn Ezra includes in this group the affixes used in verbal conjugation.

67 *Sēpat yeter* 6a.

68 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 98.

69 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 98.

70 *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 44a-b; cf. *Sēper šahōt* 15a.

71 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a-b.



1. Interrogative *he*:

The letter *h* at the head of a word serves to indicate wonder, as in *hqwkw zh bny* (1 Sam. 24:17), and is always vocalized with a *šewa* and *pataḥ* [= *ḥaṭap pataḥ*].⁷²

This letter serves in initial position for wonder, with the words of sense and the nouns and also the verbs, and the *he* is always vocalized with a *šewa* and *pataḥ* [= *ḥaṭap pataḥ*].⁷³

2. Definite article: according to Ibn Ezra another function for the *h* is determination, in which case the following letter is always geminated, as in *hqw* (*haqqōl*) *qwl y'qb* (Gen. 27:22).

3. Affix in certain verb stems:

The *h* is added at the beginning of the word as an addition to the heavy stem called *hip'il*, as in *hkbyd* [...], and in the stem *hitpa'el*, as in *whṭgdly whṭqdšty*, and in the infinitive of the *nip'al* stem, as in *'m hmš'*, as well as in the imperative [...]; also in a stem that has no infinitive [*hop'al*]: *whwšlk* [...]. It is also found in initial position in place of an *'alep*, as in *ytr h'mwn* that is *hwmwn*, as is written in the second book.⁷⁴

4. Suffix: Ibn Ezra listed three functions for the *h* appearing at the end of the word. According to him,

the *he* in final position is of three manners: one is added, as in *qdmh* ["southwards"], *mzrḥh* ["eastwards"], and also *hš'r hḥtwnh* [for *hḥtwn*], *bw'rḥ* [for *bw'r*] *m'wph*, the penultimate stress indicating that the *he* is added and is not the mark of the feminine, as in *nhlh* [for *nhl*] *'br 'l npšnw*; and the *he* sometimes replaces *'l* ["to"], which is a word of sense, as in *ywšlymh* ["to Jerusalem"], *mšrymh* ["to Egypt"] [= directional *he*].⁷⁵

And there is a *he* that is the mark of the feminine, and on verbs [as an accusative suffix] is quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script], as in *šmrh* ["she has garded"]. And if it is on a noun [as a genitive suffix] it will have a *mappiq*, as in *ydh* ["her hand"]. And the *he* is found added [= superfluous] in final position to a *taw*, as in *yšw'th* [for *yšw'h*], *'zrth* [for *'zrh*], *bšrth* [for *bšrh*] [...] because the *taw* replaces the *he*. For so is the way of the language to always replace *he* by *taw* in the construct.⁷⁶

The *he* of the feminine in nouns, if not adjacent to another, is always quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script], as in *šdqh*, *nšmh* [...] and the *he* is found added to the marks of the future in all verbal stems [cohortative], as in *'šm'h* [indicative *'šm*], *'šlykh* [indicative *'šlyk*].⁷⁷

Ibn Ezra addressed this issue again in *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh*, noting:

The *he* serves in final position as the mark of the feminine in nouns such as *šdqh* ["righteousness"], *š'qh hn'rḥ* (Deut. 22:27), and in verbs: *šmrh* ["she has garded"], *zkrh ywšlym* (Lam 1:7), *h'mrḥ blbbh* (Isa 47:8). and the *he* turns into a *taw*: *h'mrt* [for *h'mrh*], and so also *wšbt* [*wšbh*] *lnsy'* [...]. In the number up to ten it is a mark of the masculine, the feminine being without the *he*. And there is a *he* added to nouns and also to verbs [cohortative]: *yšwbw rš'ym lš'wlh* (Ps. 9:18) *'šm'h* [for *'šm*], *nd'h* [for *nd*], *ndršh* [for *ndrš*] [...] and there is a *he* in final position in place of *'l* vocalized with a *segol*, which is a word of sense, and the word always has penultimate stress: *ywšlymh* ["to Jerusalem"], *hšmymh* ["to the heavens"], *ymh wqdmh wšpnh wngbh* (Gen 28:14). There is also in the book of Ezekiel a *he* added to the word *spwn* that is not for sense, and likewise *hš'r hḥtwnh* [for *hḥtwn*] [...] And sometimes *he* serves for the feminine [= genitive suffix], as in *ydh* ["her hand"] and in the plural *ydyh* ["her hands"], *ydyhn* ["their hands"], *lh* ["to her"], *bh* ["in her"] [...].⁷⁸

The Waw

Ibn Ezra lists several functions for the *w*, essentially:

1. Coordinating conjunction joining nouns and verbs:

It is found at the head of the word serving the purpose of a noun with a noun or a verb with a verb, as in *r'wbn wšm'wn* ["Reuben and Simeon"].⁷⁹

2. Conversive *waw*:

And if not, it will initially point to a verb in the past and make it future, as in *w'sh bš'l'* (Exod. 36:24), and so in the masculine and the feminine.⁸⁰

And the *waw* if it appears before a verb in the past may be a *waw* of coordination, as in *my p'l w'sh* (Isa. 41:4) or a *waw*

72 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102.

73 *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 44b.

74 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102; cf. *Sēper šaḥôt* 18b–19a.

75 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102.

76 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102.

77 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102.

78 *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 45a; cf. *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12b, *Sēper šaḥôt* 19b–20a.

79 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 102–103.

80 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 102–103.



that turns it into future (*waw* of conversion), as in *w'sh bš'l* (Exod. 36:1), and the context will distinguish them.⁸¹

3. Introducing a clause: “and there is an added [= superfluous] *waw*, as in *w'yh w'nh* (Gen 36:24)”.

4. Part of the word radical:

And the *waw* is never found as a radical at the head of the word, unless substituting a *yod* [...] neither it is found as a radical at the end of the word, unless substituting a *he*. As a radical it is always found inside the word.⁸²

5. As a vowel:

At the end of the word, if it was with a *šuruq*, it is the mark of the plural, as in '*sw* [“they did”], *bnw* [“they built”] [...] so it is in all the verb stems. And if there was a *he* added before the *waw* or a geminated *nun*, it is the mark of the singular [= accusative suffix] [...] and sometimes the *he* and *nun* are merged [...] and if there is a *holam* on the *waw* it is always the mark of the third person singular with nouns [= genitive suffix], as in *ydw* [“his hand”], *rglw* [“his leg”], and with verbs [= accusative suffix]: *'wyb yrdpw* (Hos. 8:3), but it is a very rare with verbs. And a *waw* is found to be added [= superfluous] at the end of the word, as in *bnw b'wr* (Num. 24:3).⁸³

The Yod

Ibn Ezra touches mainly on the origin of the consonantal *y* in the radical and on its role in marking the gender and number:

1. In initial position:

And the [letter] *yod* in initial position is the mark of the masculine singular or plural in all verb stems, as in *yšmwr* [“he will gard”], *yšmrw* [“they will gard”], *yšlyk* [“he will throw”], *yšlykw* [“they will throw”] [...].⁸⁴

Ibn Ezra further writes:

It is a mark of the third person singular in all verb stems, masculine singular or plural: *ybnh*, *ybnw*. The *yod* interchanges with '*alep*, as in '*šrw ḥmwš* [for *yšrw*] (Isa. 1:17) and with *he*: *ydw hdh* [for *ydh*] (Isa. 11:8). And it is found in initial position as a radical letter, and also in the middle of the word [...] and it disappears.⁸⁵

In this context, he takes issue with the words of earlier scholars, stating:

And the grammarians have said that [*yod*] is found in final position as a radical letter in the word *ḥyym* [“life”], and they were all mistaken, for it is not found as a final radical except substituting a *he*, as in *ḥsyh npšy* [from *ḥsh*], *bwkyh* [from *bkh*].⁸⁶

2. In final position: Ibn Ezra lists several functions:

And the [letter] *yod* is found added [= superfluous] at the end of the word, as in *hmgbyhy* [for *hmgbyh*] (Ps. 113:5) [...] and with word[s] of matter such as *blty* [“besides”] and *zwlty* [“except”]: you may see that it is said *ky 'yn bltk* [“for there is none besides you”] (1 Sam. 2:2).⁸⁷

He further holds that

It is found at the end vocalized with a *hireq* in three manners, one is the mark of the first person masculine or feminine singular with nouns or verbs [= genitive or accusative suffix]: *r'sy* [“my head”], *ydy* [“my hand”]; and the second manner is the mark of the gentilic, as in *h'bry* [“the Hebrew”], *hmšry* [“the Egyptian”]; and the third manner is an added [= superfluous] *yod* as in *bnw atnw* (Gen. 49:11). And there is no need to mention the *yod* that is the mark of the feminine singular in all verbs in the seven verb stems.⁸⁸

3. As a vowel:

And know that the *yod* becomes quiescent with a broad *qamaš* in every plural with the mark of the third person, as in *bl'dyw* (*bil'ādāw*) among the words of matter and all '*yw* (*'elāw*) and '*yw* (*'alāw*); and in nouns such as *ydyw* (*yādāw*).⁸⁹

The Kap

1. In initial position:

It serves at the head of the word: *k'sr* [“as that”], *kšm'wn* [“like Simeon”], *khwšy'm 'wtm* (Gen. 19:17), which is an

81 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.
82 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 102–103; cf. *Sēper šaḥōt* 21a.
83 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 102–103.
84 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.
85 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.
86 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 103–105.
87 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 15b.
88 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 103–105.
89 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 13b.



infinitive.⁹⁰

The *kap* serves in initial position like the *lamed* and it is for a matter that is similar, the *kap* of valuation and similarity.⁹¹

2. In final position:

But it serves at the end of the word for the second person masculine, with a broad *qamaṣ*, and for the masculine plural, the plural being with the addition of a *mem* and under the *kap* a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*].⁹²

And at the end of the word for the second person the masculine it is vocalized with a *qamaṣ* and for the feminine with a *šewa*; and for the plural masculine and feminine it is vocalized with a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*] with the addition of a *mem* and a *nun* in all nouns and verbs.⁹³

3. In prepositional phrases:

We have not found the *kap* to occur on a verb in the past, and Rabbi Jonah, may he rest in peace, has said: ‘*wkmw hšḥr* *’lh* (Gen. 19:15) — why was it not said *wkmw ’lh hšḥr*? Because the *mem* and the *waw* in the word *kmw* are added, and so as not to have a *kap* with a verb in the past, they were separated by the word *hšḥr*’; but he forgot *wrbw kmw rbw* (Zech. 10:8).

The Lamed

1. In initial position:

The *lamed* serves in initial position only, with a letter of matter, as in *lk* [“to you”], *ly* [“to me”], and with a word of matter, as in *lbty* [“lest”], and with the nouns and with the verbs, except from any past and future.⁹⁴

Ibn Ezra further states that

it serves in initial position: *lsm’wn* [“to Simeon”], and with the verbs, and it is my opinion that it is the infinitive and that it stands in place of a noun.⁹⁵

2. Meaning:

And the *lamed* is found for the word *b’bwr* [in the sense of “about, concerning”]: *pn y’mrw ly* (Judg. 9:14 [9:54]), and is added [= superfluous] in the word *šl’nn* [for *š’nn*] (Job 21:23), which is an exception.⁹⁶

3. In prepositional phrases:

And should a grammarian say, how does the *lamed* join a verb in the past, there being no such case? The answer is that the *bet* and the *lamed* are equal, and the joining of one is like the joining of the other, there is one way for all.⁹⁷

And there is a word of matter where *lamed* occurs with *bet*, as in *lb’bwr* [“in order that”]; and the matter without the *lamed* would suffice, but those saying in their poetry *’bwr* [omitting the *b* as well] are mistaken, for the meaning turns to another matter [*’bwr* as a substantive meaning “produce”], as when we remove the *lamed* of *lm’n* [“for the sake of/so as to”] (for then *m’n* would be derived from *ky ’yn m’nh* [a substantive meaning “answer”]).⁹⁸

The Mem

1. In initial position:

It serves in initial position for two purposes; one is as in *m’l byk* (Gen. 49:25), which is vocalized with a short *qamaṣ* [= *šeré*] so as not to geminate the following letter [...] And it is found with the words of adhesion like its fellows that are *b-k-l*, as in *m’šr* [“from that which”], *m’l* [“from with”], *m’l* [“from over”], and does not come with other irregular words such as *gm* [“also”], *p* [“also”]; but *mbty* is found (Num. 14:16).⁹⁹

90 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–108.

91 *Mô’znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 12b.

92 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–106.

93 *Mô’znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 12b.

94 *Mô’znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 12b. Yet he stated on page 12a that “the *lamed* is found with a verb in the past, as in *lbrm h’lhym* (Eccl. 3:18), as I have explained in the commentary to Ecclesiastes”. The commentary in question is quoted below.

95 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 106–111.

96 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 106–111.

97 Commentary to Ecclesiastes 3:18. Ibn Ezra’s reference to grammatical words in his exegesis attests to his many digressions from the topic at hand and his concern with odd grammatical issues.

98 *Mô’znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 39b.

99 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 106–108.



And with the *mem* there can never be a verb in the past.¹⁰⁰

And the *mem* serves in initial position as a letter of matter, and it is *mn* ["from"]; therefore the letter following it is geminated, for the absence of the *nun*.¹⁰¹

2. In final position to mark the masculine plural:

And the *mem* at the end of the word is the masculine plural in nouns, but there are irregular feminine words: *nšym* ["women"], *pylgšym* ["concubines"]; and in verbs [...] both strong and weak.¹⁰²

The Nun

1. As verbal affix in future tense forms:

It serves in initial position for the [first person] plural, masculine or feminine, in all verb stems.¹⁰³

2. As marker of the *nip'al* stem:

And it is found added to the stem *nip'al*, and is not seen in the future, being incorporated in the gemination.¹⁰⁴

3. As verbal affix in past tense forms:

At the end, the final radical letter is found to be incorporated if it merges with the *nun* of the first person plural, as in *wmydk ntnw* (*nātannū*) (1 Chron. 29:14), and for this the *nun* of the plural is marked with a *dageš*; and so also with the *nun* that is the mark of the third person feminine plural.¹⁰⁵

4. On nouns:

The *nun* in final position is the mark of the feminine plural in nouns, as in *r'sn* ["their head"], *ydyhn* ["their hands"]; so also in the verbs in all verb stems; and it is sometimes replaced with a *mem*.¹⁰⁶

The Šin

The *šin* is in the place of 'šr ["that"], as in *škkh* (Song 5:9), *šbšplnw* (Ps. 136:23).¹⁰⁷

It serves only in initial position, instead of 'šr ["that"]: with nouns, as in *šy'y alhyw* (Ps. 144:15); and with words of adhesion: *škkh lw* (Ps. 144:15); and with verbs: *ššzptny hšmš* (Song 1:6).¹⁰⁸

The Taw

1. As verbal affix in future tense forms:

It serves in initial position for the second person masculine singular [and] plural, as well as for the second person feminine singular and plural in all verb stems, for the future tense. And the *taw* is the mark of the third person feminine singular or plural instead of the *yod* that is the mark of the masculine.¹⁰⁹ And in final position it is the mark of the second person for past verbs in all verb stems.¹¹⁰

2. In noun formation:

Taw is added in nouns, as in *tp'rh* ["glory"], *tqwmh* ["ability to stand"].¹¹¹

3. Letter substitutions:

Taw is found instead of *he*, as in *trglty* [for *hrglty*] *l'prym* (Hos. 11:3), where it replaces the *he*. In final position there is found *wšbt* [for *wšbh*] *lnsy'* (Ezek. 46:17), where it replaces the *he*.¹¹²

100 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.

101 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12b.

102 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 106–108.

103 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 101–106.

104 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 102–108.

105 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 104–108.

106 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 101–108.

107 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.

108 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 110.

109 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 110–111.

110 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 110–111.

111 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 110–111.

112 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 110–111.

4. Vocalization:

For the masculine it is vocalized with a broad *qamaṣ*, as though there were a quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script] *alep* or *he* after it, and in the feminine it is vocalised with a quiescent *šewā* under the *taw* as well as the letter before the *taw*. But if it is one of the guttural letters the letter will be vocalized with a broad *pataḥ*, and no word is an exception.¹¹³

It seems that in Ibn Ezra's way of thinking, the term *mšrtym* 'servants' is broader than *bdym* 'slaves'; the grammatical words classified under the latter, *b-k-l-m*, are part of the group of words classified under the former. The letters classified under both terms can function as letters of matter (see below) and some may be prefixed to the words of matter and of adhesion, as well as to verbs.

3.1.3. The 'words of matter'

In this group are included grammatical words such as *mn* "from", *gm* "also", *p* "even", *l* "to", *rq* "only", *k* "but, only", *l* "to", *blty* "besides", *zwlty* "except", *šr* "that", *l* "on" and *d* "up to". Ibn Ezra defines this group of words as follows:

A letter of matter or word of matter joins a name and a verb, or two names; sometimes the letter of matter is unnecessary, as in *wšmw'l mt* ["and Samuel died"] (1 Sam 28:3), but he who says *wplšty m nhlmw* [And the Philistines fought] (1 Chron. 10:1) needs one: *bysr'l* ["against Israel"], and so also every noun of place and time. And know that every intransitive or transitive verb requires a place and time, as in *wšmw'l mt brmh bywm plwny* ["and Samuel died at Ramah on such a day"] and so always every verb. And sometimes the letter of matter is omitted for it is known: it is said *hnms' byt* [for *bbyf*] *h'* ["that is found (in) the house of the Lord"] (2 Kgs 12:11) [...], and so for the letter of matter of time: it is said *ky ššt ymym 'sh h'* ["for (in) six days the Lord made"] (Exod. 31:17), and the matter is *bššt ymym* ["in six days"]. And there may be two nouns that are a substance with a substance joined with a letter of matter, as in *r'wbn bbyt* ["Reuben is in the house"].¹¹⁴

Definition

In his definitions of their grammatical functions, Ibn Ezra appears to distinguish the 'words of matter' from the 'slaves' and the 'servants'. These words have their own specific meaning and their role is to join the words in the sentence. In his opinion "the slaves [...] therefore do not serve as do all words of matter, such as *l* ["to"], *rq* ["only"] and *k* ["but, only"]; though we have found *wysm l'l* (Job 24:25), we do not say *k'*".¹¹⁵ He states additionally that "the [words of] matters are such as *mn* ["from"], *gm* ["also"] and *p* ["even"], or letter[s] of matter as in *lbnymyn* ["to Benjamin"], *škkh* ["that thus"], which are *b-w-k-l-m-š* (and are called the words of sense)".¹¹⁶

Form

According to Ibn Ezra some 'words of matter' are composed of two lexemes. "And know that the word *bl'dy* ["apart from"] is composed of two words"¹¹⁷. "And some say that the word *wyhs* (Num. 13:30) is a word of matter and the matter is *hs* ["hush!"] [...] The word *l* ["on"] comes from *lh* ["to go up"], though it is for matter (a word of sense)".¹¹⁸

Inflection

Some of the words in this group are inflected in the singular alone, and others in the plural.

Word[s] of matter such as *šr* ["that"], *rq* ["only"] and *gm* ["also"] do not occur in the plural, but there are among them *l* ["on"] and also *ly* [...], as well as the word *ly* ["to"] and the word *dy* ["up to"], and when in juxtaposition [= genitive construction] they are always in the plural, as in *lyw*, *lyw* and *dyw* (for the *yod* is the mark of the plural).¹¹⁹

Later on in that book Ibn Ezra discusses the manner in which the words of matter are used in the construct or absolute form, stating:

Some words of matter do not occur in the construct, such as *šr* ["that"], *rq* ["only"], *k* ["but, only"], *gm* ["also"] and *p* ["even"], and some of them do, such as *hr* ["after"]: you say *hry*, *hryk* in the plural, and the singular construct is not found; and some are found in both manners, such as *tht* ["under"]: it is said *thtywt* ["lower", here as an adjective] (Josh. 15:19), and *thtny* ["under me"] is an exception.¹²⁰

Determination

Ibn Ezra further delimits the 'words of matter' by saying that the definite article *h* does not attach to words of this group: "The *he* of knowledge [= definite article] never comes with a letter of matter or a word of matter".¹²¹ "The *he* of wonder [=

113 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 110–111; cf. *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 12b, *Sēper šahôt* 31b–32b.

114 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 40a.

115 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 12a–b.

116 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 3a.

117 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 17b.

118 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 19b.

119 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 17b.

120 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 30a.

121 *Mô'znê lěšôn haqqōdeš* 22a.



interrogative particle] is found with a letter of matter: *hrq 'k bmšh* (Lev. 12:2), *h'l 'lh* (Isa. 36:6 [57:6]).¹²²

Genitive constructs

There are words of matter that occur in juxtaposition [= genitive construction] as nouns do, such as *mn* ["from"], *'l* ["to"] and *'l* ["on"], in the singular and the plural, and some that do not, such as *'šr* ["that"], *rq* ["only"] and *'k* ["but, only"]: it is not said *'šry* ["that I"], nor *'šrk* ["that you"]; and there are such words that do not join and are plural in form, such as *lwly* ["unless"], and there are plural [words of] matter with a singular[-like] suffix that is not a [mark of] juxtaposition, such as *'wly* ["perhaps"]. The word *'l ydrwk ydrwk hdwrk* (Jer 51:3) is juxtaposed to a verb in the future and I know no such other. And there are words of matter that vary according to their position [= pausal forms], such as *ky 'yn* (*'én*) *kmwhw* (1 Sam. 10:26 [10:24]), *bqš lš hkmh w'yn* (*'āyin*) (Prov. 14:6).¹²³

Further on, Ibn Ezra writes:

I have already mentioned elsewhere that the words *'l* ["to"], *'l* ["on"] and suchlike, when joining a juxtaposition [= genitive construction] are always in the plural, as in *'ly* ["to me"], *'lyw* ["to him"], *'lyh* ["to her"], *'lykm* ["to you"], *'lyhm* ["to them"], *'lynw* ["to us"], and there are some that you may find in two manners, such as *wbwtḥ bh' 'šryw* (Prov. 16:20) and *šmr twrh 'šrhw* (*ibid.* 29:18).¹²⁴

In the same book Ibn Ezra adds:

The juxtaposed [...] some of them are found with endings of words of matter in the manner of juxtaposed nouns, as in *ḥsdk* (*ḥasdekā*) with a short *pataḥ* under the third radical letter, *ky 'yn qdwš kh' ky 'yn bltk* (*biltekā*) (1 Sam. 2:2) and some are in another manner such as *lk* (*lĕkā*), *bk* (*bĕkā*), *'wtk* (*'ōtkā*), *'tk* (*'itkā*) and *'mk* (*'imkā*).¹²⁵

Prepositional phrases

And any verb that is joined with *'t* [the accusative marker] sometimes remains in juxtaposition [= accusative suffix]: you say *šmwr 'wty* or *šmry* ["protect me"], and it is not so with the words *'l* ["to"], *'l* ["on"], *'šry* ["happy ...!"] and the *bet* of matter and the *lamed* of matter. And know that these adhesives come with intransitive verbs, and some are transitive, as in *w'rbh lh'* ["pleasing to the Lord"] (Mal. 3:4), *y'rb 'lyw šyhy* ["may my words be pleasing to him"] (Ps. 104:34), the *lamed* or the word *'l* ["on"] cannot be removed; and so also the word *bṯhw bh'* ["trust in the Lord"] (*ibid.* 115:10) [...]. The letter of matter or word of matter cannot be removed [...] And nothing of this sort is found except for the *lamed* or the word *'l* ["to"], thus we cannot say *yhltyk* but *yhlty lk* or *'lyk* ["I long for you"] (Ps. 25:21), but the word *wqwtw lw* ["I waited for him"] is found without *lamed*: *ky qwtyk* ["for I wait for you"], and we always pursue what is found. And there are verbs with known words of matter, such as *znh* ["to lust"], where the verb comes joined with the object with the word *'hry* ["after"], and also *wyhl mšh* ["and Moses entreated"] that joins with *pnym* ["the face"] in this matter, as in *rbyw yhlw pny ndyb* ["many entreat the face of the generous"] (Prov. 19:6).¹²⁶

3.1.4. The 'words of adhesion'

This group of words is frequently mentioned in Ibn Ezra's writings, particularly when he lists the words included in that group and these words' rules of declension. It appears that the group of 'words of adhesion' includes the words of matter and the letters classified as 'servants' and 'slaves'. In his book *Yēsōd diqdūq* Ibn Ezra distinguishes three parts of the language: the noun ("which is the base"), the verb ("which is always the predicate") and the third part — the words of adhesion. He writes as follows:

The words of adhesion also, as in the case of *gm* ["also"], *'šr* ["that"], *rq* ["only"], *'k* ["but, only"], *blty* ["besides"]. And there is sometimes a letter instead of a word of adhesion, as in *wyqr' yy lṁšh* (Exod. 19:20), and this is like *'l mšh* ["to Moses"]; and they are four letters, and the sign is b-k-l-m.¹²⁷

Ibn Ezra can be seen to include in his discussion of the words of adhesion a variety of issues, such as:

Syntagmatic rules

Ibn Ezra lists in *Yēsōd diqdūq* various rules concerned with the collocation of the 'words of adhesion' with verbs and nouns, writing as follows:

[...] and sometimes a *mem* and a *waw* are added and it becomes a word of adhesion: *bmw py 'ṯhnn lw* ["with my own mouth I entreat him"] (Job 19:16), and so also *kmw ḥy kmw ḥrwn* ["the living like the burning"] (Ps. 58:10), and so also *lmw py* ["to my mouth"] (Job 40:4). Only with the *mem* does it not come at all. And when the *bet* is juxtaposed to a first person singular it is said by ["in me"], and for the third person masculine *bw* ["in him"] and for the second person masculine *bk* (*bĕkā*) ["in you"]. But with [the cantillation mark] *etnaḥ* and at the end of a verse it is *bāk* like the feminine;

122 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 24a.

123 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 38b–39a.

124 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 39a–b.

125 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 25b.

126 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 45a–b.

127 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 105.



and the [third person] feminine singular is bh ["in her"]; and the [third person] plural is bm ["in them"]; and with a waw it is said bmw; and with the addition of a he before the mem: bhm; and for the feminine like bhn, bnhh: with the addition of a final he, for bhmh is for the masculine plural and not the feminine, although the nun is always the mark of the feminine plural. And it is not said with kap: ky ["like me"], for this would be confused with the word ky ["because/that"] that is for the adhesion of matters. But a nun and a yod are added to the word kmw ["like"], and it is said kmwny ["like me"], and the kap is vocalised with a qamaş. And in the plural: kmwnw ["like us"], kmwk ["like you"] for the masculine, but kmwk for the feminine seems slightly difficult [is not found in the biblical text]. And the plural with the addition of a he: kmwhm ["like them"] [...] And the rule for the lamed is like that for the bet, and the rule for the mem in the singular is duplication, as in mmny ["from me"].¹²⁸

Ibn Ezra gives this example:

For you say r'wbn 'kl ["Reuben has eaten"] or y'kl ["will eat"], and here are the substance and the event; and a noun does not join with a noun save with the addition of a letter or word, as in r'wbn byt ["Reuben house"], r'wbn yş' byt ["Reuben went out house"], these things have no sense until you say r'wbn bbyt ["Reuben (is) in the house"], r'wbn yş' mhbyt ["Reuben went out of the house"].¹²⁹

Etymology and derivation

Ibn Ezra describes in *Yēsôd diqdûq* the derivation of the words of adhesion, stating:

Some of them are derived from verbs, such as 'l ["on"] from 'lh ["to go up"], 'hr ["after"] from wl' 'hr hn'r ["and the youth did not delay"] (Gen. 34:19), *withynw* ["you thought it easy"] (Deut. 1:41) from the root of hn ["lo!"], and it is that they said: *hnnw w'lynw* ["we are here and will go up"] (Num. 14:40) [...] And *tbwnh* ["understanding"] is from the root of *byn* ["between"], for it is essentially to distinguish between things. 'm ["with"], like 'ryw 'mmwhw ["cedars could not compare with it"] (Ezek. 31:8). And some words of adhesion are not derived, and they are the majority, such as 'k ["but, only"], gm ["also"], p ["even"].¹³⁰

He further holds that

There are compound words of adhesion, such as *mzh* ["from this"], 'my ["with me"], *bl'dy* ["apart from"] [...] and there are words whose first letter is duplicated: *kh 'sw* ["thus they did"] (Num. 32:8), *kkh 'sh lkm* ["thus it has done to you"] (Hos. 10:15). And we have not found it without *he* [k] in the entire Scriptures, only in the Rabbinical tongue.¹³¹

Inflection and genitive constructions

Ibn Ezra lists the inflection patterns of the words of adhesion, stating:

There are words of adhesion that are always singular, such as *rq* ["only"], *gm* ["also"]; [others that are] plural, such as *lpny* ["before"], and there are some that are in both manners, such as 'l *mšh* ["to Moses"] (Exod. 2:19), 'ly *mym* ["to the water"] (Job 29:19). Also 'l ["on"], 'd ["up to"]. But when juxtaposed [= in genitive constructions] they are always plural: 'ly, 'ly, 'dy. And some are both plural and singular, such as 'šryw ["happy is he"] (Prov. 14:21). And there is a singular with the addition of a yod or without it, such as *bl mšht* ["no destroyer"], *blly* ["without"]; *zwt, zwly* ["except"]. And sometimes the speaker may add a letter of adhesion: *wbkn r'yt* ["and then I saw"] (Eccl. 8:10) [...] there may also be two, as in *bšgm hw' bsr* ["for he is flesh"] (Gen. 6:3), and sometimes he may not add any, as in *lwly* ["if not, unless"] (Gen. 31:42).¹³²

Later on in that book Ibn Ezra adds that

There are some that are not juxtaposed, such as *lw* ["if"], 'l ["no, not"], 'k ["but, only"], *gm* ["also"], *rq* ["only"]. And most of the words of adhesion indicate the singular as well as the plural, masculine as well as feminine. Only a few words: *zh* ["this"] is masculine, as is *zw: 'm zw yşty ly* ["the people that I have formed for myself"] (Isa. 43:21), and the feminine is *z't*, and the word *hlz* ["this, that"] is for the masculine and the feminine [...] and for the plural masculine or feminine: 'lh ["these"], also with the omission of the *he*: *ht'bwt h'l* ["these abominations"] (Lev. 18:27). And some are inverted and the meaning is the same, as for 'l 'm ["a no-people"], 'l 'klw *mmnw* ["do not eat of it"] (Exod. 12:9), and some interchange the letters *y-h-w*-. But the first person singular and the third person feminine singular as well as the plural is slightly difficult, it is also true. And with the word 'mdy ["with me"] alone, no other [personal pronoun] is juxtaposed to it at all.¹³³

Vocalization

Ibn Ezra addresses the rules of vocalization of some of the words of adhesion, stating that

The word of adhesion is found in the masculine with a quiescent *şewa* under the *kap*, the first letter vocalized with a *qamaş*, but mostly in pause: *h'ty mh 'p'l lk (lāk)* ["if I sin, what do I do to you?"] (Job 7:20), and so also the word *bāk* ["in

128 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–107.

129 *Sēper şahôt* 32b.

130 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–107.

131 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–107.

132 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 105–107.

133 *Yēsôd diqdûq* 106–107.



you”], as well as *'wtk* (*'ótāk*) [“you”, accusative], (*'mk*) *'imāk* [“with you”]. And for the second person masculine [accusative suffix] on all verb stems the *kap* is vocalized with a broad *qamaš* whether or not in pause [...] there is always a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*] before the *kap*. And for the feminine, it is vocalized with a quiescent *šewa* in the verbs, and under the first letter that precedes the *kap* there is always a [short] *qamaš* [= *šērē*], as in *šbrk* (*šbārēk*) *blb ymy*m [“wrecked you in the high seas”] (Ezek. 27:26). And so also in nouns: *ydk* (*yādēk*) [“your hand”], *rglk* (*raglēk*) [“your foot”]. And the words of adhesion are vocalized like the masculine pausal forms everywhere: *kulāk yph* [“you are altogether beautiful”] (Song 4:7).¹³⁴

Ibn Ezra further adds that

the gemination of the *mem* is for the assimilation of the *nun* and the gemination of the *nun* is for the assimilation of another *nun*, and it is like [...] *mnmny*. For the plural: *mmnw* (*mimmennū*), with the *nun* geminated for the omission of a *nun*, for the extant *nun* is the mark of the plural, as is the *nun* of *bšl dlywtyw tšknh* (*tiškonnā*) [“will shelter in the shade of its branches”] (Ezek. 17:23). And for the third person masculine singular there is also found *mmnw*, *wl tgr'w mmnw* [“you shall not take anything from it”] (Deut 13:1) [...] It is also said *mnhw* [“from him”] alone. [...] and for the second person masculine singular: *mmk* (*mimkā*) [“from you”]; and if it occurred in pause: *mimāk*, but we have not found *mimāk* at all. And for the feminine: *mimēk*, and for the plural with the addition of a *he*: *mhm* [“from them”, masculine], *mhn* [“from them”, feminine].¹³⁵

3.1.5. The ‘words of sense’

It emerges from Ibn Ezra’s words in *Sēper šaḥōt* that the ‘words of sense’ (*mlwt ḥīm*) constitute the third word class in the language: “Every tongue is divided into three parts, the first part is the noun [...] and the second part is the verb [...] and the third part is the sense”. In his opinion “it is sometimes a letter, or a word, and the sense is the reason of the event affecting the substance as if it were from another superior source”. It also appears that Ibn Ezra includes under the label ‘words of sense’ various words that are neither verbs nor nouns, such as *gm* [“also”], *šr* [“that”], *k* [“but, only”], *rq* [“only”] and *bly* [“besides”].¹³⁶ It seems that Ibn Ezra, in this definition, relies on the words of his predecessor R. Jonah ibn Janah, who in *Sēper hāriqmāh* also included words such as *gm* [“also”], *ky* [“because/that”], *rq* [“only”], *k* [“but, only”], *lm'n* [“for the sake of/so as to”], *bly* [“besides”], *ngd* [“against”] in the chapter on the ‘words of sense’.¹³⁷ Ibn Ezra devotes a chapter of *Sēper šaḥōt* to these words (*š'r mlwt ḥīm*, the ‘chapter of the words of sense’), noting:

Some letters join into a single word, whether two letters long or up to twelve letters long, for there is no word longer than this, as in *wh'ḥšdrpny*m [“and the satraps”] (Esth. 9:3). *'Alep* is found with *'alep*, *'zrk* [“I engird you”], *bet* is found with all letters, even three in succession, *bbbt* *'ynw* [“in the apple of his eye”] (Zech. 2:12), and sometimes a *bet* is omitted: *bbt* *'ynw*, and it is said *bt* *'yn* (Ps. 17:8) [...] and from the word *kkh* [“thus, so”] it is said *kh*, though it is altered. *Gimel* is not found with *ḥet*, nor with *samek*, *šadi* or *qop*; *dalet* is not found with *ḥet*, nor with *samek*, *šadi* or *šin*; *ḥet* is not found with *gimel*, nor with *zayin*, *samek*, *šadi* or *qop*, *samek* is not found with *zayin*, nor with *ḥet* or *šadi*, *'ayin* is not found with *ḥet*, *šadi* is not found with *zayin*, nor with *samek* or *šin*.¹³⁸

Definition

Ibn Ezra writes of the words included in this group: “the words of sense are like the verbs that come to explain the matter under discussion, and sometimes a single letter is found instead of the word of sense; and there are four such letters: b, k, l, m”.¹³⁹ The letter *šin* is also included in this group:

And the sense is sometimes a single letter, and the sign thereof is b-k-l-m-š: *r'wbn bby*t [“Reuben is in the house”], *r'wbn kšm'wn* [“Reuben is like Simeon”], *r'wbn qr' lšm'wn* [“Reuben called Simeon”], *r'wbn npr*d *mšm'wn* [“Reuben took leave of Simeon”]. But it is not the way of the *šin* to serve other than instead of *'šr* [“that”], therefore those who place *šin* in the sense of the letters have not said rightly, it is b-k-l-m alone. And there is no difference between *wyqr' h' 'l mšh* [“And the Lord called Moses”] and *wyqr' h' 'l mšh* [“And the Lord called Moses”] [sic.], it is also right to say *wyqr' h' 't mšh* [“And the Lord called Moses”].¹⁴⁰

The accusative marker *'t*

Ibn Ezra lists the accusative marker *'t* among the words of sense, writing as follows:

The word *'t* is one of the words of sense. I have searched and examined it and found that it is not like the words *'l* [“on”] and *'l* [“to”] vocalized with a *pataḥ* [= *sego*], for it is said on the verb and the object, or if omitted from the word it does no harm; whereas the meaning of *bḥw bh'* [“trust in the Lord”] (Ps. 115:10), *bḥw 'l h'* [“trust upon the Lord”], you cannot say this thing without the *bet* or without *'l*. And *znh 'hry* *'lhy nkr* [“lusted after foreign gods”] (Deut. 33:15 [= 31:16]), it is not said *znh šm'wn 't* *'mtw* [“Simeon lusted his maidservant”], for it damages the substance of the matter. Therefore it [= the

134 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 106-107.

135 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 107.

136 *Sēper šaḥōt* 32b.

137 *Sēper hāriqmāh*, Ch. 4, 41.

138 *Sēper šaḥōt* 33a–b.

139 Bacher 1882: 112.

140 *Sēper šaḥōt* 33b.



accusative marker] is omitted and it is said *br'syt br' l'hym 't hšmym w't h'rš* ["in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), *l'mn hywm 'šr br' l'hym 'dm 'l h'rš* ["since the day that God created Man on the earth", no accusative marker] (Deut. 4:32) [...] And whoso says that if someone says *r'wbn hrg 't šm'wn* ["Reuben killed Simeon"], that the word *'t* [the accusative marker] is the sign that Simeon is the killed one, is wrong; for we have found *bn ykdb 'b* ["a son honours his father", no accusative marker] (Mal. 1:6) and in reverse order *'bnym šḥqw mym* ["water wears away stones", the object preceding the verb and no accusative marker] (Job 14:19); and [instances of] the word *'t* [the accusative marker] being unhelpful since it came in places with the subject.¹⁴¹

Etymology

Ibn Ezra seems to sort the words according to their source: some of them are derived from verbs, such as *'l* ["on"] from *'lh* ["to go up"], *'hry* ["after"] from *'hr* ["delay"] (Gen. 34:19), *hn* from *wthynw* (Deut. 1:41); others are not derived from verbs.¹⁴² Ibn Ezra states:

For the word *'l* ["on"] is derived from *'lywn* ["superior"], and not so *'l* ["to"] vocalized with a pataḥ [= segol], also *pn* ["lest"] from *'pwnh* ["I am overcome"] (Ps. 88:16) or *'pwnh* from *pn*, which is the correct. *'hr* ["after"] from *wl' 'hr hn'r* ["and the youth did not delay"] (Gen. 34:19) and it is sometimes said *'hry* in the manner of *'l*. And differently *'šry* ["happy is he"], always plural [...] and differently *'l* ["no"], *klw'* *hyw* ["as though they had never been"] (Obad. 1:16), *'l b'pk* ["not in your anger"] (Ps. 6:2) [...] and this word is not juxtaposed [in genitive constructions] at all.¹⁴³

Syntagmatic rules

Ibn Ezra notes that the *mem* sometimes joins one of the four letters *b-k-l-m*, leading to forms such as *bmw* (Job 19:16) and *kmw* (Ps. 58:16). He also presents the declension of the letter *b* with suffix pronouns: *by* ["in me"], *bw* ["in him"] etc. He further remarks that when a suffix pronoun is appended to *m*, another *mn* is added to it, giving *mmny* (*mimmenni*) ["from me"] from *mmny* (*minmenni*), and so also *mmnw* ["from him"], and that caution must be taken when adding the first person suffix to the letter *k*: "It is not said *ky* for then it would be the coordinating conjunction, but it should be said *kmwny* ["like me"].¹⁴⁴

And differently are words to which you cannot add a letter except for *waw*, such as *lwly* ["if not, unless"], *rq* ["only"], *'k* ["but, only"] and *gm* ["also"], only the *he* of wonder [= interrogative *h*] alone with *rq* ["only"], *gm* ["also"] and *'p* ["even"]. And differently are words to which a *yod* is added, *bl* ["not"] *bly* ["without"], *zwily klb bn ypwneh* ["except Caleb son of Jephunneh"] (Deut 1:36), *zwilt dlt 'm h'rš* ["except the poorest people of the land"] (2 Kgs 24:14).¹⁴⁵

Inflection

Ibn Ezra writes on the inflection of several words from this group:

Some words of sense are singular and revert to plural in juxtaposition [= genitive construction], such as *'l*, *'ly* ["on"] [...] and so also the word *'ly* ["to"], and so is the rule of *'d* ["up to"], and some use *'l* in juxtaposition in the singular, like *'l mšh* ["to Moses"], but there is a great difference between the word *'l* vocalized with a pataḥ [= segol] and the word *'l* [...] ¹⁴⁶

Ibn Ezra further notes:

And differently *'šr* ["that"], *k'sr* ["as, when"], *'lšr* ["to which"], *m'sr yqrt b'yiny* ["because you are precious in my eyes"] (Isa. 43:4), and this word is said about singular and plural, masculine or feminine, and so is also the word *'lh* ["these"], the *he* of knowledge [= definite article] being added to it: *h'lh*. [...]

And the words of sense that are juxtaposed to others, such as *'l mšh* ["to Moses"], are said *'ly* (*'ēlay*) ["to me"], *'lnw* (*'ēlēnū*) ["to us"], *'lk* (*'ēlēkâ*) ["to you", masculine], *'lk* (*'ēlayik*) ["to you", feminine], *'lkm* (*'ālēkem*) ["to you", masculine plural], *'lkn* (*'ālēken*) ["to you", feminine plural], *'lyw* (*'ēlāyw*) ["to him"], *'lh* (*'ēlēhâ*) ["to her"], *'lhm* (*'ālēhem*) ["to them", masculine], *'lhn* (*'ālēhen*) ["to you", feminine].¹⁴⁷

Demonstrative articles

Ibn Ezra also discusses the demonstrative articles in this chapter, stating:

ze ["this"] is the mark of the singular masculine, *zw* is plural masculine [...] *z't* is feminine, *hlz* is for masculine and feminine, *dbr 'l hn'r hlz* ["say to that youth"] (Zech. 2:8), *hšwnmyt hlz* ["that Shunammite woman"] (2 Kgs 4:25), *h'rš hlzw* ["that land"] (Ezek. 36:35), with the addition of a *waw* it is a feminine. It may also be a masculine, or the word *lzw* is like *lz*, for we have found *n'tm rš* ["the land was burned", with the verb in the masculine] (Isa. 9:18) and many such.¹⁴⁸

3.2 Vocalization

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- 141 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 33b–34a.
 142 Bacher 1882:113–114.
 143 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 34a–b.
 144 Bacher 1882:113.
 145 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 34b.
 146 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 34a.
 147 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 34b.
 148 *Sēper ṣaḥōt* 34b.
-



Ibn Ezra made partial references to the vocalization of the grammatical words, mainly the letters, in various contexts. The main points are presented below:

The letters b-k-w-l-m

With nouns *br'wbn* ["in Reuben"], *wr'wbn* ["and Reuben"], *kr'wbn* ["as Reuben"], *lr'wbn* ["to Reuben"], *mr'wbn* ["from Reuben"] and with verbs *'hytwpl bqwsrym* ["Ahitophel was among the conspirators"] (2 Sam. 15:31), and so are all: *bšmw'* ["upon hearing"], *kšmw'* ["upon hearing"], *lšmw'* ["to hear"], *mšmw'* ["from hearing"], with a *hireq* under the letters b-k-l-m and the waw vocalized with a *šuruq*.¹⁴⁹

With respect to the *šewa*, Ibn Ezra states that in a sequence of two mobile *šewa*, a *hireq* is put in the place of the first *šewa*, and the second is pronounced with the letters b-k-l [preceding it] [...] and it is known that under these letters, which are slaves, there is a mobile *šewa*.¹⁵⁰

He additionally states:

b-w-k-l, these alone are set in one way, with a mobile *šewa*, as I mentioned about the word *šm'wn* ["Simeon"]. [...] And if a mobile *šewa* follows the letters b-w-k-l, they are all vocalized with a *hireq*: *kirē'ūbēn* ["as Reuben"], *lirē'ūbēn* ["to Reuben"], except for the waw as I have mentioned.¹⁵¹

Elsewhere, Ibn Ezra mentions that

if it were one of the letters b-k-l-m, which are servants, then the letter should have been set with a mobile *šewa*. It is impossible for a man to pronounce two mobile *šewa*, therefore the Hebrews were forced to put a *hireq* under the servant letter if it is one of the letters b-k-l-m, as in *lirē'ūbēn* ["to Reuben"].¹⁵²

Preceding a word,

three servant letters joining before the word: *ky lēmbārī'šônā l' 'tm* ["because you were not there the first time"] (1 Chron. 15:13).¹⁵³

The He

The [interrogative] *he* [...] is always vocalized with a *šewa* and *pataḥ* [= *ḥaṭap pataḥ*]: *hālō hw' 'mr ly* ["did he not say to me himself?"] (Gen. 20:5), *hāraq 'k bmšh* ["only through Moses?"] [...] and if a *šewa* follows the *he*, the *he* is vocalized with a broad *pataḥ* [...] and so also if one of the guttural letters follows the *he*, the *he* is vocalized with a broad or short *pataḥ*, as in *ha'ebed ysrl* ["is Israel a slave?"] (Jer. 2:14), *heḥākām ya'né* ["does a wise man answer?"] (Job 15:2). [...]

If one of the guttural letters follows the *he* of knowledge [= definite article], the *he* is usually vocalized with a broad *qamaš*, this is also the rule of the *reš*, so that it is not geminated. Some are vocalized with a broad *pataḥ*: *ha'ebed ha'ibrī* ["the Hebrew slave"] (Gen. 39:17).¹⁵⁴

This letter serves in initial position for wonder, with the words of sense and the nouns and also the verbs, and the *he* is always vocalized with a *šewa* and *pataḥ* [= *ḥaṭap pataḥ*] [...] But if followed by a *šewa* such as I shall yet explain, as in *hbmḥnym* [*habēmaḥānīm*] (Num. 13:19), and also if the letter following the *he* is one of the letters 'h-h-', it is vocalized with a *pataḥ*, as in *h'mwr* [*ha'āmōr*] *lmlk bly'l* (Job 34:18), and sometimes with a broad *pataḥ* and sometimes with a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*], as in *h'nky* [*he'ānōkī*] [...] *hhytm* [*haḥāyitem*] [...], and the *he* is like the 'alep, as in *hhyth* [*heḥāytā*] *z'ḥ bymykm*, while the 'ayin is vocalized with a broad *pataḥ*, as in *h'bd* [*ha'ebed*] *ysrl* (Jer. 2:14).¹⁵⁵

Ibn Ezra further explains that another function for the *h* is determination, in which case the following letter is always geminated, as in *hqwl* [*haqqōl*] *qwl y'qb* (Gen. 27:22). If the following letter is one of the gutturals, the *h* will usually be vocalized with a *qamaš*, sometimes with a *pataḥ* [= *sego*], as in *wyl h'rbh* [*hā'arbē*], *h'mwr* [*he'āmūr*].¹⁵⁶

The Waw

At the end of the word the waw with *šuruq* on the words of matter is the mark of the singular: *kl p'l h' lm'nhw* [*lamma'ānēhū*] ["the Lord made all for its purpose"] (Prov. 10 [16:4]).¹⁵⁷

And at the end of the word it is always the mark of the third person singular, and is found everywhere, for it is found with a letter of matter such as *bw* (*bō*) ["in him"] and *lw* (*lō*) ["to him"].¹⁵⁸

The Kap

It serves at the start of the word. It serves at the end of the word only for the second person masculine singular with a broad *qamaš*, and for the plural with the addition of a *mem* and under the *kap* always a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*].¹⁵⁹

The matter is vocalized with a *qamaš* on the *kap*, and if it was cantillated with an *etnaḥ* and *sop pasūq*, and sometimes with a *zaqqep gādōl*, the *kap* is set with a *šewa*, and the masculine is confused with the feminine, as

149 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 12a.

150 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 11a–b.

151 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 162–163.

152 Introduction to the second commentary on Genesis, 7.

153 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 20b.

154 *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 44b–45a.

155 *Sāpāh bē'rūrāh* 44b.

156 *Yēsōd diqdūq* 99–102.

157 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 7b.

158 *Mō'znē lēšōn haqqōdeš* 6a.

159 *Yēsōd diqdūq*, 105–106.



in *'qwm lhwdwt lk (lāk)* ["I rise to praise you"] (Ps. 119:63 [119:62]).¹⁶⁰

The Mem

Always with a *hireq* or with a short *qamaṣ* [= *šērē*] with the letters *'-h-h-'-r*.¹⁶¹

The *mem* [...] is *min* ["from"], therefore the letter following it is geminated (for the omission of the *nun*), as in *mšws* (*missûs*), *mgml* (*miggāmāl*) [...]. If one of the letters *'-h-h-'-r* follows the *mem*, the position of the *dāgēš* will be quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script] after the *mem*, as in *mh'p* (*mēhā'ôp*) *Imynhw* (Gen. 6:20).¹⁶²

The Nun

And know that the letter that is the *nun* of the feminine plural will always be vocalized with a broad *qamaṣ* as in *mšpʔn* (*mišpāʔān*) (Num 27:1), and if the word [on which the suffix is appended] is in the plural, it will be vocalized with a short *pataḥ* [= *sego*].¹⁶³

The Tav

The *tav* in final position is the mark of the second person for past verbs in all verb stems. For the masculine it is vocalized with a broad *qamaṣ*, as if after it were a quiescent and invisible [= unmarked in the script] *'alep* or *he*, and in the feminine it is vocalized with a quiescent *šēwā* under the *tav* as well as the letter before the *tav*. But if it is one of the guttural letters the letter will be vocalized with a broad *pataḥ*, and no word is an exception.¹⁶⁴

4 Conclusion

The study summarized the definition of the general concept of 'grammatical words', as reflected in the language of Ibn Ezra. It showed that Ibn Ezra uses the labels 'slaves' (*'bdym*), 'servants' (*mšrtym*), 'words of matter' (*mlwt 'nyyn*) and 'letters of matter' (*'wtwt 'nyyn*), 'words of sense' (*mlwt t'm*) and 'words of adhesion' (*mlwt dbq*) to refer to the third word class, namely the words that are neither nouns nor verbs. According to Ibn Ezra this word class includes independent and clitic prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and interjections, but also grammatical morphemes such as the affixes of verbal conjugations.

The label 'slaves' covers the clitics *b-k-l-m-w*, whereas the label 'servants' includes, besides these, the letters *'-y-t-n-š-h*, and is therefore a broader term. The label 'words of matter' is broader still, containing the grammatical words included under the labels 'slaves' and 'servants', as well as words belonging to the third word class, such as *mn* ["from"], *gm* ["also"], *p* ["even"], *'l* ["to"], *rq* ["only"], *'k* ["but, only"], *bly* ["besides"], *zwlty* ["except"], *'sr* ["that"], *'l* ["on"], *'d* ["up to"] etc., whose role is to join a noun and a verb, two nouns or two verbs. The term 'words of adhesion' is synonymous with 'words of matter', it too including the slaves, the servants and the words of matter. The last term used by Ibn Ezra is 'words of sense', and though he refers to it as the third word class, he includes in it the letters *b-k-l-m-š*.

The various terms occur in most of Ibn Ezra's writings, including his Bible commentaries, as the topic and context require. It appears from the study that the definitions vary between the works specifically concerned with grammar and the unrelated works. Ibn Ezra repeatedly mentions the grammatical words' various functions and the flexibility in their meanings, which he sees as two qualities serving the writer's needs. The examination of Ibn Ezra's entire works enables to sort the various meanings and functions and the grammatical behaviour of the words listed under each of the labels used by Ibn Ezra in his discussion of grammatical words. Furthermore, Ibn Ezra's writings show that the terms are not synonymous. Ibn Ezra's comments on the word class to which this study refers as 'grammatical words' were presented here alongside each of the principal labels he uses for these words, and by this means each label is clearly delimited.

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161 *Yēsôd diqdūq* 101–108.

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