

Call no: B. (NS)PP45

Author: Ibn Ezra, Moses, ca. 1060-ca. 1139.

Title: Ask not the bounty of the sun of dust ... /by Moses Ibn Ezra translated by Solomon Solis Cohen.

Imprint: [Philadelphia : s.n., 19--?]

Collation: 1 broadside : ill. (border designs) ; 28 x 20 cm.

Notes: Type of broadside: Religious poem.

Subject: Laudatory poetry, Hebrew - United States.
Jewish poetry, English - United States.

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(Contributed to the Jewish Exponent)

Ask Not the Bounty of the Son of Dust

By Moses ibn Ezra

Translated from the Hebrew by Solomon Solis Cohen



Ask not the bounty of the son of dust*
Who treads the earth, like thee, a moment's space;
Nor envy all his wealth—for by God's grace
Alone, he holds it; and thereof hath just
His food and raiment and a bed—and moil;
Like any ox who draws the high-heaped wain
To the barns—and hath his fodder of the grain
And straw to lie on till the morning's toil.



Him ask, Who knows thy needs; and in Him put
Firm trust, though hunger gnaw thy bosom—though
Fierce pangs of thirst lay hold on thee; for know
His treasure chests are full, his granaries
Exhaustless as the rain of heaven, and these
His mercy 'stablisheth in every place:
Nor ever hath He given command to shut
His door of bounty in the beggar's face.

* Several quatrains beginning with this line or nearly allied in sentiment have been, by means of a few explanatory or conjunctive phrases, made into this fairly connective whole.

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