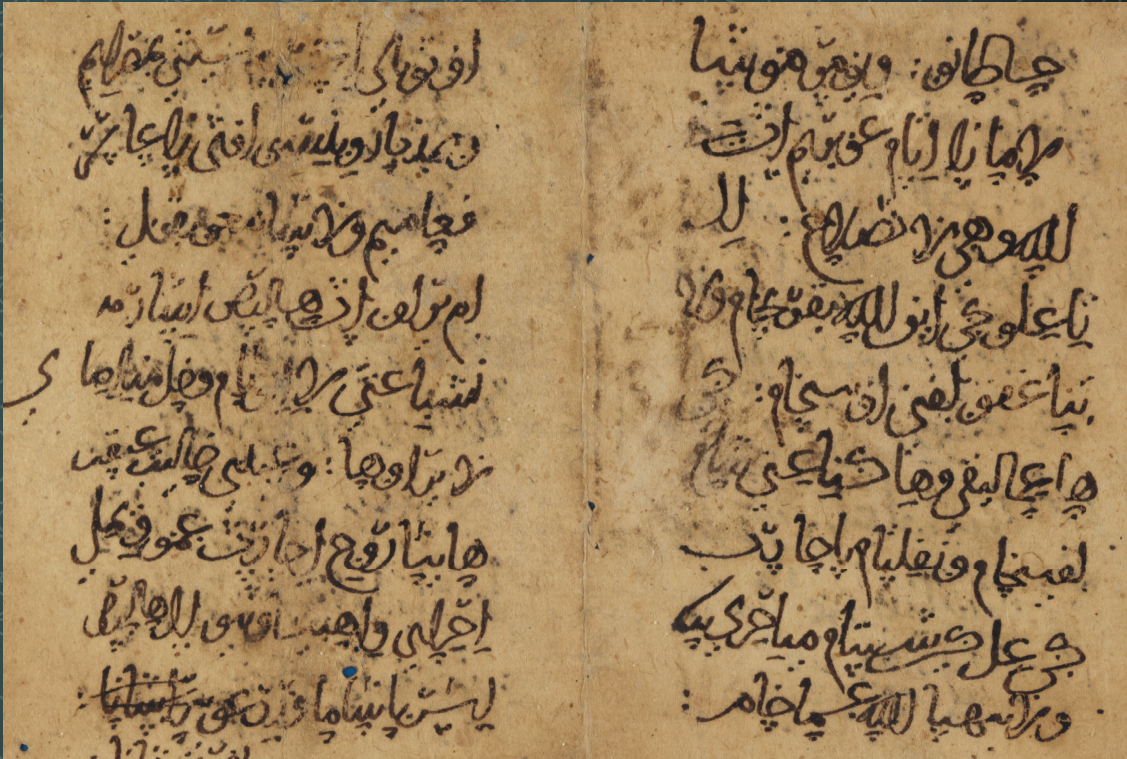


Problèmes  
d'histoire  
des  
religions

Guillaume DYE (dir. / Ed.)

# Perspectives sur l'histoire du karaïsme

## Perspectives on the History of Karaism



Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2021



## **Problèmes d'histoire des religions**

Série dirigée par Guillaume Dye

Revue scientifique reconnue sur le plan international, les Problèmes d'histoire des religions paraissent annuellement sous forme de volumes thématiques.

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*A Karaite version of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew is written in Arabic script but with Tiberian vowels.*

*Numbers 14:22-43, 15:19-25, 16:28-34, 20:3-8, 31:54-32:22.*

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# La SAMEK Le BEK

□ Arnaud SERANDOUR

La Société des amis des manuscrits et des études karaïtes (SAMEK) a été fondée à la fin de l'année 1987 par MM. Charles Perrot, Henri Cazelles, Victor Escroignart, Habib Tawa et Guy Sixdenier, avec André Caquot pour président, comme en attestent les Statuts officiels déposés à la préfecture de police de Paris le 21 décembre 1987.

Par le passé, la SAMEK n'avait jamais organisé de congrès. Elle avait été instituée, essentiellement, pour soutenir le *Bulletin d'études karaïtes* (BEK) que Simon Szyszman avait créé en 1983. La disparition de ce dernier, le 22 février 1993, à l'âge de 83 ans, mit fin au *Bulletin* dont le manque fut ressenti par l'ensemble de la communauté scientifique spécialiste des études karaïtes et juives médiévales, modernes et contemporaines, que la SAMEK s'efforcera de ressusciter à l'avenir.

Rappelons les sommaires des volumes parus :

*BEK* I, 1983 : *Études* : Joseph Thaddée Milik, « Abba Zosimas et le thème des Tribus Perdues » ; Adrian Schenker, « Der Karäer Jafet ben Eli, die Buyiden und das Datum seines Danielkommentars » ; Giuliano Tamani, « La tradizione delle opere di Yefet b. Ali » ; Simon Szyszman, « Le "talismán" de Pouchkine » ; *Échanges* : Simon Szyszman, « 1. Correspondance entre Metternich et Sir Travers Twiss » ; Simon Szyszman, « 2. Lettres de Jan Wandorph (XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle) » ; *Comptes rendus* : Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII<sup>e</sup>-début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, par S. Szyszman ; Othmar Keel (éd.), *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*, par S. Szyszman ; Moshe Gil, *Documents of the Jewish Pious Foundations from the Cairo Geniza*, par S. Szyszman ; Heinz Pohl, *Kitab al-Mirat, das Buch der Erbschaft des Samaritaners Abu Ishaq Ibrahim*, par S. Szyszman ; L. H. Vilsker, *Manuel d'araméen samaritain*, par S. Szyszman ; Simon Szyszman, *Le karaïsme. Ses doctrines et son histoire*, par J. Margain.



BEK II, 1989 : *Études* : Dominique Barthélemy, « La tradition manuscrite de l'*Eshkol ha-Kofer* (résumé en anglais) » ; Giuliano Tamani, « Prolegomeni a un'edizione dei commenti biblici di Yefet b. Ali (résumé en allemand) » ; Adrian Schenker, « Auf dem Weg zu einer kritischen Ausgabe von Japhet ben Elis Kommentar zu den Psalmen (résumé en italien) » ; Adrian Schenker, « Die Geburtswehen der messianischen Zeit nach Japhet ben Eli (résumé en français) » ; N. A. Meščerskij, « Les apocryphes de l'Ancien Testament dans la littérature slave ancienne (résumé en anglais) » ; Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, « Two religious poems by the Polish 16th cent. Poet Jan Kochanowski in Karaite (résumé en français) » ; Michel Balard, « “Infidèles” ou Comans ? À propos des “Sarraceni” de Caffa (résumé en anglais) » ; Simon Szyszman, « Les karaïtes sont-ils destinés à être méconnus ? (résumé en anglais) » ; *In memoriam* ; *Comptes rendus*.

BEK III, 1993 : *In memoriam* Simon Szyszman : un combat pour la mémoire (P. Geoltrain, B. Siahou) ; *Études* : Adrian Schenker, « Karäer im Maghreb (résumé en français) » ; Dominique Barthélemy, « Le vocalisateur-Massorète du manuscrit d'Alep est-il karaïte ou rabbanite ? (résumé en anglais) » ; H. N. Mkrtchian, « La version arménienne de l'“Histoire du jeune homme et de la jeune fille” et son parallèle en caractères hébreux (résumé en anglais) » ; Simon Szyszman, « Les karaïtes de Byzance (résumé en allemand) » ; Simon Szyszman, « Un exploit du lieutenant Tapašar lors du siège de Port-Arthur (résumé en anglais) » ; Simon Szyszman, « La communauté karaïte égyptienne : une fin tragique (résumé en anglais) » ; *Documentation iconographique et généalogique* : « La famille Krym » ; Rectification ; *Comptes rendus*.

Aucun autre BEK n'est paru depuis 1993.

Puisse le présent congrès de refondation et de renouvellement de la SAMEK être le premier d'une longue série. La SAMEK se propose d'en organiser tous les quatre ans à compter de 2023.

La SAMEK remercie vivement Guillaume Dye d'avoir organisé le congrès de Bruxelles 2019, d'en avoir invité les participants et de le publier aujourd'hui en tant qu'éditeur scientifique. Nous lui sommes tous très reconnaissants.

# Introduction

□ Guillaume DYE

Ce volume rassemble plusieurs contributions présentées lors du colloque international *Nouvelles perspectives sur l'histoire du karaïsme*, organisé à l'Université libre de Bruxelles du 13 au 16 mai 2019, grâce au soutien de la SAMEK (Société des amis des manuscrits et études karaïtes, présidée par Arnaud Serandour, de l'École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris), que nous remercions chaleureusement. L'objectif de ce colloque, et par là même du présent ouvrage, était de fournir une dynamique nouvelle aux études karaïtes dans le monde francophone. Les recherches sur ce courant fascinant du judaïsme ont en effet connu des développements remarquables ces dernières décennies, comme en témoignent l'excellent volume de synthèse dirigé par Meira Polliack<sup>1</sup> et la collection *Karaite Texts and Studies* (Brill) dirigée par Meira Polliack et Michael G. Wechsler<sup>2</sup>. Depuis 2008, cette collection a publié treize ouvrages, dont la monumentale bibliographie de Barry Dov Walfish et Mikhail Kizilov<sup>3</sup>. Le renouveau des études karaïtes se marque aussi par son inscription dans le projet *Biblia Arabica*<sup>4</sup>, dont plusieurs publications sont en lien avec le karaïsme.

Les études karaïtes s'intègrent parfaitement dans la culture éditoriale des *Problèmes d'histoire des religions* (PHR), qui fait la part belle aux approches transversales et comparatistes. Si l'on devait présenter en quelques mots le karaïsme, on pourrait dire

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<sup>1</sup> Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde, Brill, 2003. Voir aussi l'ouvrage récent de Daniel LASKER, *Karaism. An Introduction to the Oldest Surviving Alternative Judaism*, Londres, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, in association with Liverpool University Press, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Voir la liste des livres publiés sur <https://brill.com/view/serial/KTS>.

<sup>3</sup> Barry Dov WALFISH et Mikhail KIZILOV (éds), *Bibliographia Karaitica. An Annotated Bibliography of Karaites and Karaism*, *Karaite Texts and Studies* 2, Leyde, Brill, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Voir le portail Internet du projet : <https://biblia-arabica.com>.

qu'il s'agit d'un mouvement religieux juif, de nature scripturaliste et messianique, qui se cristallise dans la seconde moitié du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en Iraq et en Palestine, en opposition à l'autorité rabbinique et à la notion de Torah orale. Pour les karaïtes, la *halakhah* rabbinique déformait la législation biblique, et l'Écriture devait être interprétée à la lumière de la raison humaine et de la philologie<sup>5</sup>. Les centres géographiques du karaïsme se sont ensuite déplacés progressivement du Moyen-Orient vers le monde byzantin (à partir du milieu du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle) puis ottoman, puis en Crimée, en Lituanie et plus généralement en Europe de l'Est. Aujourd'hui, à la différence de « l'âge d'or » du X<sup>e</sup> et du début du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, où le karaïsme représentait un courant très important du judaïsme médiéval et était l'opposition la plus résolue au judaïsme rabbinique, les karaïtes constituent une petite minorité religieuse : environ vingt mille karaïtes, qui se définissent comme juifs, vivent aujourd'hui en Israël ; il y a également une petite communauté karaïte aux États-Unis<sup>6</sup>, alors que les communautés d'Europe orientale, qui se définissent comme *karaïms* et ne se considèrent pas comme juives, comptent quelques centaines de membres<sup>7</sup>.

À de nombreux égards, le karaïsme apparaît comme un objet d'étude remarquable pour les sciences des religions. Il est un exemple très parlant de la complexité et de la variété du judaïsme. Or, la notion même de judaïsme a été l'objet de questionnements divers : face à une vision de l'histoire qui privilégie une perspective centrée sur le judaïsme rabbinique, les historiens ont fait valoir la profonde diversité du judaïsme, certains préférant parler de *judaïsmes*, au pluriel<sup>8</sup>, quand d'autres ont mis en cause la pertinence même de la notion de « judaïsme » pour la période antique, voire au-delà<sup>9</sup>. Sans aller aussi loin que cette dernière suggestion<sup>10</sup>, on notera que toute approche scientifique qui permet de sortir d'une vision trop simple ou monolithique du judaïsme et qui en souligne les tensions, les complexités et les évolutions est la bienvenue.

<sup>5</sup> Voir Daniel FRANK, « The Limits of Karaite Scripturalism: Problems in Narrative Exegesis », in Meir M. BAR-ASHER, Simon HOPKINS, Sarah STROUMSA et Bruno CHIESA (éds), *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Medieval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an: Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, Jérusalem, The Ben Zvi Institute, 2007, p. 42-43 [41-82]. Comme le montre la suite de l'article, le scripturalisme des karaïtes (à savoir l'insistance sur la primauté de l'Écriture et l'idée qu'il convient de la comprendre selon son sens manifeste) se révèle en fait complexe et ambivalent, surtout à partir du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

<sup>6</sup> Voir le site <https://www.karaites.org>. Le lecteur curieux peut également trouver des informations et actualités sur le blog *A Blue Thread*, à l'adresse <http://abluethread.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Voir Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Voir par exemple Jacob NEUSNER, « Defining Judaism », in Jacob NEUSNER et Alan J. AVERY-PECK (éds), *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 3-19 ; Gabriele BOCCACCINI, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, From Ezekiel to Daniel*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2002, notamment l'introduction ; Simon Claude MIMOUNI, *Le Judaïsme ancien du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère au III<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère : des prêtres aux rabbins*, Paris, PUF, 2012 ; José COSTA, « Qu'est-ce que le judaïsme synagogal ? », *Judaïsme ancien/Ancient Judaism*, vol. 3, 2015, p. 63-218 ; Gavin McDOWELL, Ron NAIWELD et Daniel STÖKL BEN EZRA (éds), *Diversity and Rabbinization. Jewish Texts and Society between 400 and 1,000 CE*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Steve MASON, « Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History », *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 38, 2007, p. 457-512 ; Daniel BOYARIN, *Judaism. The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Voir Seth SCHWARTZ, « How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization », *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 2/2, 2011, p. 208-238. Je remercie Isaac W. Oliver d'avoir attiré mon attention sur cet important article.

Les études karaïtes se révèlent cependant particulièrement importantes à un autre égard. Hors du monde des études karaïtes elles-mêmes, ou de l'étude des manuscrits de la Genizah du Caire, et éventuellement hors du champ de l'histoire des idées religieuses en terre d'Islam, il est probable que le karaïsme apparaisse comme un phénomène isolé et mineur – parce qu'il est considéré avec hostilité par les sources rabbiniques, qui voient en lui « l'ennemi de l'intérieur »<sup>11</sup>, ou tout simplement parce qu'il reste très mal connu. Les recherches actuelles montrent au contraire l'intérêt de sortir la tradition karaïte de l'isolement dans lequel elle a longtemps été tenue : cela se révèle en effet fructueux, non seulement pour analyser les débats et les développements à l'intérieur même du judaïsme, mais aussi pour comprendre l'inscription des diverses formes de judaïsmes dans leurs contextes sociaux, culturels et religieux.

On a pu souligner, depuis de nombreuses années, à quel point il était crucial de comprendre les pratiques juives, mais aussi les textes, à la lumière du contexte socioculturel et littéraire des sociétés dans lesquelles vivent les communautés juives, à l'inverse d'une perspective autarcique, qui n'envisagerait de telles pratiques et textes qu'à la lumière d'autres pratiques ou textes juifs. Plus généralement, la pertinence d'une histoire croisée des traditions religieuses, attentive à leurs relations et à leurs hybridations, apparaît de plus en plus évidente. Ainsi, l'histoire du monde islamique médiéval, où naît le karaïsme, est marquée par la « pollinisation croisée » (*crosspollination*), expression par laquelle on désigne un phénomène qui n'est certes pas spécifique au monde islamique mais qui s'y rencontre à un degré particulièrement remarquable, à savoir l'interaction réciproque et continue entre diverses communautés religieuses, notamment les musulmans, les chrétiens et les juifs (auxquels on peut ajouter, pour le Moyen-Orient médiéval, les zoroastriens, les manichéens et les samaritains)<sup>12</sup>.

Ce phénomène de pollinisation croisée, susceptible de prendre des formes très diverses, a été particulièrement bien étudié en histoire des idées : on comprend mieux aujourd'hui à quel point les érudits juifs, chrétiens ou musulmans, par exemple les philosophes, les médecins, les mathématiciens, les astronomes, etc., lisaient les mêmes livres, communiquaient dans la même langue (l'arabe, plus tard aussi le persan) et utilisaient les mêmes références. Il est par conséquent impossible de comprendre l'œuvre d'un savant, d'un philosophe et même d'un théologien du monde islamique médiéval sans prendre en compte la pensée, les références, les formes de discours et

.....  
<sup>11</sup> Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Nous empruntons le terme *crosspollination* à Lenn E. GOODMAN, « Crosspollinations – philosophically fruitful exchanges between Jewish and Islamic thought », *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 1/3, 1995, p. 323-357 ; Lenn E. GOODMAN, *Jewish and Islamic Philosophy. Crosspollination in the Classical Age*, Edimbourg, Edinburgh University Press, 1999. D'autres métaphores ont été proposées : « hybridation », « symbiose créative » (Steven M. WASSERSTROM, *Between Muslim and Jew. The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995) ; « effet tourbillon » (Sarah STROUMSA, « The Muslim Context in Medieval Jewish Philosophy », in Steven Nadler et T. M. Rudavsky (éds), *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 39-59).

d'arguments, les questions et les problématiques que l'on rencontre chez des penseurs d'autres religions. Comme le soulignent Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et Sabine Schmidtke, puisque de nombreux lettrés du monde islamique, qu'ils soient musulmans, juifs ou chrétiens, « créèrent [...] une forme de communauté intellectuelle unique où la norme fut, pendant des siècles, un échange constant des idées, des textes et des formes de discours, [...] la perspective unidimensionnelle encore dominante dans la recherche moderne doit céder la place à une véritable approche multidimensionnelle »<sup>13</sup>.

C'est à la mise en œuvre d'une telle approche, qui rassemble spécialistes du karaïsme et spécialistes d'autres aspects de l'histoire du judaïsme, que nous convions le lecteur, en espérant ainsi stimuler l'intérêt pour le karaïsme et le faire connaître hors du champ de l'histoire du judaïsme.

L'article de David Hamidović, « Les manuscrits de la mer Morte et l'émergence du karaïsme », revient sur la question de l'origine du karaïsme, non pas pour proposer une nouvelle hypothèse<sup>14</sup>, mais plutôt pour examiner de façon critique la manière dont cette question a été discutée dans les études juives depuis le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et surtout depuis la découverte, entre 1947 et 1956, des manuscrits de la mer Morte. En plus d'être une contribution sur l'historiographie du karaïsme, cette étude examine, du point de vue du spécialiste de Qumrân, certains des parallèles allégués entre les karaïtes et les esséniens. L'analyse minutieuse de Hamidović nuance fortement la pertinence des parallèles sur lesquels certains chercheurs antérieurs avaient insisté : pour l'essentiel, il s'avère soit que ces parallèles ne sont qu'apparents (derrière des formulations proches se cachent des idées foncièrement différentes) ; soit que les points sur lesquels les karaïtes rejoignent les esséniens sont en fait partagés par divers autres courants du judaïsme ; enfin, dans le cas du « Maître de justice », les affinités s'expliquent parce que ce sont les mêmes passages bibliques qui sont étudiés. Hamidović nous invite ainsi à faire preuve de plus de rigueur dans la recherche de parallèles intertextuels et à se méfier de la « parallélomanie » – un conseil dont la pertinence déborde le champ des études juives. Il nous invite également à examiner les textes dans leur matérialité, ce qui inclut l'histoire de la copie, de la conservation et de la découverte des manuscrits. Les données originales apportées à ce sujet sur les manuscrits de l'*Écrit de Damas* trouvés au Caire montrent toute l'importance d'une telle approche pour mieux comprendre les différents scénarios possibles de transmission et de réception des écrits de Qumrân dans les communautés juives médiévales du Vieux-Caire.

Les deux articles suivants portent sur l'exégèse biblique. Michael G. Wechsler (« The Reception of Saadia Gaon's Commentary on Esther in the Karaite Tradition of Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on the Book ») étudie la réception, dans les milieux karaïtes, de

<sup>13</sup> Mohammad Ali AMIR-MOEZZI et Sabine SCHMIDTKE, « Rationalisme et théologie dans le monde musulman médiéval », *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, vol. 226/4, 2009, p. 618.

<sup>14</sup> Sur ce sujet, voir par exemple Moshe GIL, « The Origins of the Karaites », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde, Brill, 2003, p. 73-118.

l'œuvre du savant rabbanite Saadia Gaon (882-942). Saadia Gaon étant l'une des figures majeures de la polémique anti-karaïte, on pourrait s'attendre à ce qu'il soit l'objet en retour de violentes polémiques de la part des karaïtes – ce qui est effectivement le cas. Mais Wechsler montre que lorsqu'ils font de l'exégèse biblique, les mêmes auteurs karaïtes ont une attitude beaucoup plus positive, n'hésitant pas à reprendre des passages de la propre œuvre exégétique de Saadia Gaon (sans préciser, bien sûr, l'origine de ces matériaux). Pour illustrer cette question complexe et vaste, en grande partie inexplorée (de nombreux manuscrits, dont ceux de deux des auteurs étudiés ici, Salmon ben Yeruḥam et Judah Me'ir Tawrīzī, ne sont pas encore édités), Wechsler se concentre sur le commentaire que Saadia Gaon a rédigé, vers 933-934, sur le *Livre d'Esther*, et sa réception dans quatre commentaires karaïtes du même livre en judéo-arabe : deux de ces commentaires, ceux de Salmon ben Yeruḥam et Yefet ben 'Eli, peuvent être datés de la seconde moitié du x<sup>e</sup> siècle ; l'*Epitomè*, dont on sait qu'il a été composé dans l'école de Joseph ben Noah (lui-même actif à la fin du x<sup>e</sup> et au début du xi<sup>e</sup> siècle), pourrait remonter soit à Joseph ben Noah lui-même, soit à l'un de ses disciples – il est en tout cas antérieur à 1099 ; enfin, le commentaire de Judah Me'ir Tawrīzī date de la première moitié du xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle. Wechsler montre, textes parallèles à l'appui, comment les auteurs karaïtes utilisent et se réapproprient les passages du commentaire de Saadia Gaon.

L'étude de Meira Polliack et Arye Zoref (« Interreligious and Gender Facets in Yefet ben 'Eli's Portrayal of David's Wives ») s'intéresse à l'un des auteurs karaïtes traités dans l'article précédent, à savoir Yefet ben 'Eli (m. 1005). Polliack et Zoref examinent la manière dont il décrit, dans ses commentaires (non encore édités) de *1 et 2 Samuel*, trois des femmes de David : Mical, Abigaïl et Bethsabée. On peut repérer deux tendances dans l'exégèse de Yefet. D'une part, et cela n'a rien d'étonnant, Yefet est un produit de son temps, marqué par une société patriarcale, dominée par des hommes, et il projette assez naturellement sur les récits bibliques l'image de la société et du statut des femmes de sa propre époque, même s'il le fait avec une certaine prudence. D'autre part, et c'est un point plus original ou inattendu, il propose des analyses très fines de la personnalité et des motivations des personnages féminins, dans un esprit que l'on pourrait qualifier d'assez « égalitaire », en cherchant certainement à faire de ces femmes de véritables *modèles*. Les auteurs discutent aussi les inspirations possibles de Yefet et montrent qu'outre la littérature midrashique, elles peuvent être cherchées dans des textes chrétiens (comme le commentaire, en syriaque, d'Isho'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament, probablement rédigé au milieu du ix<sup>e</sup> siècle) et musulmans (avec par exemple la figure des femmes du Prophète). En plus de faire connaître au monde savant le contenu de textes qui ne sont pour l'instant accessibles qu'en manuscrits, cette étude illustre remarquablement la « pollinisation croisée » dont il a été question plus haut.

En complément d'un travail récemment publié sur les polémiques entre karaïtes et samaritains<sup>15</sup>, Gregor Schwarb (« Debating the Deuteronomic Centralisation Formula in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Palestine ») propose une édition et une traduction anglaise annotée de la version abrégée du *Traité sur la qibla*, intitulée *Section sur la détermination de la qibla* (*Faṣl fī ithbāt al-qibla*), de l'auteur samaritain Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī. Le texte, qui a certainement été composé dans les années 1030, est intéressant à de nombreux égards. Il révèle d'abord l'extrême complexité de la tâche de l'éditeur de ces textes anciens, qui doit travailler avec des versions variées, parfois abrégées ou compilées, ou citées en partie par les adversaires. Mais il est aussi un témoin remarquable de la polémique entre juifs et samaritains sur la localisation du sanctuaire (ce qui concerne directement la *qibla*, la direction de la prière) – une polémique particulièrement aiguë, vu la centralité du mont Gerizim pour les samaritains et de Jérusalem pour les karaïtes<sup>16</sup>. Ce texte est également une excellente illustration de divers éléments déjà mentionnés : ainsi, le traité d'Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī et sa réfutation karaïte sont tous deux modelés sur les pratiques dialectiques du *kalām* mu'tazilite, les polémiques entre juifs et samaritains ressemblant fortement aux polémiques entre juifs et musulmans, ou aux polémiques entre rabbanites et karaïtes.

Avec l'article de Daniel J. Lasker (« From Judah Hadassi to Aaron ben Joseph – A Lost Century and a Half? »), nous quittons le monde islamique pour le monde byzantin et nous abordons une phase plus tardive du karaïsme (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles), qui reste à plusieurs égards assez obscure. Que s'est-il en effet passé entre Judah Hadassi (milieu du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle), qui emploie les méthodes argumentatives, issues du *kalām*, du karaïsme antérieur, et Aaron le Jeune (m. 1369), qui est beaucoup moins friand de ces méthodes et de la théologie qui en est issue et se tourne plutôt vers une approche philosophique teintée d'aristotélisme ? Lasker avait déjà suggéré que la figure d'Aaron ben Joseph, dit Aaron l'Ancien (c. 1250-1320), actif à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, constituait probablement un chaînon manquant, mais elle semblait apparaître *ex nihilo*<sup>17</sup>. Il est toutefois possible de mieux comprendre le milieu dans lequel évoluait Aaron l'Ancien, quelles furent ses possibles influences et notamment quelle fut l'histoire de la pensée karaïte entre Judah Hadassi et Aaron l'Ancien. C'est ce que fait l'auteur en examinant des textes karaïtes peu connus et en revenant sur la figure énigmatique de Nissi ben Noah. Cette étude permet de combler, au moins en partie, une lacune dans notre connaissance du karaïsme dans le monde byzantin.

L'article suivant, dû à Joachim Yeshaya (« Poésie et exégèse dans l'œuvre du sage karaïte Aaron ben Joseph de Constantinople »), est justement consacré à Aaron l'Ancien.

<sup>15</sup> Voir Gregor SCHWARB, « Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Kitāb fī bāb al-qibla* and its Qaraite refutation », in Stefan SCHORCH (éd.), *Samaritan Languages, Texts, and Traditions*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2022, p. 1-32.

<sup>16</sup> Voir par exemple Yoram ERDER, « The Mourners of Zion: The Karaites in Jerusalem in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries », in Meira POLLIAK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde, Brill, 2003, p. 213-235.

<sup>17</sup> Voir Daniel J. LASKER, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi. Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy*, Leyde, Brill, 2008, p. 69-95.

À l'époque médiévale, les savants juifs – dont Aaron l'Ancien – pouvaient composer des poèmes en plus de leurs ouvrages scientifiques, ou même les insérer à l'intérieur de leurs textes scientifiques<sup>18</sup>. En d'autres termes, la forme de la poésie représentait l'une des manières de présenter des idées exégétiques, philosophiques, juridiques, etc. L'article de Yeshaya consiste en l'étude, suivie d'une traduction française, de l'introduction poétique rédigée par Aaron ben Joseph pour la cinquante-quatrième et dernière section hebdomadaire de la Torah, *pārāshat ve-Zōt ha-bērākāhā*, qui correspond à Deutéronome 33:1-34:12.

Nous voyageons vers l'ouest et remontons quelque peu dans le temps avec les deux articles suivants. Stefan Goltzberg (« Ibn Ezra, la Tradition et les karaïtes ») examine la position complexe et ambivalente du savant rabbanite andalou Abraham ben Ezra (m. 1167) envers les karaïtes et certains courants talmudistes. Il montre qu'Abraham ben Ezra, s'il s'oppose évidemment aux karaïtes, qui rejettent le concept de Torah orale, les cite souvent et parfois avec approbation – c'est la situation inverse de celle rencontrée dans l'article de Michael Wechsler, qui montrait comment plusieurs auteurs karaïtes, tout en polémiquant fortement contre Saadia Gaon, pouvaient reprendre ses idées dans leurs commentaires exégétiques (notons aussi que certains karaïtes peuvent reconnaître leur dette envers Abraham ben Ezra). Par ailleurs, Ibn Ezra critique certains talmudistes, qui auraient selon lui assuré la transmission de la Tradition mais se seraient trompés sur la manière de comprendre les Sages de l'époque talmudique. L'auteur se situe sur le terrain de l'analyse de l'argumentation juridique et se concentre sur la notion de Tradition (à la base de la théorie des sources du droit que développe Ibn Ezra), qui mérite une analyse conceptuelle serrée. Il analyse les différents types d'arguments juridiques utilisés par Abraham ben Ezra<sup>19</sup>, en se fondant sur son *Commentaire du Pentateuque* et sur le *Yesod Mora*, que ce soit dans le cadre de sa polémique contre les karaïtes ou de celle contre d'autres rabbanites. Plus généralement, il montre que les notions de « scripturalisme » et de « littéralisme » ne vont pas nécessairement de pair.

La question de la nature et de l'autorité de la Tradition est également au centre de l'étude de David Lemler (« Maimonides and Maimonideans on Karaites and *aggadot* »), qui aborde une question disputée des études maïmonidiennes. Face aux critiques karaïtes qui considéraient que le caractère irrationnel ou fantaisiste de nombreux *aggadot* (à savoir les récits relevant de la *aggada*, l'enseignement non législatif de la tradition juive, par opposition à la *halakha*, les prescriptions et traditions légales) remettait en question l'autorité de l'ensemble de la Tradition orale, les penseurs

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<sup>18</sup> Cela vaut pour les différentes phases de l'histoire du karaïsme. Voir par exemple Joachim YESHAYA, *Medieval Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Egypt. The Secular Poetry of the Karaite Poet Moses ben Abraham Dar'i*, Leyde, Brill, 2010 ; Joachim YESHAYA et Elisabeth HOLLENDER (éds), *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts*, Leyde, Brill, 2017 ; Riikka TUORI, « Notes on Karaite Hebrew qinot: Mourning and Poetry in Eastern Europe », *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge/Frankfurt Jewish Studies Bulletin*, vol. 41, 2016-2017, p. 37-53 ; Riikka TUORI, « Renewal and Tradition in Devout Hebrew Poetry. The Case of the Early Modern Karaites in Poland-Lithuania », *Zutot*, vol. 16/1, 2019, p. 31-42.

<sup>19</sup> À savoir : argument conditionnel, raisonnement *a fortiori*, mise en garde contre l'arbitraire.



rabbanites avaient deux options. La première entendait distinguer strictement *aggada* et *halakha* et minorer l'autorité et l'importance de la *aggada*. La seconde consistait à admettre le côté irrationnel des *aggadot* mais à y voir une présentation de vérités plus profondes, et quant à elles nullement irrationnelles. Cette dernière solution semble être celle de Maïmonide (1138-1204) à l'époque où il rédige son *Commentaire de la Mishna*. Cependant, il semble que, vers la fin de sa vie, Maïmonide adoucisse sa position envers les karaïtes et n'hésite pas à critiquer certaines thèses rabbanites. Une explication possible de la tension, pour ne pas dire la contradiction, entre ces différentes positions consiste à dire que Maïmonide adaptait son propos selon l'audience visée et qu'il était nécessaire que certaines vérités restent cachées et ne soient pas divulguées à la foule. Mais on pourrait aussi soutenir, et c'est la voie que choisit l'auteur, que les positions de Maïmonide ont évolué, et qu'à l'époque où il rédige le *Guide des perplexes* (1191), il ne considère plus de la même manière la différence entre karaïtes et rabbanites. Lemler étudie à cet effet divers passages du *Guide* et les compare à l'*Introduction au Pereq Heleq*. Son analyse montre que Maïmonide envisage aussi un lectorat du *Guide* potentiellement karaïte. Cette prise en compte des arguments karaïtes, mais aussi de la possible réception des idées maïmonidiennes chez les auteurs karaïtes, se retrouve dans la postérité de Maïmonide, chez son fils Abraham (1186-1237) et chez l'auteur provençal Levi ben Abraham de Villefranche (c. 1245-c. 1315).

Ce périple dans l'univers karaïte se conclut avec l'article de Mikhail Kizilov (« Between the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans: The Karaite and Rabbanite Jews of the Crimea in Early Modern Times »), qui nous conduit dans la Crimée de l'époque moderne. Après l'annexion ottomane de la Crimée en 1475, la péninsule de Crimée fut divisée en deux parties : le *khanat* de Crimée, État vassal de l'Empire ottoman, et la Crimée ottomane. La communauté juive locale était elle-même divisée en deux : les karaïtes non talmudiques, nettement majoritaires, et les juifs rabbanites – situation originale, puisqu'ailleurs les karaïtes étaient généralement une minorité à l'intérieur du judaïsme. En se fondant sur des sources et des archives jusque-là inexploitées, Kizilov examine les caractéristiques du statut juridique des juifs karaïtes et rabbanites de Crimée, ainsi que leurs relations avec la communauté et l'administration musulmane locale.

Cette brève introduction n'épuise nullement la richesse et la variété des contributions ici rassemblées, qui ouvrent de nouvelles pistes dans l'étude du karaïsme et permettent également de faire connaître cette fascinante tradition religieuse à un plus large public.

# Les manuscrits de la mer Morte et l'émergence du karaïsme

□ David HAMIDOVIĆ

La recherche scientifique moderne sur le mouvement karaïte est, depuis ses débuts, traversée d'un paradoxe, qui affecte en grande partie les études historiques sur l'émergence du karaïsme. En effet, le mouvement karaïte naît dans le monde islamique<sup>1</sup>, et dans une moindre mesure dans le monde byzantin<sup>2</sup>, mais les premiers chercheurs n'auront de cesse de mettre en avant les points communs avec des groupes juifs plus anciens<sup>3</sup>, voire d'échafauder des récits des origines du mouvement karaïte en prenant au pied de la lettre les écrits de quelques milieux karaïtes<sup>4</sup>. En quelque sorte, l'appréciation scientifique du mouvement karaïte, dans sa singularité et sa diversité, se trouve longtemps décontextualisée et peu critiquée des sources karaïtes et rabbanites.

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<sup>1</sup> Voir Moses ZUCKER, *'Al targûm rasag la-tôrâ*, New York, Feldheim, 1959, p. 144-146 ; Moses ZUCKER, « *Mi-pêrûshô shel Rasag la-tôrâ* », *Sura*, 1956-1957, p. 324-331 ; Israel FRIEDLÄNDER, « Jewish-Arabic Studies », *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 1, 1910-1911, p. 214 ; Samuel POZNANSKI, « Anan et ses écrits », *Revue des études juives*, t. 44, 1902, p. 178 ; Fred ASTREN, « Islamic Contexts of Medieval Karaism », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde-Boston, E. J. Brill, 2003, p. 145-177.

<sup>2</sup> Zvi ANKORI, *Karaites in Byzantium: the Formative Years 970-1100*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Voir les trois approches sur l'origine du karaïsme dans Daniel LASKER, « Islamic influences on the Karaite Origins », in William M. BRINNER et Stephen D. RICKS (éds), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1989, p. 23-47. Je laisse de côté les études dès le xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle sur un parallèle entre les karaïtes et les rabbanites d'un côté et entre les catholiques et les protestants d'un autre côté, voir par exemple Johannes VAN DEN BERG, « Proto-Protestants? The Image of the Karaites as a Mirror of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy in the Seventeenth Century », in Johannes VAN DEN BERG et Ernestine G. E. VAN DER WALL (éds), *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, *Studies and Documents*, Dordrecht-Boston-Londres, Kluwer Academic, 1988, p. 33-49.

<sup>4</sup> Voir la discussion de Fred ASTREN, *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding*, Columbia (SC), University of South California Press, 2004.

Parmi les travaux pionniers figure celui d'Abraham Geiger<sup>5</sup>. En fin connaisseur du judaïsme du Moyen Âge et en lecteur attentif des Sages, il remarque des points communs entre les lois formulées dans les écrits karaïtes et celles que les sources rabbiniques attachent au groupe juif des sadducéens. Par exemple, dans le traité mishnique *Yadayim* 4,6 sur l'impureté contractée par les mains en touchant des écrits, il est question de pharisiens s'opposant aux sadducéens. Plusieurs Sages qualifiaient d'ailleurs les karaïtes de sadducéens, à l'instar de Rabbi Ovadia ben Abraham de Bertinoro en Italie à la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle dans son commentaire de la Mishna<sup>6</sup>. Certes, Geiger comme tout autre historien est soumis à sa subjectivité – qu'il le veuille ou non –, c'est-à-dire la part personnelle de tout un chacun dans ses recherches. Né à Francfort-sur-le-Main au début du xix<sup>e</sup> siècle, il est lui-même rabbin. Il est connu pour être un pilier du mouvement de réforme du judaïsme en Allemagne : la *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Ces informations aident à comprendre son intérêt pour les karaïtes. Dans sa somme majeure, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte*, publiée entre 1864 et 1871<sup>7</sup>, au sujet des lois que les juifs doivent suivre, il dit déceler une opposition entre les juifs pharisiens et les sadducéens dans le Talmud de Babylone et dans les écrits rabbiniques antérieurs. La confrontation se solde, selon lui, par l'avènement des positions pharisiennes vers le ix<sup>e</sup> siècle avec les Sages géonim. Dans cette perspective, il estime que les karaïtes furent les héritiers des sadducéens rejetés par les rabbins. Ainsi est justifiée sa recherche sur les origines du mouvement karaïte. Dans la perspective du judaïsme réformé allemand, des affinités entre l'émergence du mouvement karaïte, tel qu'il le perçoit, et les débats intellectuels de son époque sur le judaïsme semblent évidents.

Toutefois, Geiger n'est pas le seul savant à étudier les origines du karaïsme. Quelques dizaines d'années plus tard, en 1913, Bernard Revel tente de trouver une origine aux lois karaïtes dans les lois énoncées par Philon d'Alexandrie au I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère<sup>8</sup>. Mais l'association du philosophe juif, qui cherche à penser le judaïsme avec des catégories grecques, avec les karaïtes peine à convaincre, à la différence de celle de Geiger avec les sadducéens qui fait florès jusqu'au milieu du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle. Moshe Gil résume ainsi la position dominante<sup>9</sup> :

<sup>5</sup> Abraham GEIGER, « On the Matter of a Controversy between the Sadducees and their Followers, and the Pharisees, and the Difference between the Early and the Later *halakha* », *He-Halus*, t. 6, 1862, p. 13-30.

<sup>6</sup> Voir l'ensemble du dossier dans Yoram ERDER, « The Karaites' Sadducee dilemma », *Israel Oriental Studies*, t. 14, 1994, p. 195-226.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham GEIGER, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte von der Zerstörung des zweiten Tempels bis zum Ende des zwölften Jahrhunderts*, t. 2, Breslau, Schlettersche Buchhandlung, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., 1865, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard REVEL, *The Karaite Halakha and Its Relation to Saducean, Samaritan and Philonean Halakha*, Thesis at Dropsie College, Philadelphie, 1913 ; Bernard REVEL, « Inquiry into the Sources of Karaite *halakha* », *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 3, 1912-1913, p. 359-391.

<sup>9</sup> Moshe GIL, « The Origins of the Karaites », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde-Boston, E.J. Brill, 2003, p. 73.

*The commonly accepted opinion of scholars of Karaism is that this sect grew out of the 'Ananite sect, whose founder was 'Anan ben David, a descendant of the family of the Exilarchs. Karaite sources explain their ancient origin as an outgrowth of the split described in the Bible that began during the reign of Jeroboam. According to them, Jeroboam's ancient rivals, over the course of generations, gave rise to the Sadducees, while 'Anan completed and reconsolidated the Sadducee approach. It is patently clear that this outlook is totally fanciful and was mainly intended to portray Karaism, within the milieu in which its adherents began to function, as having an especially long history.*

Dans ce propos liminaire, il est bon de rappeler que les sadducéens du Talmud ne sont assurément pas les sadducéens du tournant de notre ère. La précaution méthodologique s'impose, car il demeure fréquent dans la recherche sur les groupes juifs d'utiliser les notices talmudiques pour circonscrire les croyances et pratiques des sadducéens au tournant de l'ère chrétienne<sup>10</sup>. Les sadducéens sont, certes, les familles de prêtres au sens large, c'est-à-dire leurs maisonnées, mais de manière assurée, il ne subsiste d'eux au tournant de l'ère chrétienne que des données archéologiques issues de leur quartier d'habitation en partie fouillé à Jérusalem<sup>11</sup>. De là à en déduire leurs croyances précises, il y a un pas qu'on ne peut franchir<sup>12</sup>.

Ainsi, la recherche scientifique sur l'émergence du mouvement karaïte s'oriente vers la recherche d'affinités avec un groupe juif en déclin ou marginalisé, comme les sadducéens au Moyen Âge ou les juifs hellénisés en dispersion. La mise en parallèle avec le mouvement qui a copié une partie des manuscrits de la mer Morte, les manuscrits de Qumrân, découverts entre 1947 et 1956, s'inscrit dans cette perspective ; nous allons y revenir. Pour comparer les textes et les idées, deux des acquis récents de la recherche sur les karaïtes sont d'avoir examiné à frais nouveaux les contextes musulmans de l'émergence du mouvement karaïte<sup>13</sup> et d'avoir redoublé d'efforts pour discerner ce qui relève de la stratégie rhétorique, exégétique ou politico-religieuse et ce qui relève de l'histoire dans les écrits karaïtes présentant l'origine du mouvement<sup>14</sup>. À l'aune de ces données renouvelées sur l'origine du mouvement karaïte, nous

<sup>10</sup> Voir Jean LE MOYNE, *Les Sadducéens*, Paris, Gabalda, 1972 ; Emmanuelle MAIN, « Sadducees », in Lawrence H. SCHIFFMANN et James C. VANDERKAM (éds), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, t. 2, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 812-816.

<sup>11</sup> Voir Hillel GEVA, « Stratigraphy and Architecture », in *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, t. 4 : *The Burnt House of Area B and Other Studies*, Jérusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 2010, p. 1-90.

<sup>12</sup> La même conclusion chez Moshe GIL, *op. cit.*, p. 109 et n. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Voir la distinction entre les « karaïtes d'Islam » et les « karaïtes de Chrétienté » chez William M. BRINNER, « Karaites of Christendom – Karaites of Islam », in Clifford E. BOSWORTH et al. (éds), *The Islamic World: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 55-73 ; voir aussi Zvi ANKORI, *op. cit.* ; Fred ASTREN, *History, Historicization, and Historical Claims in Karaite Jewish Literature*, Berkeley (CA), University of California, PhD., 1993, et Fred ASTREN, *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding*, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Voir Fred ASTREN, « History or Philosophy? The construction of the past in medieval Karaite Judaism », *Medieval Encounters*, t. 1, 1995, p. 114-143 ; Fred ASTREN, « Karaite approaches to history in medieval Islam », in Benjamin H. HARY, John L. HAYES et Fred ASTREN (éds), *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication, and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William Brinner*, Leyde, E. J. Brill, 2000, p. 321-324.

souhaitons réévaluer l'hypothèse d'un lien entre les manuscrits de Qumrân et les écrits karaïtes, entre les esséniens, qui ont gardé et/ou copié les textes de Qumrân, et les premiers karaïtes.

## Les découvertes de la *genizah* de la synagogue du Vieux-Caire et des manuscrits de Qumrân

Un tournant dans la recherche sur l'émergence du mouvement karaïte a lieu suite à une découverte archéologique à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, lorsque sont notamment trouvés deux manuscrits dans l'ancienne *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra<sup>15</sup> du Vieux-Caire : l'un de seize pages, copié au X<sup>e</sup> siècle (CD A), et l'autre de deux pages, copié au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle (CD B). Une fois achetés par la bibliothèque de l'Université de Cambridge, ils sont publiés en 1910 par Solomon Schechter, qui a participé à l'exploration de la *genizah* de la synagogue. Comme la locution « fils de Sadoq » (*beni tsadoq*) est inscrite à deux reprises sur le cuir, il nomme le document *A Zadokite Work*<sup>16</sup>. Il reconnaît ainsi l'œuvre d'une « secte » qui défendait la légitimité des prêtres de la lignée de Sadoq, prêtre légendaire des rois David et Salomon, contre les prétentions des souverains hasmonéens à l'exercice du grand pontificat au Temple de Jérusalem dans les deux derniers siècles avant l'ère chrétienne. Selon ses notes, Schechter voit des liens avec les lois karaïtes<sup>17</sup>. D'autres chercheurs comme Adolf Büchler vont jusqu'à attribuer le texte aux premiers karaïtes<sup>18</sup>. Néanmoins, l'attribution karaïte ne s'impose pas, tant s'en faut, et les hypothèses se multiplient : dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, on compte au moins dix-sept propositions différentes pour identifier le groupe juif qui a rédigé le texte. Par exemple, Louis Ginzberg défend en 1922 la thèse selon laquelle l'ouvrage appartenait aux premiers pharisiens zélotes<sup>19</sup>. De même, après Schechter, on prend l'habitude de donner pour titre à l'ouvrage le *Document de Damas* ou l'*Écrit de Damas*. Les rares mentions des « fils de Sadoq » sont supplantées dans la recherche du milieu d'origine par un autre détail. Il est dit que les membres du groupe décrit dans le texte ont quitté le pays de Juda pour rejoindre la Damascène afin d'y établir une « nouvelle

<sup>15</sup> Voir Stefan C. REIF, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Geniza*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 2000 ; Rebecca J. W. JEFFERSON, « The Historical Significance of the Cambridge Genizah Inventory Project », in Nachum DERSHOWITZ et Ephraim NISSAN, *Language, Culture, Computation: Computing of the Humanities, Law, and Narratives*, Berlin-Heidelberg, Springer, 2014, p. 9-37.

<sup>16</sup> Solomon SCHECHTER, *Documents of Jewish Sectaries*, t. 1 : *Fragments of a Zadokite Work*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1910.

<sup>17</sup> Yoram ERDER, « The Karaites and the Second Temple Sects », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde-Boston, E.J. Brill, 2003, p. 122-129, avance que Schechter distinguait les « Zadokites » des sadducéens. En effet, Solomon SCHECHTER, *op. cit.*, p. xxi-xxv, voyait un Dosithéen de Samarie comme auteur de l'écrit.

<sup>18</sup> Adolf BÜCHLER, « Schechter's 'Jewish sectaries' », *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 3, 1912-1913, p. 429-485.

<sup>19</sup> Louis GINZBERG, *An Unknown Jewish Text*, New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1976, p. 135. Voir Alex P. JASSEN, « American Scholarship On Jewish Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls », in Devorah DIMANT (éd.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Scholarly Perspective: A History of Research*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 1999, p. 117-121.

Alliance ». Pris littéralement, une origine dans la région de Damas ou encore plus loin, en direction de la Babylonie, est alléguée<sup>20</sup>.

Il faut attendre la découverte des premiers manuscrits de Qumrân en 1947 pour que le débat rebondisse. Quelques mois après l'acquisition de trois des premiers rouleaux de la grotte 1 en novembre 1947, Éléazar L. Sukenik, avec l'aide probable de Chanokh Albeck, reconnaît un lien littéraire entre l'*Écrit de Damas* et les manuscrits de Qumrân<sup>21</sup>. Le même savant propose d'attribuer les rouleaux de Qumrân aux juifs esséniens, hypothèse qu'il applique aussi à l'*Écrit de Damas*. À partir de ce moment, l'*Écrit de Damas* rejoint le corpus des écrits rédigés par les esséniens. La découverte dans les années 1950 de huit copies de l'*Écrit de Damas* dans la grotte 4 (4Q266-4Q273) et la publication en 1962 de deux autres manuscrits retrouvés dans les grottes 5 (5Q12) et 6 (6Q15) confirment cette vue. L'analyse paléographique révèle que tous les manuscrits ont été copiés au I<sup>er</sup> siècle avant l'ère chrétienne, excepté 6Q15, daté du I<sup>er</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne. Le lien potentiel entre les manuscrits de Qumrân et l'émergence du karaïsme se fait ainsi par le biais de l'*Écrit de Damas* trouvé successivement dans la *genizah* de la synagogue du Vieux-Caire et les grottes attachées à la mouvance essénienne. Il devient donc tentant de voir les karaïtes au Moyen Âge comme les continuateurs des esséniens de la fin de l'Antiquité.

## De l'intertextualité ou de la « parallelomania »

Dans cette veine, à mesure que les manuscrits de Qumrân sont publiés, les comparaisons avec les écrits karaïtes se développent, principalement dans les années 1950 et 1960<sup>22</sup>. Par exemple, l'archéologue du site de Khirbet Qumrân, Roland de Vaux, discute sommairement l'hypothèse d'une identification karaïte dans un article de la *Revue biblique* en 1950<sup>23</sup>. Simon Szyszman développe des arguments en ce sens dans un article de la revue *Vetus Testamentum* en 1952<sup>24</sup>. Bien entendu, les premières traductions et les premiers commentaires de l'*Écrit de Damas* s'arrêtent sur l'identification aux karaïtes, comme celui de Chaim Rabin en 1953<sup>25</sup>. Le chercheur qui publie le plus d'articles sur le sujet est Naphtali Wieder. La compilation de ses articles

<sup>20</sup> Jerome MURPHY O'CONNOR, « A Literary Analysis of Damascus Document VI 2-VIII 3 », *Revue biblique*, t. 78, 1971, p. 210-232 ; Chaim MILIKOWSKY, « Again: Damascus in the Damascus Document and in Rabbinic Literature », *Revue de Qumrân*, t. 41, 1982, p. 97-106 ; Michael A. KNIBB, « Exile in the Damascus Document », *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, t. 29, 1983, p. 99-117.

<sup>21</sup> Éléazar L. SUKENIK, *Megillot Genuzot metokh Genizah Kedumah she-Nimtzah be-Midbar Yehuda-Skirah Rishonah*, Jérusalem, Bialik, 1948.

<sup>22</sup> Voir le rôle que les manuscrits de Qumrân ont joué dans l'autodéfinition actuelle des karaïtes selon Daniel LASKER, « The Dead Sea Scrolls in the Historiography and Self-Image of Contemporary Karaites », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 9, 2002, p. 1-14.

<sup>23</sup> Roland DE VAUX, « À propos des manuscrits de la mer Morte », *Revue biblique*, t. 57, 1950, p. 417-429.

<sup>24</sup> Simon SZYSZMAN, « À propos du karaïsme et des textes de la mer Morte », *Vetus Testamentum*, t. 2, 1952, p. 343-348.

<sup>25</sup> Chaim RABIN, *The Zadokite documents*, t. 1 : *The Admonition*, t. 2 : *The Laws*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952.

dans le livre intitulé *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* en 1962 restera longtemps le point de référence pour ceux voulant étudier le lien entre les karaïtes et les manuscrits de Qumrân<sup>26</sup> ; la deuxième édition publiée en 2005 ajoute même sept articles<sup>27</sup>. Nathan Schur, dans son encyclopédie sur les karaïtes parue en 1995, résume les principaux parallèles établis entre les idées karaïtes et les idées de ceux qui copièrent les manuscrits de Qumrân<sup>28</sup>. Au passage, il ne mentionne pas les esséniens car, à l'époque de la parution de l'ouvrage, de sérieux doutes sont apparus quant à l'identification essénienne, suite à la publication des manuscrits de la grotte 4, doutes levés au tout début des années 2000 au point qu'un consensus s'établit durablement sur le sujet jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Schur cite successivement comme points communs entre les deux groupes<sup>29</sup> : le rejet implicite de la tradition orale, l'emphase portée sur la recherche dans les Écritures, des termes similaires pour qualifier leurs opposants respectifs, des expressions et mots communs concernant des groupes ou des personnages comme le « Maître de justice », les « fils de Sadoq », le « *maskil* » qu'on pourrait traduire par « l'enseignant », les « fils de vérité »... Il mentionne également l'utilisation des histoires bibliques pour dire le présent et le futur, la recherche des signes de la venue du messie dans les Écritures, la conviction de chaque groupe de détenir la vérité concernant la signification des lois mosaïques et, par antithèse, que les autres groupes sont dans l'erreur. Après d'autres chercheurs<sup>30</sup>, il signale aussi des similarités entre les textes de lois découverts et la *halakha* de Daniel al-Qūmisī au milieu du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>31</sup>. Il explique cette prétendue proximité par la transmission d'idées via des groupes minoritaires relégués à l'état de clandestinité jusqu'aux karaïtes plusieurs siècles après.

Il énumère ensuite des différences majeures entre les idées des deux groupes comme le soi-disant dualisme cosmologique essénien et le strict monothéisme des karaïtes, la prédestination à l'œuvre dans la pensée essénienne et la croyance en la liberté de choix chez les karaïtes, la quasi-absence de pratiques rituelles en commun, la stricte hiérarchie promue par les esséniens et inconnue des karaïtes.

<sup>26</sup> Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean scrolls and Karaism*, Londres, Horovitz Publishings, 1962.

<sup>27</sup> Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean scrolls and Karaism: A reproduction of the first edition with addenda, corrigenda and supplementary articles*, Jérusalem, Ben-Zvi, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Nathan SCHUR, *The Karaite Encyclopedia*, Francfort-sur-le-Main, Peter Lang, 1995. Voir aussi une liste de parallèles dans Fred ASTREN, « Karaites », in Lawrence H. SCHIFFMANN et James C. VANDERKAM (éds), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, t. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 464-465.

<sup>29</sup> Nathan SCHUR, *op. cit.*, p. 84-86.

<sup>30</sup> Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism: A reproduction of the first edition with addenda, corrigenda and supplementary articles*, *op. cit.*, p. 59-61 ; résumé dans Fred ASTREN, « Karaites », *op. cit.*, p. 464 ; Yoram ERDER, « The Karaites and the Second Temple Sects », *op. cit.*, p. 121, pense que Daniel al-Qūmisī développe une doctrine messianique inspirée du genre littéraire du *peshar* dans les textes de Qumrân.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel ben Moses AL-QŪMISĪ, *Pitron Sheneim 'Asar, Commentarius in Librum Duodecim Prophetarum*, I. D. Markon (éd.), Jérusalem, 1958.

Enfin, il conclut qu'il n'y a pas de lien direct avéré entre les esséniens et les premiers karaïtes<sup>32</sup>. En effet, à la différence des pharisiens, des sadducéens, des zélotes et d'autres groupes juifs, les esséniens disparaissent des sources juives après la première révolte juive (66-73/74), bien qu'un souvenir du nom soit conservé par des Pères de l'Église<sup>33</sup>. Il semble que le mouvement ait disparu, ce qui ne signifie pas que les esséniens ont péri physiquement lors de la guerre contre les Romains. Il y a fort à parier que les esséniens percevaient les débuts de la guerre comme les signes du début de la fin des temps selon leur perspective théologique. Or, les événements ont cruellement démenti leurs attentes de voir leurs idées se diffuser à l'ensemble des juifs et de bouter les Romains hors de la Judée<sup>34</sup>. Il est probable que les esséniens se soient rendu compte de l'inanité de leur croyance eschatologique et qu'ils aient décidé de quitter les groupes esséniens pour d'autres groupes. Néanmoins, il n'y a aucune chance que les premiers karaïtes aient pu hériter directement des esséniens, car il existe un fossé chronologique entre les deux groupes et un hiatus spatial parce que les premiers karaïtes résidaient principalement à l'est du Tigre, selon Schur<sup>35</sup>. Pourtant, plusieurs chercheurs se sont adonnés à la quête d'une intertextualité en pensant à un lien indirect, c'est-à-dire des écrits, des expressions ou des idées conservés par des groupes à travers les âges et les régions. D'ailleurs, la nature de cette intertextualité a pu grandement varier d'un chercheur à l'autre. On peut distinguer l'intertextualité proche insistant sur un même mot ou une même expression dans les textes karaïtes et les textes de Qumrân, et l'intertextualité lointaine s'attachant davantage à des idées caractéristiques qu'à des citations au mot à mot. Le catalogue précédemment cité de Schur résume les traits saillants issus de cinquante années de recherche. Il est remarquable que ces savants proviennent presque tous du domaine des études karaïtes et que leurs recherches fondées sur une intertextualité avec les textes de Qumrân aient visé à trouver les traces d'une origine du mouvement karaïte dans le groupe tardo-antique des esséniens<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> La conclusion est partagée par Meira POLLIACK, « On the Question of the Peshet's Influence on Karaite Exegesis », in Gershon BRIN et Bilhah NITZAN (éd.), *Fifty Years of Dead Sea Scrolls Research: Studies in Memory of Jacob Licht*, Jérusalem, Ben-Zvi, 2001, p. 275-294 [hébreu]; Meira POLLIACK, « Wherein Lies the Peshet? Re-questioning the Connection between the Medieval Karaite and Qumranic Modes of Biblical Interpretation », *Jewish Studies; an Internet Journal*, t. 4, 2005, p. 151-200.

<sup>33</sup> Voir Synésios de Cyrène (c. 370-413) sur la vie de Dion (Chrysostome) 3.2; Hégésippe de Jérusalem (c. 115-180) dont les *Hypomnemata* sont conservées dans l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe de Césarée (c. 260/265-339/340); Hippolyte de Rome (c. 170-235) dans *Réfutation de toutes les hérésies* 9.17-28; Épiphanes de Salamine (c. 315-403), *Panarion* 10.1.1-12.1.2; 20.3.4. Voir Alfred ADAM, *Antike Berichte über die Essener*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1972; Geza VERMÈS et Martin GOODMAN (éds), *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources*, Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1989.

<sup>34</sup> Voir Albert HOGETERP, *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Traditio-Historical Study of Eschatological, Apocalyptic and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Nathan SCHUR, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Voir l'idée d'une dissémination des idées esséniennes jusqu'en Babylonie dans Yoram ERDER, « When Did the Karaites First Encounter Apocryphical Literature akin to the Dead Sea Scrolls », *Cathedra*, t. 42, 1987, p. 54-68 [hébreu].

<sup>36</sup> Voir un état de la question des liens suggérés avec les premiers karaïtes dans Yoram ERDER, *The Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Qumran Scrolls: On the History of an Alternative to Rabbinic Judaism*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, et plus largement des parallèles littéraires avec les écrits juifs du Second Temple; Fred ASTREN, « Karaites », *op. cit.*, p. 462-465, pp. 464-465.



## Au sujet de la comparaison entre les karaïtes et les esséniens

Il peut être intéressant de renverser la perspective. Il ne s'agit plus d'évaluer la prétendue intertextualité à l'aune des études karaïtes, mais d'examiner les parallèles précédemment allégués d'après les études sur les textes de Qumrân. Autrement dit, les spécialistes des études karaïtes postulant une intertextualité – proche ou lointaine – avec les textes de Qumrân prennent-ils en compte la signification des termes, des expressions, des idées dans leur contexte d'expression autour de l'ère chrétienne ou la transposent-ils à l'époque des karaïtes ?

Récemment, une nouvelle génération de chercheurs a rouvert le dossier à frais nouveaux. La connaissance des idées karaïtes avec l'édition de nouveaux manuscrits et la mise au jour de la diversité des idées karaïtes sur différents sujets ont épousé le renouvellement des études sur les écrits rabbiniques qui montrent la variété et la complexité des idées et pratiques, contrairement aux vues unifiantes et traditionnelles des décennies précédentes. En somme, l'étude critique des textes à partir des manuscrits renouvelle la connaissance des karaïtes et des rabbanites depuis quelques décennies et quelques (rares) chercheurs interrogent les points communs relevés avec les textes de Qumrân<sup>37</sup>. Je souhaite contribuer à cet élan comme spécialiste des manuscrits de Qumrân, ce qui n'a pas été fait jusqu'à présent, à ma connaissance. Ainsi, je reprends succinctement quelques points communs allégués entre les textes karaïtes et les textes de Qumrân afin d'insister sur une direction de recherche que j'estime prometteuse.

Par exemple, on ne peut plus écrire que les textes de Qumrân rejettent implicitement la tradition orale. Les textes juridiques et réglementaires de Qumrân attestent une autre conception de la révélation<sup>38</sup>. En effet, les membres de plein droit du mouvement essénien se doivent d'étudier la *Torah* et les Prophètes pour trouver le sens caché par Dieu. On distingue ce qui est révélé (*nigleh*) et qui a été écrit et copié depuis plusieurs générations, et ce qui est caché (*nistar*) par Dieu dans le texte révélé, c'est-à-dire le message complémentaire de ce qui est déjà connu. Ce message confirme et justifie les idées professées par les esséniens, y compris pour la fin des temps. La découverte de ce message caché est guidée par le Maître de justice, dirigeant anonyme du groupe, puis, probablement après sa mort, par un processus très codifié d'oralisation et

<sup>37</sup> Voir Fred ASTREN, « Karaites », *op. cit.*, p. 464, et Fred ASTREN, « The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies: Methods and Problems », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 8, 2001, p. 105-123, sp. 123 avec une sage conclusion.

<sup>38</sup> Voir Lawrence H. SCHIFFMAN, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 1975 ; Aaron SHEMESH et Cana WERMAN, « Hidden Things and their Revelation », *Revue de Qumrân*, t. 71, 1998, p. 409-427 ; Lawrence H. SCHIFFMANN, « Halakhah and Sectarianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls », in Timothy H. LIM (éd.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, Édimbourg, T&T Clark, 2000, p. 123-142.

d'écriture ou réécriture des textes de référence et d'autorité du groupe<sup>39</sup>. Ces notions et ce processus sont donc éloignés de la conception prétendument à l'œuvre dans les textes de Qumrân, selon Schur et ses devanciers. Ainsi, N. Wieder cite la phrase célèbre de 'Anan ben David, *ḥapisu be'orayta shappir*, « cherche-le minutieusement dans l'Écriture »<sup>40</sup>, pour dire que la *Torah* se suffit à elle-même et que sa signification se trouve dans l'exégèse de ce texte seul. Mais il omet la seconde partie de la citation, *ve al tisha'anū al da'ti*, « et ne vous fiez pas à mon opinion », et n'entre pas dans le débat sur la date de rédaction de ces deux phrases. Il cite également le *Diqduqe ha-Te'amim* où le rabbin Aaron ben Moshe ben Asher dit que les mots de la *Torah* qui sont cachés ne permettent pas de remplir les commandements et que les juifs ne peuvent donc être considérés comme fautifs à cause de cela<sup>41</sup>. Wiener ajoute l'opinion de Yehudah ha-Dassi dans le *'Eshkol ha-Kopher*, Alph. 171, lettre *shin*, expliquant que les choses cachées sont à chercher avec vigueur dans la *Torah*, mais il conclut que cela est réservé aux « parfaits craignant-Dieu sages », c'est-à-dire aux savants karaïtes<sup>42</sup>. Ainsi, les choses cachées dans les écrits karaïtes sont les passages obscurs de la *Torah* que les savants karaïtes peuvent expliquer grâce à leur sagesse et leur piété. En somme, les érudits karaïtes possèdent une connaissance authentique de la *Torah* en eux. La conception essénienne diffère fondamentalement en dépit d'une apparente similitude.

En revanche, l'emphase portée sur la recherche dans les Écritures, ou plus largement dans les textes d'autorité pour les esséniens, est bel et bien avérée pour déterminer la vie du groupe et son projet politico-religieux. Toutefois, le processus à l'œuvre est régi par un principe de préservation de l'impureté des membres afin d'atteindre le message caché, ce qui est fort différent des karaïtes. Il est aussi correct de prétendre que les esséniens reprennent des histoires bibliques pour en déduire les événements présents et futurs. Plus précisément, les esséniens interprètent des paroles prophétiques afin d'expliquer l'époque dans laquelle ils vivent et qu'ils comprennent comme le début de la période eschatologique. La suite de l'*eschaton* est déduite selon cette interprétation de l'histoire, ce qui donne lieu à l'écriture de commentaires en ce sens. Ces commentaires sont nommés des *pesharim* dans la recherche moderne, car ils citent un extrait biblique suivi du commentaire introduit par une formule dérivée du mot

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<sup>39</sup> Voir David HAMIDOVIĆ, « Le processus social d'oralisation dans l'édition et les rééditions de la *Règle de la Communauté* à Qumrân », in Thomas RÖMER, Hervé GONZALEZ, Lionel MARTI et Jan RÜCKL (éds), *Oral et écrit dans l'Antiquité orientale : les processus de rédaction et d'édition*, Louvain, Peeters, 2021, à venir ; David HAMIDOVIĆ, « The Production and Dissemination of Knowledge within the Qumran Community », in Catherine HEZSER et Diana V. EDELMAN (éds), *The Use and Dissemination of Religious Knowledge in Antiquity*, Sheffield, Equinox, 2021, p. 93-121.

<sup>40</sup> Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism: A reproduction of the first edition with addenda, corrigenda and supplementary articles*, op. cit., p. 57, confond avec la *Torah* orale des rabbanites. Voir aussi la discussion sur cette fameuse phrase dans *ibid.*, p. 58 et n. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Seligmann BAER et Hermann L. STRACK, *Diqduqe ha-Te'amim*, Leipzig, 1979, p. 53, cité par Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism: A reproduction of the first edition with addenda, corrigenda and supplementary articles*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Yehudah ben Elijah HA-DASSI, *Sefer 'Eshkol ha-Kopher*, Yevpatoria, 1836, cité par Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism: A reproduction of the first edition with addenda, corrigenda and supplementary articles*, op. cit., p. 59.

*pesher*, « interprétation »<sup>43</sup>. Dans cette perspective, la recherche des signes de la venue du messie existe, mais l'attente messianique ne peut plus se résumer à l'attente d'une figure de sauveur du peuple juif. Les textes de Qumrân attestent l'existence de cette croyance, mais elle n'est pas centrale dans les scénarios eschatologiques envisagés. La guerre eschatologique et le jugement final condamnant les impies à la destruction et l'oubli sont davantage omniprésents<sup>44</sup>. De même, il existe plusieurs types de figures messianiques : le messie royal comme dans l'ensemble du judaïsme au tournant de l'ère chrétienne, mais aussi le messie sacerdotal et des figures eschatologiques qu'on peut qualifier la plupart du temps de messies prophétiques<sup>45</sup>.

En somme, les esséniens attendent bien le messie, regardent bien les épisodes bibliques comme des enseignements pour le présent et le futur et ont la conviction de détenir la vérité face aux autres groupes juifs, mais il s'agit d'idées générales qui ne résistent pas à l'examen détaillé de l'ensemble des textes de Qumrân<sup>46</sup>. De plus, ces idées générales sont largement partagées par l'ensemble des groupes juifs à partir du tournant de l'ère chrétienne<sup>47</sup>. Il n'est donc pas étonnant que des groupes ou des savants juifs plus tardifs partagent des conceptions communes dans les grandes lignes sur des thématiques centrales. L'étude précise des textes de Qumrân d'un côté et des écrits produits par les différents groupes karaïtes, *a fortiori* à différentes époques, d'un autre côté ne permet pas d'alléguer une simple reprise des conceptions esséniennes par le mouvement karaïte. L'existence de liens même indirects entre les esséniens disparus et les premiers karaïtes ou une partie d'entre eux demeure difficile à établir. Les karaïtes comme tout groupe juif empruntent au fonds commun intellectuel du judaïsme ancien. Ainsi, des expressions comme « fils de Sadoq »<sup>48</sup> ou bâties avec le mot « vérité » sont légion dans

<sup>43</sup> Voir Moshe J. BERNSTEIN, « Introductory Formulas for Citation and Re-citation of Biblical verses in the Qumran Pesharim », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 1, 1994, p. 30-70 ; George J. BROOKE, « Qumran Pesharim: Toward the Redefinition of a Genre », *Revue of Qumrân*, t. 10, 1979-1981, p. 483-503 ; Maurya P. HORGAN, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*, Washington (DC), Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979 ; George J. BROOKE, « Some Comments on Commentary », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 19, 2012, p. 249-266 ; Alex J. JASSEN, « The Pesharim and the Rise of Commentary in Early Jewish Scriptural Interpretation », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 19, 2012, p. 363-398.

<sup>44</sup> Voir David HAMIDOVIĆ, « La diversité des attentes messianiques dans le judaïsme palestinien », in David HAMIDOVIĆ, Xavier LEVIEILS et Christophe MÉZANGE (éds), *Encyclopédie des messianismes juifs dans l'Antiquité*, Louvain, Peeters, 2018, p. 205-286.

<sup>45</sup> Voir John J. COLLINS, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids (MI), Eerdmans, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Voir Meira POLLIACK, « On the Question of the Pesharim's Influence on Karaite Exegesis », *op. cit.*, p. 275-294 [hébreu].

<sup>47</sup> Voir l'hypothèse des maghariens (Yoram ERDER, « The Observance of the Commandments in the Diaspora on the Eve of the Redemption in the Doctrine of the Karaite Mourners of Zion », *Henoch*, t. 19, 1997, p. 175-202 ; John C. REEVES, « Exploring the Afterlife of Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings », *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, t. 30, 1999, p. 148-177 ; Fred ASTREN, « Magharisians », in Lawrence H. SCHIFFMANN et James C. VANDERKAM (éds), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, t. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 501-502) comme chaînon manquant entre les esséniens et les karaïtes. Cette hypothèse pose plus de problèmes qu'elle n'en résout, voir Fred ASTREN, « The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies », *op. cit.*, p. 112-115.

<sup>48</sup> Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī 1.2.7 signale qu'il connaît des livres écrits par Sadoq. Voir Bruno CHIESA et Wilfrid LOCKWOOD, *Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity: A Translation of 'Kitāb al-anwār'. Book 1, with Two Introductory Essays*, Francfort-sur-le-Main, Peter Lang, 1984, p. 101-102.

les écrits juifs anciens ; ces exemples parmi d'autres montrent aussi les limites de la philologie lorsque celle-ci n'est pas assez contextualisée.

Par exemple, l'expression *moreh tsédeq* ou *moreh ha-tsédeq*, « Maître de justice », attestée dix-sept fois dans les textes de Qumrân et reprise dans des écrits karaïtes, étonne, car on ne peut alléguer d'une expression prosaïque. À ce jour, aucune explication n'a convaincu la communauté scientifique<sup>49</sup>. Récemment, en 2014, Yoram Erder est revenu brièvement sur le sujet<sup>50</sup>. Les karaïtes attendent celui nommé le « Maître de justice », parce qu'il est chargé d'enseigner la signification des commandements au peuple dans le désert. Ainsi, il est réputé préparer les juifs à retourner en terre d'Israël. En effet, dans le *Perush Yefet ben 'Eli le-Sefer Hoshea*, il est dit<sup>51</sup> :

*'Car Il t'a donné le Maître de Justice' (Joël 2,23). À mon avis, le Maître de justice est Élie, à qui Il donnera à Israël d'enseigner les lois à Israël comme il est écrit, 'Jusqu'à ce qu'il vienne et t'enseigne la justice' (Osée 10,12), et 'Il réconciliera les parents avec les enfants' (Malachie 3,24), et cela arrivera avant Gog.*

Comparant avec le *Pesher d'Habakkuk* trouvé dans la grotte 1 de Qumrân, Erder conclut que le Maître de justice a un rôle similaire dans les textes karaïtes à ceux de Qumrân : « un enseignant de halakhah »<sup>52</sup>. Il suggère ainsi de réviser la traduction de *moreh tsédeq* par « le pourvoyeur de la vraie loi » (« *True Law Giver* »)<sup>53</sup>, reprenant ainsi la traduction de John Reeves en 1988<sup>54</sup>. Certes, à l'examen des passages mettant en scène le Maître de justice dans les textes de Qumrân, le Maître donne une interprétation de la *Torah* et des Prophètes qu'il estime la vraie, mais en bonne méthodologie, on ne peut s'empêcher d'observer que le texte karaïte cité discute l'identité et la fonction du Maître à partir des mêmes citations bibliques qui fondent le titre de Maître de justice dans les textes de Qumrân. Il en ressort qu'à plusieurs siècles de différence, le Maître de justice a le même rôle parce qu'une exégèse est faite sur les mêmes passages bibliques<sup>55</sup>. Ainsi, cela ne permet pas de conclure que les karaïtes ont

<sup>49</sup> Voir dernièrement Travis B. WILLIAMS, *History and Memory in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Remembering the Teacher of Righteousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Yoram ERDER, « Understanding the Qumran Sect in view of Early Karaite Halakhah from the Geonic Period », *Revue de Qumrân*, t. 103, 2014, p. 422-423.

<sup>51</sup> Meira POLLIACK et Eliezer SCHLOSSBERG, *Perush Yefet ben 'Eli le-Sefer Hoshea*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009, p. 159.

<sup>52</sup> Yoram ERDER, « Understanding the Qumran Sect in view of Early Karaite Halakhah from the Geonic Period », *op. cit.*, p. 423.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> John C. REEVES, « The Meaning of *Moreh sēdeq* in the Light of 11QTorah », *Revue de Qumrân*, t. 13, 1988, p. 287-298.

<sup>55</sup> Voir cet exemple et d'autres exemples de parallèles pour une même conclusion dans David HAMIDOVIĆ, « The Memory Box of the Teacher of Righteousness », à venir.

hérité du Maître de justice des esséniens. Un lien indirect est mis au jour, celui des sources, mais la déduction d'un lien direct est spéculative<sup>56</sup>.

## La matérialité des textes et leurs contextes historiques : l'Écrit de Damas

Pour dépasser le stade des comparaisons, souvent formelles bien que nécessaires, et évaluer la relation entre les esséniens et les premiers karaïtes, il me semble que l'approche de l'anthropologie sociale sur les milieux religieux qui se construisent en dissidence peut expliquer une partie des caractéristiques des milieux karaïtes à leur début. Une autre direction de recherche prometteuse, ancrée dans l'approche historique, est l'analyse de la matérialité, c'est-à-dire l'étude des manuscrits en eux-mêmes et du texte lu dans son contexte de copie.

Parmi les manuscrits exhumés de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra à Fustat (une partie du Vieux-Caire) et les manuscrits trouvés dans les grottes de Qumrân figurent le livre de Ben Sira en hébreu, le document araméen de Lévi, le livre de Tobit en hébreu et l'Écrit de Damas<sup>57</sup>. Quoi qu'il en soit pour l'instant du groupe juif qui détenait la synagogue Ben-Ezra, les trois premiers textes cités n'ont pas été rédigés par les esséniens ; ceux-ci en ont sciemment hérité, c'est-à-dire qu'ils ont choisi de conserver des copies du livre de Ben Sira, du document araméen de Lévi et du livre de Tobit – réalisées par des scribes esséniens ou bien appropriées –, parce que les idées proposées dans ces textes allaient dans le sens des idées esséniennes, voire les justifiaient. Ainsi, pour le livre de Ben Sira en hébreu, il ne fait pas de doute que ce texte a été rédigé avant l'émergence du mouvement essénien et qu'il a été repris par eux. Comme les fragments découverts à Qumrân sont tenus – seulement Si 6,14-15 (ou 1,19-20) et Si 6,20-31 dans le manuscrit 2Q18, et Si 51,13-19.30 dans le grand rouleau des Psaumes de la grotte 11 (11Q5) –, la comparaison avec les manuscrits découverts au Caire est difficile<sup>58</sup>. Quoi qu'il en soit, le livre de Ben Sira est par bien des égards différent des idées esséniennes et aucun chercheur aujourd'hui, à ma connaissance, n'en fait un écrit essénien. De la découverte du texte à Qumrân et au Caire, il faut simplement en déduire que le livre a circulé dans plusieurs milieux juifs pendant plusieurs siècles.

<sup>56</sup> On peut faire la même conclusion au sujet de l'expression, כרי (ה)רדך citée par Naphtali WIEDER, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, op. cit., p. 129-131 et Fred ASTREN, « The Dead Sea Scrolls and Medieval Jewish Studies », op. cit., p. 106-107, et lue en CD A | 13 ; II 26 ; 1QS X 21, et chez plusieurs auteurs karaïtes. Tous ces passages empruntent au texte biblique de Malachie 2,8.

<sup>57</sup> Stefan C. REIF, « Reviewing the links between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Cairo Genizah », in Timothy H. LIM et John J. COLLINS (éds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 669-672.

<sup>58</sup> Pancratius C. BEENTJES, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 1997.

Concernant le document araméen de Lévi, sept manuscrits ont été exhumés des grottes de Qumrân (1Q21 ; 4Q213 ; 4Q213a ; 4Q213b ; 4Q214 ; 4Q214a ; 4Q214b) et deux fragments ont été extraits de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Probablement rédigé au III<sup>e</sup> siècle avant l'ère chrétienne comme le livre de Ben Sira, le document araméen de Lévi est une source majeure pour nombre d'écrits apocryphes avant l'ère chrétienne, mais il n'a pas été rédigé par les esséniens<sup>59</sup>. Ils en ont aussi hérité. C'est pourquoi la concomitance de l'écrit à Qumrân et au Caire s'explique par un texte partagé par plusieurs groupes juifs à travers le temps. Enfin, le livre de Tobit en hébreu est connu au Caire par trois fragments (T-S A45.25.26.29) et un fragment de la grotte 4 de Qumrân (4Q200). L'histoire littéraire du livre est complexe car quatre autres fragments ont été trouvés dans la même grotte (4Q196-4Q199), mais ils sont rédigés en araméen. Comme il existe aussi des manuscrits en grec et en latin qui présentent des versions différentes, le milieu rédacteur du livre demeure débattu<sup>60</sup>. Néanmoins, les chercheurs ne reconnaissent pas une origine essénienne. Il est donc aussi probable que le fragment en hébreu, sans considérer les fragments araméens, appartient à une version proche de celle découverte dans la *genizah* du Vieux-Caire mais de nouveau, le livre de Tobit n'est pas une œuvre essénienne. Les esséniens ont hérité d'une ou plusieurs versions plus anciennes que leur mouvement.

Demeure le cas de l'*Écrit de Damas*. Des quatre écrits cités découverts dans la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra du Vieux-Caire, l'*Écrit de Damas* est le seul rédigé par les esséniens au milieu du II<sup>e</sup> siècle avant l'ère chrétienne<sup>61</sup>. Par ailleurs, aucun autre écrit essénien parvenu jusqu'à nous n'a été reçu dans un autre milieu<sup>62</sup>. L'*Écrit de Damas* semble être un cas unique. Pour savoir si les deux manuscrits de l'*Écrit de Damas* du Caire (CD A et CD B) ont été copiés dans un milieu karaïte au sein de la synagogue Ben-Ezra, respectivement au X<sup>e</sup> et au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, il faut d'une part examiner le dépôt des manuscrits dans la *genizah* de la synagogue, et d'autre part vérifier que ladite synagogue ou bien un autre lieu d'origine des manuscrits appartenait à un milieu karaïte aux dates de copie.

<sup>59</sup> Henryk DRAWNEL, *An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran: A New Interpretation of the Levi Document*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 2004 ; Jonas C. GREENFIELD, Michael STONE et Esther ESHEL, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Merten RABENAU, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1994 ; Joseph A. FITZMYER, « 196–200 pap4Tob<sup>a</sup> ar, 4QTob<sup>b-d</sup> ar, and 4QTob<sup>e</sup> ar », in Magen BROSHI et al. (éds), *Qumran Cave 4: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 19*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1995, p. 1-76 ; Stuart WEEKS, Simon GATHERCOLE et Loren STUCKENBRUCK (éds), *The Book of Tobit: Texts from the Principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2004.

<sup>61</sup> David HAMIDOVIĆ, *L'Écrit de Damas. Le manifeste essénien*, Louvain, Peeters, 2011,

<sup>62</sup> L'hypothèse d'une rédaction essénienne pour les *Cantiques de l'holocauste du sabbat* trouvés à Qumrân (4Q400-4Q407) et à Massada (11Q17) ne trouve pas d'appui littéraire, voir David HAMIDOVIĆ, « La contribution des Cantiques de l'holocauste du sabbat à l'étude de la pensée mystique juive au tournant de l'ère chrétienne », in Simon C. MIMOUNI et Madeleine SCOPELLO (éds), *La Mystique théorique et théurgique dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine. Judaïsmes et christianismes*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2016, p. 303-319 ; Michael R. JOST, *Engelgemeinschaft im irdischen Gottendienst*, Tübingue, Mohr Siebeck, p. 161-189 mais relaps de celui-ci dans « The Liturgical Communion of the Yaḥad with the Angels: The Origin of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice Reconsidered », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 29, 2022, p. 52-75, sp. 68.

La réponse à ces questions se trouve dans les témoignages des voyageurs avant et pendant la découverte de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Ceux-ci instillent un doute sur l'origine des textes découverts et donc sur les manuscrits cairotes de l'*Écrit de Damas*. En effet, la collection d'écrits karaïtes amassés par Abraham Firkovitch en Égypte en 1864-1865, près de 13 700 documents, suscita des interrogations sur leur provenance exacte au Caire<sup>63</sup>. Le collectionneur fut imprécis lorsqu'il s'agissait de dire le lieu exact de ses achats au Caire. Il est question de la synagogue karaïte, mais il est difficile de savoir s'il fait allusion à la synagogue Ben-Ezra ou non. Toutefois, il fait peu de doute qu'il connaissait l'intérêt de la *genizah* de cette dernière. Dans la correspondance avec son fils, il rapporte que le chef des rabbanites, connaissant les découvertes de la synagogue karaïte, brûlait « d'un désir ardent en lui pour ouvrir les *genizoth* aussi »<sup>64</sup>. Firkovitch semble indiquer l'existence de plusieurs *genizoth* dans plusieurs synagogues au Caire qui livraient des manuscrits. La synagogue Ben-Ezra ne semble donc pas la seule pourvoyeuse de manuscrits avant même la découverte officielle de sa *genizah* en 1897. De même, quelques trente ans plus tard, lors de la véritable redécouverte de la *genizah*, furent exhumés des écrits karaïtes mais aussi d'autres écrits juifs religieux rabbanites et des pièces administratives. L'imprécision – volontaire ou non – de Firkovitch, le contenu multiple de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra et les témoignages d'autres voyageurs avant 1897<sup>65</sup> firent naître des questions légitimes sur l'existence d'une seule *genizah* au Caire et la présence d'autres lieux où des manuscrits juifs étaient déposés<sup>66</sup>.

Lors de la visite de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra par Schechter en 1897, la chambre avait été reconstruite entre 1889 et 1892. Schechter avait donc face à lui une *genizah* dans une forme moderne, différente de son apparence antérieure, *a fortiori* médiévale<sup>67</sup>. Implicitement, la *genizah*, dans sa forme de 1897, était comprise comme un calque de la *genizah* ou des *genizoth* antérieures. Or, plusieurs témoignages laissent entrevoir une histoire mouvementée du dépôt des manuscrits dans la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Localisée à Fustat, son histoire avant le XI<sup>e</sup> siècle échappe en grande partie, parce que se mêlent des récits dont on ne sait s'ils font la part belle à l'histoire ou à une légende orientée à des fins politiques et religieuses locales. Fustat aurait été créé en 641 par les Arabes après avoir défait les Byzantins à Babylone. Les coptes auraient réclamé un terrain au général arabe 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ parce que la tradition localisait la synagogue détruite du prophète biblique Jérémie en ce lieu. Ainsi, les

<sup>63</sup> Menahem BEN-SASSON, « Firkovitch's Second Collection: Remarks on Historical and Halakhic Material », *Jewish Studies*, t. 31, 1991, p. 47-67.

<sup>64</sup> Voir Zeev ELKIN et Menahem BEN-SASSON, « Abraham Firkovich and the Cairo Genizas in the Light of his Personal Archive », *Pe'amim*, t. 90, 2002, p. 90.

<sup>65</sup> Voir Rebecca JEFFERSON, « Deconstructing 'the Cairo Genizah': A Fresh Look at Genizah Manuscript Discoveries in Cairo before 1897 », *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 108, 2018, p. 422-448.

<sup>66</sup> Voir Nehemya ALLONY, « The Ezra Synagogue and the Cairo Geniza Not Identical », *Beth Mikra*, t. 23, 1978, p. 480-493 [hébreu].

<sup>67</sup> Cependant, l'idée d'une architecture préservée depuis le Moyen Âge circulait ; il semble que la rénovation se fit sur des fondations médiévales, ce qui n'est pas la même chose. Voir Jacques MOSSERI, « The Synagogues of Egypt: Past and Present », *Jewish Review*, t. 5, 1914, p. 31-44.

coptes bâtirent une église dédiée à l'ange Gabriel ou à saint Michel selon les voyageurs. À la fin du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'église serait devenue une synagogue au nom d'Esdras le scribe, réputé avoir copié le rouleau de la *Torah*. Une autre tradition explique le nom de la synagogue par l'achat du lieu par un certain Abraham ben Ezra en 882 en échange d'un tribut annuel versé au patriarche copte. Mais on ne sait si ces traditions ont été forgées tardivement ou non et si elles conservent des éléments historiques ou une mémoire forgée plus tardivement afin de défendre une primauté copte. Une autre tradition karaïte fait de la synagogue Ben-Ezra une synagogue karaïte dès sa fondation, mais il est fort possible que le conflit avec les rabbanites ait justifié la confection de cette tradition. Quoi qu'il en soit, sous les Fatimides au X<sup>e</sup> siècle, des juifs étaient présents en nombre à Fustat ; des karaïtes étaient établis en nombre à l'est du quartier Zuwayla et ils y menaient une vie florissante encore au siècle suivant.

Du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Fustat fut le centre de la vie juive et on y dénombrait trois synagogues : la synagogue babylonienne al-'Irāqiyīn, la synagogue palestinienne al-Shāmiyīn (qui correspond à la synagogue Ben-Ezra aussi connue sous le nom de synagogue Élie) et la synagogue karaïte. À cette époque, la synagogue palestinienne semblait plus développée et plus prestigieuse que les deux autres, puisqu'elle comptait une maison d'étude (*beth midrash*), un tribunal (*beth din*), un lieu de réunion pour des activités politiques, économiques ou sociales diverses<sup>68</sup>. Les trois synagogues semblaient vivre en symbiose, néanmoins, parce que des mariages entre les membres des trois communautés juives sont attestés<sup>69</sup>. Marchands et commerçants à succès, les familles juives s'enrichissaient rapidement et les élites s'adonnaient à une vie intellectuelle. Dans ce cadre, il n'est pas étonnant de trouver dans la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra les monuments de la culture juive médiévale ainsi que des écrits inconnus avant leur découverte. À l'instar du fameux codex d'Alep contenant des variantes anciennes de la Bible hébraïque, les juifs de Fustat achetèrent des rouleaux aux Croisés. La synagogue palestinienne semble avoir servi de dépôt des rouleaux précieux à cette époque<sup>70</sup>, parce qu'elle était probablement mieux fortifiée. Ainsi, une liste datée de 1075 énumère dix-huit rouleaux déposés dans la synagogue palestinienne ; nombre d'entre eux proviennent d'autres synagogues. De cette information, il faut retenir que les manuscrits de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra ne sont pas tous issus de ladite synagogue ; des manuscrits juifs provenant d'autres lieux de Fustat y étaient déposés. Il est aussi probable que les synagogues babylonienne et karaïte avaient leurs propres *genizoth*. Toutefois, la *genizah* de la synagogue palestinienne semblait un lieu de dépôt plus sûr ou plus prestigieux, ou bien les manuscrits entre les trois synagogues étaient échangés à des fins d'étude puis restitués, ou encore des propriétaires y déposaient leurs rouleaux précieux afin de garantir leur sécurité et/ou afin de faire un don prestigieux à la synagogue. De nombreuses

<sup>68</sup> Menahem BEN-SASSON, « The Medieval Period », in Phyllis LAMBERT (éd.), *Fortifications and the Synagogue: The Fortress of Babylon and the Ben Ezra Synagogue*, Montréal, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2001, p. 201-202.

<sup>69</sup> Marina RUSTOW, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, Ithaque (NY), Cornell University Press, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Menahem BEN-SASSON, « The Medieval Period », *op. cit.*, p. 216-218.



hypothèses sont possibles et il ne faut pas exclure une vision dynamique du fonctionnement des *genizoth* entre elles, c'est-à-dire comme des lieux ouverts où les manuscrits, ainsi que d'autres écrits non religieux, étaient stockés avant ou après usage. La vision de la *genizah* comme un lieu fermé où les textes contenant le nom divin doivent se décomposer avec le temps selon le commandement requis semble être apparue plus tardivement dans l'histoire de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. La localisation des manuscrits exhumés en 1897 dans la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra s'avère donc plus complexe, puisqu'il faut distinguer le dépôt des manuscrits dans ladite synagogue et leur usage possible dans une, deux ou les trois synagogues de Fustat.

Lorsque Schechter découvre la *genizah*, il ne connaît pas cette distinction et la putréfaction odorante des manuscrits mélangée à la poussière cairote l'orientent assurément vers une *genizah* fermée conformément au commandement juif. Toutefois, les écrits de Schechter et des témoignages contemporains laissent entrevoir une autre variable. Entre autres témoignages, Elkan Nathan Adler rédige l'article « Genizah » pour la *Jewish Encyclopedia* éditée par Schechter en 1906. Adler écrit que le cimetière juif de Bassatine, à l'est du Vieux-Caire, n'est « pas la moins importante partie de la collection Taylor-Schechter »<sup>71</sup>. Qui ne dit mot consent. Schechter n'ayant pas modifié l'affirmation, cela signifie que les manuscrits rapportés par Schechter en Angleterre ne proviennent pas tous assurément de la *genizah*. Comme il est d'usage, les achats de manuscrits à des revendeurs ou directement sur le marché des antiquités cairottes ont leurs clauses de discrétion. De plus, les intermédiaires donnent souvent le nom d'un lieu de découverte contemporain ou d'un site bien connu pour donner de la valeur aux marchandises vendues. Ces deux paramètres peuvent expliquer l'identification des fragments avec la seule synagogue Ben-Ezra. Par ailleurs, les achats directs de fragments à la synagogue sont aussi documentés<sup>72</sup>. On ne sait pas toujours s'ils sont consécutifs à la découverte de la *genizah* ou s'ils proviennent du déterrement de manuscrits enfouis pendant les travaux de la *genizah* entre 1882 et 1892 afin de les préserver<sup>73</sup> ; une partie des manuscrits aurait été enterrée puis déterrée du cimetière de la Bassatine : était-ce un dépôt de la synagogue à cause des travaux de la *genizah* ou était-ce un autre dépôt ? La provenance des manuscrits découverts en 1897 et après semble donc plus complexe, parce qu'elle ne se résume pas au seul lieu identifié, c'est-à-dire la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra.

Le mélange des manuscrits appartenant à différents milieux juifs cairottes dans la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra aux XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles conjugué à des achats de fragments dans et hors de la synagogue en question permettent difficilement d'identifier le courant juif derrière les manuscrits de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-

<sup>71</sup> Elkan Nathan ADLER, « Genizah », in Solomon SCHECHTER (éd.), *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York, Funk & Wagnall, 1906, p. 613.

<sup>72</sup> Voir Meir BAR-ILAN, « The Genizah: Antonin and Wertheimer's Collections », *Alei sefer*, t. 23, 2013, p. 121-138 [hébreu].

<sup>73</sup> Voir Richard GOTTHEIL et William H. WORRELL, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, New York, MacMillan, 1927, p. XIII.

Ezra. L'incertitude n'est pas donc pas liée à l'identité du courant juif qui dirigeait la synagogue : était-ce des rabbanites ou des karaïtes ? Avant le <sup>xr</sup> siècle, il est impossible, en l'état des sources, de démêler ce qui relève de la tradition et de l'histoire : les uns postulant une origine chrétienne, les autres une origine rabbanite, ou encore une origine karaïte. La synagogue palestinienne qui devint la synagogue Ben-Ezra semble n'avoir été qu'un lieu rabbanite. En dépit des mariages entre les courants juifs et une circulation des manuscrits entre les synagogues cairottes, la synagogue karaïte semble avoir eu une existence à part entière, différente de la synagogue palestinienne. Par exemple, elle ne fut pas touchée lors de l'incendie qui eut lieu avant 1473. Celui-ci affecta les synagogues babylonienne et palestinienne, puisque les communautés respectives demandèrent l'autorisation de reconstruire aux autorités ottomanes locales à cette date<sup>74</sup>. On ne sait si les manuscrits des *genizoth* respectives ont souffert de l'incendie et si des transferts de manuscrits ont pu avoir lieu en direction de la synagogue karaïte, le temps de reconstruire. La décision des autorités de la synagogue palestinienne de fermer la *genizah*, mettant ainsi fin aux échanges de manuscrits entre communautés juives, signifie peut-être aussi une coexistence plus tendue entre les communautés. Les synagogues rabbanites babylonienne et palestinienne étaient peut-être en opposition à la synagogue karaïte comme dans les autres régions de la Méditerranée à la même époque. Quoi qu'il en soit, Issachar Ibn Susan, un voyageur au <sup>xvi</sup> siècle<sup>75</sup>, décrit les synagogues babylonienne et karaïte à l'état de ruine. La communauté karaïte existe toujours et elle a transféré sa synagogue dans le quartier d'al-Gamāliyya dans le Vieux-Caire à cette époque ; elle l'a nommée Dār Simḥa<sup>76</sup>. Le témoignage cité précédemment de Firkovitch montre une rivalité entre cette synagogue et la synagogue Ben-Ezra au <sup>xix</sup> siècle, notamment en matière de manuscrits possédés. Il semble d'ailleurs que des manuscrits acquis par Firkovitch puissent provenir de la synagogue karaïte. Dans cette perspective, Rebecca Jefferson fait un pas décisif en affirmant que des manuscrits de Schechter peuvent aussi provenir de la synagogue karaïte Dār Simḥa<sup>77</sup>. Elle justifie en citant le cas de Moses Wilhem Shapira, marchand d'antiquités à Jérusalem, qui a vendu des manuscrits à la British Library dans les années 1870, avant la découverte de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Des fragments de cette collection s'assemblent à ceux de la collection de Cambridge exhumés soi-disant de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Elle conclut que Shapira ou son agent au Caire avaient eu accès à la *genizah* ou bien que la collection Schechter est issue de manuscrits de différentes provenances, dont la synagogue karaïte.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph R. HACKER, « The Mameluke and Ottoman Periods: The Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries », in Phyllis LAMBERT (éd.), *Fortifications and the Synagogue: The Fortress of Babylon and the Ben Ezra Synagogue*, Montréal, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2001, p. 225.

<sup>75</sup> Voir Joseph R. HACKER, « The Mameluke and Ottoman Periods: The Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries », *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>76</sup> Haggai BEN-SHAMMAI, « Is 'The Cairo Genizah' a Proper Name or a Generic Noun? On the Relationship between the Genizot of the Ben Ezra and the Dar Simḥa Synagogues », in Ben M. OUTHWAITE et Siam BHAYRO (éds), *From a Sacred Source: Genizah Studies in Honour of Professor Stefan C. Reif*, Leyde, E.J. Brill, 2010, p. 44-45.

<sup>77</sup> Rebecca JEFFERSON, « Deconstructing 'the Cairo Genizah' », *op. cit.*, p. 434-435.

Il est vrai que les manuscrits d'écrits karaïtes exhumés du Caire au tournant du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle sont nombreux. Ce nombre mis en correspondance avec le lieu allégué de découverte, la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra, dont les sources portent à croire qu'elle est demeurée rabbanite à travers les siècles, instille un doute. Certes, on peut expliquer cette concomitance avec la circulation des manuscrits entre les communautés juives cairottes aux xi<sup>e</sup>-xiii<sup>e</sup> siècles, lorsque les *genizoth* de Fustat étaient de simples lieux de stockage pérenne ou temporaire de manuscrits ; des manuscrits karaïtes auraient été conservés, laissés ou oubliés dans la *genizah* de la synagogue palestinienne<sup>78</sup>. Mais les zones d'ombre sur les conditions et les sources d'approvisionnement en manuscrits des savants européens en voyage au Caire peuvent aussi suggérer que des manuscrits karaïtes ou non rabbanites plus largement provenaient d'autres lieux comme des synagogues ou des cimetières.

Forts de ces réflexions sur l'histoire juive de Fustat, l'histoire des synagogues et les contextes de découverte de manuscrits, la présence de deux copies de l'*Écrit de Damas* dans la collection Schecher s'éclaire d'un jour nouveau. Rappelons que les deux copies sont datées respectivement du x<sup>e</sup> et du xii<sup>e</sup> siècle, c'est-à-dire pendant l'âge d'or des communautés juives du Vieux-Caire. Elles sont présentées par Schecher comme provenant de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra. Mais on ne sait plus si cela désigne pour lui un label afin d'édifier un corpus ou bien le lieu précis de découverte des copies. En d'autres termes, les copies cairottes de l'*Écrit de Damas* peuvent provenir d'une autre synagogue, notamment la synagogue karaïte, ou d'un autre site.

Dans l'hypothèse d'un manuscrit tiré de la synagogue karaïte, il faut mesurer la réception karaïte du texte dans ce contexte<sup>79</sup>. En effet, si la communauté karaïte du Vieux-Caire a reçu et adopté l'*Écrit de Damas*, elle a dû au moins s'interroger sur la signification du texte et son rapport avec les croyances karaïtes locales. On ne sait, en l'état des sources, si l'*Écrit de Damas* était perçu comme un texte d'autorité au sein de la communauté karaïte ou bien comme un texte illustrant des positions différentes. Le raisonnement est le même dans l'hypothèse d'une communauté rabbanite réceptionnant l'*Écrit de Damas* : comment percevait-elle ce texte ? lui accordait-elle une autorité ou bien était-ce l'écrit d'opposants ? La copie à deux reprises, à deux époques différentes, de l'*Écrit de Damas* signifie d'une part que le texte n'est pas seulement conservé, mais qu'il est lu, voire étudié, parce que des scribes l'ont recopié.

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<sup>78</sup> Marina RUSTOW, *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 24-54, envisage aussi de telles conclusions. Elle y ajoute le contexte de l'État fatimide. Je remercie le ou la relectrice anonyme qui a suggéré ce livre paru après le colloque et l'envoi du manuscrit de cette communication. Marina RUSTOW, *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, op. cit., p. 45-49, cite aussi le concept de « Museum Archaeology » forgé par Katelijin VANDORPE, « Museum Archaeology or How to Reconstruct the Pathyris Archives », *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, t. 17, 1994, p. 289-300, pour expliquer l'enquête nécessaire afin d'établir l'histoire des collections sous le label de *genizah*.

<sup>79</sup> Voir Norman GOLB, « Literary and Doctrinal Aspects of the Damascus Covenant in the Light of Karaite Literature », *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 47, 1957, p. 354-374 ; Norman GOLB, « The Dietary Laws of the Damascus Document in Relation to Those of the Karaites », *Journal of Jewish Studies*, t. 8, 1957, p. 51-69 ; Maxine GROSSMAN, *Reading for History in the Damascus Document: A Methodological Study*, Leyde, Brill, 2002, p. 213-218, 225, entrevoit cette perspective dans la conclusion.

Ainsi, l'*Écrit de Damas* bénéficie d'une réception du ou des milieux juifs lors de l'âge d'or cairote. L'analyse codicologique et l'étude paléographique des deux manuscrits comparés à d'autres manuscrits exhumés du Vieux-Caire permettent d'écarter l'hypothèse de manuscrits importés. La copie CD A présente même les caractéristiques de manuscrits contemporains karaïtes selon Ben Outhwaite<sup>80</sup>. C'est pourquoi il nous semble que la conservation et les copies de l'*Écrit de Damas* dans la synagogue karaïte du Vieux-Caire plutôt que dans la synagogue rabbanite Ben-Ezra est à envisager. Comme on l'a signalé plus avant, il ne peut cependant être exclu que les copies étaient bien dans la synagogue Ben-Ezra, elles auraient pu y demeurer car elles ont été réalisées à l'époque de circulation des manuscrits entre les communautés juives de Fustat.

Pour aller plus avant dans l'hypothèse de manuscrits karaïtes de l'*Écrit de Damas*, il faut examiner de près les deux copies et leurs textes respectifs pour mesurer si les manuscrits et/ou le texte même portent les indices d'une réception karaïte. Un passage en particulier retient notre attention : il comporte une erreur de copie. En CD A I 9, le scribe karaïte notait *'anashim* en hébreu, les « hommes », tandis que le scribe de Qumrân en 4Q266 2 i 13 écrivait *'ashamim*, « ceux qui étaient coupables ». Le contexte est une réévaluation du châtement d'Israël par le roi babylonien Nabuchodonosor. Les Israélites reconnaissent qu'ils furent pécheurs : « Et ils comprirent leur péché et ils surent qu'ils étaient coupables. » Le texte du 4Q266 est probablement le passage originel, parce que le scribe karaïte de CD A a vu son erreur. Il a ajouté une série de points autour du mot *'anashim*. L'erreur de copie est peut-être à interpréter dans le contexte karaïte. Le scribe pouvait avoir à l'esprit une référence aux « hommes de la grande assemblée », *'anshei knesset hagedolah*, c'est-à-dire l'institution religieuse et judiciaire du judaïsme rabbanite. Le contexte du péché aurait inconsciemment suggéré au scribe l'assimilation entre les pécheurs et les Sages. Mais il a noté son erreur avec des points selon la pratique habituelle des scribes. Bien entendu, l'interprétation d'une faute d'orthographe est à manier avec beaucoup de précautions, mais il s'agit néanmoins d'une erreur d'un scribe professionnel et on peut se demander ce qui a motivé cette erreur : étourderie ou assimilation d'idées ? Bien qu'on ne puisse le prouver formellement, la seconde hypothèse peut reposer sur le rôle auctorial du scribe durant l'Antiquité et le Moyen Âge. Si cet exemple est significatif, l'*Écrit de Damas* aurait été reçu dans la communauté karaïte du Vieux-Caire, parce que le texte pouvait rappeler la situation des karaïtes en opposition aux rabbanites.

Il est aussi possible que des lois conservées dans l'*Écrit de Damas* aient un écho par rapport aux lois karaïtes, ce qu'Erder appelle des « affinités halakhiques »<sup>81</sup>, ou même

<sup>80</sup> Voir Jean-Sébastien REY, « Codicological Reconstruction of the Cairo Damascus Document (CD A) and 4QD<sup>a</sup> », *Dead Sea Discoveries*, t. 25, 2018, p. 321, citant la comparaison de Ben Outhwaite avec le manuscrit T-S 10C2.3 portant un commentaire des dix commandements écrit par Daniel al-Qûmîsî. Voir l'opinion, par exemple, de Joseph L. ANGEL, « Damascus Document », in Louis H. FELDMAN, James L. KUGEL et Lawrence H. SCHIFFMAN (éds), *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, vol. 3, Philadelphie, The Jewish Publication Society, 2013, p. 1976.

<sup>81</sup> Yoram ERDER, « Understanding the Qumran Sect in view of Early Karaite Halakhah from the Geonic Period », *op. cit.*, p. 422.

des positions communes en quelques occasions comme le relève encore Erder<sup>82</sup>. Les karaïtes ont peut-être adopté l'*Écrit de Damas*, parce qu'il corroborait leurs lois et présentait l'histoire d'un groupe minoritaire dans le judaïsme à l'instar de la leur, et surtout parce qu'il annonçait leur succès futur dans le judaïsme face aux rabbanites assimilés aux pécheurs selon le modèle deutéronomiste des Israélites punis au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère par le roi de Babylone, Nabuchodonosor. D'un point de vue codicologique et littéraire, l'hypothèse d'une réception karaïte de l'*Écrit de Damas* est énonçable, mais la circulation des manuscrits en général pendant l'âge d'or des communautés juives de Fustat et les incertitudes sur le lieu de découverte des deux copies au tournant de l'ère chrétienne sont tant des indices en faveur d'une réception karaïte de l'*Écrit de Damas* que des indications en défaveur de l'hypothèse.

L'examen des conditions possibles de transmission de l'*Écrit de Damas* de l'orbe essénienne tardo-antique aux milieux juifs médiévaux du Vieux-Caire pourrait être éclairant, car il existe bien une filiation entre les manuscrits de Qumrân de l'*Écrit de Damas* et la copie cairote A de l'*Écrit de Damas*<sup>83</sup>. En effet, le manuscrit A témoigne d'une grande fidélité dans la copie avec les manuscrits de Qumrân, à l'exception de quelques dittographies et erreurs de suffixes, erreurs courantes dans une chaîne de copie. Pourtant, la communauté essénienne (appelée *yahad* dans les textes de Qumrân) s'est construite en opposition au reste de la société juive, car elle prétendait détenir seule la vérité – idée classique des mouvements dits sectaires en sociologie des religions –, et l'admission au groupe était réservée et se faisait graduellement. Dans ce contexte, il n'était pas étonnant que l'ensemble des écrits communautaires ou sectaires du groupe fût inconnu avant la découverte des manuscrits de Qumrân, car ils ne pouvaient être diffusés hors du mouvement essénien. C'est pourquoi la présence de l'*Écrit de Damas* dans deux copies médiévales du Vieux-Caire, loin de la Judée, étonne.

L'explication qui prévaut est la découverte antérieure de manuscrits près de Jéricho qui auraient été repris par les karaïtes de Judée, parce qu'ils n'allaient pas dans le sens des rabbanites. La première découverte est rapportée dans l'Antiquité tardive par Épiphane de Salamine dans *De mensuris et ponderibus* 18. Il y raconte que le savant Origène a utilisé la découverte d'un rouleau dans des « jarres à vin de Jéricho » pour faire la *Quinta*, une traduction grecque supplémentaire de la Bible<sup>84</sup>. La deuxième découverte a lieu avant 800 de notre ère. La date correspond à une lettre du patriarche nestorien syriaque de Séleucie du Tigre, Timothée I<sup>er</sup>, adressée au métropolitain d'Élam, Serge<sup>85</sup>. Il annonce qu'une décennie plus tôt, des manuscrits ont été découverts dans

<sup>82</sup> Yoram ERDER, « The Karaites and the Second Temple Sects », *op. cit.*, p. 119-120, 126-128, 141, mais sa compréhension détaillée de l'*Écrit de Damas* est à affiner.

<sup>83</sup> Voir Joseph M. BAUMGARTEN, *Qumran Cave 4. XIII. The Damascus Document (4Q266-273)*, DJD 18, Oxford, Clarendon, 1996 ; David HAMIDOVIĆ, *L'Écrit de Damas. Le manifeste essénien*, *op. cit.*

<sup>84</sup> Otto EISSFELDT, « Der gegenwärtige Stand der in Palästina neu gefundenen hebräischen Handschriften », *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, t. 74, 1949, p. 595-600.

<sup>85</sup> Oskar BRAUN, « Ein Brief des Katholikos Timotheos I über biblische Studien des 9. Jahrhunderts », *Oriens Christianus*, t. 1, 1901, p. 299-313.

« une maison troglodyte » près de Jéricho. Plus loin, la lettre semble moins précise, car la découverte aurait eu lieu « dans les montagnes et les grottes ». La nouvelle aurait attiré beaucoup de juifs venus de Jérusalem dans le désert afin d'explorer la grotte. Ils ont trouvé de nombreux manuscrits en écriture hébraïque, y compris des manuscrits de la Bible hébraïque. En ce sens, on relève que les deux manuscrits cairotes de l'*Écrit de Damas* ont perdu le début et la fin du document ; cela pourrait être la preuve de la provenance de l'original au cœur des grottes où insectes et champignons auraient rongé les extrémités du rouleau encore enroulé, au début et à la fin. Ainsi, les pages conservées au Vieux-Caire seraient la copie de reliquat du texte déjà amputé lors de la découverte près de Jéricho<sup>86</sup>. En somme, la découverte fortuite de manuscrits judéens expliquerait la transmission de l'*Écrit de Damas*.

Mais une telle explication peine à convaincre. Le contenu de l'*Écrit de Damas* pourrait donner la solution. En effet, l'*Écrit de Damas* comporte la particularité par rapport aux autres textes esséniens de présenter le projet politico-religieux du mouvement essénien dans le premier tiers de l'écrit ; les deux autres tiers donnent la position des esséniens en matière de lois afin de définir comment les juifs doivent vivre conformément aux préceptes divins. Le texte commence donc par une historiosophie mêlant des repères historiques et symboliques décrivant les premiers temps de la communauté et enseignant les valeurs chères aux esséniens. Dans cette partie, les juifs sont appelés à retourner (le verbe *shûv*) à la *Torah*, c'est-à-dire à aller vers la bonne interprétation de la *Torah* pour vivre. Le texte enjoint ainsi les juifs à l'écoute des esséniens afin de renoncer aux voies impies et venir vivre dans la communauté essénienne qui se définit comme la seule préservant l'alliance originelle avec Dieu. Il est donc question d'un appel à rejoindre le groupe avec toute une série d'arguments exposés sous la forme de valeurs et de lois à suivre. Ainsi, l'*Écrit de Damas* ressemble à un manifeste essénien dont le but est de convaincre des juifs de rejoindre le groupe, d'où la nécessité de diffuser l'écrit hors du mouvement essénien<sup>87</sup>. Dans ces conditions, un ou plusieurs groupes juifs marginaux, après l'échec de l'essénisme à l'issue de la première révolte juive finissant en 73-74 de l'ère chrétienne, ont probablement conservé le texte, parce qu'il exprimait les idées et les stratégies rhétoriques d'un groupe marginalisé. L'exposé d'une vie collective en dissidence dans l'espoir de devenir la majorité dans un futur proche a probablement rencontré les aspirations d'autres groupes juifs. Comme le karaïsme à ses débuts est composé de groupes marginalisés divers au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, il est possible que le ou les milieux récepteurs de l'*Écrit de Damas* soit à chercher en leur sein. Malheureusement, on sait peu de ces groupes, bien que

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<sup>86</sup> Jean-Sébastien REY, *op. cit.*, p. 319-334, tente de reconstruire l'intégralité du codex, mais la méthode de calcul du texte manquant à partir du manuscrit 4Q266 n'est pas exempte de problèmes. Il pouvait exister des blancs dans le texte, des parties volontairement ou involontairement omises, des problèmes de copie dans la chaîne de transmission à travers les siècles, une écriture plus ou moins régulière... De plus, d'un point de vue méthodologique, le comblement de pages supposées manquantes dans le codex permet toujours d'arriver à un nombre approchant du texte supposé de référence. Pour reconstruire le codex, l'argument de la mauvaise organisation des pages du codex est bien meilleur, parce qu'il témoigne d'une modification du sens de l'écrit suite à une désorganisation vraisemblablement involontaire des pages du codex.

<sup>87</sup> Voir David HAMIDOVIĆ, *L'Écrit de Damas. Le manifeste essénien, op. cit.*, p. IX-XV.

des clarifications aient été faites récemment dans la recherche afin de distinguer ce qui relève de la mémoire reconstruite et de l'histoire<sup>88</sup>.

Toutefois, il ne peut être exclu que d'autres groupes – marginalisés ou non – qui ne s'apparentent pas aux karaïtes aient pu conserver l'*Écrit de Damas* et l'apporter directement ou par le truchement d'autres groupes jusqu'au Vieux-Caire. Il est avéré que les élites juives de Fustat enrichies lors de l'âge d'or, du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, achetaient des manuscrits pour eux ou pour leur synagogue respective afin de montrer leur richesse, leur prestige et leur piété. Il ne peut être exclu que l'*Écrit de Damas*, conservé par un ou plusieurs groupes juifs palestiniens marginaux, soit arrivé au Vieux-Caire par ce biais et que le mouvement karaïte et/ou d'autres milieux juifs l'aient adopté ainsi dans une perspective archéographique ou antiquaire plutôt que littéraire et intellectuelle.

Ainsi, des hypothèses de transmission et de réception de l'*Écrit de Damas*, et plus généralement des textes de Qumrân, dans les communautés juives médiévales du Vieux-Caire, dont le milieu karaïte local, demeurent, mais elles ne sont plus les mêmes : elles ont dépassé l'intertextualité proche ou lointaine avec les écrits karaïtes grâce à une meilleure connaissance historique des contextes juifs médiévaux du Vieux-Caire et des conditions de découverte de la *genizah* de la synagogue Ben-Ezra.

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<sup>88</sup> Voir Moshe Gil, *op. cit.*, p.73-118.

# The Reception of Saadia Gaon's Commentary on Esther in the Karaite Tradition of Judaeo- Arabic Commentary on the Book

□ Michael G. WECHSLER

## 1. Introduction

One need not foray long amongst the hills and hollows of Karaite-Rabbanite polemics before encountering the towering figure and enduring impress of Saadia Gaon (882-942). Among his many seminal contributions to Jewish intellectual and literary history, Saadia was the first Rabbanite scholar to engage in explicit and sustained polemics with the Karaites. His precedence in this role, amplified by the multifarious scope of his anti-Karaite polemics as well as his prominent erudition (rendered all the more totemic by his appointment as gaon – i.e., head – of the yeshiva in Sura), led to his becoming the central personalized target of Karaite polemics directed against Rabbanism, both in his day and thereafter. Viewed as the totemic exponent of Rabbanism, express references to Saadia in Karaite literature are thus consistently negative, disparaging not only of his views, but even of himself as a person, reflecting what has been characterized as “unrelenting animosity and contempt.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> So Zvi ANKORI, *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970-1100*, New York/Jerusalem, Columbia University Press/The Weizmann Science Press of Israel, 1959 (Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences, no. 597), p. 23. Ankori suggests – quite reasonably, in our view – that a contributing factor to the Karaites’ animosity towards Saadia was his opposition to Palestino-centricism, which was so central in the formation of Karaite thought. For a richly detailed and very useful – if dated – survey of the Karaite’s diachronic polemical and literary interaction with Saadia, see Samuel POZNAŃSKI, *The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon*, London, Luzac & Co., 1908



Notwithstanding such strong characterizations and the express references on which they are based, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Karaite intellectual and literary reception of Saadia was far more nuanced. This is especially evident in Karaite exegetical works, where one finds that the same scholars who elsewhere (even in the same work) expressly polemicize with Saadia also, and not infrequently, adopt or entertain the viability of material drawn tacitly (i.e., anonymously and often non-citatively) from his works.<sup>2</sup> This more positive-appropriative aspect of the Karaite reception of Saadia is, however, still largely uncharted, precisely because of the inherent challenge posed by its more tacit nature, compounded by the fact that so much source material remains unedited (though recent decades have seen a marked increase in the publication of scholarly editions<sup>3</sup>). In connection with our own research on sources appertaining to the domain of exegesis of the book of Esther, we have previously remarked on examples of the tacit appropriation of material from Saadia's commentary on the book in Karaite exegetical sources, both Islamicate as well as Byzantine.<sup>4</sup> Among the latter, as we hope to address more fully in a future study, such appropriation appears in fact to have been quite extensive, facilitated largely by the

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(a repaginated separatum, with *addenda* and *corrigenda*, of the identically-titled series of articles in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s., 18 [1906]: 209-50; 18 [1907]: 59-83; 20 [1908]: 74-85, 216-31).

<sup>2</sup> See, *inter alios*, in addition to our own work appertaining to the exegesis of Esther cited in n. 4 below, Bruno CHIESA, "A New Fragment of al-Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Riyād*," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 78, 1988, *passim*; James T. ROBINSON, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli the Karaite on the Book of Joshua*, Leiden, 2012 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 7; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 64), pp. 8-9; *idem*, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy: The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Salmon ben Yeroham on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)*, Leiden, Brill, 2012 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 5; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 45), pp. 8-9; Ilana SASSON, ed. *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli on the Book of Proverbs*, vol. 1: *Introduction and Edition*, Leiden: Brill, 2016 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 8; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 67), pp. 9-15; Solomon L. SKOSS, *The Arabic Commentary of 'Ali ben Suleimān the Karaite on the Book of Genesis*, Philadelphia, The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1928, pp. 37-45; *idem*, *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible, known as Kitāb jāmi' al-alfāz (Agrōn), of David ben Abraham al-Fāsi, the Karaite (Tenth. Cent.)*, vol. 1, New Haven, 1936 (Yale Oriental Series, Researches, vol. 20), p. LIX; Marzena ZAWANOWSKA, ed., *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli on the Abraham Narratives (Genesis 11:10-25:18): Edition and Introduction*, Leiden, 2012 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 4; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 46), p. 7, n. 13 (and the sources there cited); and Moshe ZUCKER, *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis* [Hebrew], New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1984, pp. נ" and נב, as well as the plethora of references enumerated in his index of authors under "Ya' āqōb al-Qirqisānī."

<sup>3</sup> See especially Brill's "Karaite Texts and Studies" series (subsumed under "Études sur le judaïsme médiéval"), started in 2008 and in which 12 volumes have so far appeared, with several more in preparation. The online availability of digitized manuscript images has also dramatically increased (see esp. the websites of the National Library of Israel and the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society). For a comprehensive bibliography of manuscript holdings and published works through the end of 2009 see Barry Dov WALFISH with Mikhail KIZILOV, *Bibliographia Karaitica: An Annotated Bibliography of Karaites and Karaism*, Leiden, Brill, 2011 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 2; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 43).

<sup>4</sup> See Michael G. Wechsler, ed. and trans., *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli the Karaite on the Book of Esther: Edition, Translation, and Introduction*, Leiden, Brill, 2008 (Karaite Texts and Studies, vol. 1; Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 36), pp. 66-71; *idem*, "Sa'adia Gaon on Esther's Invitation of Haman: A Case Study in Exegetical Innovation and Influence," in Meira POLLIACK and Athalya BRENNER-IDAN, eds, *Jewish Biblical Exegesis from Islamic Lands: The Medieval Period*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019 (The Bible and Its Reception, vol. 1), pp. 334-8; and our sporadic remarks attending the numerous parallels cited from Karaite exegetical sources in the footnotes to our translation of Saadia's commentary in *idem*, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile (Kitāb al-inās bi-'l-jalwa): The Judaeo-Arabic Translation and Commentary of Saadia Gaon on the Book of Esther*, Leiden, Brill, 2015 (Biblia Arabica, vol. 1), along with our index of those citations on pp. 494-510 ("Medieval Authors and Works").

communally-oriented and compilatory activity characterizing the Karaite literary project inaugurated by Tobiah ben Moses in the eleventh century.

Focusing, therefore, on the former category of Islamicate sources, our goal in what follows is to selectively survey the data bearing upon the reception of Saadia's commentary on Esther (composed *ca* 933-4)<sup>5</sup> within the Karaite domain of Judaeo-Arabic exegesis, specifically as represented by the four identified specimens of expository<sup>6</sup> Karaite commentary on the book written in Judaeo-Arabic.<sup>7</sup> These four commentaries collectively span the greater part of Karaite exegetical and literary history, including both the "Golden Age" of Islamicate Karaite literature – specifically its early classical period in latter half of the tenth century (represented by the commentaries of Salmon ben Yeruḥam and Yefet ben Eli) as well as its late classical, or scholastic, period in the eleventh century (represented by an epitomized commentary, or digest, from the school of Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ) – and the early modern period, represented by the commentary of Judah Me'ir Tawrīzī in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> In the extant text of these commentaries Saadia is mentioned explicitly only once, by Salmon, who does so – consistent with the general rule of express references to Saadia in Karaite (especially classical Karaite) literature – in a polemically-charged refutation of a view cited from Saadia's commentary on the book (see 2.1.1 below). All the other examples in our following survey therefore appertain to the tacit appropriation of material from Saadia's commentary discussed above. While the degree of probability attending the identification of appropriated material

<sup>5</sup> See Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> I.e., concerned with elucidating the sense of the text in more or less multifarious conceptual sense, encompassing pertinent aspects of grammar, syntax, literary structure, intertextuality, theology, historical background, socio-cultural background, etc. We have thus excluded from our present survey the far more restricted "grammatical commentary" (*al-Diqdūq*) of Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ (though we have included the epitomized expository commentary from his school, or perhaps even his own pen, in 2.3 below), which is concerned primarily with "the analysis and explanation of word structure" (Geoffrey KHAN, ed. and trans., *The Early Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought, Including a Critical Edition, Translation and Analysis of the Diqdūq of 'Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ on the Hagiographa*, Leiden, Brill, 2000 [Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics, vol. 32], p. 12). While he may well have consulted Saadia's commentary (particularly his translation), we have found nothing in Ibn Nūḥ's treatment of Esther (*op. cit.*, pp. 486-93) suggesting the incorporation of uniquely Saadianic material.

<sup>7</sup> In the inventory of Karaite Judaeo-Arabic commentaries on Esther given by us in the appendix to *Strangers in the Land: The Judaeo-Arabic Exegesis of Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi on the Books of Ruth and Esther*, Jerusalem, Magnes, 2010, pp. 344-7, we enumerated seven items, including the *Diqdūq* of Ibn Nūḥ. Regarding the three commentaries there designated as anonymous, the first is the epitomized commentary from the school of Ibn Nūḥ included in the present survey, whereas the remaining two represent what we have now concluded to be two distinct reworkings of Salmon's commentary and will be included in our forthcoming edition of that work. We also enumerated (*ibid.*, pp. 348-9) seven undetermined (i.e., either Rabbanite or Karaite) Judaeo-Arabic commentaries on Esther, one of which ("Anonymous III") is a fragment from Saadia's commentary subsequently included in our edition of that work (see *The Book of Conviviality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8 [1.12.1]).

<sup>8</sup> For recent surveys of the history and major periods of Islamicate Karaite exegesis see Meira POLLACK, "Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *idem*, ed., *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden, Brill, 2003 (Handbook of Oriental Studies, sec. 1, vol. 73), pp. 363-413; Daniel FRANK, "Karaite Exegesis," in Magne SÆBØ, ed., *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, pt. 2, *The Middle Ages*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000, pp. 110-26; and Michael G. WECHSLER, "Interpretation, History of: III. Judaism: D. Medieval Judaism in Arabic-speaking Lands," in Christine HELMER *et al.*, eds, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 13, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, cols. 95-105.

for each of these examples necessarily varies, we have endeavored to select those that are most compelling, if not practically certain.<sup>9</sup> For Salmon ben Yeruḥam, moreover, we have given more examples than for the following three sources since 1) his tacit appropriation of material from Saadia appears to have been far more extensive, and 2) his commentary, being the earliest of the four, may well be the “gateway” source underlying, or at least reinforcing, the inclusion of any of the same apparently Saadianic material in the later three sources. In the latter case – which is of course still pertinent to Saadianic reception – we have noted such occurrences of the same Saadianic material in our discussion of the examples where they appear in Salmon’s commentary. The translations of the passages cited, finally, are our own: for Saadia based in all but one instance (see 2.1.1) on our edition of his commentary published in 2015,<sup>10</sup> and for the four Karaite sources based either upon our published editions (Yefet and the epitomized commentary) or manuscripts (Salmon and Tawrīzī).<sup>11</sup>

## 2. The Sources

### 2.1. Salmon ben Yeruḥam (Early Classical Period)

The first commentary in our survey, proceeding chronologically, is that of Salmon ben Yeruḥam. Born *ca* 910-5, he was one of the leading figures of the Karaite spiritual and scholarly center in Jerusalem and is generally characterized as one of Karaism’s most ardent polemicists.<sup>12</sup> In his versified Hebrew polemical treatise *Sēfer milḥāmōt ha-Shēm* [“The Book of the Wars of the Lord”],<sup>13</sup> composed *ca* 935-40 when he was still a young man (ṣā’īr), he attacks the Rabbanites and Saadia in particular with

<sup>9</sup> We refrain from the unqualified label of “certain” given the possibility, however unlikely, that, in the absence of explicit attribution to Saadia, both parties may have either taken recourse to an earlier, as-yet unknown source, or else arrived at the same view given the application of a similar rationalistic-contextual hermeneutic. For further discussion of the complexities and parameters attending the identification of material appropriated from Saadia see Michael G. WECHSLER, ed., *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-71; *idem*, *Strangers in the Land*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-64.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 4 above. Our edition was subsequently republished – with our permission – with Modern Hebrew translation and discussion (together with a new edition of Saadia’s intro. and trans. of *Mēgillat bēnē Hashmōnā’y*) by Yudah (Yehudah) SEEWALD, ed. and trans., *Sēfer ha-livvūy ba-gālūt: Pērūsh mēgillat Estēr ... lē-mārānā vē-rabbānā ... raḅ Sē’adyā Gā’ōn*, Jerusalem, Haozar (hā-Ōṣār), 2019. SEEWALD also identified and included three additional fragments of Saadia’s commentary (see *ibid.*, p. 34), one of which definitively establishes the opening part of Saadia’s comment on 2:5-7 as the source of the one expressly-attributed view of Saadia in the extant text of Salmon’s commentary.

<sup>11</sup> For bibliographic details see our introduction to each source in section 2 below. Page references for the published editions are to the edited text followed in parentheses by the translation.

<sup>12</sup> *Cf.*, *inter alios*, Zvi ANKORI, *Karaite in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970-1100*, New York/Jerusalem, Columbia University Press/The Weizmann Science Press of Israel, 1959 (Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences, no. 597), p. 99, n. 51; Leon NEMOV, *Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952 (Yale Judaica Series, vol. 7), pp. 69-70; Samuel POZNAŃSKI, *The Karaite Literary Opponents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-4.

<sup>13</sup> Edited by Israel DAVIDSON, *Sēfer milḥāmōt ha-Shēm, kōlēl ṭā’ānōt ha-qārā’ī Salmōn ben Yērūhīm neḡed Raḅ Sē’adyā Gā’ōn* [The Book of the Wars of the Lord, Containing the Polemics of the Karaite Salmon ben Yeruḥim against Saadia Gaon], New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1934.

language that has been described as “violent,” “belligerent,” “snarling,” and “savage.”<sup>14</sup> It is in this work that he first refers to Saadia's commentary on Esther when refuting the latter's lengthy exegetical justification of the rabbinic *hālākhā* entailing the observance of separate festival days of Purim for walled and unwalled towns.<sup>15</sup> In his Bible commentaries, most – if not all – of which were composed in the 950's,<sup>16</sup> Salmon's language towards the Rabbanites and Saadia is more moderate and restrained than in his more youthful polemical work. His commentary on Esther was composed no earlier than 955<sup>17</sup> and survives – with some lacunae – in 11 separately-catalogued fragments comprising five distinct MSS.<sup>18</sup> We begin our survey with the one explicit reference in his commentary to Saadia – specifically to the latter's commentary on Esther, the relevant passage from which we give, both here and throughout, in a parallel column for comparison (for the sake of concision we have adopted the following sigla for the MSS employed for the citations from Salmon's commentary: MS A = NLR Evr.-Arab. II 3350; MS B = NLR Evr.-Arab. II 110; and MS C = NLR

<sup>14</sup> See, *inter alios*, Leon NEMOV, *Karaite Anthology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70; Samuel POZNAŃSKI, *Literary Opponents*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-4; Israel DAVIDSON, *Séfer milhāmōt*, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Simḥa PINSKER, *Liqqūtē qadmōniyyōt*, *op. cit.*, pt. 1, p. 112; pt. 2, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> “The Fayyumite sharpened his tongue like a sword / to propound riddles in his commentary on Esther / to justify observing two feast days as he desired, / but the Lord deplores his fancies and sees his shame. // He erred in asserting that Jews of unwalled villages / observe a different rite than those of walled towns: / he forgot that Mordecai enjoined all the people / to observe the two days of Purim in unison” (see Israel DAVIDSON, *Séfer milhāmōt*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-3 [canto 9]). He is referring to Saadia's comment on Esth 9:18-9, for which see Michael G. Wechsler, *The Book of Conviviality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-80 [659-60]).

<sup>16</sup> See E. Lawrence MARWICK, “Studies in Salmon ben Yeruḥam,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 34, 1944, pp. 319-20; Samuel POZNAŃSKI, “Miscellen über Saadja. III. Die Berechnung des Erlösungsjahres bei Saaja,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 44, 1900, pp. 406, 522; *idem*, “Karaite Miscellanies,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s., vol. 8, 1896, p. 688. His commentary on Psalms was completed in 955 and that on Lamentations in 956. Between these two, based on internal references, were completed his commentaries on Song of Songs, Daniel, and Job (regarding which last see his comments on Pss 49:3, 119:96, and Lam 2:19). From this one may further deduce the *terminus a quo* of 955 for the completion of his commentary on Ecclesiastes (completed after that on Job per his comm. on Eccl 5:6) and his commentary on Esther (completed after that on Daniel, for which see the following note). For his commentary on Proverbs we know only that it was written before that on Ecclesiastes, whereas we have found no data bearing upon the compositional date or sequence of his commentaries on Ruth (see Michael G. WECHSLER, “A Judaeo-Arabic Witness to the Commentary on Ruth by Salmon ben Yeruḥam,” *Ginzei Qedem*, vol. 13, 2017, pp. 53\*-94\*) and Isaiah (regarding the two fragments tentatively identified in the catalogue of the National Library of Israel as Salmon's comm. on Isaiah, one [NLR Evr.-Arab. I 3704] is in fact from the beginning of his comm. on Lam ch. 3, whereas the other [NLR Evr.-Arab. I 4003] requires further investigation before we would be comfortable suggesting even tentative attribution to Salmon).

<sup>17</sup> So, insofar as Salmon refers to his commentary on Daniel as completed in his comment on Esth 1:1 (MS NLR Evr.-Arab. I 4468, fol. 3r: *wa-'alā mā sharaḥtu hādhihi 'l-qīṣaṣ fi tafsir Dāniyē'l*), and his commentary on Daniel was completed sometime after his commentary on Psalms, which was completed in 955 (see Samuel POZNAŃSKI, “Miscellen über Saadja. III. Die Berechnung des Erlösungsjahres bei Saaja,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 44, 1900, pp. 406, 522; *idem*, “Karaite Miscellanies,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s., vol. 8, 1896, p. 688).

<sup>18</sup> Ten of these are held by the National Library of Russia (NLR) in Saint Petersburg: MS 1) Evr. II C 521, 522, Evr.-Arab. I 3476, 4468, 4469, Evr.-Arab. II 4469; MS 2) Evr.-Arab. I 4467, Evr.-Arab. II 110; MS 3) Evr.-Arab. II 3350; MS 4) Evr.-Arab. II 29; and MS 5) a one-leaf fragment published by Yehuda Ratzaby without attribution or any identifying information in *Sinai*, vol. 104, 1990, pp. 213-4, which fragment we have unfortunately been unable to locate anywhere. One leaf each also survives of two Judaeo-Arabic reworkings of Salmon's commentary, one of which is compilatory (NLR Evr.-Arab. I 4021) and the other an abridgment (NLR Evr.-Arab. I 3699, fol. 24). An edition and translation of Salmon's commentary is currently in preparation by the present writer.

Evr.-Arab. I 4467; MS D = Evr.-Arab. II 3295; MS E = NLR Evr.-Arab. I 3699; MS F = NLR Evr.-Arab. I 4468):

**2.1.1. Ad 2:5-6: Concerning the tribal affiliation of Jerusalem as the place from which Mordecai the Benjamite was exiled:**<sup>19</sup>

Salmon  
MS A, fols. 5<sup>v</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>

I have been astonished by the assertion of al-Fayyūmī that the children of Judah had a portion in Jerusalem on the basis of Scripture's statement, *And the children of Judah fought (against Jerusalem, and took it)*, etc. (Judg 1:8)! Do you not see (in Josh 15:1-62) what constitutes the portion of the children of Judah and that Jerusalem is not mentioned therein, and yet the towns that were allotted to them are mentioned? Then, when the inheritance of Benjamin is described, Jerusalem is clearly included therein, as it says, *and the Jebusite – that is, Jerusalem* (Josh 18:28).

Saadia  
p. 221 (63)<sup>20</sup>

(As to the expression *a Judaeen man* (2:5) ... after which it says, *a Benjamite man, who) had been exiled from Jerusalem*: Even though Jerusalem is part of the inheritance of Benjamin, as per the statement, *and Zela, Eleph, and the Jebusite – that is, Jerusalem* (Josh 18:28), yet the children of Judah also had a portion therein, as it says, *And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem*, etc. (Judg 1:8) and, *the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah (at Jerusalem, unto this day)* (Josh 15:63). Thus the people of Jerusalem are called “Judaeans” just as the ten tribes are called “Ephraim”<sup>21</sup> by association with the tribe to which Jeroboam belonged.

Although lacking the more ardent animus of his references to Saadia in *Sēfer milḥāmōt ha-Shēm*, this critical reference by Salmon – which represents the only explicit reference to Saadia in any of the four Karaite commentaries here surveyed – is consistent with the generally critical nature of his other explicit references to Saadia, both in *Milḥāmōt* and in his other Bible commentaries. Indeed, the expected presence of such express criticism is rendered almost obligatory per the appraisals of such leading modern scholars of Karaism as Samuel POZNAŃSKI, who claims that in Salmon's Bible commentaries, just as in *Milḥāmōt*, “an aggressive war is waged against Saadia”;<sup>22</sup> and Leon NEMOY, who describes Salmon's commentaries on Psalms and Song of Songs as being “characterized by uncomprising denunciations of Sa'adiah's

<sup>19</sup> In all of the ensuing translations, italics indicate citations from the Hebrew Bible and underlining indicates Judaeo-Arabic text which is practically identical in both of the juxtaposed excerpts.

<sup>20</sup> This citation is based on the edition of SEEWALD (see n. 10 above), who identified and included a fragment containing the only extant witness to the present text. All other citations from Saadia's commentary are based on our edition (see n. 4 above).

<sup>21</sup> “Thus the ... ‘Ephraim’” – so, emending SEEWALD's reading and restoration to agree more precisely with the extant text and lacuna length attested by the MS (i.e., *יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְהוּדִים כְּמֵא יִסְמוֹן עֶשְׂרֵה אֱלִיאָסְבַּאט אֶפְרַיִם*, as opposed to: *יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְהוּדִים כְּמֵא יִסְמוֹן אֱהֵל שׁוּמְרוֹן בְּאֶסֶם* [שבאט אפרים]).

<sup>22</sup> *The Karaite Literary Opponents, op. cit.*, p. 13.

views on various matters.”<sup>23</sup> Such sweeping and unqualified appraisals can be problematic, however, for by reinforcing the expectation of what *to* find, they also reinforce the expectation of what *not* to find – namely, any positive valuation or interaction with Saadia's views on the part of Salmon. Even the *absence* of any express polemicizing against Saadia was taken by the aforementioned scholars as enough reason to doubt whether the commentaries on Lamentations and Ecclesiastes attributed to Salmon were truly his.<sup>24</sup> The reality, as borne out by the following examples, is that Salmon was not at all averse to accepting and appropriating – in one instance apparently even commending (see 2.1.8 below) – material drawn tacitly from Saadia's commentary where deemed consistent with the dictates of his own scripturalist exegetical method. Whether this is true to the same degree in his other commentaries remains to be assessed.

### 2.1.2. *Ad* 2:7: On the exemplary nature of Mordecai's caring for orphaned Esther:

Salmon	Saadia
MS A, fol. 6 <sup>r-v</sup> + MS B, fol. 3 <sup>r-v</sup>	p. 187 (593)
<p>The statement <i>And he was bringing up Hadassah</i> indicates the excellence of (Mordecai's) faith and his desire for the reward (of God in the hereafter), his raising of this orphan being due to the fact that she had neither father nor mother, and because it would have been unseemly to neglect her, for she was a young girl in exile, in addition to having a beautiful semblance and a beautiful body – and through her, indeed, God facilitated both (Mordecai's) deliverance as well as the deliverance of the rest of the (Jewish) people.</p>	<p>By the statement <i>Mordecai took her to himself as a daughter</i> (Scripture) is urging us on to the care of orphans with a view to the benefit they bring us when it comes to the reward (of God) in the hereafter – and sometimes (this benefit) may accrue (to us) in this life by virtue of the standing to which they attain. It is with respect to this that Job says, <i>I have been a father to the needy</i> (Job 29:16). Of even greater weight than that, however, is the description of God Himself as a <i>father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows</i> (Ps 68:6).</p>

Like Saadia, Salmon supplements the reason expressly given in the biblical text for Mordecai's care of Esther – *viz.*, “because she had no father or mother” – by referring to the pietistic motive of eschatological, divine reward (as signified by the definite term *al-thawāb* in the comments of both exegetes), which view we have not found in any

<sup>23</sup> *Karaite Anthology*, *op. cit.*, p. 70; see also Jonathan SHUNARY, “Salmon ben Yeruham's Commentary on the Book of Psalms,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 73, 1982, p. 157.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; Samuel POZNAŃSKI, *The Karaite Literary Opponents*, *op. cit.*, p. 14 (following M. STEINSCHNEIDER). On the authentic attribution of Salmon's commentary on Lamentations see Mohammed Abdul-Latif ABDUL-KARIM, “Commentary of Salmon ben Yeruham on Lamentations: A Critical Edition,” PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1976, pp. 8-10. On the authenticity of his commentary on Ecclesiastes see Moshe I. RIESE, “Sharḥ mēgillat Qōhelet she-nikhtaḅ bi-ydē ha-qārā'ī Salmōn ben Yērūhām” [The Arabic Commentary of Solomon(!) ben Yeruham the Karaite on Ecclesiastes], PhD diss., Yeshiva University, 1973, pp. LIV-LIX; and James T. ROBINSON, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

previous Jewish exegetical sources *ad loc.* So too, just as Saadia refers to the potential benefit that may be facilitated by an orphan in this life, Salmon refers to the benefit facilitated by Esther in her day.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.1.3. *Ad 2:9/15: On the biblical-theological paradigm of “finding favor”:*

Salmon  
MS A, fol. 7<sup>r-v</sup> + MS B, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>

The statement *And she found favor* (2:9) indicates that God engendered partiality and favor towards her in the heart of Hegai, just as He did for Joseph in the heart of his master, as per the statement, *And Joseph found favor* (Gen 39:4); and as He did for him in the heart of the warden, as it says, *And He gave him favor*, etc. (*ibid.* 39:21); and as it says concerning Israel, *And the Lord granted the people favor* (Exod 12:36), and, *the peoples have heard* (*ibid.* 15:14); and to Joshua He said, *This day will I begin to put (the dread of thee, etc.)* (Deut 2:25); and with the advent of the kingdom it says, *Then the fame of David went out into all lands* (1 Chr 14:17); and it says, *Now the fear of the LORD was (on all the kingdoms, etc.)* (2 Chr 17:10). And after our political dominion passed away from us, God has still held us in such regard as to bless us with favor and partiality in the eyes of the nations, as per the statement, *Now God gave Daniel (favor)*, etc. (Dan 1:9); and as Ezra says, *He hath extended favor unto me*, etc. (Ezra 7:28); and as it says (again) concerning Esther, *And Esther found favor*, etc. (Esth 2:15).

Saadia  
pp. 200-1 (598-9)

As to the statement, *And Esther found favor (in the eyes of all who saw her)* (2:15) – this characterizes the state by which we in the Diaspora have been blessed by God – namely, that our basic necessities are fulfilled either due to fear or due to favor. Indeed, even before the days of our nationhood our Lord continually blessed us with favor, as it is said (concerning Joseph), *(the LORD) extended kindness unto him and gave him favor (in the sight of the chief jailer)* (Gen 39:21); and concerning the Patriarchs in Egypt, *And the LORD gave this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians* (Exod 11:3). Then, when the days of our nationhood arrived, He established fear and dread towards us, as it is said, *This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the peoples* (Deut 2:25); and, *Then the fame of David went out into all the lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all the nations* (1 Chr 14:17); and again, *Now the fear of the LORD was on all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat* (2 Chr 17:10). And after (our) political dominion

<sup>25</sup> In Salmon's references to the excellence of Mordecai's faith and the unseemliness of neglecting Esther as a young girl in exile there may also be a muted echo of the communal-hortatory framing of Saadia's comment. Yefet, who devotes far less attention to the factors appertaining to Mordecai's decision to care for Esther, says only that doing so was incumbent upon him "on account of (their) kinship" (*min jihati 'l-qarāba*; see Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18\*, 199).

passed away. He has still held us in such regard as to bless us with favor, as it is said, *Now God gave Daniel favor and compassion (in the sight of the chief of the officers)* (Dan 1:9); and as Ezra says, *He hath extended favor unto me before the king and his counselors* (Ezra 7:28); and as it says concerning Esther, *And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her* (Esth 2:15); and concerning all of us collectively it says, *He hath granted them compassion in the presence of all their captors* (Ps 106:46).

In this example Salmon, like Saadia, identifies the reference to Esther “finding favor” as part of the larger biblical-theological pattern of God sovereignly manipulating the attitude of non-Jews either towards Israel collectively or towards key individuals therein through whom he eventually effects the nation’s deliverance or contributes positively to their welfare. Except for the last, diachronically collective reference to Psalm 106:46, Salmon gives the same series of examples as Saadia – i.e., Joseph, Israel during the exodus, Joshua, David, Judah under Jehoshaphat, Daniel, and Ezra, concluding with the subsequent reference to Esther finding favor in 2:15 – and for each one he cites either the same proof-text as Saadia or, in the case of the exodus, a different proof-text from the same narrative section (probably because its size and the repetition of the key phrase enabled him to personalize his comment somewhat and so distinguish himself from Saadia). At one point, in fact, when referring to Israel’s state of political statelessness to which, like Saadia, he links the state of contemporary Jewry, he practically quotes Saadia verbatim (see the underlined text<sup>26</sup>).

#### 2.1.4. *Ad 2:21-23/3:1: On the theological paradigm of God “preparing the remedy before the affliction”:*

Salmon	Saadia
MSS A, fol. 10 <sup>r</sup> + MS C, fol. 12 <sup>r-v</sup>	pp. 212-3 (605-6)
The Lord of Hosts caused Ahasuerus to forget that with which he would have rewarded Mordecai in order that this matter might be concealed until its proper time, thereby “preparing the remedy before the affliction” (see <i>b. Meg.</i> 13b). In this way, accordingly,	This pericope begins with the expression <i>After these things</i> (3:1) so as to call to our attention (God’s) well-known practice of preparing the remedy before the affliction, for just as He prepares what is needed before the need for it is felt – as when He created light

<sup>26</sup> Salmon: *wa-lammā zālat al-dawla ‘annā ‘addanā ilā an yarzuqanā ‘llāh al-ḥazz;* Saadia: *fa-lammā zālat al-dawla ‘addanā ilā an yarzuqanā ‘l-ḥizā’.*



both (Mordecai) as well as his people would be benefited by (the matter), for God had established this as a prelude (to redemption) for Israel before the exaltation of Haman the Cursed. This is just as when He sent Joseph beforehand as an expression of compassion towards Jacob and his children, as it says, *He sent a man before them*, etc. (Ps 105:17), and, *for God sent me before you to preserve life*, etc. (Gen 45:5).

and nourishment before animal life –, so too does He appoint deliverance before the onset of distress. To mention some examples of this: Before He – the Sublime in His splendor! – dispatched the famine upon the Patriarchs, He sent Joseph beforehand as an expression of compassion towards them, as per the statement, *And He called a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a servant* (Ps 105:16-7), and as Joseph said, *And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth* (Gen 45:7).

In this instance Salmon not only endorses the same theological paradigm as Saadia (who is clearly taking his cue from the talmudic discussion, in *b. Mēg.* 13b, of the same paradigm in connection with the opening phrase of *Esth* 3:1), but he also illustrates it with the same canonical example of Joseph (which is not found in the talmudic discussion *ad loc.*), for which he cites the same two prooftexts, and at one point, again, practically quotes Saadia verbatim (see the underlined text<sup>27</sup>). That Salmon was aware of the rabbinic provenance of the aforementioned paradigm, moreover, is suggested by the fact that he refers to it, not in Arabic like Saadia (i.e., *yusabbiqu 'l-dawā' qabla 'l-dā'*), but in the specific Hebrew register of the talmudic discussion in *b. Mēgillā* 13b (i.e., *maqḏīm rēfū'ā lē-makkā*<sup>28</sup>). This choice of locution bears out Salmon's receptiveness to rabbinic material where, like the material in Saadia's commentary, such was deemed consistent with the dictates of his own scripturalist exegetical method.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Salmon: *qaddama Yōsēf rahmat<sup>an</sup> li-Ya'āqōb wa-awlādihi*; Saadia: *qaddama Yōsēf rahmat<sup>an</sup> lahum*.

<sup>28</sup> On the phrasing of this common locution see Louis GINZBERG, *Ginzē Schechter* [Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter], vol. 1, New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928 (Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, vol. 7), p. 173, n. *ad* line 3.

<sup>29</sup> On Salmon's use of rabbinic sources, whether for polemical or appropriative purposes, see James T. ROBINSON, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-65; and, within the context of the more general Karaite use of rabbinic sources, Ofrah TIROSH-BECKER, "The Use of Rabbinic Sources in Karaite Writings," in Meira POLLIACK, ed., *Karaite Judaism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-38; *idem*, *Rabbinic Excerpts in Medieval Karaite Literature* (Heb.), 2 vols., Jerusalem, The Bialik Institute, 2011.

**2.1.5. Ad 4:3/4:1-4 (proem): On the reason that God chastised Israel via Haman's decree:**

Salmon  
MS A, fol. 16<sup>r</sup> + MS D, fol. 4<sup>r-v</sup>

As to the mourning and the weeping – this constituted repentance for their sins, (concerning which) it is said that they intermingled with the Gentile nations<sup>30</sup> and acquired their wicked traits, and so God raised up against them Haman as an adversary in order that they might return to God with a pure and sincere heart.

Saadia  
pp. 257-8 (622)

The underlying cause of their (affliction) was intermingling with the Gentile nations and intermarrying with them, as it is related in Ezra that they did during the seventy-year exile (see Ezra 9:2) ... Thus, because a portion (of the people) undertook this and the rest did not reprove them, they were tormented by this (decree of Haman), upon which they were humbled and repented.

In his comment on 4:3 Salmon citatively presents the same essential reason for God's chastisement that Saadia gives (non-citatively) at the outset of his comment on 4:1-4 – viz., “intermingling” with the Gentiles, for which we have found no precedent in the rabbinic sources *ad loc*. In divergence from Saadia, however, Salmon associates this intermingling, not with intermarriage, but with the acquisition of “wicked traits” – perhaps with an admonitory-moralizing eye towards the similarly broad “intermingling” of Jewry in his own day with their Islamicate host culture, against which he elsewhere rails at length.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ummōt hā-ōlām* (versus Saadia: *al-umam*), on this use of which rabbinic phrase see the preceding note.

<sup>31</sup> See esp. his comment on Eccl 1:8, where, after referring to the sin of Ezekiel's generation, he writes: “So too we – how many iniquities do we commit and how many sins are committed and perpetuated by us every day while we intermingle (*mukhtaliṭīn*) with the Gentiles and follow their ways?! We focus our attention on learning their language along with its grammar, and while we use up our dirhems to learn it, we neglect the knowledge of the Holy Tongue and the study of the Lord's commandments; we preoccupy ourselves with eating, drinking, laughter, amusement, singing, melodies, banquets, construction, jewelry, and clothing, and we have forgotten the desolation of Jerusalem and neglected God's commandment to us, ‘Remember the LORD from afar, and let Jerusalem be raised up in your mind’ (Jer 51:50) ...” (per the text of Mohammed Abdul-Latif ABDUL-KARIM, “Commentary of Salmon,” *op. cit.*, pp. 43-4).

**2.1.6. Ad 4:11: Refuting Anan's exegetical basis for obliging a 70-day fast from Nisan 13 to Sivan 23:**

Salmon

MS A, fol. 17<sup>r-v</sup> + MS E, fol. 24<sup>r</sup>

Esther's statement *and I have not been called (... these thirty days)* implies that, if this (conversation) had truly taken place on Sivan 20, she would certainly have already spoken with the king about the matter on Iyyar 20. Nor is the situation (to be understood) according to the one who supposes that Esther was unaware of this matter for 70 days.

Saadia

pp. 276-7 (627)

This statement of hers (*and I have not been called ... these thirty days*) clearly invalidates what (Anan) prescribed, for had the matter truly been as he claimed, Esther would certainly have already gone in to Ahasuerus within 40 days after the event and so spoken with the king about her people, and therefore she would have had no need to risk her life. Should one suppose, moreover, that she only became aware (of the matter) after 70 days, this would be an incorrect supposition, for the record keepers would surely have reported any news to the king and queen on a daily basis. It is also quite improbable that Mordecai would have refrained from bestirring her knowledge (of the matter) for 70 days, only to inform her thereafter.

In this instance Salmon appears to adopt a more concise version of Saadia's refutation of the exegetical basis for the prescription of a 70-day fast attributed to the purported Ananite/Karaite heresiarch Anan b. David. According to Anan, this fast is meant to commemorate the 70-day period during which the Jews of the Persian empire fasted, starting with those in Susa, from the issuing of Haman's decree on Nisan 13 (per 3:12) to the publication of Mordecai's decree on Sivan 23 (per 8:9), with the conversation between Mordecai and Esther in chap. 4 having taken place on Sivan 20 (and the three-day fast that she enjoined having also concluded on Sivan 23). Salmon's refutation consists of the same two points as that of Saadia: first, as implied by Esther's statement in 4:11 ("I have not been called these thirty days ..."), that she would certainly have spoken with the king when she was last summoned 30 days prior (about 40 days after the decree was issued on Nisan 13), and second, that it is simply unreasonable to think that Esther, living in the palace whence the edict was issued, would have been unaware of it for almost 70 days until her conversation with Mordecai. Notably, in the lengthy refutation of this view given by the Karaite polymath Ya'qūb

al-Qirqisānī in his *Kitāb al-anwār*,<sup>32</sup> written in 927,<sup>33</sup> and thus the only known refutation of this view potentially predating Salmon's commentary, neither of the two points advanced by Salmon or Saadia are included.

### 2.1.7. *Ad 7:4: On the pentateuchal framework of Esther's hypothetical statement:*

Salmon  
MS F, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>

Her saying *We have been sold* refers to Haman's offer of *ten thousand talents* (3:9); yet God never terminates (His) solicitude, for God – the Exalted and Sublime – has promised that He will never destroy us in the ignominy of exile, as He has said, *And yet for all that, (etc.) (Lev 26:44); yet her saying, But if (we had been sold) for bondmen, (etc.)*, is due to the fact that God did declare among His threats: *and (there) you shall be presented for sale (to your enemies) for bondmen* (Deut 28:68).

Saadia  
pp. 327-8 (642)

Now regarding the statement, *But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I would have been silent*, it may be asked, "How is it that a free person should be taken and sold into slavery, yet remain silent?" In order to dispel this perplexity one may explain that she would have endured this, first and foremost, because it was consistent with what her Lord had decreed in His Law: *and there you shall be presented for sale to your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, yet no one will buy you* (Deut 28:68); yet she would not endure annihilation because He had not decreed this – in fact, He had decreed the opposite: *And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, (I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them so as to annihilate them, etc.) (Lev 26:44)*.

Like Saadia, who may have drawn inspiration from the back-to-back statements of R. Isaac and Samuel in proems 3 and 4 of *Midrash Esther Rabbā* (if not the less original version of such in *b. Mēg.* 11a),<sup>34</sup> Salmon validates Esther's hypothetically-expressed acceptance of slavery based on God's threat in Deut 28:68, which he balances with an affirmation of God's promise in Lev 26:44. Unlike Saadia, however, Salmon employs

<sup>32</sup> See Leon NEMOV, ed., *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqib – Code of Karaite Law*, vol. 4, New York, The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1942, pp. 920-3 (§IX.16).

<sup>33</sup> See Bruno CHIESA and Wilfrid LOCKWOOD, *Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1984 (*Judentum und Umwelt*, vol. 10), pp. 17-23; Bruno CHIESA, "A New Fragment," *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> On the relationship of the two see Eliezer SEGAL, *The Babylonian Esther Midrash*, vol. 1, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1994 (*Brown Judaic Studies*, vol. 291), pp. 98-110.

the specific language of “promise” (*wa’d*) and “threat” (*wa’īd*), more readily suggesting the impress of Mu’tazilite Kalām.<sup>35</sup>

**2.1.8. Ad 5:14: On Psalm 7 (esp. vv. 16-7) as a proem to the account of Israel’s deliverance and Haman’s demise.**

Perhaps the most surprising of the passages here surveyed is the following, from Salmon’s comment on 5:14, in which he gives an unusually express commendation to the “commentary” (or “comment”; *sharḥ*) of “one of the scholars” (*baḍ al-‘ulamā*), by which he apparently intends Saadia (per MS A, fol. 21’):

*The advice and plan are collectively laid before (Haman) that a stake be prepared in the manner described, (after) seeking leave of the king; and there was no one among his people who dissented from this advice. Nonetheless, God had pledged that when the wicked dig a pit for the righteous, they themselves will fall therein, as it says, Whosoever digs a pit shall fall therein (Prov 26:27) and, He who digs a pit, (etc.) (Eccl 10:8); and just as God had also pledged to do to the wicked when they plot Israel’s destruction, as it says in the portion (beginning), A Shiggāyōn of David (Ps 7). I have also seen one of the scholars interpret this portion (i.e., Ps 7) by construing it as a proem (iftitāḥ) to the account of the deliverance of Mordecai and Israel and the destruction of Haman and his people – and in his commentary (or “comment”) there is also benefit for those who are educated (wa-fi sharḥihi aiḍ<sup>am</sup> naf li-l-muta’allimīn).*

Among the Jewish exegetical sources on Psalms and Esther preceding Salmon, the only ones in which we have found any application of Psalm 7 to the plot reversal of Esther is in *Midrash Tēhillīm* on Ps 7:17, *Midrash Estēr Rabbā* on Esth 6:4, and Saadia’s comment on Esth 5:14. Both of the midrashic passages consist of very brief, anonymous expositions, which we give here in parallel columns:

.....  
<sup>35</sup> On elements of Mu’tazilite Kalām in Salmon’s exegesis see in particular James T. ROBINSON, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 111-2, 170, n. 17. On the Mu’tazilite impress upon Islamicate Karaism generally see the survey of Haggai BEN-SHAMMAI, “Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in Meira POLLIAK, ed., *Karaite Judaism, op. cit.*, pp. 339-62.

*Midrash Tēhillīm ad Ps 7:17 (§12)*<sup>36</sup>

*His mischief shall return upon his own head* – this refers to Haman, for everything that he devised against Mordecai was made to return upon his own head.

*Midrash Estēr Rabbā x.2 (ad Esth 6:4)*<sup>37</sup>

*To impale Mordecai on the stake that he had prepared for him* – (a certain teacher) expounded: He had prepared it for himself, and of him it is said, *He has prepared for himself weapons of death, and his arrows he makes sharp; He has dug a pit, and deepened it, and is fallen into the ditch that he made* (Ps 7:14, 16).

Saadia's comment, the first part of which is unfortunately lost, is as follows (p. 634 [303-4]):

*[...] digging a pit for a righteous man, yet all the while he himself is falling into it, as it says, He has dug a pit, and deepened it, and is fallen into the ditch that he made (Ps 7:16), and (as) it also says, Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him (Prov 26:27).*

While all three of these sources are consistent with the apparently concessive nature of Salmon's appended commendation – suggesting the need to justify a source that he would not normally endorse (or be expected to endorse) –, Saadia is in our view the likeliest reference insofar as (1) the dating of the midrashic passages is problematic, and at the very least uncertain: *Midrash Tēhillīm* is dated in its various parts from the 3rd to the 13th century,<sup>38</sup> and the passage in *Estēr Rabbā* belongs to a later section of that midrash (i.e., secs. 7-10, covering Esth 3:1-8:15) which is generally assigned a compilation-composition date in the 11th century;<sup>39</sup> (2) Saadia's interpretation and Salmon's reference are both given in their comments on Esth 5:14; and (3), perhaps most compelling, the term *al-'ulamā'* ("the scholars") that Salmon here employs is typically used by him to designate the unspecified collective of Jewish intellectual authorities, either of his own time or in a more general diachronic sense,<sup>40</sup> whereas in

<sup>36</sup> Here per the text of Salomon BUBER, ed., *Midrash Tēhillīm, ha-mēkhunneh Shōhēr Tōb*, Vilna, Wittwe et Gebrüder Romm, 1890/91 (repr. Jerusalem, H. Vagshal, 1976/77).

<sup>37</sup> Here per *Midrash Estēr Rabbā*, in *Sēfer Midrash Rabbā*, vol. 2, Vilna, Wittwe et Gebrüder Romm, 1887 (repr. Jerusalem, H. Vagshal, n.d.).

<sup>38</sup> See BRAUDE, *op. cit.*, pp. xxv-xxx; Hermann L. STRACK and Gunter STEMBERGER, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, translated and edited by Markus BOCKMUEHL, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996, pp. 322-3.

<sup>39</sup> See Hermann L. STRACK and Gunter STEMBERGER, *Introduction, op. cit.*, pp. 318-9.

<sup>40</sup> Among his published works see, for example, his commentary on Psalms 42-72 (per Lawrence MARWICK, ed., *The Arabic Commentary of Salmon ben Yeruham the Karaite on the Book of Psalms, Chapters 42-72, Edited from the Unique Manuscript in the State Public Library in Leningrad*, Philadelphia, Dropsie, 1956) ad 42:2; 50:15; 62:12, 13; 64:4; 66:7; 69:3, 7; his commentary on Lamentations (per Mohammed Abdul-Latif ABDUL-KARIM, "Commentary of Salmon," *op. cit.*) ad 1:2 (end); 2:20; 3:14, 20; 4:1, 6; 5:7; and his commentary on Ecclesiastes (per James T. ROBINSON, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy, op. cit.*) ad 2:26; 3:1, 10; 7:12, 16; 9:1; 10:6, 8; 12:5. His comment on Eccl 7:16 is especially significant, since there his use of *'ulamā'* almost certainly includes – perhaps primarily so – reference to Saadia in connection with his refutation of the infamous Bible critic

referring specifically to rabbinic authorities (such as those of the midrashim) he employs otherwise distinct terms such as *al-awā'il* ("the forerunners") and *al-rabbānīn* ("the rabbis").<sup>41</sup> Unless, therefore, the reference is to some other, non-extant source, we would appear to have before us an instance of Salmon expressly – if still anonymously – commending Saadia's work (whether his specific comment or his commentary generally) to a degree which is unparalleled, as far as we are aware, anywhere else in his extant corpus. Yet he is not without precedent: his older contemporary al-Qirqisānī, who also engages in frequent polemics with Saadia, singles out the latter's commentary on Genesis for similarly express – albeit anonymous – commendation, describing it as "a splendid book" (*kitāb ḥasan*) that, together with the commentary of Dāwūd al-Muqammaṣ (whom he names), he utilized for his own commentary.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2. Yefet ben Eli (Early Classical Period)

The reception of Saadia in the commentary of Yefet b. Eli – Salmon's younger contemporary and the first Jewish exegete to compose (*ca* 960-90)<sup>43</sup> commentaries on the entire Hebrew Bible – is more difficult to assess. He nowhere refers to Saadia with any of the usual identifying expressions (e.g., "the head of the yeshiva" [*rā's al-mathība*], "the Fayyumite" [*al-Fayyūmī*], or simply "this man" [*hādha 'l-rajul*]), nor do his comments at any point come as close, in content and language, to those of Saadia as in the examples noted above for Salmon. In some instances Yefet may in fact be appropriating (and further reworking) Saadianic material via Salmon's commentary, resulting in an even more diffuse "footprint" of the former.<sup>44</sup> The first of our selections from Yefet represents one apparent instance of such, whereas the remainder involve material that would appear to have been appropriated either directly from Saadia's commentary or via some other, non-extant source.

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Hīwī al-Balkhī. On Saadia's use of *al-'ulamā'*, which is consistent with that of Salmon, see Michael G. Wechsler, "New Data from Saadia bearing on the Relocation of the Palestinian Yeshiva to Jerusalem," *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal*, vol. 12, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., for his use of *al-awā'il*: his comm. *ad* Eccl 1:4, 15; 12:6, 12; for *al-rabbānīn*: his comm. *ad* Lam 1:20; 4:2, 19; Eccl 7:18; 9:5. See also, regarding the more general Karaite use of these terms, Ofrah TIROSH-BECKER, *Rabbinic Excerpts*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>42</sup> See Bruno CHIESA, "A New Fragment," *op. cit.*, pp. 184-5. For the text of al-Qirqisānī's statement see Hartwig HIRSCHFELD, *Qirqisāni Studies*, London, Jews' College, 1918 (Jews' College Publications, no. 6), p. 40.

<sup>43</sup> On this date range, as well as the compositional order of Yefet's commentaries, which followed more or less the traditional canonical order of Spanish and Oriental Jewry, see Haggai BEN-SHAMMAI, "Edition and Versions in Yefet b. Ali's Bible Commentary" (Heb.), *Alei Sefer*, vol. 2, 1976, pp. 17-32; E. Lawrence MARWICK, "The Order of Books in Yefet's Bible Codex," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 33, 1943, pp. 445-60. Seeing that Esther is followed in this order only by Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah, Yefet's commentary on the book would have been composed towards the end of the ninth decade, *ca* 40 years after Salmon's commentary on the book.

<sup>44</sup> See further our discussion of the issues attending the identification of Saadianic material in Yefet's commentary in *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-71. On Yefet's use of Salmon see *ibid.*, pp. 78-83.

**2.2.1. Ad 2:21-3: On the theological paradigm of God “preparing the remedy before the affliction” (pp. 21\*-2\* [210])<sup>45</sup>:**

*This pericope is a prelude (muqaddima) to what (the narrator) intends to relate in following – namely, what Haman sought to do to Mordecai, upon we shall expound in its proper place. It is with regard to scenarios such as this that one declares, “Blessed is He who prepares the cure before the affliction” (bārūkh maqdīm rēfū’ā lē-makkā; see b. Mēg. 13b).*

Yefet here appears to have selectively drawn upon Salmon’s appropriated version of Saadia’s comment discussed in 2.1.4 above, for he not only refers to the aforementioned paradigm in his comment on 2:21-3 (rather than in on 3:1, like Saadia), but also signals that paradigm with same rabbinic Hebrew locution (contra Saadia’s Arabic reference), albeit with the addition of the benedictory participle.

**2.2.2. Excursus: On the reason for the omission of any explicit mention of God**

Yefet  
p. 45\* (272–3)

Also among these cruxes is that the name of God is not mentioned in this scroll. Accordingly, some people say that there is no need for any mention of it, since (the scroll) circulated as (a compilation of) anecdotes and reports. Other people say that the writer copied it from the text (*nuskha*) that Esther wrote, and that in Esther’s letter there was no mention of the name of God, for she disdained the idea that the scroll might fall into the hands of a people other than Israel whereupon they would attribute the work of God to the work of another (god)... And perhaps there is another reason that we have not grasped.

Saadia  
pp. 566–7 (111)

As to the reason why neither the name of the Lord (y’y)<sup>46</sup> nor (the term) God (*ēlōhīm*) was entered in (the book), I would say – without being categorical – that insofar as it was commanded that the subject matter of this book be written down to serve as an accurate record for the kings of Persia who had it recorded in their annals – as it says, *are they not written (in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia)?* (10:2) –, it was produced in ordinary fashion<sup>47</sup> without the holy designations, for had the believers entered the name of the Compassionate One therein, the unbelievers would surely have entered the name of their own god in

<sup>45</sup> All page references for Yefet are to our edition and (with occasional adjustment) translation of his commentary (see n. 4 above).

<sup>46</sup> I.e., the Tetragrammaton.

<sup>47</sup> “in ordinary fashion” (*Ar. sādḥajatan*)—i.e., in the “ordinary” vein of secular writing, unembellished by explicit references to the person and work of God.



its place in their version (*nuskha*)<sup>48</sup> of it – and it would have been the believers who were ultimately responsible<sup>49</sup> for the entering of the idol's name in one of the reports. Yet because the unbelievers did not find the name of God in the text, they did not enter the name of their own god in place of it.

The omission of any reference to God is addressed by Yefet in an excursus at the end of his commentary on 6:14-7:10, where he noncommittally cites four possible explanations,<sup>50</sup> the second of which is clearly a condensed and perhaps somewhat revised version of the explanation presented by Saadia at the end of his introduction. Whether the reference to Esther and “the writer” (*al-mudawwin*)<sup>51</sup> in Yefet's version is consistent with Saadia's intention in referring to “the believers” (*al-mu'minīn*) is unclear, seeing that the majority of the latter's commentary on 9:29-32, where he would presumably have addressed the matter of the book's composition, is unfortunately lost.<sup>52</sup>

**2.2.3. Ad 1:10-2: On the basis in Persian custom of the king's intention to display Vashti:**

<p>Yefet p. 11* (180-1)</p>	<p>Saadia p. 584 (160)</p>
<p>Now some people say that this was a customary practice of the Persians, that they would bring out their wives in the presence of the people, and so the king was justified and not in the wrong; yet (Vashti) objected that the commoners should look upon her and so she disobeyed this customary</p>	<p>Should one who is given to musing ask how it is that kings would dishonor their wives by (bringing them into) the presence of their leaders, we would respond that it was a custom of every queen among the Persians to appear before the people that they might pay homage to her just as they pay</p>

.....

<sup>48</sup> I.e., in the copy/version (*nuskha*) of the book adapted by the Persian scribes for inclusion in the royal annals (*akhbār*).

<sup>49</sup> “ultimately responsible”—lit. “the cause” (*al-sabab*)—because of their lack of foresight.

<sup>50</sup> The latter two, which we have omitted from the above citation, are that it was to avoid the defilement of God's name resulting from handling of the scroll by ritually impure people (*qawm ghayr athār*), or that it was because there was at that time no prophet or national trustee (*waliy*) among the Jewish people.

<sup>51</sup> On this term and its innovative exegetical application by Yefet and other Karaites see Ilana SASSON, “The *Mudawwin* Revisited: Yefet ben Eli on the Composition of the Book of Proverbs,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 67, 2016, pp. 327-39, and the many additional studies cited by her on p. 328, n. 4.

<sup>52</sup> See Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile, op. cit.*, pp. 410, 668-9.

practice of theirs, whereupon they judged her appropriately.

homage to the king – as is attested even today in the land of India and elsewhere. Since, therefore, it was permitted for the leaders and governors to behold (Vashti) at the time of their entering in order to pay homage to her, (the king) also deemed it permissible to bring her out at the time of their wine drinking.

This may represent an instance of Yefet relying on Saadia (or an intermediary version of his comment) for cultural information. The only prior source that we have found which mentions a “custom” in connection with this verse is the eighth-century aggadic midrash *Pirqē (dē-)Rabbī Ēlī'ezer* (chap. 48 [49]), in which it is said that “it was a custom of the kings of Media that, when they were eating and drinking, they would bring out their wives to entertain and dance before them, that all might observe the beauty of their form.”<sup>53</sup> Yefet’s formulation, however, is much closer to that of Saadia, who refers to the Persians rather than “the kings of Media” and does not include the requisite venue of eating and drinking, or the attendant actions of entertaining and dancing by the queen. As to Vashti’s refusal, however, Saadia takes a more nuanced view, concluding that her refusal to abide by the custom was in this instance circumstantially justified.<sup>54</sup>

#### 2.2.4. *Ad 4:1ff. (proem): On the reason that God chastised Israel via Haman’s decree:*

Yefet

p. 31\* (238-9)

Some people say that the reason for it was their worship of Nebuchadnezzar’s idol, yet this is an erroneous view since Scripture did not relate that the Jews worshiped it. And even if we agreed with them on this point, it would have been impossible, with respect to the justice of God, that He should punish all the Jews for the sin of some in Babylon who worshipped the idol. Even those who advocate this reason are unable to say (in its defense)

Saadia

p. 622 (257)

Now, I admit that it may be due to one of two possibilities, the first being that they ate of Ahasuerus’ food and drank of his wine. This is unlikely, however, for two reasons: first, Scripture makes clear that (Ahasuerus) did not compel anyone to drink or eat, per the statement, *that they should do according to every man’s pleasure* (1:8); and second, as would logically follow had this in fact been the case, the punishment would surely have been

.....

<sup>53</sup> Per Michael HIGGER, ed., “Pirqē R. Ēlī'ezer,” *Horeb*, vol. 10, 1948, p. 241.

<sup>54</sup> See Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-2. See also 2.4.1 below.

that God refrains from punishing those (who commit the sin) and instead punishes others.

Others say that it is because they ate of Ahasuerus's food at the banquet, yet the refutation of this view is similar to the refutation of the previous one, for it is impossible that all the Jews should have been punished for the sin of the those in Susa – indeed, the news of (what they did) may not even have reached (the others)! It would only have been possible for such (a view) to be advanced if the hardship had befallen the (Jewish) residents of Susa (alone), apart from the others.

incurred only by the Jews of Susa, and none others.

The second (possibility) is that they worshipped Nebuchadnezzar's idol, which he set up in the plain of Dura, insofar as none among us refused except for the three men. Yet this is also unlikely, for had all (the Jews) truly done this they would unquestionably have forsaken the creed of Judaism, even had they been compelled and threatened by execution, as I have previously discussed; and second, as would logically follow had this in fact been the case, the punishment would surely have been incurred only by the Jews who were in Babylon and its environs – how so, then, those who were in Khurāsān<sup>55</sup> and its environs?!

Though ultimately endorsing a different reason for the affliction,<sup>56</sup> Yefet begins his commentary on chap. 4, like Saadia, by reviewing and dismissing the same two views, albeit in the opposite order and in more categorical fashion. While both views are broadly attested in rabbinic sources<sup>57</sup> (which is likely why Saadia addresses them<sup>58</sup>), none of those sources expressly rejects both views (the first view presented by Saadia is rejected only in some of the sources, and the second view in none), and in several of them one or the other view is in fact endorsed.

<sup>55</sup> Apparently here signifying, as often in early Islamic literature, the general region east of Jibāl (i.e., Media/ 'Irāq 'Ajāmī) until India (see Bosworth, "Khurāsān," 56a; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 2:218a-b).

<sup>56</sup> *Viz.*, "When the people saw that the House of God was replete with sacrifices and its rebuilding begun, they forsook that state of mourning in which they had been concerning their exile, the destruction of their homes, and the abolition of their sacrifices, and instead took up eating and drinking; and because this was an inappropriate response, God incited this hardship against them" (p. 31\* [239-40]). On Saadia's view, which entails the practice and general tolerance of intermarriage, see 2.1.5 above.

<sup>57</sup> See *b. Mēg.* 12a (*ad Esth* 1:5); *Midr. Abbā' Guryōn ad* 4:1; *Midr. Esth Rabbā* ii.5 (*ad* 1:5); vii.13 (*ad* 3:9); *Midr. Pānīm Āḥērīm A ad* 4:1; *Midr. Pānīm Āḥērīm B ad* 4:1; *Tg. Esth I ad* 1:5; *Aggādāt Esth ad* 4:1; *Midr. Song Rabbā* vii.8 (*ad Song* 7:7); and *Midrash Tanḥūmā'* (ed. BUBER), *Bē-har*, 9 (*ad Lev* 25:25). Not all of these necessarily predate Saadia and Yefet, on which see the respective summaries concerning the dating of these sources and their component parts in Hermann L. STRACK and Gunter STEMBERGER, *Introduction*, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> On Saadia's critical attitude towards aggadic-midrashic tradition, as opposed to his unquestioning allegiance to halakhic tradition (i.e., the Oral Law), see Haggai BEN-SHAMMAI, "The Rabbinic Literature in Sa'adyā's Exegesis: Between Tradition and Innovation" [Hebrew], in Joshua BLAU and David DORON, eds, *Heritage and Innovation in Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Culture: Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* [Hebrew], Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000, pp. 33-69; Robert BRODY, *The Geonim of Baylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 312-5; *idem*, *Sa'adyah Gaon*, trans. Betsy ROSENBERG, Oxford, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013, pp. 73-8; Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-20; *idem*, "Sa'adia Gaon on Esther's Invitation of Haman," *op. cit.*, pp. 326-30; Moshe ZUCKER, *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-8.

**2.2.5. Ad Esth 7:6: On the indirect referential distinction between the terms “adversary” (*ṣar*) and “enemy” (*ōyēb*):**

Yefet	Saadia
p. 43* (269)	pp. 643-4 (332)
By saying <i>an adversary and an enemy</i> she means, “an adversary to me and an enemy to my people.”	The sense of <i>an adversary and an enemy</i> is layered <sup>59</sup> – (to wit:) an adversary to Esther’s people and an enemy to her personally; also: an adversary to her and an enemy to the king; also: an adversary to the king and an enemy to the Lord of the Universe; also: an adversary to the people and an enemy to himself – were it not so, he would not have entered into (the predicament) that he did.

Yefet’s identification of Esther and the Jewish people as the distinct indirect referents of “adversary” (*ṣar*) and “enemy” (*ōyēb*) is identical to the first juxtaposed distinction presented by Saadia (albeit in the opposite order) – which specific juxtaposed distinction we have not found in any preceding source. As non-juxtaposed referents, however, both Israel, Esther, and most of the referents in Saadia’s three additional juxtaposed distinctions are identified with one or the other term in rabbinic sources (which is likely why Saadia includes the additional pairs), although the only juxtaposed pair presented by Saadia attested in these sources is that of Esther and the king.<sup>60</sup>

**2.3. An Epitomized Commentary from the School of Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ (Late Classical/Scholastic Period)**

This commentary is partially extant, from the beginning through 3:4 (ending *in medias res*), as part of a larger MS also containing distinct Judaeo-Arabic commentaries (most of which are also partially extant) on Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs (two commentaries), Lamentations (two commentaries), and Ecclesiastes. The commentary on Esther is written in the style of *nukat* – i.e., relatively short, concise notes – drawn primarily from the commentaries of Salmon and Yefet. Though not expressly identified, the author-compiler of the commentary was likely either Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ, a leading figure among the Karaite scholars of Jerusalem during the second half of the 10th and early-11th centuries, or else one of the students of his school in the

<sup>59</sup> Or “manifold” – Ar. *mukarrar*, here signifying polysemy with respect to the indirect (and complementary) referential parameters of the words, not their lexical meanings (i.e., “adversary” and “enemy”) or direct application (i.e., to Haman).

<sup>60</sup> This is in the so-called “early” midrash – the dating of which is still uncertain, insofar as it appears to be associated with the later section of *Midr. Esth Rabbā* (on which see our discussion under 2.1.8 above) – published by Zvi Meir RABINOWITZ, ed., *Ginzé Midrash: The Oldest Forms of Rabbinic Midrashim according to Geniza Manuscripts* [Hebrew], Tel-Aviv, Tel-Aviv University, 1976, p. 160. See otherwise *Pānīm Āḥērīm B ad 7:6 and Midr. Exod Rabbā xxxviii.4*.

11th century prior to the destruction of the Jewish community in that city by the Crusaders in 1099.<sup>61</sup> Due to the commentary's concise and partially-extant character we have only been able to identify a few, tentative examples of material that may have been appropriated, directly or indirectly, from Saadia (citation references are to our edition and translation of the commentary published in 2002<sup>62</sup>):

**2.3.1. Ad 1:1: Equating Heb. *mēdīnā* with Arab. *minbar* ("district"):**

<p>The Epitomized Commentary p. 114 (118)</p> <p>(Scripture) says of Darius the Mede that he appointed 120 governors (see Dan 6:1), yet this (king) surpassed him by 7 <i>mudun</i>, which are very large districts (<i>manābir kibār</i>).</p>	<p>Saadia p. 572 (122)</p> <p>As to the enumeration <i>a hundred and twenty-seven mēdīnā</i> – insofar as one accepts the view that <i>mēdīnā</i> signifies a "district" (<i>minbar</i>) or a "province" (<i>kūra</i>), it becomes evident that (Ahasuerus' kingdom) encompassed most of the inhabited world.</p>
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In the Judaeo-Arabic sources preceding the epitomized commentary, the specific equation of Heb. *mēdīnā* in this verse (and elsewhere in Esther) with the Arabic lexeme *minbar*<sup>63</sup> is attested only by Saadia. The adoption of this equivalency may also have been reinforced by Salmon's equation of *mēdīnā* with *balad*,<sup>64</sup> as well as by semantically similar construals of the term in rabbinic literature (cf. *Tg. Esth I ad loc.*; *Midr. Esth Rabbā* i.5, 9 [ad 1:1]; *Pirqē (dē-)Rabbī Ēlī'ezer*, chap. 10<sup>65</sup> [11]).

<sup>61</sup> On the activity and personalities of the Jerusalem school of Karaites in the 11th century see (along with the additional literature there cited) Daniel FRANK, "Karaite Exegesis," *op. cit.*, pp. 123-6; Miriam GOLDSTEIN, *Karaite Exegesis in Medieval Jerusalem*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011 (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism, vol. 26); Meira POLLIAK, *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation: A Linguistic and Exegetical Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C.E.*, Leiden, Brill, 1997 (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval, vol. 17), pp. 46-58; Jacob MANN, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2, *Karaïtica*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1935, pp. 33-43; Solomon L. Skoss, *The Arabic Commentary of 'Alī ben Suleimān*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-35.

<sup>62</sup> "An Early Karaite Commentary on the Book of Esther," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 72, 2002, pp. 101-37.

<sup>63</sup> On this term in the sense of "district" see Joshua BLAU, *A Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2006, p. 679b; Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, Leiden, Brill, 1927, vol. 2, p. 635b.

<sup>64</sup> In his comment on 1:1: "This means 127 provinces (*balad*), in the same sense that *mēdīnā* might be applied to something like the entirety of Syro-Palestine (*al-Shām*), and like Iraq" (MS A, fol. 2').

<sup>65</sup> Per Michael HIGGER, "Pirqē R. Ēlī'ezer," *op. cit.*, p. 99.

**2.3.2. *Ad* 1:10, 12: On the basis in Persian custom of the king's intention to display Vashti, and the reason for her refusal (p. 115 [123-4]):**

*Some people are of the opinion that (Ahasuerus) was sagaciously prudent, and that it was the practice of the kings (of Persia) to distinguish themselves by displaying their wives, as it is said, and the queen was sitting beside him (Neh 2:6) ... But (Queen Vashti) refused – Some people commend her (for this) and some people censure her, which (latter) is more reasonable. Perhaps she perceived something that displeased her, or else she did not desire that the common people should look upon her.*

In this instance the apparently Saadianic material has been carried over from Yefet's comment *ad loc.* (on which see 2.2.3) and further reworked (either by the author-compiler or another intermediary source) – most notably, by the inclusion of 1) a biblical proof-text regarding the custom, and 2) an alternative motive for Vashti's refusal ("Perhaps she perceived something that displeased her"), which latter may well have been drawn directly from Saadia's commentary (on which see 2.4.1 below).

**2.3.3. *Ad* 2:5: On the genealogy of Mordecai in this verse being immediate and uninterrupted (rather than condensed in some fashion):**

The Epitomized Comm. p. 116 (128-9)	Saadia p. 592 (183)
<p>It is possible that Jair was his father, Shimei his grandfather, and Kish his great-grandfather. It may also be the case that Kish is the father of Saul, and Shimei the son of Kish, and Jair the son of Shimei, without interruption.</p>	<p>They say that ... we are to construe (Mordecai's genealogy) as linking uninterruptedly to that point where the genealogy of Saul's descendants, at its latest, breaks off – specifically, as it says concerning the descendants of Benjamin: <i>And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal ... and Azel had six sons, whose names are these: Azrikam, Bocru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan</i> (1 Chr 8:34-8). On this basis his genealogy may be enumerated: Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, the son of Azrikam, the son of Azel, the son of Eleasah, the son of Raphah, the son of Binea, the son of Moza, the son of Zimri, the son of Jehoaddah, the son of Ahaz, the son of Micah, the son of Mephibosheth,<sup>66</sup> the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul.</p>

<sup>66</sup> I.e., Merib-baal (see 2 Sam 4:4).

We have included this example only insofar as the construal of Mordecai's genealogy in this verse as immediate and uninterrupted – while certainly not unnatural – is in fact unattested either in the rabbinic literature preceding Saadia or in the commentaries of Salmon and Yefet. These other sources, rather, clearly favoring the homiletical-theological view of the Mordecai-Haman enmity as a resumption of the Saul/Kishite-Agag/Amalekite enmity, identify Kish as the father of Saul, with the genealogy being condensed either between Kish and Shimei (so the rabbinic sources<sup>67</sup>) or, perhaps, between Yair and Mordecai (so Salmon and Yefet,<sup>68</sup> who, although they do not expressly specify the abridgement, are likely represented by the second view given in the epitomized commentary).

**2.3.4. Ad 2:21-3: On the canonical parallel to Joseph's situation as a prelude to redemption (p. 118 [134-5]):**

*This (episode) is a prelude (muqaddima) to his deliverance from Haman ... The king investigated (the matter) and executed the verdict, yet he offered Mordecai no reward until the most propitious time, as (also in the case of Joseph): but he forgot him (Gen 40:23).*

In this instance the Saadianic material is being mediated via an epitomized combination of the comments *ad loc.* of Yefet (see 2.2.1) and Salmon (see 2.1.4).

**2.4. Judah Me'ir Tawrīzī (Early Modern Period)**

Judah Me'ir Tawrīzī<sup>69</sup> was the last Karaite, so far as we are aware, to compose a Judaeo-Arabic commentary on the book of Esther. Of his life we know very little. That he lived during the late-16th and early-17th centuries may be inferred from the signature of his son in a letter dated to AM 5406 (= 1646 CE). Like his son – and like the composers of our previous three commentaries – he was probably a resident of Jerusalem (having emigrated, perhaps, from Cairo). By profession, also like his son, he appears to have been a physician, per the addition to his name of the appellation *al-ḥakīm*. His commentary on Esther (extant in two MSS, as yet unpublished) is his only surviving work, though in it he also refers to his commentary on Zechariah. He speaks of the Rabbanites in generally congenial terms, notwithstanding occasional, obligatory critiques appertaining primarily to aspects of Rabbanite *hālākhā*. Not only does

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<sup>67</sup> See the handy comparative chart of these sources in Bernard GROSSFELD, *The Two Targums of Esther: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1991 (The Aramaic Bible, vol. 18), p. 210. The same enumeration of Mordecai's genealogy is also found in the Yemenite "midrash" *Aggadat Estēr ad loc.*, although the composition date of this work is clearly post-Saadianic (see Salomon BUBER, ed., *Agadische Abhandlungen zum Buche Ester* [Heb.], Krakau, Josef Fischer, 1897, p. xi), and in fact it contains many passages corresponding uniquely to material in Saadia's commentary (see our index in *The Book of Conviviality in Exile*, *op. cit.*, p. 489), which in our assessment attest definitively to the Yemenite compiler's use of Saadia rather than to Saadia's use of those exegetical traditions as found in some other, non-extant source.

<sup>68</sup> See Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18\*, 196-7, and Salmon's comment in *idem*, *The Book of Conviviality in Exile*, *op. cit.*, p. 184, n.

<sup>69</sup> On the details of our following sketch see Michael G. Wechsler, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-9, and the sources there referenced.

Tawrīzī expressly cite his Karaite predecessors Yefet ben Eli and Samuel ha-Ma'ārābī (al-Maghribi), but also, and with obvious respect, the Rabbanite littérateurs Judah ha-Levi and Bahya ben Asher. As we shall see in following, he appears to have drawn from Saadia as well, albeit tacitly (citation references are to the text of Tawrīzī's commentary in MS British Library Or. 2517, fols. 108<sup>r</sup>-46<sup>v</sup>, dated in the colophon to Elul, AM 5460 [= 1700 CE]).<sup>70</sup>

**2.4.1. Ad 1:12: On the basis in Persian custom of the king's intention to display Vashti, and the reason for her refusal:**

Tawrīzī  
fols. 109<sup>v</sup> – 110<sup>r</sup>

One of (the scholars) says that such was their custom, consistent with what is known of the Persians' customary practice from (the statement), *and the queen was sitting beside him*, etc. (Neh 2:6) ... Were their custom not so, Esther would not have requested of the king: "Let the king and Haman come (this day) to the banquet that I have prepared for him" (5:4). Vashti's refusal was due rather to her apprehensiveness towards both the eminent and the lowly among those who were present, lest any of them should say, "This is the queen?! Perhaps if my wife, or my sister, or my daughter were beautified with the various cosmetics and finery, she would be more beautiful and attractive than her!"

Saadia  
pp. 584-5 (161-2)

One may further wonder: Why did she refuse to appear? We would say that it was due to several vitiating factors, among these being that unveiling herself to the governors and rulers was a trial for her; also because, were her presence clearly displayed, she felt insecure that a critic might challenge her beauty and say, "Were it only for such-and-such, she would be perfect," or, if there was someone at the reception who disliked her, some defect might be attributed to her – indeed, it was inevitable that it should be so, for people are not altogether of one mind in liking a single individual ... It may further be wondered whether the right was on her side or his? We would say that the right was on her side and that Ahasuerus is the one who wronged her.

This example reflects not only Yefet's appropriation of Saadia's comment *ad loc.* (on which see 2.2.3), but also the reworked version of Yefet's comment attested in the epitomized commentary (see 2.3.2), which latter also includes the prooftext from Nehemiah. So too, regarding the reason for Vashti's refusal despite this customary practice, whereas Yefet writes only that "she objected that the commoners should look upon her," Tawrīzī's more elaborate reference to her apprehensiveness regarding the critique of both the eminent and the lowly aligns more closely with the alternative

<sup>70</sup> The other extant witness to Tawrīzī's commentary, MS A29/2 (pp. 205-55) of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Budapest), appears to be a 19th-century copy of the British Library MS, in which Tawrīzī's commentary is likewise preceded by that of Salmon b. Yeruḥam on Lamentations. See further Max WEISZ, *Katalog der hebräischen Handschriften und Bücher in der Bibliothek des Professors Dr. David Kaufmann S. A.*, Frankfurt a.M. J. Kauffmann, 1906, p. 8 (no. 29).



reason given in the epitomized commentary that “she perceived something that displeased her.” That Tawrīzī may also have drawn directly – albeit in reworked fashion – from Saadia’s comment *ad loc.* is suggested by his correspondingly specific reference to the theoretical criticism of Vashti’s beauty, as well as by the quotative phrasing of that criticism by the theoretical critic. Such direct recourse to Saadia’s commentary would also explain why, whereas Yefet and the epitomized commentary attribute the explanation to “(Some) people” (*qawm*), Tawrīzī attributes it to “one” of the scholars (*ba‘duhum*, the pronominal reference being to *al-‘ulamā’* mentioned by him earlier).

**2.4.2. Ad 2:21-3: On the didactic value of Mordecai’s disclosure of the plot to assassinate the king:**

Tawrīzī fol. 115 <sup>v</sup>	Saadia p. 603 (208-9)
<p>(Mordecai) did not deem it permissible to keep silent and ignore the (planned) murder of the king and so he included in the sin, for insofar as he was aware (of the plot), he would have become a partner in the crime – for anyone who becomes aware of one who is doing anything that is proscribed or forbidden in the Law, yet keeps silent about it, is held equally accountable by God, Exalted be He! ... Moreover, in the Law it says, <i>If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt forbear to pass by him; thou shalt surely release it with him</i> (Exod 23:5) – which statement entails compassion towards dumb animals; how much more so, then, (are we to show compassion towards) rational man without restriction, (as it also says,) <i>His tender mercies are over all His works</i> (Ps 145:9)?!</p>	<p>(Scripture) here omits mentioning the essence of the plot that these two servants had devised against the king and its (intended manner of) implementation, focusing upon it rather as an occasion for the loyal counsel which Mordecai subsequently delivered to the king. In this it teaches us several important lessons, among them: that we should expose unjust people and not consider doing so as forbidden slander, for it is absolutely fitting that they themselves should fall into what they have dug rather than that the innocent should fall into it ...; and that it behooves us to act charitably towards believers as well as unbelievers, giving due heed to the fact that the Creator – Exalted be He! – cares for them all and has mercy on them, as it says, <i>The LORD is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works</i> (Ps 145:9).</p>

In specific correspondence with Saadia, Tawrīzī here adduces the didactic principle of doing good to all men (i.e., “rational man,” corresponding to Saadia’s “believers as well as unbelievers”), which he immediately corroborates by citing the same proof-text from Psalms.

**2.4.3. Ad 3:2: On Mordecai's refusal to worship Haman vis-à-vis the creedal impermissibility of dissimulation:**

Tawrīzī  
fol. 117<sup>r-v</sup>

When Mordecai refused this act (of prostration), his companions sincerely admonished him out of fear for his life. He then told them about his creed – that it was impermissible for him to worship anyone but the one and only God, who alone is worthy of worship, and even should he be killed, he could not do it. Such is the creed of Israel! The sages have said, moreover, that there are three things for which a man must accept death and not do: the first is engaging in “idolatry” (‘*āḇōdā zārā*’); the second is “fornication” (*gillūy ʾārā(y)ōt ʾāsūrōt*); and the third is “murder” (*shēfikhūt dām nāqī*). Thus Daniel's friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azzariah were cast into the furnace of fire for not prostrating themselves before Nebuchadnezzar's idol; nor did they adopt the conduct of dissimulation (*al-riyāʾ*) and flattery,<sup>71</sup> the expression of which (conduct) is reflective of unbelief and insincerity (see Dan 3:13ff.).

Saadia  
p. 609 (221-2)

It may also be asked: Considering the issue of dissimulation (*al-taqiyya*) and fear for one's life, might Mordecai have done that (which the king commanded) even though it was forbidden (by his faith)? In response we would say that in connection with the following three sins, dissimulation by a believer will be of no avail to him as an excuse, as it is set forth in our traditional literature: “There is nothing that takes precedence over the saving of life except idolatry (‘*āḇōdā zārā*’), fornication (*gillūy ʾārāyōt*), and murder (*shēfikhūt dāmīm*)” (*b. Kētub*. 19a). And when we carefully examine Scripture we find that what it has to say indeed substantiates this halakhic dictum. Regarding “idolatry” – with respect to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah it says, *But even if (He does) not (deliver us), let it be known to you, O king, (that we will not worship your gods, etc.)* (Dan 3:18).

Like Saadia, Tawrīzī devotes a relatively lengthy discussion to the permissibility of dissimulation (*riyāʾ/taqiyya*) in connection with Mordecai's refusal to worship (or appear to worship) Haman, in the course of which discussion he not only cites, in same order, the same three categorical exceptions against dissimulation as are presented in the talmudic passage cited by Saadia, but also designates those three exceptions in their talmudic Hebrew register, immediately after which he cites the example of Daniel's friends (which is not cited in the talmudic passage) as a biblical proof-text for the exception of idolatry.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Ar. al-musāqala < al-muṣāqala*, on which phonetic shift see Joshua BLAU, *A Grammar of Medieval Judaeo-Arabic*, Jerusalem, Magnes, 1980, pp. 36-7 (§182); on the denotation of “flattery” see Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément*, *op. cit.*, Leiden, Brill, 1927, vol. 1, p. 839b.

<sup>72</sup> Tawrīzī also appears to draw upon Saadia's commentary in his preceding discussion concerning the nature of the prostration required before Haman, on which see Michael G. Wechsler, *The Book of Conviviality*, *op. cit.*, p. 222, n.

**2.4.4. *Ad* 3:7/8:9ff.: On the divine motive underlying Haman's selection of Adar 13 as the date of the Jews' decreed destruction:**

Tawrīzī  
fol. 124<sup>r</sup>

The extending of that interval was an expression of grace on the part of God, His praise be exalted, for if the decree – Heaven forbid! – had been to undertake the killing more quickly upon the arrival of the communiqué, many people would surely have been killed.

Saadia  
p. 618 (247)

The display (of any celestial portents)<sup>73</sup> by God was to facilitate Haman's selection of a distant month out of the twelve and not one that was near, for then a portion of the people would have been killed during (the period) intervening the (arrival) time of the decree entailing their destruction and the (arrival) time of the decree entailing the destruction of their enemies.

In this instance Tawrīzī's comment (included in his discussion of the book's dénouement) may represent a reworked version of Saadia's explanation (*ad* 3:7) as mediated via Yefet (likewise *ad* 3:7), to whose formulation of the comment that of Tawrīzī more closely corresponds.<sup>74</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

From the aggregate of examples here surveyed – notwithstanding the variable uncertainty attending the identification of tacitly-cited material – it appears that the reception of Saadia in the Karaite tradition of Judaeo-Arabic Esther commentary was predominantly one of positive appropriation, both direct as well as indirect and in variously-reworked fashion. That such appropriation is in every instance tacit – whether presented in anonymously-citative or non-citative fashion – is reasonably due to several mutually-reinforcing factors including (1) the didactic-polemical desire to refrain from explicitly endorsing the Karaites' totemic Rabbanite polemical opponent, (2) the Karaites' epistemological-exegetical emphasis on individual reasoning over against reliance on the authority of tradition,<sup>75</sup> and (3) the communal-accretive nature

<sup>73</sup> Prior to this excerpt Saadia discusses various aspects of judicial astrology – specifically, the pertinent aspects of genethliology and hemerology – which Haman and his advisors would potentially have considered in selecting the day of Israel's destruction. Though affirming God's sovereign manipulation of astronomical-celestial portents to influence Haman's decision, he categorically rejects the *actual* revelatory utility of such (see Michael G. Wechsler, *The Book of Conviviality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-7).

<sup>74</sup> "This (selection of Adar) was brought about by God – the Blessed and Sublime – for the sake of distancing the time (of the decree's enactment), for had it been a near time, many among Israel would surely have been killed" (Michael G. WECHSLER, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, p. 24\* [218-9]).

<sup>75</sup> See, along with the additional literature cited therein, Meira POLLIACK, "The Emergence of Karaite Bible Exegesis" [Hebrew], *Sefunot*, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 299-311; *idem*, "Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis,"

of Oriental exegesis generally.<sup>76</sup> The degree to which this tacit, predominantly positive appropriation of Saadia is carried over into the Byzantine-Hebrew tradition of Karaite Esther commentary – in which, from what we have observed (and sporadically noted elsewhere),<sup>77</sup> it appears to have been even more extensive than in the Judaeo-Arabic tradition here surveyed – is a topic that we hope to take up more fully in a future study.

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*op. cit.*; Daniel FRANK, "Karaite Exegesis," *op. cit.*; Michael G. Wechsler, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-34.

<sup>76</sup> See, *inter alios*, Ignác GOLDZIHNER, *Studien über Tanchûm Jerûschalmi*, Leipzig, List & Franke, 1870, pp. 3-4; Michael G. Wechsler, *Strangers in the Land*, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-66; and Sarah STROUMSA, "Citation Tradition: On Explicit and Hidden Citations in Judaeo-Arabic Philosophical Literature" [Hebrew], in Joshua BLAU and David DORON, eds, *Heritage and Innovation in Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Culture: Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* [Hebrew], Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000, pp. 167-78 (esp. the concluding summary on pp. 177-8).

<sup>77</sup> See n. 4 above.



# Interreligious and Gender Facets in Yefet ben ‘Eli’s Portrayal of David’s Wives

□ Meira POLLIACK and Arye ZOREF

No differently to most Bible commentators through the ages, the Karaite Yefet ben ‘Eli (Jerusalem, late x<sup>th</sup> century) read biblical narrative through the lenses of his own time and place, whether consciously or unconsciously. In particular, it seems he considered as a prerequisite that the social structures and cultural norms governing the reality of everyday life and male and female conduct, with which he was familiar as a Jewish male living in the Middle East under Islamic Rule, had some parallel in biblical times, or grew out of them in some way. Today we would designate these structures and norms by terms such as “patriarchal” or “androcentric,” in that they designate a society governed by a male-dominated mentality, as reflected in biblical literature. Hence, this literature’s general tendency to view female characters and describe them through a “male gaze.”<sup>1</sup> While modern or even pre-modern feminist-typed views and critiques of biblical literature were not part of our exegete’s cognizance, and while, in general, he interpreted the biblical text according to the male dominant structures of medieval Islamic (and Judeo-Arabic) culture, Yefet ben ‘Eli’s unusual exegesis and approach to

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this article was prepared within the framework of the ISF project (grant no. 321/17) *The Davidic Narratives and David’s Portrayal (The Books of Samuel and Psalms) in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Exegesis, A Comparative Religious Approach* (Pl: Meira POLLIACK, 2017-21). On the patriarchal framing and female portrayals in the Books of Samuel and Kings, see Athalya BRENNER, ed., *The Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* [First Series], Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994; Jo Cheryl EXUM, “Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative,” in Athalya BRENNER, ed., *The Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* [Second Series] Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, pp. 45-67. On the concept of the “male gaze,” first introduced by the feminist film theorist Laura MULVEY, as applied to biblical literature, see, for instance, Caryn TAMBER-ROSENAU, “Biblical Bathing Beauties and the Manipulation of the Male Gaze: What Judith Can Tell Us about Bathsheba and Susanna,” in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 33, Fall 2017, no. 2, pp. 55-72.

gender matters and female characters has been noted in various studies.<sup>2</sup> Yefet was an ardent member of the Karaite Jewish community in the Holy Land, known by the biblical term “Mourners of Zion” (*aveley siyyon*).<sup>3</sup> The medieval Karaites appear to have upheld a relatively egalitarian notion of the relationship between men and women, probably due to their sectarian and messianic tendencies.<sup>4</sup> This uncensored approach is discernible in Yefet’s understanding of biblical law and also in the manner in which he interprets the character and actions of female figures in biblical narrative. In general, Yefet leaned towards highlighting the positive and dynamic role of female characters, often recognizing their centrality to the plot and their spiritual potency. He also offered a relatively sensitive and unusual reading of the “inner-life” of female characters, their emotions and psychological motives. Yefet’s uniqueness and originality stand out in his ability to offer a serious and validating exegetical portrayal of female biblical characters, and often of those completely ignored or passed over as insignificant by many ancient and medieval commentators.<sup>5</sup> In the following, we illustrate two major tendencies in Yefet’s characterization of three of David’s wives: Michal, Abigail and Bathsheba. On the one hand, a “historicizing” reading of Scripture, which applies to it the type of male dominant social norms known from his Islamic and Judeo-Arabic milieu; On the other hand, an “egalitarian” tendency, in the unravelling and upholding of these characters’ personality and motives. We are not suggesting that these tendencies necessarily conflict, yet they appear to coexist in a kind of subtle tension throughout his commentaries on the Hebrew Bible, especially, its narrative portions. In some cases, we found that ancient Jewish, Christian Syriac or Islamic sources throw some light on the gender and hermeneutic issues raised by Yefet’s fascinating readings of these female characters. We addressed various interreligious sources within the limited context of our discussion of each of the three characters, yet clearly further study is needed in order to establish the wider trajectory of this phenomenon in Yefet’s and other early Karaite works.

<sup>2</sup> Most notable among them, Ilana SASSON, “Gender Equality in Yefet ben Eli’s Commentary and Karaite Halakhah,” in *AJS Review*, vol. 37, 2013, no. 1, pp. 55-61.

<sup>3</sup> On the historical background of the medieval Karaite circle in Jerusalem, see: Yoram ERDER, *The Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Qumran Scrolls: On the History of an Alternative to Rabbinic Judaism*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For further reading on this aspect and additional bibliography, see Meira POLLIACK “Inversion of ‘Written’ and ‘Oral’ Torah in Relation to the Islamic Arch-Models of Qur’an and Hadith,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 22, 2015, no. 3, pp. 243-302.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars who addressed this originality in addition to SASSON (note 2 above) include: Marzena ZAWANOWSKA, “The Literary Approach to the Bible and its Characters in Yefet ben ‘Eli’s Commentary on the Book of Genesis: An Example of Competing Females in the Story of Abraham,” in *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies*, vol. 1, 2005, pp. 78-80; Shlomo Dov GOITEIN, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, Los Angeles, University of California Press 1988, vol. 5, p. 363; Meirav NADLER AKIRAV, “The Biographical Stories of the Prophets in the Writings of Yefet ben Eli,” in Miriam LINDGREN HJÄLM, ed., *Senses of Scriptures, Treasures of Tradition*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 190-1.

## Michal: A young woman in love—romance, marriage and personal adversity

In accordance with the social norms of his time, Yefet assumed that a young bride in biblical times did not have much of a choice regarding the man she was going to marry. This is evident from his following comment on 1 Samuel 18:19 (“when the time came for Merab, Saul’s daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Mehola”)<sup>6</sup>:

*There is no mention of the reason why Saul did not fulfil his promise (to David): “here is my older daughter Merab ...” (1 Samuel 18:17). Perhaps the reason was what David said: “who am I, and what is my family ...” (1 Samuel 18:18). When he saw that to all appearances he (David) was not interested (in the marriage), he (Saul) decided that he will not give her (Merab) to him in marriage [...]. It is also possible that he did not want to give her to him in marriage (to begin with). He (Saul) called people to gather according to the original plan, to celebrate her marriage to David, but when the people assembled, he gave her [instead] to Adriel of Meholah in marriage.<sup>7</sup>*

According to Yefet’s interpretation, King Saul’s older daughter, Merab, had no say of her own with regard to her marriage. Her father decided the matter, and could even change his mind and resolve that she should marry someone else, at the last minute, while her actual wedding took place, without consulting her and without her being able to express any complaint. This, of course, is not necessarily the only possible way to interpret the elliptic biblical verse. Commentators who lived in a similar historical and social surrounding as Yefet offered different views. Ishodad of Merw, The Nestorian Syriac commentator of the IX<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, claimed that Merab herself decided that she would not marry David, yet emphasizes this was not because she rejected David. Rather, Ishodad explains:

*Merab discharged herself from marrying David, not because there was something wrong with him, but because she knew her father’s wishes, that he wanted to harm David [...] Michal, on the hand, was sure she could save him, and therefore she happily agreed.<sup>8</sup>*

Ishodad describes Merab as a woman of her own mind, who made a sensible decision when considering her father’s designs and behavior. In his view, Merab took a

<sup>6</sup> Quotations from the Bible are based on NIV translation: Leslie CARLSON et al., eds, *New International Version*, New York, Zondervan, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Ms. SP RNL EVR ARAB I 1313 (F56141 in the National Library of Israel), pp. 184b-5a.

<sup>8</sup> Išo’dad, *Commentaire d’Išo’dad de Merv sur l’Ancien Testament : III Livre des Sessions* (ed. Ceslas Van den Eynde, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 230), Louvain, Peeters, 1963, p. 59.



calculated choice and decided not to marry David, since it was not worth the trouble of conflicting at some stage with her father or her husband. It was better to stay out of it. Her sister, Michal, in contrast, took the opposite decision in his view, by agreeing to the marriage, since she believed (possibly wrongly) that she could overcome the circumstances of her father's alienation towards David. It is likely that Christian lore and norms, which generally gave higher status to woman than did Muslim and Jewish ones, explain the disparity between these two medieval interpreters. Yefet judged that a prospective young bride like Merab had no rights of her own in such matters. She was thus considered her father's "property," in his view, legally and socially, right up to the moment of her wedding party. A close reading of the biblical text seems, alas, to support Yefet's view. In other biblical descriptions of wedlock, similar patriarchal standards are reflected: In Jacob's wedding night Rachel is substituted by her sister, Lea, and is completely in the hands of her devious father Laban (see Genesis 29:22-23). The daughters have no say in the matter, as they themselves confess later on in the narrative (see Genesis 31:14-15).<sup>9</sup> In light of Yefet's interpretation of Merab's marriage, his view of Michal's marriage is especially significant. The biblical narrative emphasizes Michal "fell in love with/loves" David (1 Samuel 18:20), in fact, the only woman described as actively loving a man in the Hebrew Bible, apart from the bride in the Song of Songs. Her father, Saul, being "notified" of her affections decides to give her to David in marriage, as part of his wider plan to trick David (vss. 21-2). However, the Hebrew Bible does not explain how Michal met David, and how she informed her father of her feelings. Yefet, as he is sometimes wont to do, fills in the gaps in the narrative mainly through contextual and grammatical reconstruction, sometimes also with rare psychological insight.<sup>10</sup> Thus he explains in his commentary on 1 Samuel 18:20:

.....

<sup>9</sup> Apart from the case of Rachel, another biblical parallel is the story of Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman of Timna, who is eventually given to another man after a period of marriage to Samson, and whose father offers to substitute her by her younger sister, when Samson returns to enquire over her (see Judges 14-5; especially 14:20-15:3). Yefet does not refer to these analogies in his commentary on our story, yet they are likely to have informed his "historicizing" reading of the events described in regard to Meirab. In all three cases the women are not asked of their opinion in the matter nor is their opinion conveyed in the narrative. Critical editions of Yefet's works on Genesis, Judges and Chronicles are in preparation and may cast further light on their analogues interpretive reading. As part of his Karaite stance, Yefet considered all 24 books of the Hebrew Bible to be the sole source of divine revelation, in which all texts are equally valued for the sake of legal and non-legal interpretation. Often he based himself on other inner-biblical data, from which he inferred. Sometimes he mentions this in passing, though we have not come across such cohesive inner-referencing in his work on Samuel. According to Yair ZORAN, Yefet indeed expands sometimes and refers back to his reasoning on Samuel when commenting on Chronicles, parts of which he is preparing for publication.

<sup>10</sup> For Yefet's technique of filling gaps in biblical narrative, see: Daniel FRANK, "The Limits of Karaite Scripturalism," in Meir BAR ASHER et al, eds, *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies Presented to Haggai Ben Shammai*, Jerusalem, Yad Ben Zvi, 2007, p. 47; Meira POLLIACK, "The Unseen Joints of the Text: On the Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Concept of Elision (*ikhtišār*) and its Gap-filling Functions in Biblical Interpretation," in Athalia BRENNER and Frank H. POLAK, eds, *Words, Ideas, Worlds in the Hebrew Bible: The Yairah Amit Festschrift*, Sheffield, Phoenix Press, 2012, pp. 183-5.

*There is no mention, with regard to Merab, that she loved David and desired him, as the Bible mentions with regard to Michal. It seems that Michal had heard what happened with her sister, and she saw David's success and his commendable qualities. When she was told that her sister was given to Adriel, she began to hint that David is more desirable to her than other (potential grooms), and that it is a great privilege to be with him. Michal was a virgin, [confined] to her home, and those who heard her words knew that she loves and desires him, and they informed Saul about this, and he was satisfied with it, because a marriage between David and Michal would serve his purpose.<sup>11</sup>*

Yefet fills in the gaps in the narrative by expanding it as a kind of miniature romance. In accordance with the social norms of his times, Yefet imagines that Michal was physically confined to her father's house, and that she could not express her wishes directly in her father's ears. Therefore, when trying to understand how Michal could have met David and fallen in love with him, without actually leaving her precincts, he posits that there was a lot of discussion about David in Saul's home. Word of Saul's plan to marry David with Merab, and hearing so much of David's fine qualities, made Michal fall in love with him. Again, in accordance with the social norms of his time, Yefet was sure that a young princess like Michal would not dare to approach her father and say explicitly that she loves a man, nor leave her house to meet a potential suitor or form a premarital liaison with him. Therefore, he assumes that Michal sang David's praises in front of the people of Saul's household, until it was obvious to everyone that she was in love with him, and even her father got word of it. In biblical narrative, however, there are examples of young women who act to some degree on their own accord (see, for instance, the stories of Rebecca (Gen 24) and Dinah (Gen 34), and also the female heroine in the Song of Songs). It seems that Yefet is going out of his way, in this case, in order to protect Michal's reputation and chastity. Michal also, cheats her father later on, though only after her marriage, when she claims David is asleep in bed in order to protect him (see 1 Samuel 19:13, and *cf.* Rachel's similar deceit of her father in Gen 31:34). This suggests that Yefet's explanation of her falling in love with David is not only because he believed that Michal was confined by the patriarchal social structure that also existed in Yefet's own time. It may result from his wish to defend her character (and David's), through emphasizing there were no "improper" advances before matrimony. It seems that the implications of an unauthorized love affair are no less undermining of David's character, in this case, than of Michal's, since David's "approach" to women is criticized in the Bible itself (including married ones).<sup>12</sup> It may

<sup>11</sup> Ms. EVR ARAB I 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 185a.

<sup>12</sup> *Cf.* Diana LIPTON and Meira POLLIACK, "Our Mother, Our Queen: Bathsheba through Early Jewish, Christian and Muslim Eyes," in Marzena ZAWANOWSKA and Mateusz WILK, eds, *The Character of David in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Warrior, Poet, Prophet and King*, Leiden, Brill, 2021, pp. 417-53. Yefet appears to defend Bathsheba to the utmost, partly in order to exonerate Solomon, at least via Bathsheba's innocence, from a rather complicated, and stained, parentage (see further in the following). The Muslim framing of David as Prophet no doubt also affected Yefet's attempt to enhance the positive qualities of the women in his life. See: Arye ZOREF, "The Psalms Attributed to David in Karaite Judeo-Arabic Bible Commentaries: Exegetic and Interreligious Aspects," in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2022 (forthcoming).

be therefore that Yefet is defending him through emphasizing Michal's chasteness. Nevertheless, his close reading of the biblical portrayal of Michal's character may also have informed his above interpretation. Throughout the narrative Yefet highlights the layered biblical portrayal of Michal as a smart and determined woman, one who is able to get her own way, even when confined by restricting social norms, and even though her stamina (as a female heroine) is constantly being curbed.<sup>13</sup>

Modern Bible critics often reflect on Michal's relationship with David as a "one-sided relationship." They stress the rare biblical emphasis on "Michal loved David" (see above) whereas David is described, contrastively, as one who saw Michal as a tool in his quest for political power.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, Yefet interprets the relationship as two-sided, and does not regard David as instrumental in this case, though he is quite critical of David in some of his other narrative readings (see further below). Yefet describes David as longing for Michal during his years of exile among the Philistines, and during the first years of his reign in Hebron. Accordingly, in his view, David was aware that Saul and his sons would not let him get in touch with Michal, and therefore he did not even try, until an opportunity presented itself, when Abner approached him and asked for his allegiance. Yefet's reasoning is clearly possible, when considering the wider narrative context of 2 Samuel 3:13, as he further explains:

*I demand one thing of you: [the text/the biblical narrator] mentioned [specifically] what he (David) demanded. He wanted him (Abner) to send Michal the daughter of Saul to him. In my opinion, this proves David's longing for [Arabic: yadullu alā taḥarruq] Michal, because he could have been absolved [for not requiring to get her back] since he was in exile [a long time] and could not contact her. However, when Abner sent him a message he found an opening and was able [to contact her and get her back].<sup>15</sup>*

If Michal and David cared for each other so much, how should we explain her long (and seemingly, positive) relationship with Palti son of Laish, who married her after David has escaped Saul? Moreover, why did David take Michal from Palti, when David could not marry her again, since marrying a woman for the second time after she had been married to another man is forbidden, according to biblical law (Deuteronomy 24:4)? Yefet supplies two explanations for these interpretive cruxes in his commentary on 2 Samuel 3:16:

.....  
<sup>13</sup> Similarly to Rachel. Several modern studies have emphasized the analogies between these two female figures, see Jan P. FOKKELMAN, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 274-6. Yefet, however, does not draw attention to the inner-biblical analogy as far as we have been able to ascertain.

<sup>14</sup> See Chaya SHRAGA BEN AYUN, *David's Wives: Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, Mofet Institute, 2005, p. 29. Julia Michelle HOGAN, *David's Women: A Critical Comparison of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar* (M.A. Thesis), University of Birmingham, 2013, p. 55. Lilian KLEIN, "Michal the Barren Wife," in *From Deborah to Ester: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 2003, pp. 85-9.

<sup>15</sup> Ms. SP IOS C 39 (F69289 in NLI), p. 115b.

*The scholars are disputed how to interpret her episode [in connection to Palti]: Some interpreters say that Saul had done this [gave Michal to Palti], and neither Michal nor Palti asked for it, but they could not disobey Saul. Palti and Michal did not have intercourse as man and a wife, and this situation had prevailed for all these years [in which she was separated from David], he did not drive her out of his home and she did not demand him to let her go, especially since David refrained from demanding that she would be sent back to him. [...] Other scholars say that Saul did this since David's time in exile became long-drawn-out and he (David) did not provide for her livelihood and needs [as a husband ought]. The court appointed a custodian [who issued her a divorce] on David's behalf, and Paltiel married her and it this marriage was valid. [In this case] David did not bring her back to his house in order that she return to be his [lawful] wife, but because it is not permissible that a King's [former] wife lie in the bosom of another man. [...] I tend towards the first explanation, because this our method, namely, that it generates much less difficulties than the second.<sup>16</sup>*

The first explanation presented by Yefet has some background in Jewish Midrash literature.<sup>17</sup> The discussion as a whole, however, and especially the second explanation, is probably based on Syriac sources of a scholastic genre also known as “questions and answers on biblical matters,” or Arabic adaptations of such literature<sup>18</sup>. A resonant passage appears in Ishodad's Syriac commentary on Samuel, where he too offers two explanations as to why David could remarry Michal. The first is that she did not go to Palti's home willingly, and therefore could not be considered as formally married to him. The second is that she was formally married to Palti and David did not want her in his home as a wife, but had to return her since a king's wife cannot be in another man's home.<sup>19</sup> These two explanations, given by Ishodad and by Yefet respectively reflect two basic answers, which fill in the gap regarding the nature of the relationship between David and Michal. The first explanation is more straightforward (which is what Yefet means by “less difficult”), building on the assumption that David and Michal continued their emotional and legal attachment as a married couple through the years he was absent, and Michal remained faithful to him, to the best of her ability. The second explanation is more subversive in that it builds on the assumption that David and Michal were somehow legally divorced (a fact not mentioned in the narrative), and suddenly David intervened and took her back from her lawful husband,

<sup>16</sup> . Ms. IOS c 39, *op. cit.*, pp. 115b-6a.

<sup>17</sup> See: Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 2b, 19b.

<sup>18</sup> On this Syriac genre, and its possible contacts with similar genres in Judeo Arabic literature, see: David SKLARE, “Ninth-Century Judeo-Arabic Texts of Biblical Questions and Answers,” in Miriam LINDGREN HJÄLM, ed., *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 117-9.

<sup>19</sup> Išo'dad, *Commentaire d'Išo'dad, op. cit.*, p. 77. Van Den Eynde, the editor of Išo'dad's commentary, pointed out in his notes to the translation that a similar paragraph can be found in a collection of questions and answers on the bible, written by the Syriac author Išo' Bar Nun (ix<sup>th</sup> century). See: Išo'dad, *Commentaire d'Išo'dad, op. cit.*, p. 92 (translation section).

for political reasons (which again are not stated in the text).<sup>20</sup> Yefet prefers the first explanation, not only because it gives more credit to both characters, but also because it requires less interpolations into the text. In any event it is consistent with his understanding of Michal as a faithful wife in his interpretation of other sections of the truncated narrative on her and David, as we shall see in what follows.

Yefet's positive attitude toward Michal, as well as his understanding that she was confined by social norms similar to those he knew from Islamic (and Jewish Arab) society, is also well attested in his commentary on the last scene of the David and Michal "romance," wherein Michal expresses what is usually interpreted as sardonic contempt for David (2 Samuel 6:16-23). In Yefet's original view, this sealing scene of the couple's troubled relationship suggests it ends on a positive note. Yefet first suggests that Michal did not actually go out of her home in order to see the Ark entering Jerusalem, even though other women in Jerusalem did so. Michal, as a princess, a woman from the upper class of society, simply could not do so, as he explains when he comments on 2 Samuel 6:16: "Michal did not go out with the crowd, but stayed in her room [Arabic: *kānat mukhaddarah*], as was customary for the daughters of kings and their wives."<sup>21</sup> In his view, this is the reason why Michal is described as watching David through the window.

In some feminist readings of this episode, the biblical image of Michal (and that of other females such as Sisra's mother, see for instance Judges 5:28), passively observing male heroes (in this case David) through a window, serves as a visual representation and wider symbol of female subjection to patriarchal social norms. Similarly perhaps to the depiction of females as enclosed in castles and observing from up high in medieval knight ballades, biblical women are confined to "watching" male activity, yet cannot partake in it. Thus, they are barred from an active and empowering social and gender role. In the modern tradition of the feminist school of biblical interpretation, Cheryl Exum interestingly suggests that the window in our episode also represents the narrow viewpoint through which the reader is expected to regard female figures in biblical narrative, and so view woman's restricted place in society, through a shutter. The window also symbolizes the woman's actual physical confinement to her home, where she can look out on the accomplishments of men, but not participate in them.<sup>22</sup> Yefet, though highly sensitive to the poetic and literary aspects of the biblical text, does not recognize the connection between the window motif and women's standing in society, probably due to his own endorsement of female gender role. Nevertheless, he does not frame the scene as a sower one, as do many ancient and medieval commentators. Rather, pursuing his initial understanding of

<sup>20</sup> This explanation is also adopted by some modern scholars, based on a comparison with the laws of ancient Mesopotamia. See: Zafrira BEN BARAK, "The Legal Background to the Restoration of Michal to David," in John Adney EMERTON, ed., *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament*, Leiden, Brill, 1979, pp. 15-29, 22-4.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. I. Elisha 17 (F42629 in NLI, pages are not numbered).

<sup>22</sup> Jo Cheryl EXUM, "Michal: The Whole Story," in *Fragmented Women: Feminist (sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives*, Sheffield, T&T Clark, 1993, p. 47.

David and Michal's affectionate relationship, Yefet explains Michal's motivation in scolding David, as a loving and protective gesture on her part, even though she had been estranged from him for years. She disapproved of David's frivolous behavior in front of the ark, not because she resented David, but to the contrary, because she was worried that it might harm his public image. Her political savvy in this respect, again, issued from her genteel background and rearing in Saul's home, as Yefet further elaborates in his commentary on 2 Samuel 6:20 [Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today" ...]:

*She said these things because she was concerned over David's honor, [and also] since she was used to her father's manner [of behavior], he [Saul] always conducted himself with gravity, and never smiled, not to mention laughing. Therefore, she said: 'how the king of Israel has distinguished himself today ...'. She meant, on such a significant day and in front of such an important crowd, you should have conducted yourself with seriousness, and not have behaved as you did.<sup>23</sup> David felt that she was comparing him with her father [Saul] and found him lacking. It did not go down well with him. When David heard what she said, he understood what she had meant and answered her appropriately, though his words carried a biting tone [Arabic: shay' min al-lad'], for he said: [vs 21] "It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father [or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel]." Yet he mentioned this [her father's rejection] also for a reason, which he explains later [in the verse: "I will celebrate before the Lord"]. He told her: you want me to conduct myself with weightiness, as your father did when he was standing in front of a crowd, yet you do not distinguish between two different situations. The current time [bringing the Ark into Jerusalem] is a time for worshipping the Lord, and so I wish to stand before him [in worship] as a male or female slave [...]. He mentioned Saul and his family in order to convey a message to her [as follows]: the Lord has chosen me instead of your father because he knew that I'm humble and meek. Besides, my position and standing has become stronger than those of your father, and therefore I must recognize [God's] grace and dance and frolic in front of his ark, as men-slaves and women slaves do in front of their masters. He silenced her with these words.<sup>24</sup>*

The famous final exchange of words between Michal and David, from a literary perspective, one of the most powerfully fashioned and charged emulations of "live discourse" in the Hebrew Bible, ended, at least according to Yefet's interpretation, with David silencing Michal's criticism by rational argumentation, and not by personal humiliation. Nonetheless, Yefet recognizes there was a bit of that too. The importance of rational argumentation in Kalam works with which the Jerusalem Karaites were

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<sup>23</sup> Ms. I. Elisha 17, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Ms. I. Elisha 17, *op. cit.*

well acquainted and which they espoused may have been one of the reasons for Yefet's more genteel reading of David's answer in this passage.<sup>25</sup> An apologetic motive is also undoubtedly detected in Yefet's need to mold David's character as less coarse and blunt, not only in respect of his behavior towards his wife, but also in regard to his general indecent conduct, as portrayed in the passage, even if only through the eyes of a princess. Her view of his behavior is expressed in no uncertain terms in the latter part of vs. 21 ["going around half-naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would"], a section of the dialogue on which Yefet keeps fairly quiet. The apologetic approach, nevertheless, does not take away from Yefet's original and convincing reading of the dialogue, as David's sincere attempt to offer a coherent explanation of his apparently incongruous behavior, following Michal's heartfelt and corrective attempt to draw attention to his misconduct, due to her personal knowledge of the affairs of state, as the former king's daughter. This reading is also consistent with his continuous understanding of the reciprocal love and mental equilibrium between these two characters in other episodes, which we discussed above. It is also consistent with Yefet's reading of the last verse in the current episode, which appears as the narrator's footnote to the dialogue, in 2 Samuel 6:23: "Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death," with no explanation. Why did not Michal have a child? Many commentators have suggested this was because David fully rejected her after the above exchange, denying her conjugal rights.<sup>26</sup> Yefet, however, offers two explanations:

*Some say that the words "had no children" actually mean that he did not have intercourse with her after he got angry with her because of what she said, and that these words ["had no children"] should not be understood literally [but as a euphemism]. This is not true, because [the biblical text/narrator] could have phrased it "he did not come to her," or "he did not know her," or other expressions that are used for this purpose [in describing sexual intercourse]. Others say that God did not bless her with a child from him, in order that there will be no branch of Saul's descendants amongst David's descendants. It seems that she died before David.<sup>27</sup>*

The second, unusual, explanation continues Yefet's basic assumption that the couple's love was genuine and mutual, interpreting Michal's lack of offspring from David as providential. It also serves to explain David's suspected cruelty, in that after the elimination of Saul's entire family, more or less, he also prevented the possibility of a joint heir to both kings (and royal families) from sitting on the throne. Since the royal

<sup>25</sup> On Kalam and Karaism see: David SKLARE, "Levi ben Yefet and his Kitāb al-Ni'ma: Selected Texts," in Camila ADANG, Sabine SCHMIDTKE, and David. SKLARE, eds, *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2017, pp. 157-216.

<sup>26</sup> This interpretation can be found in Gersonides' commentary (Provence, XIII<sup>th</sup> century) on this verse: "She did not have a child because David did not love her in the same manner after this event." However, it is obvious from Yefet's words on the subject that he was familiar with this line of interpretation, but rejected it.

<sup>27</sup> Ms. I. Elisha 17, *op. cit.*

line continues also through the females, this may well have been the right political decision on David's part, since any heir of Michal's would have been considered, effectively, an heir to the house of Saul.<sup>28</sup> Yet, the political unrest that fermented later on, perhaps even leading to the tearing of David's kingship into two, Israel and Judah, after the death of Solomon, is attested in the book of Kings, and may have resulted from the general lack of public legitimacy to the Davidic line, and bitterness over the ousting of the house of Saul. Unfortunately, Yefet does not elaborate much on his wider reasoning in this respect.<sup>29</sup> In our view this second explanation which he attributes to "others" [Arabic: *wa-qīlā*] is probably based on Syriac sources or influenced by them. Ishodad of Merw, in his commentary on this verse, presents two explanations as to why Michal had no children: firstly, as punishment for her voiced contempt of David; secondly, because if Michal had a son, he would have become king after David, and that would mean that that kingship of Israel would have returned, effectively, to Saul's royal family line, yet God had declared that this line should discontinue (see 1 Samuel 15:24, 28:17).<sup>30</sup> There still appears to be a significant difference between the two commentators, Christian and Jewish-Karaite, respectively. In Ishodad's view, David refrained from sexual intercourse with Michal even before the ark event, because she had lived with another man (Palti). In addition, he suggests that Michal did not have a child with David, so that the kingship would not return to Saul's house. He does not state explicitly that God prevented the pregnancy, though he may have assumed this. The two options are not dependent on each other. They represent separate lines of reasoning as to why Michal did not have a child until her death. In Yefet's view, David continued to have conjugal relations with Michal, and God prevented the pregnancy, yet for the same reason noted by Ishodad, namely, to complete His rejection of the house of Saul. In any event, Yefet rejects the possibility that David willingly refrained from intercourse with Michal after the incident of the Ark. He pursues a consistent line of interpretation throughout their truncated narrative, namely, that the mutual love and affection between David and Michal continued until the end of Michal's life. This is why he suggests, in the end of the above passage, that she may have died before David. This is perhaps a third option, namely, that the couple had not enough time to bring children into the world. In any event, Yefet does not allow for the possibility that Michal was punished (to use Ishodad's terminology in Syriac: *'al d-bazaḥat*, "by reason of her contempt") either by God or by David himself for her so-called disrespect. In the above comment he mentions David may have been "angered" with her (Arabic: *al-tawajud 'alayhi*), yet rejects this possibility. Earlier in the passage, Yefet also elaborates, by use of an extended dialogue he puts in David's mouth (*sic!*), on Michal's reaction. Through David's wording, he shifts the blame for her point of view,

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<sup>28</sup> On "house" as a semantic and wider cognitive frame in the book of Samuel see Frank H. POLAK, "David's Not So Steadfast House: Frame Semantics and Overarching Patterns in the David Tales and Beyond." See also Walter DIETRICH, ed., in cooperation with Cynthia EDENBURG and Philippe HUGO, *The Books of Samuel: Stories-History-Reception History*, Leuven, Peeters, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Yefet may have elaborated on the subject in his commentary on 1 Chronicles 15:29, yet his work on Chronicles has not yet been edited and requires further manuscript consultation. See note 9 above. Once available, Yefet's understanding of these two parallel biblical texts will shed more light on the matter.

<sup>30</sup> Išo'dad, "Commentaire d'Iso'dad", *op. cit.*, p. 77.



psychologically at least, to her relationship with her father, Saul, and her internalization of his personality traits (or “disorders”), claiming she was not used to seeing him “smile and definitely not laugh” (Arabic: *wa-lā yabtasim faḍlan ‘an al-ḍaḥk.*) This insight into Michal’s rearing as princess by a depressed (mentally-ill, as described in the Bible) father illuminates the last episode of her exchange with David in a highly sensitive reading of her character. It certainly shifts the motive for her criticism of David onto her father’s behavior, at the same time serving as an (apologetic) explanation for David’s ungentlemanly remark on Saul. Moreover, Yefet’s final comment on the possibility that Michal had no child because she died before David (possibly, while still young), also asserts his view that her lack of progeny was not in any way through any fault of her own, or David’s, but rather, providential.<sup>31</sup>

In summary: Yefet depicts Michal, daughter of Saul, as an intelligent and active woman, restricted and hampered by social norms, and possibly also by a polygamous society, and problematic father figure. In his view, Michal was wise and willful enough to have prevailed within these norms, society and circumstances. In some respects, his approach is similar to that of modern Bible critics who see in Michal a portrait of an Israelite princess oppressed by biblical patriarchy at large. Though he does not share their feminist or gender-informed methods of analysis, Yefet endorses Michal’s essential biblical portrayal as a strong, courageous and opinionated woman, whose individuality is left bruised by the male court (and beyond it). In the eyes of modern critics, this intolerance is partly the reason why Michal’s “one-sided” love affair with David was bitter and ended in personal tragedy. Yefet, however, while highlighting Michal’s independent-mindedness, does not read her story as leading to a bitter life or tragic fate, at least not as modern scholars would frame it. He considers her relationship with David to have been a true and profound one, and no less importantly, one based on mutual consent, respect and regard, even in the most difficult times. Despite considerable constraints and difficult circumstances, he insists this relationship continued until the end of Michal’s life. It seems to us that the main incentive behind such a relatively egalitarian portrayal of this love affair and marriage lies primarily in Yefet’s Karaite sectarian milieu, which somewhat improved the legal rights of Karaite women, in comparison to Rabbinic law, but perhaps more to the point, tried to elevate their image as spiritual and educational models.<sup>32</sup> This type of elevation of the female image does not go unnoticed as a consistent streak in Yefet’s exegesis, which offers relatively positive and rather unusual readings into the psyche and

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<sup>31</sup> There is some inconsistency in the Bible over Michal’s progeny. In 2 Samuel 21:8 it is mentioned that Michal had five sons she bore with Adriel son of Barzilai, who were handed over to the Gibeonites, by David, and killed. A textual transmission error may explain this inconsistency since Adriel was the man to which Michal’s sister Merab, was given in marriage (see above). In his comment on this verse Yefet adopts an explanation that can be found in Midrash literature (Bavli Sanhedrin 19b), according to which these five sons were actually the children of Merab, but since he (and the Midrash) cannot accept the biblical text is faulty, Yefet suggests, Michal raised them, and therefore they were considered her sons. See: Ms. NY JTS 3386 (F32071 in NLI), p. 371a. This helps in “harmonizing” the apparent contradiction with the statement that she had not child at all, yet further deepens David’s contrastive characterization as the cruel monarch, due to her attachment to these children, and the evident blood on the King’s hands, which is a constant theme in the biblical David Saga.

<sup>32</sup> See notes 2-5 above.

motives of quite a few female characters in the Hebrew Bible/OT. The wider Christian and Islamic influences on these readings should be taken into consideration, from a gender perspective. The above comparison with Ishodad of Merw's commentary suggests Christian sources may have been feeding into Yefet's focus on scriptural female characters. After all, Mary as mother of Jesus would be a powerful symbol with which to contend in the literary and public spheres of which he was familiar.<sup>33</sup> Another possibility, which also needs to be studied in depth in the future, are the models of Muhammad's wives, already given place in the Qur'an, and especially developed in the wider Islamic tradition. In general, The Prophet's wives are portrayed in Islamic tradition from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward as chaste women who stay within the confines of their homes. Nevertheless, they also figure prominently as supportive and instrumental in spreading the new faith, already in the Qur'an, from which derives their later prefix as "Mothers of the Believers."<sup>34</sup> As such, they serve a foundational role in Islamic religion, which has some parallel with the biblical matriarchs' place in the Hebrew Bible and in early Judaism. This parallel may have particularly appealed to the medieval Karaites, who would have sought to expand the number of female characters that could be regarded as religious and spiritual models in Judaism, beyond those of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Lea and perhaps Ruth and Esther as well. David, as a distinctly political figure of a warrior king, and his wives, who also had a more political role, in furthering the Israelite Kingdom, would have served as a more suitable analogy to Muhammad and his wives, than Abraham or Moses. In addition, the stories about David's wives/women are without doubt the most elaborate in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>35</sup> Jews living in medieval Jerusalem, as did many of the Karaites, under Islamic rule, would have been well aware of these "competing" Christian and Islamic feminine exemplars. They may have wanted to offer Jewish women who chose to join the Karaite movement a more empowering sense of cultural modelling and valor than was available in traditional Rabbinic circles of their time. Systematic biblical exegesis became therefore a primary method of endorsing a new gender agenda, even while Karaite legal thinking on the rights of women remained, in practice, conservative, possibly due to its dependency on biblical derivation. Nevertheless, on the whole, it was more lenient towards women in various aspects of interpreting biblical law (such as divorce, marriage and inheritance rights), matters which still await a proper

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<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, Stephen J. SHOEMAKER, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016. This work has been recognized as a milestone in revealing the vital role played by Marian devotion in early Christianity, and has also drawn attention to female role modelling through the beliefs surrounding the subject of Mary, Mother of God. As regards the western tradition cf. also Miri RUBIN, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

<sup>34</sup> See Qur'an 33:6: "The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves, and his wives are (as) their mothers." The term is traditionally applied to all of Muhammad's thirteen wives.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Ghassan ASCHA. "The 'Mothers of the Believers': Stereotypes of the Prophet Muhammad's Wives," in H.G. KIPPENBERG and E.T. LAWSON, eds, *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, Leiden, Brill, 1995, pp. 91-96. For an interesting attempt to challenge patriarchal readings of the Qur'an, see Asma BARLAS, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 2002.

diachronic history in research, as do so many gender issues in the study of the three religions.<sup>36</sup>

## Abigail: A mature woman's reasoning – marriage and society

So far we have discussed Yefet's unravelling of the character of Michal, and to a certain extent, that of her sister, Merab, to which she is contrastively fashioned in the David narrative. Contrast is one of the major tools in biblical characterization, as has been noted in various studies on the Bible as literature.<sup>37</sup> Intelligence (and reason) is clearly one of Michal's attributes in Yefet's view, and this quality is even more central to his understanding of Abigail. The fact that Yefet focuses on this attribute in exegeting biblical female characters (more than on physical appearance or other aspects described in the biblical text) is telling of his Karaite identity, in that rational thinking (in its universal kalam sense of "aql") is clearly celebrated by this movement from its incipience.<sup>38</sup> As regards Abigail's character, a woman who is eventually widowed and then consents to marry David, the contrastive fashioning is achieved vis-a-vis her unworthy and vile husband (Nabal) and to a certain extent vis-a-vis the rash and impulsive usurper king David.<sup>39</sup> Yefet praises Abigail's wisdom and courage, by which she saved her husband and her servants from being killed, and David from committing murder. Thus he reflects on 1 Samuel 25:35 [Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request"]:

<sup>36</sup> Cf. SASSON, "Gender Equality," *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63. Rebecca JEFFERSON, "Genizah Marriage Contracts: Contrasting Biblical Law and Halakhah with Mediaeval Practice," in Deborah ROOKE, ed., *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, Sheffield, Phoenix Press, 2007, pp. 162-9. Phillip I. LIEBERMAN, "Partnership, Equity, and Traditional Jewish Marriage," in Harry Fox and Tirzah MEACHAM eds, *Jewish Law Association Studies XXVIII - The Jewish Family*, Atlanta, Scholar Press, 2019, pp. 73-93.

<sup>37</sup> See: Frank H. POLAK, *Biblical Narrative: Aspects of Art and Design* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, Mosad Bialik, 1994, pp. 256-64. Cf. also Frank H. POLAK. "The Circumstantial Clause as Trigger: From Syntax to Discourse and Plot Structure in Biblical Narrative," in B. ISAKSSON and M. PERSSON, eds, *Strategies in Clause Linking in Semitic Languages*, Wiesbaden, 2014, pp. 191-203. Frank H. POLAK, "Biblical Parataxis in Light of the Judeo-Arabic Translations of Sa'adia Gaon and Yefet ben 'Eli," (Hebrew), in Michael RYZHIK, ed., *Studies in Biblical Hebrew*, Jerusalem, The Academy of Hebrew Language, 2020, pp. 140-57. Yefet's awareness of contrast as a characterization tool has been discussed at length in Sivan Nir's PhD Thesis, see: Sivan Nir, *The Development of the Literary Character from Late Midrash Literature to Medieval Exegesis, as exemplified in the Characters of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther* (PhD Thesis; Tel Aviv University, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Haggai BEN SHAMMAI, "Major trends in Karaite philosophy and polemics in the tenth and eleventh centuries," in Meira POLLIAK, ed., *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 339-362; SKLARE, "Levi ben Yefet," *op. cit.*, pp. 157-60.

<sup>39</sup> See especially in the exposition to the story, 1 Samuel 25:3: "His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings – he was a Calebite." In Hebrew, *kalbi*: he adjective may refer not only to his pedigree as offspring of the hero Kaleb ben Yefuneh [see: Numbers 13:6, 13:30], but also to Nabal's nature, "doglike." As to the private name Nabal, the nominal form in biblical Hebrew also means "villain, scoundrel," see: John DECKER, "Characterization in the Hebrew Bible: Nabal as a Test Case," in *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, vol. 26, 2016, no. 3, pp. 313-20.

*About such acts the wise man said: “wisdom is better than might [...] wisdom is better than weapons of war” (Ecclesiastes 9:16-18). Had it not been for her wisdom and counsel (ʿaqliha wa-tadbiriha) a disaster would have come over Nabal and his family and the rest of his entourage, and [bad things] would have happened to David. Therefore, what she did was beneficiary in our world and also in the hereafter (nafʿ dunyā wa-ukhrā)<sup>40</sup>.*

Yefet's empowering reading of Abigail's high moral motive is made evident when compared to some early and medieval Rabbinic sources which suggest that Abigail was acting out of a wish to seduce David, and that she hinted to him that she would like to be his wife, even before Nabal's death.<sup>41</sup> Yefet rejects this notion, which frames her character, very much in gendered terms, as that of a manipulative and divisive woman. So he emphasizes in his commentary on her words in 1 Samuel 25:31 [“My lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”]:

*Later [in the verse] she said: “remember your servant.” There are many ways to explain this. Some commentators say that when she said: “remember your servant,” she [actually] meant: “marry me.” I think that this interpretation is unlikely (Arab.: wa-huwa ʿindī baʿīd). Another explanation is that she asked him to take care of her, because she knew that Nabal is going to perish, and then her [financial] status will be at risk. This is a likely explanation (Arab.: wa-huwa qawl qarīb). Another explanation is that she said: when you become king, and this event will not have burdened you and weighed heavy on your heart, then you will remember your servant, and thank her and pray for her<sup>42</sup>.*

In respect of David's character and motivation, Yefet pursues his general (apologetic) interpretive policy of “improving” upon David's qualities whenever he is able to justify this strategy in the literal-contextual sense of the narrative. He explains that David wanted to marry Abigail because he recognized her fine qualities. What is more important, however, is that he felt sorry that such a worthy woman as Abigail should be married to such an unworthy husband as Nabal. Therefore, when he heard that her husband had died, he felt the need to compensate her, by offering her a worthier husband (at least in his own eyes, it seems), i.e. himself. Thus he comments on 1 Samuel 25:39 [When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head.”]:

<sup>40</sup> Ms. IOS c 39, *op. cit.*, p. 56b.

<sup>41</sup> This opinion is found, for instance, in Midrash literature. See: Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 2:3.

<sup>42</sup> Ms. IOS c 39, *op. cit.*, p. 56a.

*He (David) sent people to ask her hand in marriage for two reasons. Firstly, he desired her because she was a woman of valor (Heb. eshet hayyil).<sup>43</sup> Secondly, in his [David's] opinion, she deserved to be his wife after she had been Nabal's wife, and Nabal was unworthy of her, while she was worthy of David (Arab. wa-lam nabal yustahiliha wa-kānat mustahilah li-Dawid)<sup>44</sup>.*

While Michal and David's relationship is depicted by Yefet as a young lovers' romance, he mentions no such emotions when describing the liaison between the more middle-aged David and Abigail. This appears a cerebral affair from the start: David chose Abigail because he admired her intelligence, and to a certain extent considered her of equal moral and other qualities to himself. This is why he believed that her marriage to Nabal was an injustice, something that society (and he as a king) are obliged to rectify. He genuinely considered her, therefore, as one who deserves to be compensated by marrying a man worthy of her. In Yefet's view this marriage was not based on love or even mutual attraction (a matter hinted in the biblical narrative itself, as when Abigail's beauty is described, in 1 Samuel 25:3, see above), but on a social and moral bond. The marriage was a calculated step on David's part, meant to restore a morally-based (and to some extent "equal" or at least balanced) form of gendered social order, which had been jeopardized by the imbalance between an unworthy husband and a worthy wife in Abigail's previously unsuccessful marriage. In his unique understanding of this narrative we consider Yefet to have been influenced by concepts of Islamic law, of which he was obviously well-aware. According to Islamic law, one of the legal conditions for marriage is that there should exist *kafā'a* (meaning: worthiness; mutual value) between the husband and wife. Usually, this meant that they should be of the same social and economic background and status. According to most Islamic scholars, this is especially required of women, but not necessarily of men. In other words, a man may marry a woman of lower status, but a woman should not marry a man of lower status, because this tarnishes her honor and that of her family. Most Islamic scholars interpret *kafā'a* as comparable social status (i.e. lineage, wealth, profession and so on). However, some Islamic scholars also stressed that such status ought to be assessed by one determining factor only: religious piety.<sup>45</sup> Yefet, in his commentary on Proverbs 18:22, also insists that husband and wife should be of the same status (Arab.: *al-rajul wa-al-mar'ā qarībīna [...] fī-l-ḥasab wa-l-nasab*).<sup>46</sup> In light of the above, it seems likely that Yefet framed the David and Abigail liaison in terms known to him from his present social milieu, as a marriage between an intelligent and righteous woman who finally found her proper *kafā'a* in David. Her earlier marriage to a vile and foolish man like

<sup>43</sup> See Proverbs 31:10; cf. SASSON, "Gender Equality," *op. cit.*, p. 55; Michael WECHSLER, "The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli on Proverbs 31:10-31," in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 54, 2003, no. 2, pp. 283-310; Michael WECHSLER, "The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli on Proverbs 31:1-9," in *Revue des études juives*, vol. 161, 2002, no. 3-4, pp. 393-409.

<sup>44</sup> Ms. IOS c 39, *op. cit.*, p. 58a.

<sup>45</sup> See Huda GHAITHAN, "Efficiency in Marriage in Islamic Jurisprudence and Jordanian Personal Status Law," in *An-Najah Journal of Humanities*, vol. 29, 2015, no. 7, pp. 442-7.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. SASSON, "Gender Equality," *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Nabal was not just a misfortune, but a serious injury to Abigail's honor, that of her family, and to social order in general. Therefore, he considered such an injury might have been recognized by King David, who also had the power to rectify it by offering her his hand in marriage. Clearly this interesting interpretation brings out the best in both David and Abigail. The apologetic undertone cannot be missed, in that the gaps in the story leave other, less moral avenues, through which it may be interpreted, particularly as a critique of David's opportunism, or as yet another portrayal of a divisive female, for which the Hebrew Bible is not unknown. The empowering reading offered by Yefet, particularly of Abigail's figure in this respect, goes beyond the Muslim model of marriage he may have had in mind. It suggests, yet again, that he had a genuine interest in positively illuminating the figures of David's wives, for the reasons we already mentioned in our discussion of Michal, namely, as reverent female role models. Possibly, in order to engage a female Jewish-Karaite audience or following, possibly in order to offer scriptural examples for female social modelling similar to those he knew to be more readily available in Christian or Muslim sources.<sup>47</sup>

### **Bathsheba: A married woman's dilemma, from innocent victim to queen mother – marriage and politics**

Yefet's innovative commentary on the Bathsheba affaire has been analyzed in several contexts.<sup>48</sup> Herein we add some unnoted aspects, which may illuminate his understanding of David's relationship with his wives in general. Unlike many ancient and modern commentators, Yefet puts the entire blame for the affair squarely on David. He is the culprit, while Bathsheba is completely innocent. In Yefet's close contextual reading of the text, in which he appears quite aware of biblical gapping as a narrative technique, he emphasizes that Bathsheba did not know why David summoned her to the palace, and once she found out she simply could not reject his advances, because she was obviously afraid of his power as king.<sup>49</sup> In Yefet's understanding, Bathsheba was clearly victimized by David, yet, possibly due to her resourceful and aspiring nature, she had not remained helpless or in shock for long. Yefet raises the possibility that Bathsheba had become at some stage aware of the plot to kill Uriah. He comments on 2 Samuel 11:26, as follows:

*[When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him] - It is possible that she had already known [by then] of the plot that unfolded to kill*

<sup>47</sup> On the problem of female role-model representation in ancient Judaism compared to Hellenistic (and later on Christian sources), see: Gershon D. COHEN, "The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality", in *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1991, pp. 3-17.

<sup>48</sup> See Yoram ERDER, "The Influence of Muslim Theology on Yefet ben 'Eli as Evidenced in his Interpretation of Two Biblical Stories," in *Revue des études juives*, vol. 174, 2015, no. 1-2, pp. 47-76. LIPTON and POLLIACK, "Our Mother," *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ERDER, "Influence of Muslim Theology," *op. cit.*, p. 66; LIPTON and POLLIACK, "Our Mother," *op. cit.*, pp. 15-7.

*him, and she demonstrated her grieving for her husband, according to custom, so that people would not notice her [real] purpose [and situation].*<sup>50</sup>

It seems that Yefet fills in the narrative gap as to Bathsheba's actual awareness of what was going on behind the scenes in a logical and contextual way, yet one also consistent with her character. An astute and ambitious woman like Bathsheba, at least as her personality is revealed in later passages of the David saga, might have suspected that Uriah's death was a little too convenient, even if she was not aware of the full details. Bathsheba, however, is not described as asking any questions or commenting on the matter of her widowhood in any way, and later on agrees, immediately, to marry David (see the consecutive verse 27: After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son). Therefore, Yefet assumed that she might have been aware, though not necessarily all along, of David's plot to cover up the affair, and once that failed, due to Uriah's refusal to cooperate, to get rid of Uriah. By the time of her husband's death she may have gone along with the mourning rites, without protesting, since she realized this would be her only way to become David's lawful wife. Unlike some modern scholars, who consider Bathsheba a passive figure, nothing more than a tool, during the entire affair and even later,<sup>51</sup> Yefet delves into her psyche. He highlights her personality traits, those which enabled her to play an active part, at least to the limited extent that was possible through publicly demonstrating her grief, in determining her future. He does not appear to suggest that she was feigning her grief over her deceased husband, rather, that she had already known of the lot David determined for him. Hence, she may have grieved for him much earlier herself, yet when in the public eye, a fact emphasized by Yefet, she knew what she had to do in order to secure her future, and that was to go through the motions expected by society [*alā rasm al-dunyā*], and thus collude with David's cover-up. This indeed may have been the moment of her political awakening or apprenticeship. In any event, Bathsheba's political acumen certainly becomes apparent later on in the narrative, in relation to her role as queen mother, and does not go unnoted by Yefet later on in his commentary. Still the question should be asked, did Bathsheba collude with David over Uriah's death, for another reason, namely, because Uriah mistreated her or disappointed her? Some commentators in Yefet's time suggested this as an explanation for her behavior, but also as a means of taking some blame off David. Yefet rejected this notion. Before commenting on the next chapter 12, which includes Nathan's famous parable of the poor man's ewe, Yefet posits that the details of the parable must be matched, in exactitude, to the details of the events and characters described in the narrative itself (chapter 11).<sup>52</sup> The parable serves as a contextual tool, in his method, for reconstructing data, which may be missing from

<sup>50</sup> In Arabic: *yajūz an qad 'allamat bi-mā jarā min al-ḥīlah fi qatlihi wa-azharat al-nadab 'alā ba'alihā 'alā rasm al-dunyā idh la yankashif li-l-nās qaṣḍihā*; Ms. I. Elisha 17, *op cit.*

<sup>51</sup> HOGAN, "David Women," *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> On Yefet's poetics, see: Sivan NIR and Meira POLLIACK, "Many Beautiful Meanings Can Be Drawn from Such a Comparison: On the Medieval Interaction View of Biblical Metaphor," in Joachim YESHYA and Elisabeth HOLLENDER, eds, *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 40-79.

the narrative of the events. In 2 Samuel 12:3, especially, the parable emphasizes how much the poor man loved and cherished his ewe, hence, says Yefet, we must assume that Uriah too cherished Bathsheba and treated her with loving care:

*[But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him] – The literal meaning of the words “he had bought” testifies that he did not take her by force [Arabic: ġaṣb], in order to distinguish between Uriah and David, because David did take her by force. [...] He said: “it was like a daughter to him,” which testifies that he treated her with love and compassion [Arabic: maḥabbaw-ṣafaqa]. The way in which his conduct with her is described here proves the mistake of those who claim that Uriah was a sinner [Arabic: ‘aṣi]; that he took Bathsheba by force, and by doing so committed an act of injustice [Arabic: kāna zālim]; that David did the right thing when he pried her out of his hands, and that he could not find any other way to do this except by killing Uriah.<sup>53</sup>*

The explanation that Yefet rejects with regard to Bathsheba is very similar to the one he embraces with regard to Abigail (see above). Abigail had the misfortune of being married to an unworthy husband Nabal (in Hebrew, literally, “scoundrel”), and therefore she was in some way “compensated” by the passing away of her husband and by marrying a worthier husband (David). The same idea could have applied to Bathsheba as well, had the literal sense of the story justified such an interpretation, namely, Uriah (in Hebrew, literally, “the light of God”) as an unworthy husband, and Bathsheba, deserving to get rid of him and marry a better husband. Yet, Yefet cannot accept such an interpretation because it is incoherent with the story itself, with the description of the characters and their motives in the narrative itself and no less with the way the Prophet Nathan reflects on the episode through his parable. The weight of argumentation from text and context is such that it cannot sustain the kind of explanation made possible in the case of Abigail. The matter of murder comes into it too of course since in the case of Nabal, though David comes close to killing him, he dies in the end what on the face of it at least is described as a natural death. Uriah's death however is a form of cold-blooded murder by proxy for which the king has to be, and is, punished. In effect all the three male competitors of David in our narratives: Palti, Nabal and Uriah sketch out David's moral decline: the first has his wife torn from him yet survives, the second dies somewhat mysteriously and the third is murdered. The female objects of David's desire also, in some way echo his decline, yet they do so by improving upon their own rights, in reverse trajectory to the men. Michal pays the highest price and dies childless, Abigail sails through somehow and eventually

<sup>53</sup> Ms. I. Elisha 17, *op. cit.* The tendency to blame Uriah for some form of wrongdoing and so justify his death can be found in some Midrash literature, which describe him as being insolent and insubordinate to David, yet do not go as far as to claim he was violent toward Bathsheba. See Talmud Bavli Shabbat 56a: “Uriah has rebelled against the king.”



has a son with David (Kilav, see 2 Samuel 3:3), and Bathsheba prevails to establish her son Solomon on his throne, as his eternal heir. This is yet another structural reason for Yefet's rejection of the (apologetic) interpretation according to which David had similar motives for intervening in both the Abigail and Bathsheba marriages. In essence, the fact that the biblical text makes very clear that David is to blame, at least in a major sense, and that Uriah and Bathsheba were innocent, meant there was no room for a literal, cohesive or rationalizing reading that might minimize David's sin, even though discrediting the cuckolded husband. In the Abigail affair, by contrast, Nabal is characterized from the start and by his name as a villain, and David's behavior is described as positive for the most part, or at least understandable. Yefet seems to have reckoned, nevertheless, with an inbuilt analogy between the two stories, which has been recognized and made explicit in the works of modern scholars, who have suggested that the Abigail affair is a reversed mirror image of the Bathsheba affair.<sup>54</sup> In Abigail's case, David waited until the villain husband died, and therefore his marriage proposal could be interpreted as a just and honorable act, even though some have cast doubt on the nature of his waiting. In Bathsheba's case, however, David planned and caused the death of an immaculate husband in battle, and did not wait for his death, but first committed adultery with his wife. There is no way this could be interpreted as a just and honorable act, no matter the circumstances. Some readers may feel ill at ease with Bathsheba's behavior towards Uriah. Why did she agree in the first place to go to the palace, and how can a worthy woman realize there might be a plot to kill her husband and do nothing, and later marry his killer? These are certainly the type of questions asked through the history of interpretation, which cast some shadow on her character as well. As we have shown above, Yefet takes pains to correct this impression and exonerate Bathsheba of any possible doubt, by pointing out there was really no option for her to survive otherwise. In his commentary on 2 Samuel 12:24-25, he further stresses her exemplary character:

*[Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved him; and because the Lord loved him, He sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah] – This testifies to Bathsheba's piety and fine qualities, after what had happened.*<sup>55</sup>

It seems that any apologetic reasoning in Yefet's interpretive strategy has to be directed at Bathsheba, if it cannot be directed at David. After all, in the biblical narrative Solomon is their rightful heir, born after wedlock, endorsed by God. Regardless of what the reader might think of Bathsheba's behavior toward Uriah, after she has become Solomon's mother her behavior is described and recognized as exemplary. In other words, only a pious woman could have raised a son like Solomon, whose

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, SHRAGA BEN AYUN, "David Wives," *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ar. *wa-hādā yadullu 'alā ḥusn dīn Baṭ Ṣeba ba'da an jarā mā jarā*. Ms I. Elisha 17, *op. cit.*

tarnished father leaves no room for improvement. In the literal sense, Bathsheba's wisdom and ambitions, all be it within the patriarchal system of service to her son, are attested in 1 Kings 1:15-21, where she intervenes in the process of the throne succession and makes sure that her son be made king. She is called to act by Nathan the Prophet, but when discussing the matter with David, she does not recite what Nathan tells her, but rephrases her entire speech according to her own agenda and understanding of David's mind. Yefet emphasizes the dialogical and rhetorical nature of her encounter with David, by reconstructing what she chose to include and what she chose to leave out of her speech, as follows:

*She told [him] what Nathan advised her to say, and she told him what Adonijah [son of Hagit] did, i.e. that he prepared a feast and invited all the king's sons and Abiathar and Joab, yet he did not invite Solomon because he was angry with him. She did not mention Zadok and other people [who were not invited], because she wanted to mention only what was directly related to her. Lastly, she mentioned that not all the people of Israel had joined Adonijah, but that they were waiting to see what the king [David] would decide on the matter, because they know that Adonijah did not do it [claiming the throne] with the king's permission.<sup>56</sup>*

In this manner, Yefet highlights how Bathsheba reminded David that he was still the king, and that the question of the heir should be decided by him, and by no one else. Thus, she managed to sway David, and secure the throne for her son. In accordance with the narrative (see 2 Samuel 12:24-25 above), and unlike some modern commentators, Yefet does not consider Bathsheba to have been manipulative or self-serving in her actions. On the contrary, she acted upon the Prophet's words and God's will, as stated in the biblical text. Yefet's appreciation for Bathsheba's political talents is fully attested in his commentary on 1 Kings 2:13-25, in which Adonijah approaches Bathsheba and asks that she intercede on his behalf and ask Solomon to give him Abishag (David's concubine) as a wife. Yefet explains that Adonijah knew fully well that it was legally forbidden to marry a woman that was a concubine (of sorts) to a king, and that he made his request in the hope that Solomon would agree, and so Adonijah would be able to prove publicly that Solomon has no understanding of the law and hence is unfit to be king. The request was actually a trap that Adonijah prepared for Solomon. Yefet again describes Bathsheba's political savvy, as one who immediately sensed Adonijah's real intentions. Nevertheless, she decided that she would deliver the request to the king without any comment or remark, so that Solomon could decide the matter for himself:

*Bathsheba was fully aware that Abishag was forbidden to Adonijah, but she said nothing of the matter [Arab. wa-'amsakat 'an ḏālika], so that he [Solomon]*

<sup>56</sup> Ms. Lon BL Or 2500 (F6271 in NLI), p. 5b.

*could decide the matter as he wished. She entered his [Solomon's] court. The biblical text/narrator mentioned that he honored her and welcomed her and bowed in front of her and placed her in a seat next to his own throne. [...] The biblical text/narrator mentioned in this verse how he honored her, in order to make it clear that he denied her request and even killed the man on whose behalf she interceded, but he did not do so because he disrespected her or disregarded her words. On the contrary, he honored her and saved no effort in showing her respect, but did not do what she asked of him, because fulfilling her request would have caused great harm [Arab. limā fi dālika min al-fasād].<sup>57</sup>*

According to Yefet, Bathsheba recognized the trap that was set before her son, but she did not try to take the matter into her own hands. She trusted her son to make the right decision.<sup>58</sup> In this way he casts Bathsheba as the educator of kings. She raised her son to be a king, and intervened in the field of politics in order to make sure that he would become king. However, it was not enough for her that he would be a king by title, she wanted to make sure he knew how to rule. She did not want him to be dependent on her, but wanted him to be a king and a ruler in his own right. Yefet highlights Bathsheba's character as an educator of kings, not only in his commentary on the Book of Kings, but also in his commentary on Proverbs. In Proverbs 31:1-9 the mother of "King Lemuel" warns him against spending his time on women and wine, because that will interfere with his role as a king. In his commentary, Yefet explains that "King Lemuel" is Solomon, and his mother is Bathsheba. Bathsheba instructs her son how to be a king, one who should rule on his own and not be ruled by others. Moreover, after warning him against lowly women, Bathsheba describes the ideal woman "a woman of valor" (Proverbs 31:10-31), which is a wife suited for a king.<sup>59</sup> Bathsheba advises her son to marry a suitable wife, a woman like Abigail (whom Yefet described as "a woman of valor" in his commentary on 1 Samuel 25:39) or like Bathsheba herself. Such a woman could help the king raise and educate his heir, so that his son could be a successful king like himself.

According to Yefet, Bathsheba started her involvement with David as a victim, an innocent and defenseless married woman at the mercy of a powerful and morally corrupt man. However, she did not remain in this position. Relying on her own resourcefulness and intelligent reasoning, and guided by her ambition to secure her son's place as the rightful (and God-chosen) successor to David, she managed to turn the tables and become a major force in court politics, and this secure for place in posterity son. As "a woman of valor" she too had faith in God and His justice. This is the kind of female role model Yefet, more than any other medieval Jewish commentator holds up to his Karaite readers, through Bathsheba. It is certainly a fresh change for

<sup>57</sup> Ms. BL 2500, *op. cit.*, pp. 13b-4a.

<sup>58</sup> Similar views were expressed in modern scholarship. See: Ora Horn PROUSER, "The Truth about Women and Lying," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 61, 1994, p. 22, no. 21.

<sup>59</sup> Ilana SASSON, "The Book of Proverbs between Saadia and Yefet," in *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, vol. 1, 2013, p. 175; SASSON, "Gender Equality", *op. cit.*, p. 55.

his female readers for sure, compared to the very limited and usually negative depictions of women in power to which they were prone in Jewish exegesis. Naturally, this is done within the limitations of patriarchal society, one Yefet envisages as a continuum from biblical times to his own. Yefet is no feminist and hence the role model cannot have any aspirations of her own, and so, Bathsheba did not want power for herself. Her goal was to create a mighty and independent king, who would be able to rule without her guidance. Indeed, she managed to raise a mighty king: Solomon, the builder of the Temple. She did not challenge patriarchal social norms. She did not try to confront men (as Michal did, and even Abigail, to some extent). She is undoubtedly the most conformist of the three, and as such, “the winner (who takes it all).” Yet, she does not break either, despite the fact that many powerful men try to break her by denying the throne to her son (and to her). Yefet’s Bathsheba is at least partly a liberating portrait. She was smart and astute enough to ride the social and political norms and even rise above them, with God’s aid. She could reign through her son or with him, gaining his respect (and that of the readers), enough for him to invite her to sit at the throne by his side, after rearing him to be a good and mighty king, despite his almost absent and unworthy father. Many medieval women would no doubt have found this portrait to be most empowering, even as a farfetched ideal of bygone times.

## Concluding Remarks

Yefet ben ‘Eli’s unique portrayal of David’s three major wives: Michal, Abigail and Bathsheba, and his exegesis of their narratives, were the focus of this study. We have shown, on the one hand, how like all commentators through the ages, Yefet too was a product of his own time. He lived in a male dominated patriarchal society, and he projected the gender and social norms of his time onto the biblical text, even when such norms are not made explicit in the Hebrew Bible. This type of reading, which also attempts to reconstruct some socio-historical background to the stories on the basis of what is known to the commentator and so “historicize” the biblical text was common when archeology and anthropology were not yet available as disciplines which could inform biblical study. Extrapolation from an existing and tangible real-life social parallel, served as a synchronic means for medieval exegetes to try and fill in gaps and so fathom something of the biblical world view. This explains why Yefet was certain that women (of the higher class at least) were confined to their home and could not go outside. He was also certain that a father could marry his daughter to whoever he decided without asking her. He assumed that a young woman could not possibly speak outright and say that she is in love with a specific man and wishes to marry him (Michal). Even a mature woman had to be very careful how she phrased her wishes (Abigail), and sometimes had to play along in silence, acting out her grief publicly, when she knew quite well that the truth was unbearable (Bathsheba). Such gap-filling is common in pre-modern readings of the Bible, yet Yefet administers it with much care and in most cases only when a close reading, backed by the wider biblical context, makes it cohesive with the narrative and its wider themes and semantic frames. Apologetic or harmonistic considerations may indeed influence his interpretation, yet

he is relatively careful in keeping as much as possible to the narrative structure and themes. On the other hand, Yefet (and the Karaite movement in general) embraced a relatively egalitarian attitude toward women. In interpreting biblical narrative, Yefet tended to shine the spotlight on active female characters, and to explain their motives and behavior in a positive and affirming light, sometimes even an empowering one, most uncommon among commentators of ancient and medieval times and sometimes even among those of modern times. Therefore, he assumed that even in biblical times, when women took the initiative, they could actually succeed in achieving their goals, despite the social and gender limitations, on which he does not voice any direct criticism. No less importantly perhaps, he conveyed the message that such women should not be, and were not, in fact, punished for their leadership. As we have pointed out in our discussion, some modern scholars, particularly those who belong to the feminist and gender schools of biblical criticism consider the biblical authors had an unfavorable and oppressive vision and attitude toward active, independent-minded women. Therefore, they characterized strong and active woman in the Bible as disgraceful, cruel, manipulative or as ones ending their life in disgrace. This was part of their patriarchal agenda, namely, to discourage such female models who might challenge a male domineering society and family structure. Hence such women must be punished for trying to undermine male dominance. Accordingly, Michal lived her last days in distress, after David abandoned her. Bathsheba was more successful, but at the end of her days she was rejected by her son, Solomon, because she thought she could manipulate him as she did with his father. Abigail was spared this fate only because she disappeared from the scene after her marriage, and did not try to control David.<sup>60</sup> Yefet did not think so. He upheld Michal, Abigail and Bathsheba as successful women who were loved and respected until the end of their lives, even if not all their wishes were fulfilled. In any event, in his reading of the biblical text, their lives as active and powerful women certainly did not end in tragedy, but in fulfillment. We have shown how the David saga's inbuilt trajectory of these three female partners of David, from young bride to mature (widowed) woman, to mature married woman (also widowed, "post factum"), structured as a kind of extended biography of the king, did not escape Yefet's notice. Uniquely, however, he appears to have read it as a constant improvement, not decline, at least in the female flank, of Davidic reign. From this would follow that these three women, at least in his view, contributed much to its moral stability and political success, and may even have saved it from earlier disintegration. In this respect, we have found that competing Christian and Muslim models, as well as the sectarian ideology of Karaite Judaism all played a part in re-framing gender questions and attitudes at large, and these found expression in the favorable exegesis of female biblical characters, as reflected in the works of Karaism's most prominent medieval commentator.

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. SHRAGA BEN AYUN, "David Wives," *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 212.

# Debating the Deuteronomic Centralisation Formula in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Palestine

□ Gregor SCHWARB

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla*, written in the 1030s C.E., and its Qaraite rebuttal, most likely written over the course of the following decade, preserve the most substantial and extensive surviving account of the centuries-old debate between Jews and Samaritans about the chosen place, the permanent location of the sanctuary and the status of Jewish prophets after Moses.<sup>1</sup> In Jewish legal and exegetical literature, Samaritans are regularly brought up as straw men in theological, halakhic and polemical contexts, most conspicuously in the section on prayer of legal codes which quite naturally broaches the subject of the *qibla*.<sup>2</sup> However, all these cursory considerations of Samaritan practices, beliefs, and doctrines in Jewish literature dwarf in comparison to the depth of engagement and the intricacy of argument that comes to the fore in the two treatises at hand.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This study was prepared within the framework of the ERC Consolidator Grant Project MAJLIS, "The Transformation of Jewish Literature in Arabic in the Islamicate World". It is a sequel to my "Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Kitāb fī bāb al-qibla* and its Qaraite refutation", in *Samaritan Languages, Texts, and Traditions*, ed. Stefan SCHORCH, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2022, pp. 1-32 (<https://www.academia.edu/40783625/>, consulted on 31 October 2019), which offers a thorough introduction to pertinent authors, texts, and manuscripts as well as a more elaborate discussion of the identification and reconstruction of al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla*. The textual material under discussion was first presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies (Cambridge 2011) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Société d'Études Samaritaines (Erfurt 2012). To celebrate the relaunch of SAMEK and its sisterhood with SES, the present contribution would like to bring into focus the significance and benefit of combining the study of Judaeo-Arabic and Samaritan-Arabic literature. My thanks are due to Friederike Schmidt (LMU Munich) for her diligent proofreading of the article.

<sup>2</sup> See Gregor SCHWARB, "Vestiges of Qaraite Translations in the Arabic translation(s) of the Samaritan Pentateuch", *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, t. 1, 2013, pp. 115–57 (esp. p. 134f. with n. 78).

<sup>3</sup> For another interesting, but little known example of anti-Samaritan polemic in Qaraite literature see *Masā'il* 108 & 128 of Solomon ben David ha-Nasi's *Treatise on the Fundamentals of Religion which no Subject of Legal Obligation Ought to Omit or Disregard* (*Kitāb mā lā yasa'u kull mukallaf tarkuhu wa-ihmāluhu fī uṣūl al-dīn*), which has been edited in my "A Digest of Jewish Mu'tazilī Uṣūl al-Dīn by a Qaraite Contemporary of Maimonides in Cairo", in *The Semitic Languages of Jewish Intellectual Production. Memorial Volume for Dr. Friedrich Niessen*, ed. María Ángeles GALLEGO, Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA, Leiden, Brill, forthcoming.

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī's *Treatise on the qibla* has come down to us in two distinct formats<sup>4</sup>:

I) In Samaritan literature, it has only survived in summary form as “Chapter containing an account of what Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī, may God sanctify his spirit, wrote about the determination of the *qibla*”.<sup>5</sup> This summary is quoted, for instance, within the 73<sup>rd</sup> commandment of Nafis al-Dīn b. Ibrāhīm's (fl. 13<sup>th</sup> c.) commentary on the 613 precepts (*Kitāb al-Farā'id*) and Ġazāl al-Duwayk's (fl. 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> c.) commentary on the Samaritan version of the Decalogue within his *Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (*Šarḥ Sifr al-Ḥurūġ*).<sup>6</sup> An edition and translation of this summary, whose structure appears to have been distorted over the course of transmission, is given below.

II) An anonymous Qaraite refutation of al-Šūrī's *Treatise on the qibla* is extant in two sizeable fragments deriving from one and the same manuscript codex in Hebrew script and a smaller fragment of its *Vorlage* in Arabic script.<sup>7</sup> The work consists of unassigned quotations of varying length from al-Šūrī's treatise, which are followed by detailed comments and objections penned by the Qaraite detractor. It is worth noting that the quotations do not cover the entire *Treatise on the qibla*. Thus, the entire section surveying “the arguments of the ancients”, i.e. arguments put forward by previous Samaritan scholars in support of the identification of Mount Gerizim with the chosen place, has only been preserved in the summary version, while it has been omitted from the Qaraite rebuttal.<sup>8</sup>

The identification of the treatise relies on the following evidence<sup>9</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> Another aspect of the *qibla* in al-Šūrī's work is discussed in Stefan SCHORCH, “An Unknown and Unique Samaritan Arabic Introductory Prayer by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī (11<sup>th</sup> Century)”, in *The Samaritans in Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives* (Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the Société d'Études Samaritaines, held in Prague, July 31-August 5, 2016), ed. Jan DUŠEK (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 131–62 (143–45).

<sup>5</sup> Šadaqa b. Munaġġā b. Šadaqa refers to al-Šūrī's *Kitāb al-Qibla* in his commentary on Deuteronomy 5:17<sup>a-h</sup> (i.e. the extended Samaritan version of the Decalogue), which in secondary literature has erroneously been ascribed to his father: *wa-lil-wālid fi 'l-ġuz' al-awwal min Masā'il al-ḥilāf kalām balīġ, wa-ka-dālika lil-šayḥ Abī l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī, raḥimahu llāh, kitāb sammāhu Kitāb al-Qibla wa-huwa kitāb ḥasan* (Nablus, Samaritan High Priest Ms. 15 [= 1 דשתי עמרם] = ms. Baillet [see n. 6 below], p. 153, no. 9), fol. 20a ([https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL\\_ALEPH000192810/NLI](https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000192810/NLI)).

<sup>6</sup> On these two compositions see Maurice BAILLET, “Quelques manuscrits Samaritains”, *Semitica*, t. 26, 1976, p. 154f., nos. 12–13; IDEM, “Commandements et lois (*Farā'id* et *Tūrot*) dans quatre manuscrits samaritains”, in Jean-Pierre ROTHSCHILD and Guy Dominique SIXDENIER, ed., *Études samaritaines. Pentateuque et Targum, exégèse et philologie, chroniques*, Louvain, Peeters, 1988, pp. 259–70; Iain Ruairidh Mac Mhanainn BÓID, *Principles of Samaritan Halachah*, Leiden, Brill, 1989, p. 42f.; Christophe BONNARD, Marie-Christine DONZÉ-MICHAU, “*La Maqālat Bal'am*, Traité sur Balaam, un traité samaritain inédit”, *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, t. 89,3, 2009, pp. 289–311 (290). My thanks are due to Leonhard BECKER (Halle) who drew my attention to the inclusion of the abridged version in Ġazāl al-Duwayk's commentary on Ex 20. It is quite likely that this version has been embedded into other Samaritan compositions as well.

<sup>7</sup> MSS London, British Library, Or. 2523, fols. 1–46 and St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Yevr.-Arab. I 1681. A fragment of the *Vorlage* in Arabic script is extant in ms. RNL, Arab.-Yevr. 350. For a reconstruction of the original codex see the codicological table in SCHWARB, “Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī” (above n. 1), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> This is explicitly stated in ms. St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Yevr.-Arab. I 1681, f. 15b.

<sup>9</sup> For details and an edition of the relevant passage from *Kitāb al-Ṭabāḥ* see SCHWARB, “Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šūrī” (above n. 1), pp. 1–12.

- 1) A considerable portion of the summary is made up of verbatim quotations from the Samaritan composition quoted in the Qaraite refutation.
- 2) An as yet unedited chapter in al-Şūri's *Kitāb al-Ṭabāḥ* contains a cross-reference to the *Treatise on the qibla* and mentions that the Qaraite scholar "Abū Ya'qūb" Yūsuf al-Baṣīr had promised to write a refutation of it, while his death prevented him from delivering on his promise.<sup>10</sup>

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In the fields of Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, we have witnessed in recent years a remarkable surge of scholarship focusing on the Deuteronomic idea of cult centralisation, the concept of one place being chosen by God as His sanctuary, and the history of its concrete identification and localisation.<sup>11</sup> Among other things, this enhanced interest has been triggered by recent advances made in the field of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible which according to some scholars lends support to the conclusion that the Masoretic reading of the Deuteronomic centralisation formula, **הַמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** ("the place that the LORD your God will chose"), is a secondary, ideological correction of "the original reading", **הַמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** ("the place that the LORD your God has chosen"), as it is preserved in textual witnesses associated with the Proto-Samaritan tradition.<sup>12</sup> These studies suggest, moreover, that the two readings of the centralisation formula, which occurs 21 times in the Book of Deuteronomy, existed as variants side-by-side and were part of the same literary and textual culture at least until the second century B.C.E. For several centuries, "the sanctuaries of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim had been co-existing..., both offering a regular temple service operated by priestly elites...".<sup>13</sup> The endeavour of the Hasmonean rulers to religiously unite their new territorial acquisitions and to push the Samaritans to recognise the Jerusalem temple as the only legitimate center of worship expedited

<sup>10</sup> On Yūsuf al-Baṣīr see David E. SKLARE, "Yūsuf al-Baṣīr: Theological Aspects of His Halakhic Works," in *The Jews of Medieval Islam*, ed. Daniel FRANK, Leiden, Brill, 1995, pp. 249-70; IDEM and Haggai BEN-SHAMMAI (eds.), *Judaean-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collections: The Works of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr. A Sample Catalogue, Texts and Studies*, Jerusalem, Ben-Zvi Institute, 1997; Gregor SCHWARB, "Yūsuf al-Baṣīr", in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. N. Stillman, Leiden: Brill, 2010, vol. IV, pp. 651-55.

<sup>11</sup> The large number of recent publications on the subject is borne out by a simple keyword search in *Index Theologicus* (<https://ixtheo.de/>) or *RAMBI* (<http://merhav.nli.org.il/>).

<sup>12</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible: Qumran, Septuagint. Collected Essays, Volume 3*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, pp. 387-410; Adrian SCHENKER, "Le Seigneur choisira-t-il le lieu de son nom ou l'a-t-il choisi? L'apport de la Bible grecque ancienne à l'histoire du texte samaritain et massorétique", in Anssi VOITILA and Jutta JOKIRANTA, ed., *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, pp. 339-52; IDEM, "Textgeschichtliches zum Samaritanischen Pentateuch und Samareitikon: Zur Textgeschichte des Pentateuchs im 2. Jh. v. Chr.", in Menachem MOR and Friedrich V. REITERER, ed., *Samaritans: Past and Present: Current Studies*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2000, pp. 105-21; Stefan SCHORCH, "The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy", in József ZSENGELLÉR, ed., *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 23-37.

<sup>13</sup> Stefan SCHORCH, "Is a Qibla a Qibla? Samaritan Traditions About Mount Garizim in Contact and Contention", in Sabine SCHMIDTKE, ed., *Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton: 1935-2018*, Piscataway, Gorgias, 2018, pp. 95-100 (95).



the formation of the Samaritans as “a self-contained community separate from the Jews”.<sup>14</sup> Even though the effects of Hasmonean religious policy were not as immediate and definitive as has hitherto been thought<sup>15</sup>, it eventually gave rise to “the emergence of a Jerusalem-focused Judaism versus a Mount Garizim-focused Samaritanism as two distinct [religious communities] in opposition to each other.”<sup>16</sup>

While some arguments employed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century debate may ultimately be traced back to the late Second Temple and the Tannaitic periods, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla* and its Qaraite rebuttal were both modelled on the dialectic structure of Mu'tazilī *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* compositions.<sup>17</sup> In this and other respects, the Jewish-Samaritan debate of the 11<sup>th</sup> century displays a very close affinity to other instances of inter-religious (e.g. Jewish-Muslim) and intra-religious (e.g. Qaraite-Rabbanite) disputations from the same period.<sup>18</sup> To duly appreciate the art of their dialectic and rhetoric texture, the two treatises will have to be studied within the polyphony and multi-perspectivity of these other debates as well as in due consideration of the hermeneutical and interpretative tools developed within Mu'tazilī *kalām*.

In contrast to modern scholarship, the 11<sup>th</sup> century debate between Jews and Samaritans about the permanent location of the sanctuary did not resort to documentary and epigraphic evidence, manuscript witnesses, or archaeological finds. Instead, the arguments advanced by both parties essentially build on text-based, semantic-lexicographical, linguistic-grammatical, hermeneutical and theological considerations.

The methodological and contextual disparity between the 11<sup>th</sup> century debate and contemporary scholarship notwithstanding, one may discern conspicuous points of commonality with regard to specific viewpoints voiced in both types of discourse which might be indicative of shared ideological commitments. Whatever the case

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan BOURGEL, “Brethren or Strangers? Samaritans in the Eyes of Second-Century B.C.E. Jews”, *Biblica*, t. 98,3, 2017, pp. 382–408 (382) (DOI: 10.2143/BIB.98.3.3245513).

<sup>15</sup> Bourgel, *ibid.*, concludes that in the second century B.C.E. “the borders between the two communities were still blurred and even in parts overlapped each other” (p. 408); IDEM, “The Samaritans during the Hasmonean Period: The Affirmation of a Discrete Identity?”, *Religions*, t. 10(11), 628, 2019, 21 p., esp. 15–16 (DOI: 10.3390/rel10110628); Günter STEMBERGER, “Rabbinic Exegetical Debates with Samaritans”, in Antti LAATO, ed., *The Challenge of the Mosaic Torah in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Leiden, Brill, 2020, pp. 205–217 (DOI: 10.1163/9789004441996\_011). For a convenient survey of prevalent viewpoints about “the origin of the Samaritans” see Magnar KARTVEIT, “Theories of the Origin of the Samaritans - Then and Now”, *Religions*, t. 10(12) 661, 2019, 14 p. (DOI: 10.3390/rel10120661).

<sup>16</sup> SCHORCH, “Is a Qibla a Qibla?”, (above n. 13), p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> For a convenient survey of Jewish Mu'tazilism see David SKLARE, “Mu'tazili Trends in Jewish Theology – A Brief Survey”, *İslami İlimler Dergisi* 12,2 (2017), pp. 145–78 and selected articles in C. ADANG et al. (eds.), *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism* (Würzburg: Ergon 2007). The Mu'tazilī underpinnings of the *Treatise on the qibla* and its Qaraite rebuttal will be explored in a separate in-depth study.

<sup>18</sup> The larger socio-cultural context of debates about the *qibla* is discussed in Ari Michael GORDON, *Sacred Orientation: The Qibla as Ritual, Metaphor, and Identity-Marker in Early Islam*, PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2019.

may be, the edition and translation of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla* and its Qaraite rebuttal will be of considerable interest to biblical scholars and historians of religion alike.

## Notes on edition and translation

The present edition and translation of the abridged version of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla* is based on three manuscripts described in my "Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī's *Kitāb fī bāb al-qibla* and its Qaraite Refutation" and four manuscripts of Ġazāl al-Duwayk's commentary on Exodus, which I have been able to consult in the meantime.<sup>19</sup> The edition clearly demonstrates the distinct inferiority and unreliability of these later copies.

Passages which are parallel to quotations embedded in the Qaraite refutation have been underlined and incorporated into the critical apparatus (ⲓⲛ/ⲓⲛ). The oldest manuscript of the abridged version (ⲛ) gives most scriptural prooftexts and Hebrew catchwords in Arabic script.<sup>20</sup> These transcriptions, which are overlined in the manuscript as well as in the edition, are reproduced in a separate apparatus in Hebrew square script. Scriptural quotations within passages that are only extant in ms. Ⲕ, where scriptural prooftexts and catchwords are given in Samaritan script, have been rendered in Hebrew square script.

Quotations from the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch are marked with (S) in the translation and with (ⲩⲛ) in the margin of the edition. Quotations from the Masoretic version are marked with (M) respectively (ⲛⲛ). Explanatory additions in the translation are put in square brackets.

The following sigla are used<sup>21</sup>:

ⲛ Ms. St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Firk. Sam. IV:6, fols. 31<sup>r</sup> (= orig. foliation 132<sup>r</sup>) – 41<sup>r</sup> (= orig. foliation 144<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> See n. 1 above. My thanks are due to Leonhard BECKER and Stefan SCHORCH (Halle) who shared with me images of ms. F 150.sa 18.1 at the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in the Holy Land (Jerusalem). For a brief description of this collection see Ḥasīb ŠAḤḤĀDA, *Talāta maḥṭūṭāt sāmīriya fī maktabat al-ma'had al-almānī* (<https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=589535>, last accessed 11/02/2020). Other manuscripts of al-Duwayk's commentary available to me include ms. Paris, BnF, Sam. 45, ms. Jerusalem, Ben Zvi Institute, 7004a, and ms. New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, no. 3531 [= ms. ENA no. 1601]. Owing to extended library closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not given access to ms. Manchester, John Rylands Library, Gaster 135.

<sup>20</sup> See Stefan SCHORCH, "The Allographic Use of Hebrew and Arabic in the Samaritan Manuscript Culture", *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, t. 8,1, 2020, pp. 1–38.

<sup>21</sup> For a description of the pertinent manuscripts see SCHWARB, "Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī" (above n. 1), pp. 3-9. The four manuscripts of Ġazāl al-Duwayk's commentary on Exodus available to me (mss. ⲓ, Ⲕ, ⲕ, ⲛ) were all copied in the early 20th century and reflect a similar state of corruption and an almost identical range of mistakes. Variant readings from these manuscripts have only been reproduced selectively in the critical apparatus.

- ⊢ Ms. St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Firk. Sam. IV:13, fol. 18.  
 7 Ms. Jerusalem, German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in the Holy Land, F 150. sa 18.1, fols. 232<sup>r</sup>-242<sup>r</sup> (= p. 463–483).  
 ⊢ Ms. Jerusalem, Ben Zvi Institute, 7004a, fols. 243<sup>r</sup>-253<sup>r</sup> (= p. 486–506).<sup>22</sup>  
 7 Ms. Paris, Institut Catholique, Fonds Maurice Baillet, no. 13, fols. 27–54.  
 1 Ms. New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, no. 3531 [= ms. ENA no. 1601], fols. 263<sup>r</sup>-273<sup>v</sup> (= p. 526–547).<sup>23</sup>  
 ⊖ Ms. London(?), Sassoon 726, fols. 6<sup>r</sup>-14<sup>r</sup>.<sup>24</sup>  
 7 Ms. St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Arab.-Yevr. 350.<sup>25</sup>  
 5 Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Sam. 45, fols. 304<sup>r</sup>-316<sup>r</sup> (= p. 604–628).<sup>26</sup>  
 17 Ms. London, British Library, Or. 2523, fols. 1–46.<sup>27</sup>  
 27 Ms. St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Yevr.-Arab. I 1681, 92 fols.<sup>28</sup>

A vertical line (|) indicates the beginning of a new manuscript page as indicated in the margin.

Understanding the use and function of scriptural prooftexts requires the consultation of relevant Arabic translations in addition to the Hebrew versions and their respective reading traditions. By way of example, I list here a few Arabic translations of Deut. 12:5 which constitutes the nucleus of the Deuteronomistic centralisation formula and lies at the heart of the Jewish-Samaritan debate about the identification and localisation of the sanctuary/*qibla*:<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Open access at [https://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE53775071](https://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE53775071) (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>23</sup> Open access at [https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL\\_ALEPH000107031/NLI#\\$FL144776239](https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000107031/NLI#$FL144776239) (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>24</sup> David Solomon SASSOON: *Ohel Dawid: Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London*, Oxford, Oxford University Press / London, Humphrey Milford, 1932, t. 2, p. 593, no. 726. I had access to British Library, Or. mf. reel no. 2864. Note that ms. Sassoon 726 derives from the same codex of *Kitāb al-Farā'id* as ms. Sassoon 719.

<sup>25</sup> Open access at [https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX\\_MANUSCRIPTS990001521640205171](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001521640205171) (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>26</sup> Open access at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100872490?rk=21459;2> (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>27</sup> Open access at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or\\_2523](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_2523) (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>28</sup> Open access at [https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX\\_MANUSCRIPTS990001535200205171](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001535200205171) (last accessed, 11/02/2020).

<sup>29</sup> Left column: 7 = Masoretic text; 7 = Samaritan text; Samaritan reading tradition, in Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans*. Vol. IV: *The Words of the Pentateuch, Jerusalem, The Academy of the Hebrew Language*, 1977, p. 532f.; right column: 7 = Sa'adyah Gaon, *Tafsir*; (7)7 = *The Samaritan Version of Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Pentateuch*, ed. T. Zewi, Leiden, Brill, 2015, p. 450 (orig. in Samaritan script); 7 = Yefet ben 'Eli; 7 = Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah; 7 = Old Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch, ed. H. SHEHADEH, Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2002, p. 480.

Deut 12:5	<p>מ כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל שבטיכם לשוים את שמו שם לשכנו תד- רשו ובאת שמה</p> <p>ש כי אם אל המקום אשר בחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל שבטיכם לשים את שמו שם לשכינו תד- רשו ובאתם שמה</p> <p><i>kī am al ammāqom ēšār bār šēmā ēluwwikimma mikkal šbāṭikimma alšam it šēmu šamma alšēkīnu tidrāšu wbāttimma šamma</i></p>	<p>סעי' בל אלמוצע אלדי יכתארה אללה רבכם מן גמיע אסבאטכם פיחל נורה פיה אלתמסו מסכנה חתי תצירו אליה.</p> <p>סעי'(ש) בל אלמוצע אלדי אחתארה אללה רבכם מן גמיע אסבאטכם ליתבת אסמה הנאך פאלתמסוא מסכנה אלי חין תצירון אליה.</p> <p>יפי' אלא אלי אלמוצע אלדי יכתאר אלרב אלאהכם מן גמלה אסבאטך לאגעאל אסמה תם לסכינתה תלתמסו ותגי אלי תם.</p> <p>יש' בל אלמכאן אלדי יכתארה אללה אלאהכם מן כל אסבאטכם לגעל אסמה תם פאלי מכאן סכינתה או סכאנה פלתצלי ותגו אלי תם.</p> <p>שומי' بل الى الموضع الذي اختار الله الهكم من كل اسباطكم لشرح اسمه هناك لسكانه تقصدوا وتاتون الى هناك.</p>
	<p>(M) But to the place that the LORD your God will choose of all your tribes to set His name there, to make it dwell, you shall seek it and come there.</p> <p>(S) But to the place that the LORD your God has chosen of all your tribes to establish/enunciate His name there. You shall seek His glory and come there.</p>	<p><b>Saadia Gaon:</b> But the place that God your Lord will choose of all your tribes. There he will establish His light. Seek for His dwelling place so that/until you get there.</p> <p><b>Saadia (Samaritan version):</b> But the place that God your Lord has chosen of all your tribes to establish His name there. Seek for His dwelling place until you get there.</p> <p><b>Yefet ben 'Eli:</b> But to the place that the Lord your God will choose of all your tribes to render/establish His name there. Seek for His glory and come there.</p> <p><b>Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah:</b> But the place that the Lord your God will choose of all your tribes to render/establish His name there. To the place of His glory or his dwelling place, in order to pray you shall come there.</p> <p><b>Old Samaritan translation:</b> But to the place that the Lord your God has chosen of all your tribes to expose His name there. Seek for His dwelling place and come there.</p>

## Chapter containing an account of what the eminent master Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī, may God sanctify his spirit, wrote about the determination of the *qibla*

He pointed out two methods [to approach the question at issue]: the first comprises the proofs of the ancients and their refutation, the second an argument of his own making.

I.

As to the first [method]<sup>30</sup>:

One of the proof(text)s invoked by the ancients is the text in the Ten Commandments<sup>31</sup> which states that large stones will be put up on Mount Gerizim<sup>32</sup> on which the texts of the Law (*al-nuṣūṣ al-šarīya / nuṣūs al-šarī'a*) will be written, that an altar of stone will be built there, and that sacrifices will be offered on it. [Ex 20:13<sup>ad</sup> (S) // Deut 5:17<sup>ae</sup> (S)]

This proof is not sufficiently conclusive to determine the [location of the] 'chosen place', since what is meant [by 'the chosen place'] does not correspond to the features just mentioned. It should rather be understood as being an abode for the presence of God, mighty and exalted, a site for all acts of divine worship, the enunciation of the [divine] name and suchlike acts for ever and ever, sustained by prayers, a place to perform pious deeds and a *qibla*,

<sup>30</sup> In the chapter on the *qibla* included in *Kitāb al-Ṭabāḥ* (ed. G. Wedel, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabbāḥ des Samaritaners Abū l-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūrī. Kritische Edition und kommentierte Übersetzung des ersten Teils*. Dissertation im Fach Arabistik, Freie Universität Berlin, Fachbereich Altertumswissenschaften, 1987, pp. ١٤٧-١٥٢), Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī lists ten traditional 'yardsticks' (*ḥudūd*) or proof-texts indicative of the *qibla*: Four relate to Abraham [Gen 12:6-8; 22:2-4; 22:14], two to Jacob [Gen 28:10-19; 35:6-9; 38:6-7], and four to Moses [Ex 20:13-14(S); Deut 5:17(S); Deut 12:2]. All these prooftexts are also included in the present summary of al-Ṣūrī's *Treatise on the qibla*.

<sup>31</sup> I.e. the Samaritan version of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:13<sup>ad</sup> (S) and Deut 5:17<sup>ae</sup> (S)).

<sup>32</sup> In the Samaritan tradition, הַר גְּרִיזִים is read as a one-word toponym (הַרְגְּרִיזִים) and therefore written without space (*ārgārīzəm*).

فصل يتضمن ما ذكره الشيخ الفاضل أبو الحسن الصوري،  
 قدس الله روحه، في إثبات القبلة

3 ذكر طريقتين: الأولى تضمنت حجج السلف والرد  
 عليهم، الثانية تركيباً | من نفسه. [464]

أما الأولى، فن حجج السلف النصّ الوارد في عشرت<sup>6</sup>  
 هديريم ومضمونه أن تقام في هرجيزيم حجارة بكار وتكتب  
 عليها النصوص الشرعية ويبنى فيه مذبح من حجارة وتقرّب  
 عليه | قرابين. [ب 18 - 605 p [527]

وهذا لا يدلّ دلالةً قطعيةً على إثبات مقوم مبحر، |  
 لأنه ليس مفهومه ما ذكر، بل أن يكون مقراً لسكينة الله،  
 عزّ وجلّ، وسائر | عباداته، عزّ وجلّ، وشرح الاسم عليه  
 وما يجري مجراه على الدوام معتمداً | بالصلوات قرابةً وقبلّةً  
 [ب 487]

١ الشيخ الفاضل [الشيخ الفاضل العالم العلامة الشيخ د ن ف، الشيخ  
 العالم الشيخ ٥ | ٢ قدس...روحه] رضي الله عنه د ن ف، رضي الله  
 تعالى عنه د | ٣ طريقتين [الطريقتين ٤ | تضمنت] يتضمن د ن ف  
 ٤ الثانية [والثاني د ن ف | ٥ حجج السلف] السلف حجج د ن ف  
 النص [الناس د ن ف | ٦ أن] أنه د ن | هرجيزيم] هرجيزيم ثم د  
 ٧ النصوص الشرعية [نصوص الشريعة د ن ف | ٨] فيه  
 فيها د ن ف | من حجارة [بحاره د | ٨ قرابين] القرابين د  
 ١٠ مقراً...الله] مقرّ والسكينة لله، مقرّ السكينة لله د | ١١ عز  
 وجل] - د | ١٢ معتمداً [معتمداً د ن ف

٥ عشرت هديريم] لשרت הדברים | ٦ هرجيزيم] הרגריזים  
 ٩ مقوم مبحر] מקום מבוחר

[נ"ש] שמ'  
 כ"ג א-ד,  
 דב' ה"ז א-ה

[a site] that has been sanctioned to serve as pilgrimage destination and place of worship, and as site for the payment of tithes and obligatory alms.<sup>33</sup> [All] this is recorded in Scripture as per His saying: “But to the place [that the Lord your God has chosen of all your tribes to set His name there, to make it dwell, you shall seek it and come there.]” [Deut 12:5 (S)].<sup>34</sup>

Though missing in the Jewish version of the Ten Commandments, the very same passage is cited in the section “And Moses charged the people ...” [Deut 27:1 ff.]. In their version, however, Mount Gerizim has been replaced with Mount Ebal [Deut. 27:4 (M)], while the rest of the passage is identical in meaning. Hence, what they believe with regard to Mount Ebal is identical with what we believe with regard to Mount Gerizim. This shows that this proof is not sufficiently conclusive.

The second proof-text is found in the story of Abraham, peace upon him: “And Abram crossed through the land [to the site of Shechem, to the Terebinth of Moreh]” [Gen 12:6], and immediately afterwards it says: “And the Lord appeared to Abram [and said, “To your seed I will give this land. And he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.”] [Gen 12:7]. The fact that the place is named ‘Bethel’ [‘House of God’] implies that it was designated for the worship of God, exalted be He. Bethel in turn is situated within the territory of Nablus, in the vicinity of “the pasture of splendour”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In *Kitāb al-Tabāḥ*, the chapter on the *qibla* (see above n. 1) lists six criteria concerning the *qibla* (*ṣurūt al-qibla*): 1) It is the location of the house of divine blessing over the nation as well as the enunciation of God’s mighty name; 2) it is a permanent abode of divine presence and a dwelling place of the angels; 3) acts of God’s worship are directed towards it and from it; 4) it is a place for the offering of sacrifices; 5) it is a pilgrimage destination; 6) it is a place to present the tithe portions, taking vows, first fruits offerings, almsgiving, etc.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. “But to the place [that the Lord your God has chosen to make His name dwell, there shall you sacrifice the Passover offering in the evening, as the sun comes down, the hour of your coming out of Egypt.]” [Deut 16:6 (S)]

<sup>35</sup> Arab. *Marj al-bahā* renders hebr. אלון מורה (M) / אלון מורא (S) (*ālon mūra*), the Terebinth of Moreh [Gen 12:6].

مؤهلاً للبيح إليه والعبادة عليه، وصرف الأعشار والزكوات  
 من الأموال الواجبة فيه، وذلك بالنص لقوله كي ام ال  
 3 همقوم.

وأيضا هذا الفصل، وإن كان ساقط عند اليهود في  
 العشر كلمات، فإنه بعينه مذكور في فصل ويصو مشه،  
 6 لكن عندهم عوض هرجيزيم هر عيبيل، وتمام المعنى [132] [31 א] [כ]  
 واحد، وما يعتقدون في هر عيبيل ما تعتقد في هرجيزيم.  
 فعمل من ذلك أنه لا يدلّ تمام الدلالة.

9 والحجة الثانية ما ورد في قصة ابرهيم، عليه السلام،  
ويعب ابرم بارص وتمامه، وقوله من بعد ويرا يهوه ال  
ابرم، لأن تسمية الموضع بيت ال تقتضي كونه مختصاً  
 12 بعبادة الله تعالى، وإن بيت ال ببلد نابلس جوار مرج البها

1 [وصرف] وصره 1 [والزكوات] والزكاة 2 [6] | 6 [وتمام المعنى]  
 فالمعنى 2 [7] | 7 [واحد] واحداً 2 [8] | 8 [يعتقدون]  
 يعتقدوا 2 [9]، يعتمدوه 8 [8] | 8 [لا] - 9 | 9 [الدلالة] الدلائل 9  
 9 [الحجة] الحجة 9 | الثانية [الثابتة 9] | ابرهيم [ابراهيم]، السيد  
 ابرهيم 2 [10] | ابرهيم 9 | 10 [وتمامه] - 2 [11] | 11 [ويرا... ابرم] - 9  
 بعد - 1 | 1 [ويرا] ويراه 2 | 11 [تقتضي... ال] - 2 | 12 [ببلد]  
 ببلدنا 2 [نابلس] نابلس 2 [مرج] مرج 2

2 [كي... همقوم] كي ام ال המקום | 5 [ويصو مشه] ويصو مشه  
 6 [هرجيزيم] הרגריזים | هر عيبيل [הר עיבל] | 1 [وتمام] [1] ויצו משה  
 7 [هر عيبيل] הר עיבל | هرجيزيم [הרגריזים] | 10 [ويعب... بارص]  
 ויעבר אברם בארץ | ويرا... ابرم [וירא יהוה אל אברם] | 11 [بيت  
 ال] [1] בית אל | 12 [بيت ال] [2] בית אל | مرج البها > אלון מורא  
 [בר' יב:ו]؛ انظر شحادة، ترجمة، ج. 1، ص. 50-51.



to the west of the height that is Mount Gerizim, i.e. in between the pasture and the height. It is the site which is nowadays known as *al-qā'ima al-fawqā* ("the upper socle"), for Abraham, peace upon him, set up his tent camp in the pasture land and then moved on to the height that is Mount Gerizim, which lies to the east of Bethel and hence Bethel lies to its west.

If someone were to object that this does not conclusively prove that [Abraham] moved from the pasture land to Mount Gerizim, inasmuch as "And he pulled up his stakes" (*vay-ya'teq*) may not only denote a translocation to a nearby location, but also a translocation to a remote place, as the opponent claims.

He would be answered as follows: [In the case at hand,] "and he pulled up his stakes" (*vay-ya'teq*) [Gen 12:8]<sup>36</sup> can only denote a translocation to a nearby place. Considering that it is said concerning Isaac, peace upon him, that "he pulled up stakes from there [and dug another well]" [Gen 26:22], we concede that it may also refer to longer distances. Here, however, it does refer to a nearby location only. This is proved by the stages that he, peace upon him, covered on his return from Egypt, for it says: "And he went on by stages from the south [= the Negev] up to Bayt al-Qādir [= Bethel],

.....

<sup>36</sup> "And he pulled up his stakes from there for the high country east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east, and he built there an altar to the Lord, and he invoked the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed onward by stages to the Negeb." [Gen 12:8-9 (M)].

غربي الجبل الذي هو هرجريزيم بين المرج وبينه، وهو  
الموضع المعروف اليوم بالقائمة الفوقا، لأنّ ابرهيم، عليه  
السلام، نصب مضره في المرج، ثمّ انتقل إلى الجبل الذي<sup>3</sup>  
هو هرجريزيم وهو شرقي بيت ال، فيكون بيت ال غربيه.  
فإن قيل: إنّ هذا لا يدلّ دلالةً قطعيةً على الانتقال من

المرج إلى هرجريزيم، | لأنّ ويعتق، | كما تفيد الانتقال إلى  
مكان قريب، كذلك تفيد [الانتقال] إلى مكان بعيد، كما  
يقوله الخصم.

[465 ي]  
[606 ف]

9 وهو جوابه: إنّ ويعتق لا يدلّ إلاّ على القرب لقوله

في | اسحق، عليه السلام، ويعتق مشم، سلّمنا أنه قد يدلّ  
على البعد، لكنّ هاهنا لا يدلّ إلاّ على القرب. دليله

عوده، عليه السلام، | من مصر في المراحل التي سلكها، |  
فقال: وسار لمراحله من الجنوب إلى بيت القادر إلى

[528 ج]  
[488 ب]

بر' ي:ج-د

١ غربي شرقي [في هامش الورقة] غربي | الذي - | ف | وهو  
هو ١٥٥ | ٢ اليوم - | ١٥٥٥ | الفوقا | الفوقا ٥ | ابرهيم | السيد  
ابراهيم ١٥، ابراهيم ١، ابرهيم ٥ | ٦ | إلى هرجريزيم | لهرجريزيم ١٥٥  
تفيد | تريد ٥ يفيد ١٥ | ٨ | يقوله الخصم | نقوله ٥ | ٩ | إن - | ١٥  
لا... ويعتق - | ١٠ | اسحق | ياحق ١٥ | ١١ | البعد | البعيد ٥  
١٢ عوده | عودته ١٥٥٥ | ١٣ | وسار... 13 | الابتداء | ويلد للمسعوي  
منغرب وعد بيت ال عد המקوم אשר היה شمس اهلو بتحלה وقال بين

١ هرجريزيم | الهجريزيم | ٤ هرجريزيم | الهجريزيم | بيت ال<sup>1</sup> | بيت  
ال | بيت ال<sup>2</sup> | بيت ال | ٦ ويعتق | ويعتق | ٩ ويعتق | ويعتق  
١٠ ويعتق مشم | ويعتق مشم | ١٣ | وسار... 13 | الابتداء | ويلد  
للمسعوي منغرب وعد بيت ال عد המקوم אשר היה شمس اهلو بتحלה  
بين بيت ال وبين العي، ال مقوم المذبح אשר عשה شمس برايشوناه.

شهادة، ترجمة، ج. ١، ص. ٥٤-٥٥.

to the place where his tent had been before, between Bayt al-Qādir and al-Kafīr [= Ai], to the place of the altar he had made the first time, [and Abram invoked there the name of the Lord]” [Gen 13:3-4].<sup>37</sup>

To prove that the position of the opponents concerning the ‘House of Plague’<sup>38</sup> is invalid, the ancients, and among them the Dositheans, also referred to the scriptural phrase “[on] one of the heights” [Gen 22:2], arguing that it signifies “the most special height” (*aḥaṣṣ al-ġibāl*), as in “like one [of us]” [Gen 3:22], which means “like the most special and singular one from whom one obtains knowledge”, and as in “Dan, his folk will judge as one of Israel’s tribes” [Gen 49:16], in the sense of “the most special and eminent of them all”, for otherwise it would [merely] be one of the tribes. Their sanctuary, however, even though situated in the land of Moriah, is not [located on] a height, but [in] a valley.

They have no right to claim that the offering of Isaac, peace upon him, took place on one of the heights in the vicinity of the ‘House of Plague’ [viz. Jerusalem] and that the very same city is a permanent abode of divine presence. According to their own allegation, the place

<sup>37</sup> The verses [Gen 13:3-4] are here given in Arabic translation. This translation corresponds to some manuscripts of the “Old Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch”. See Shehadeh (ed.), *The Arabic Translation of the Arabic Pentateuch*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem : The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1989), p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Aram. *Bet Maḳtaš* (‘House of Plague’) or hebr. *Bet Maḳteš* (‘House of Pounding’), a derogatory term for *Bet [ha-] Miqdaš*, the Temple in Jerusalem. See A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 96.

الموضع الذي كان هناك مضربه في الأول بين بيت القادر بر' יג:ד  
 وبين الكفير | إلى موضع المذبح الذي صنع هناك في  
 [א 24 - 133] 3 الابتداء.

استدلّ السلف - | ومن جملتهم الدستان - على بطلان  
 قول انلصوم في بيت مكثش بقول الكتاب أخذ ههريم  
 6 وأنه أخصّ الجبال كقوله هيه كاحد، أي كالأخصّ  
الأوحد الذي عنه تتخذ العلوم، وقوله في دن يدين عمو  
 9 كاحد شبطي يشرال بمعنى أخصهم وأجلهم، وإلا فهو  
واحد من الأسباب. وليس قدسهم وإن كان عندهم في  
أرض همريه جبل، بل واد.  
 [א7] بر' כב:ב  
 בר' ג:כב  
 בר' מט:טז  
 [נ"מ] בר'  
 כב:ב

وليس لهم أن | يقولوا إنّ تقريب اسحق، عليه السلام، |  
 [פ 607]  
 [י 466]  
 كان على أحد الجبال المجاورة لبيت مكثش وأنّ نفس  
 البلد هو مقر السكينة. فإن على قول احتجاجهم أن الموضع

בית אל ובין העי, אל מקום המזבח אשר עשה שם ברישונה ג  
 למراحله] في مراحله י כ פ | ١ الأول] الاوله وقال בין בית אל ובין  
 העי אל מקום המזבח אשר עשה שם בראישונה אי י כ | ٢ صنع]  
 التي | ٤ | ٥ [الدستان] الشيخ أبو عبيد الدستان י כ נ פ | ٦ كقوله]  
 بقوله י, لقوله تعالى ד, لقوله כ ٥ | كالأخصّ] كان  
 كالأخص י כ נ פ | ٧ يدين عمو] - א ג | ١٠ همريه] همورا/هورا א,  
 המוראיה י כ נ פ | בל] - ג | ١٣ هو] - כ נ פ | فإن] فإن كان ג

٥ بيت مكثش] בית מכתש (כינוי שומרוני לבית המקדש  
 בירושלים) | أخذ ههريم] אחד ההרים | ٦ هيه كاحد] היה כאחד  
 ٧ دن ... يشرال] דן ידין עמו כאחד שבטי ישראל | ١٠ أرض  
همريه] ארץ המריה, ארץ המוראיה | ٥ | ١٢ ליث مكثش] לבית  
 מכתש

where [God] charged [Abraham] to sacrifice Isaac, peace upon him, is the place that was sanctioned as destination of pilgrimage, because Abraham, peace upon him, when he finished to carry out the [divine] ordinance on his child, up to the point when God redeemed him, called the name of that place ‘šēmā yērē’i’.<sup>39</sup> The prophet [*scil.* Moses], peace upon him, explained it [*scil.* the meaning of this name] by saying: “As it is said today: On the mount of the Lord there is sight.” [Gen 22:14]. In their understanding, however, [its meaning] has been replaced by “The Lord Is There” [Ez 48:35].

It has, moreover, been explained that Abraham, peace upon him, advanced the knowledge of the unseen [here: the future] and that the true meaning relates to the Israelites who go on pilgrimage, as per His saying “[Three times in the year] every one of your males shall appear [in the presence of the Lord your God in the place that He has chosen]” [Deut 16:16; *cf.* Ex 23:17]. This is what they said. It proves that the place where the sacrifices are offered is identical with the pilgrimage destination, in the same way as His saying “no man will covet your land when you *go up* to appear in the presence of the Lord three times in the year” [Ex 34:24] proves that the place that was endorsed as a pilgrimage site is a height, not a valley.

From the same story [of Abraham], the ancients also cited the verse “and he saw the place from afar” [Gen 22:4] as evidence in support of their position. They argued that if the sanctuary was located in the place where they claim it to be,

.....  
<sup>39</sup> *Adonay yir’eh* according to the Masoretic reading.

- الذي أمر فيه بتقريب اسحق، عليه السلام، هو المكان  
 المؤهل للحج، لأنه لما انتهى ابرهم، عليه السلام، من  
 3 امتثال المرسوم في ولده إلى الحد الذي فداه الله، سمي  
 الموضوع يهوه يراه، وفسره النبي، عليه السلام، بقوله أشر  
 يامر هيوم بهر يهوه يراه، وعندهم عوض يهوه شمه.  
 6 فبين أن ابرهم، عليه السلام، أتى بعلم غيب، والحق فيه  
 [529 1] ما يكون من بني اسرائيل في الحج، وهو قوله | يراه كل  
 زكورك. فهذا كلامهم، وهو يدل على أن موضع التقريب  
 هو موضع الحج. | وكما يدل على أن الموضوع المؤهل للحج هو  
 [24 2] جبل، لا واد، بقوله ولا يحمدايش | اث ارضك بعلوثك  
 489 [د] هراوث اث فني يهوه الهيك شلش فعميم بشنه.  
 12 ومما احتجوا به السلف في القصة المذكورة ويراث  
 همقوم مرحق. قالوا: ولو كان الموضوع الذي يدعون أنه  
 1 الذي - 5 | بتقريب | تقريب 5 | هو | من هو 5 | 2 لأنه | كما  
 انه 1 5، لما انه 2 | لما | لم 5 | ابرهم | ابراهيم 5 | 3 المرسوم | الأمر  
 المرسوم 1 5 | إلى - 5 | إلى الحد | الوحيد 1 | 6 ابرهم |  
 ابراهيم 5 | أتى | النبي 5، اني 5، وقران القرآن، سورة البقرة  
 [2]: 33. | غيب | روجي 1 5 | والحق | والمعنى 1 5 5  
 9 موضع 2 | مع منع 5 | وكما | ومما 1 5 5 | 10 جبل | الجبل 5  
 12 القصة | القضية 4 | 13 ولو | فلو 4 | يدعون | يدعون  
 الخصوم 1 5، يدعون به الخصم 1
- 2 ابرهم | ابراهم | 4 يهوه يراه | יהוה יראה | أشر... يراه | אשר יאמר  
 היום בהר יהוה יראה | 5 يهوه شمه | יהוה שמה | 6 ابرهم | اברהם  
 7 يراه... زكورك | יראה כל זכורך | 10 ولا... بشنه | ולא יחמד איש  
 את ארצך בעלותך להראות את פני יהוה אלהיך שלש פעמים  
 בשנה. | 12 ويرا... مرحق | וירא את המקום מרחק

this [statement] would not apply, because – being [in] a valley – it cannot be seen from afar. It does, however, apply to Mount Gerizim, because it is a height which can be seen from afar. The opponent may object: ‘being nearby’ and ‘being far away’ are relative magnitudes, and any place, regardless of whether it is elevated or low-lying, can be seen from afar and nearby.

They [*scil.* the ancients] also adduced the argument of the route distance. If what the Jews allege were correct, the route [to the sanctuary] would be less than three days long, but he only arrived there after a three-day [journey] as per His saying “[and he reached] the place that God had said to him on the third day” [Gen 22:3–4].<sup>40</sup>

The opponent may object: the route is not a decisive criterion, for one may cover a long-distance route in a shorter or longer time depending on whether one keeps a quick or a slow pace, not to mention the fact that we disagree with them about

.....  
<sup>40</sup> According to the Samaritan reading, verse 22:3 ends with *ba-yom ha-šlišī*, whereas according to the Masoretic reading, it is the beginning of verse 22:4.

القدس، ما صحّ ذلك فيه، لأنه لا يشاهد من بعد، إذ هو  
 وادٍ، ويصحّ ذلك في هرجريزيم، لأنه جبل يصحّ رؤيته  
 من بعد. وللخصم أن يقول: إنّ القرب | والبعد | أمران [608 פ  
 [67 ס] إضافيان، فلا موضع، عالي كان أو منخفض، إلا ويصحّ  
 رؤيته من بعد ومن قرب.

6 واحتجوا أيضاً بمسافة الطريق وأنه، لو كان ما يدّعيه  
 اليهود حقاً، كان مسيره دون ثلاثة أيام، وأنه إنما وصل  
 إليه في اليوم الثالث لقوله ال همقوم اشر امر لو هالهم بيوم

בר' כב:ג-ד

9 هشليشي.

7 وللخصم أن يقول: | إنّ المسير لا يؤثّر به، لأنه قد يجوز  
 أن يسير الطريق ذات المسافة البعيدة في زمان أقصر  
 وذات المسافة | القريبة في زمان أطول بحسب ما يعتمده [א {134} 25 א  
 من الإسراع والإبطاء، لا سيما ونحن وإياهم مختلفين في

1 بعد [ بعيد י כנפ | 2 ويصحّ... هرجريزيم ] وأما הרגריזים يصح  
 ذلك فيه י כנ | ويصحّ... رؤيته ] وأما هرجريزيم يصح ذلك فيه  
 لأنه لا [! ] يشاهد פ | لأنه جبل [ لا جبل ס | 3 بعد [ بعيد י כנפ  
 إنّ ] - י כ | 4 كان... منخفض ] - י כנפ | 5 بعد [ بعيد נפ  
 قرب [ قريب כנפ | 6 يدعيه [ تدعيه כ | 7 دون ] - 8 [ ثلاثة ]  
 ثلاث י | 10 يؤثّر [ يعتبر י כנפ، نعتبر 8 | به [ فيه נ | 11 أقصر ]  
 قصير כנפ | 12 القريبة [ الطويلة א 8 | أطول [ طويل כנפ  
 يعتمده [ يعتمدوا כ، يعتمدوه 8

2 هرجريزيم [ הרגריזים | 8 ال... هشليشي ] ال המקום אשר امر לו  
 האלהים ביום השלישי



the verse division: according to their reading, the verse ends with 'God' (*ha-elohim*); they take "on the third day" (*bay-yom ha-šēlīšī / bayyom aššēlīšī*) to be the beginning [of the following verse]; we, by contrast, take it to be the end of the verse.

Another argument adduced [by the ancients] with regard to the underlying question is a passage in the story of Jacob, peace upon him: On his way from Beersheba to Ḥarrān, he had a dream and gave it the following interpretation: "[How fearsome is this place!] This can be but the house of God, and this is the gate of the heavens." [Gen 28:17] According to one exegetical tradition, this means that it is the place that ought to be fit for the worship of God – for God's having a house is inconceivable – and a place where prayers are answered and where [God] bestowed [His] compassion as per His saying "and this is the gate of the heavens". It is in fact the symbolic abode of the angels, may God's favour be upon them, and that is what is meant by 'chosen place'.

الفصل، فالفصل عندهم على هاهيم وجعلوا بيوم هشليشي  
[530] ابتداء ونحن نجعله | فصلا.

3 ومن احتجاجهم في أصل المسألة ما ورد في قصة

פרשת ויצא  
(בר' כח:י)  
בר' כח:יז

يعقوب، عليه السلام، عند توجهه من بئر السبع إلى حرّان

من منامه، وتفسيره له بقوله اين زه كي ام بيث الهيم وزه

شعرا | هشميم. ومعنى هذا أنه الموضوع الذي يجب كونه

[609 פ

مؤهلاً لعبادة الله تعالى، إذ لا يصحّ أن يكون لله بيتاً،

[490 כ

وهو الموضوع الذي يُستجاب فيه الدعاء وأنزل الرحمة

حسب قوله وزه شعرا | هشميم على أحد التأويلات. שם [609 פ

ولكنه منزل الملائكة أماره، رضوان الله عليهم، وهذا هو

مفهوم مقوم مبحر.

1 | فالفصل] - 1 | وجعلوا] ويجعلوا כספ | 2 | ابتداء] ابتد

كلام יכפ | فصلا] כאל الكلام / כאלה كلام ونقول אשר אמר לו

האלהים ביום השלישי יכנפ | 3 | قصة] قضية כס | 4 | عند

עندמא כנפ | توجهه] توجه כנפ | בئر السبع] בئر سبع א | 5 | من<sup>2</sup>

ومن 5 | من منامه] ومنامه יכפ | بقوله] وبقوله 5 | ام] - י

6 | هشميم... 11 | شعرا] - פ | 7 | لله] - כנ, | لله 8 | وهو] وإنما

הו יכנ | الموضوع] موضع 8 | وأنزل] وأنزل יכנ, | وتنزل 8

9 | وزه] - י | التأويلات] التأويلين יספ | 10 | منزل] تنزل (?) 8

أماره] - 8 | عليهم] - א יכנפ, | اماره (?) 8 | هو] - יכנפ

1 | هاهيم] האלוהים | بيوم هشليشي] ביום השלישי | 5 | اين...

هشميم] אין זה כי אם בית אלהים וזה שער השמים. שחאדה, ترجمة,

ج. 1, ص. 130-131. | 9 | وزه... هشميم] וזה שער השמים

11 | مقوم مبحر] מקום מבחר

Someone may object and say: This is a dream and it is therefore inadmissible that its *prima facie* meaning should be identical with its inner meaning. Don't you see that in this dream God is standing on a ladder? This is an impossible absurdity in relation to Him. This proof is therefore inconclusive. It is a mere conjecture, all the more so as it is not certain whether Jacob, peace upon him, was actually acting as a prophet [i.e. foretelling the future ] when he had his dream vision.

We would then reply to him: the messenger [*scil.* Moses], peace upon him, testified to the veridicality of the dream by saying “[And he built there an altar and he called the place El-Bethel,] for there God was revealed to him when he fled from his brother” [Gen 35:7] and once again by stating that “God appeared to Jacob again when he came [from Paddan-Aram, and He blessed him]” [Gen 35:9]. The word עוּד, which means ‘again’, was inserted in reference to the angels that appeared to him when he was on the move [< Gen 28:12 & 35:7] and the angel who said to him in the dream: “I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel” [Gen 31:13]. Given that the prophet, peace upon him, confirmed to us the veridicality of all this, it is pointless for you to question whether Jacob was acting as a prophet at that time; instead, we content ourselves with the testimony of the prophet. The same holds true with regard to the question of whether his interpretation of the dream is conceivable. The fact

ولقائل أن يقول: هذا منام، وليس يجوز أن يكون  
ظاهره بباطنه. ألا ترى أن من جملة هذا المنام أن الله قائم  
3 على السُّلم، وهذا مستحيل عليه سبحانه، ولا يكون دلالة  
قطعيةً، بل على سبيل الظنّ، لا سيما وما ثبت أن يعقوب،  
عليه السلام، حين رؤيته المنام أنه تنبّى.

[ا 25 {134} ب] فحينئذ نجيبه أنّ الرسول، عليه السلام، | شهد بصحة

المنام بقوله، كي شم نجله اليو هالميم ببرحو مفني احيو، بر' له: 2

كذلك قوله ويراه الهيم ال يعقب عود بباو، | لأنه إنّما [468 ي] بر' له: 8

9 عطف عود الذي معناه <أيضا> على ما كان من ظهر

الملائكة | له وقت مسيره. وكذلك في قول الملائك له أيضا [ا8 x]

في المنام انكي هال بيت ال. وإذا كان النبي، عليه السلام، بر' لا: 10

12 قد حقق ذلك فينا، غنى في مناظرتك في نبوة يعقوب في

ذلك الزمان، وكفانا في ذلك شهادته، عليه السلام. | [531 د]

وكذلك الكلام في صحة تأويله المنام، ولا يضر ذلك ما

١ أن<sup>1</sup> - | وليس [ ولا د | أن يكون] - ي د ن ف | ٢ قائم [

قائماً ي د ن س ف | ٣ سبحانه] سبحانه وتعالى ي د ن ف | ٤ وما [

ما د | ٥ حين رؤيته [ حينما رأى هذه الرؤية د | حين... 3

السلام ] - س س | رؤيته... أنه [ رأى هذه الرؤية د | ٧ المنام] هذا

المنام د ن | نجله] نغلا د ف | ٨ بباو] بباو ممدن ارم ي د

٩ ظهر] ظهور د ف | ١٠ له] - د ف | ١٢ فينا... مناظرتك] كفانا

قناة ي د ن ف | يعقوب] السيد يعقوب ي | ١٤ ما] م م

٧ كي... احيو] كي شم نغلا (!) ا ليو الهالهم ببرحو מפני אחיו.

٨ ويراه... بباو] ويراه [الهيم ال يعقب عود בבאו | ٩ عود<sup>2</sup>

عود | ١١ انكي... ال] انكي هال بيت ال

that it contains things which are inadmissible in His regard does not impair [our position], because it is not interpreted according to its prima facie meaning, like many other texts of Scripture whose interpretation is at variance with their prima facie meaning.

The proof is, however, incomplete without two additional constituents, one being that the scene of the dream is Mount Gerizim, and the second that the acts of divine worship which He has enjoined on the Israelites concur with the totality of what [Jacob] meant by saying “This can only be the house of God !” [Gen 28:17]

As for the first constituent, it has already become clear that the scene of the dream was Luz, and thereafter that Luz is identical with Bethel, as per His saying “And Jacob came to Luz in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel.” [Gen 35:6] Earlier on, we have already explained that Bethel is identical with Mount Gerizim. From this it follows that Mount Gerizim was the scene of the dream.

As for the second constituent: up to the time when the Israelites entered into the land, no acts of divine worship related to the sanctuary had been enjoined on Jacob, peace upon him, and his children that would justify to call the scene of the dream

تضمّنته ممّا [لا] يجوز عليه، سبحانه، لأنه يُحمَل على غير  
ظاهره، كنصوص كثيرة وردت في الكتاب، وهي تعدل  
بها عن ظاهرها.<sup>3</sup>

لكن لا يتمّ الدليل إلا بأمرين: أحدهما أن موضع المنام  
هو هرجيزيم، الثاني أن يكون ما كلفه لبني اسرائيل من

العبادة | عليه هو جملة ما عني بقوله اين زه كي ام بيت | بر' كه: 1  
[610 פ] |  
[19 ב] |  
[491 ג] |  
الهميم.

أمّا الأوّل، فقد بينّ أن موضع المنام هو لوزه، وبينّ بعد

هذا أن لوزه هو بيت ال بقوله ويبا يعقب لوزه | اشر | بر' له: 1  
بارص كنعن هوا بيت ال. وبينّا بما تقدّم أن بيت ال هو  
هرجيزيم، فموضع المنام هو هرجيزيم.

12 وأمّا الثاني، فإنّه لم يكن على يعقوب، عليه السلام،  
وأولاده إلى حين دخول بني اسرائيل إلى البلاد شيء من  
العبادات المتعلّقة بالقدس ما يصحّ أن يسمّى موضع المنام

1 سبحانه [ سبحانه وتعالى ] 2 لا يحمل | لا يحمل 3 | غير -  
4 ظاهره [ ظاهرها ] 5 تعدل | يعد 6، يقول 7 | 3 عن  
على 8 [ ما ] 9 [ ما ] 10 [ وبين... لوزه ] - 11 [ هذا ] هذه 12 [ هو ]  
هوا 13 [ هو ] - 14 [ وأما ] فاما 15 [ يعقوب ] السيد يعقوب 16  
عليه السلام - 17 [ المتعلّقة ] المتعلقات 18

19 هرجيزيم [ הרגריזים ] | 20 اين ... الهميم [ אין זה כי אם בית אלהים ]  
21 لوزه [ לוזה ] | 22 لوزه<sup>1</sup> [ לוזה ] | بيت ال [ בית אל ] | ويبا... ال [ ויבא  
יעקב לוזה אשר בארץ כנען הוא בית אל ] | 23 بيت ال<sup>2</sup> [ בית אל ]  
24 هرجيزيم [ הרגריזים ] | 25 هرجيزيم [ הרגריזים ]

'House of God' ('Bethel'). Hence, [this name] must relate to the acts of divine worship that the Israelites were going to be instructed to perform there [*viz.* at the sanctuary].

Someone may raise the following objection: It is possible that Jacob, peace upon him, was enjoined to perform acts of divine worship that were unknown to him, or it could be a reference to the building of the altar and other things on-site, as per His saying: "Rise, go up to Bethel and dwell there and make an altar there to the God [who appeared to you when you fled from Esau your brother]" [Gen 35:1] as well as "And this stone that I set as a pillar will be a house of God, [and everything that You give me I will surely tithe it to You]." [Gen 28:22] Hence, this entire [proof] is inconclusive and does offer no more than a hypothetical interpretation.

\*\*\*

You should know that after the entrance into the Land, [God] enjoined [upon the Israelites] to present burnt offerings and communion sacrifices on either Mount Gerizim or Mount Ebal. The place where after the entrance into the Land burned offerings and communion sacrifices were presented is the chosen place. It follows that either Mount Gerizim or Mount Ebal is the chosen place.

ביִּית אֵל، فیبقی أن يكون مصروفاً إلى ما كلفوا به بني  
 اسرائيل فيه من العبادات.

3 ولقائل أن يقول: إنه قد يمكن أن يعقوب، عليه  
 السلام، قد كلف عبادات لم يعرفها أو يكون إشارةً إلى

בר' לה:א

بناء المذبح فيه وغيره لقوله قوم على بيت ال وشب شم

בר' כח:כב

[469 י] وعشه شم مزبح، وتماه إلى قوله وهابن هزاث | אשר شمתי

مصبه يهيه بيت الهيم وتماه. وجميع هذا لا يقطع به،  
 وأكثر ما فيه احتمال التجويز.

9 اعلم أن هر جريزيم أو هر عييل بعد دخول الديار أمر

[8 د] بأن تقرب عليه علوث وشليم، والموضع الذي | تصعد عليه

[532 د] الصعائد وتقرّب عليه القرابين | بعد دخول الديار هو مقوم

[611 ف] مبحر، | فهر جريزيم أو هر عييل مقوم مبحر.

1 فيبقي [ فبقي آ ي د ن ف | كلفوا به ] كلفونه آ ي ن ف | 3 يعقوب [  
 السيد يعقوب ي | 4 كلف ] كلفت آ | يعرفها [ يعرفها ] نعرفها ي د ف،  
 تعرفها آ | 6 وتماه ] - آ | 7 يهيه... الهيم ] - آ | 8 التجويز ]  
 التحرير 5 | 9 أو ] هو 5 | 10 يأن ] أن آ ي ن ف | تقرب ] يقرب ي ف  
 تصعد ] يصعد ي ف | 11 وتقرّب ] ويقرب ي ف | 12 فهر جريزيم ]  
 فاهر جريزيم آ

1 بيت ال [ بيت ال | 5 قوم... مزبح ] قوم علوا بيت ال وشب شم

وعשה شم מזבח | 6 وهابن... الهيم ] وهابن הזאת אשר شمתי מצבה

יהיה בית אלהים | 9 هر جريزيم ] הרגרזים | هر عييل ] הר עיבל

10 علوث وشليم ] علות وشלמים | 11 مقوم مبحر ] מקום מבחר

12 هر عييل ] הר עיבל | مقوم مبحر ] מקום מבחר



The elucidation of the minor premise is His saying “And it shall be when you cross [the Jordan]” [Deut 27:4] up to “and offer up upon it burnt offerings to the Lord your God.” [Deut 27:6] According to our text version, this place is Mount Gerizim [Deut 27:4 (S)]; for those who adhere to the ‘black version’ it is Mount Ebal [Deut 27:4 (M)].

The elucidation of the second [i.e. major] premise is His saying “Watch yourself, lest you offer up your burnt offerings in any place that you see fit. Rather, in the place that the Lord has chosen” [Deut 12:13-14 (S)] up to the end of the verse. Moreover, Scripture has prohibited to offer up any kind of sacrifice after the entrance into the land except in the chosen place [Deut 12:5-6 (S)] and [commanded] to obliterate the invocation of idols and idolatry in all places, as per His saying: “[And you shall destroy their name from that place.] You shall not do thus for the Lord your God!” [Deut 12:4 (S)] and “You shall not do as all that we do here today, [each man what is right in his eyes]” [Deut 12:8 (S)]. On the other hand, it follows by necessity from the fact that burnt offerings and communion sacrifices were offered on Mount Gerizim that

א 26 {135}ב] بیان الصغرى بقول الكتاب الشريف | وهيه بعبركم إلى دב' כזד:

3 وقوله وهعليث عليو علوث ليهوه الهيك، فعندنا هرجريزيم  
وعند أصحاب النسخة السوداء هر عييل. דב' כזו:

[עד כאן ב] وبيان الثاني | قوله هشمر لك فن | تعلمه علوثيك بكل [נ"ש] דב'  
 [כ 492] همقوم اش تره كي ام بمقوم اش بحر يهوه وتمامه. ثم أن יב:יג-יד

[ק' 38א] الكتاب الشريف نهى عن تقريه شيء من القرايين بعد  
دخول الديار إلا في الموضع المختار وإبادة ذكر عبادات

الأصنام في كل موضع لقوله لا تعשו كن ليهوه الهيك [נ"ש] דב' יב:ד

9 وقال لا تعשו ككل اشرا نحنو عسيم فه هيوم. ومن وجه [נ"ש]  
آخر يلزم من تقريه علوث وشليم عل هرجريزيم أن דב' יב:ח

1 بقول] يقول 1 | 2 عليو] عليهو؟ 3 | 4 أصحاب... السوداء]  
اليهود 2, أصحابنا اليهود 5 | 5 همقوم] مقوم 5 | وتمامه] - 1  
6 نهى... 9 هيوم] ונהי עז תקריב שי מן אלקראבין בעד דכול  
אלדיאר אלא פי אלמוצע אלמכתאר בקו' לא תעשו כן ליי' אלהיכם  
בעד דכר עבאדאת אלאצנאם פי כל אלמואצע ואסתתנא במקום  
מבחר כקו' לא תעשו ככל אשר אנחנו עשים פה היום וג' ( ונהי  
ען תקריב شيء من القرايين بعد دخول الديار إلا في الموضع المختار  
بقوله لا تعשו כן ליי' אלהיכם بعد ذکر עبادת الأصنام פי כל  
المواضع واستثناء במקום מבחר كقوله لا تعשו ככל אשר אנחנו  
עשים פה היום וג' ) ק' 1

1 وهيه بعبركم] והיה בעברכם | 2 وهعليث... الهيك] והעלית... ההיך  
עולת ליהוה אלהיך | 3 هرجريزيم] הרגריזים | 4 هر عييل] הר עייל  
4 هشمر... يهوه] השמר לך פן תעלה עלתיך בכל מקום אשר תראה  
כי אם במקום אשר יבחר יהוה | 8 لا... الهيك] לא תעשו כן  
ליהוה אלהיכם | 9 لا... 2... هيوم] לא תעשו ככל אשר אנחנו עשים  
פה היום | 10 علوث... هرجريزيم] עלות ושלמים על הר גריזים

it is the chosen place. We point this out, because burnt offerings and communion sacrifices were only offered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting<sup>41</sup> which is the Lord's Tabernacle.

Concerning burnt offerings Scripture states: "If his offering is a burnt offering, ... [he shall bring it] to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" [Lev 1:3], and with respect to "And if his offering is a communion sacrifice" [Lev 3:1] it states: "and he shall slaughter [his offering] at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting." [Lev 3:2] The provision to offer burnt offerings and communion sacrifices on Mount Gerizim entails therefore that the Tent of Meeting was located on it, for otherwise it would not have been admissible to offer the afore-mentioned sacrifices. This being the case, it necessarily follows that it is the permanent abode of divine presence. According to all doctrinal strands, this is the ultimate purport of what is meant<sup>42</sup> by His saying "the place that the Lord your God has chosen in which to make His name dwell. [Deut 12:11 (S)]

[Based on these premises], one comes by necessity to the conclusion that this very height is the sanctuary.

.....

<sup>41</sup> *Bāb 'ohel mo'ed* renders *petah' ohel mo'ed* [Ex 29:4ff.].

<sup>42</sup> Lit. The utmost of what can conceivably be meant ...

יִכּוֹן מְקוּם מְבַחֵר. אִמָּא קִלְנָא זֶלֶק, לְאֵן אֵלּוּת וְשִׁלְמִים אִמָּא  
תְּקִרְבָּא בְּחִצְרָא בָּב אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד, וְהוּא מִשְׁכֵּן יִהוּה.

[ק' 39א] אִמָּא אֵלְהֵה, פִּקּוּל הַכָּתָב הַשְּׂרִיף אִם עֵלֶה קִרְבְּנוּ אֵלֵי קוּלֵה ויק' א:ג

אֵל פִּתַּח אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד, וְקָל בִּי וָאֵם זִיחַ שְׁלִימִים וְשִׁחְטוּ פִּתַּח

ויק' ג:ב

אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד. פִּלְאֵמֵר בְּתִקְרִיב אֵלּוּת וְשִׁלְמִים | בְּהֵרְגִיזִים 470 י  
[612 ב -

יִקְטְצִי אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד בִּיּוֹה וְאֵלָּא יִבְשַׁח תְּקִרְבֵי הַקְּרָאִיִּים

הַמְּזָכָרָה. וְאִזָּא וְכִי זֶלֶק, וְכִי אִסְתַּבְּרָא הַסְּכִינָה בֵּה |

[א {136} 27א]

וְזֶה גַּיְהֵה מָא יִמְכֵּן אֵן יִכּוֹן מֵרָאדֵה בְּקוּלֵהוּ הֵמְקוּם אִשְׁרֵי בַּיָּם [נ"ש]

דב' יב:יא

יִהוּה אֵהֵיכֵם | בּוֹלְשִׁכֵּן אִתְּ שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְ עַל כָּל מִזְבֵּחַ. [533 ב]

פּוֹכֵב הַקְּצָא בְּכּוֹן הַגְּבִיל הַמְּזָכָר הוּא הַקְּדֹשׁ.

א [וְשִׁלְמִים] וְהִשְׁלִימִים א | 2 [תְּקִרְבָּא] יִקְרָנָא, יִקְרָבָא ב | בָּב [פִּתַּח ג  
3 [אֵלְהֵה] לְעֵלֵה כ פ | 4 [וָאֵם] - א כ נ | 5 [בְּהֵרְגִיזִים] פְּהוּ  
הַרְגִיזִים 5 | בְּהֵרְגִיזִים יִקְטְצִי [פְּהוּ מְקוּם אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד פְּהֵרְגִיזִים  
יִקְטְצִי י נ פ, פְּהוּ מְקוּם אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד בִּיּוֹה כ | 7 [וְכִי זֶלֶק] -  
י כ נ פ | בֵּה ] - כ | 8 [וְזֶה] וְהֵדָא הוּא (וְזֶה) ק | א [אֵן] מֵן  
אֵן כ | מֵרָאדֵה [מֵרָאדֵה אֵן פ, מֵרָאדֵה (מֵרָאדֵה) ק | 10 [הַקְּצָא  
בְּכּוֹן] [הַמְּקָצִי יִכּוֹן י כ נ | הוּא] וְהוּא כ נ פ

א [מְקוּם מְבַחֵר] מְקוּם מְבַחֵר | אֵלּוּת וְשִׁלְמִים [עֵלּוּת וְהִשְׁלִימִים  
2 [אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד] אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד | מִשְׁכֵּן יִהוּה [מִשְׁכֵּן יִהוּה | 3 א ...  
קִרְבְּנוּ] אִם עֵלֵה קִרְבְּנוּ | 4 א... מוֹעֵד] אֵל פִּתַּח אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד  
וָאֵם... שְׁלִימִים] וְאִם זִבַּח שְׁלִימִים | וְשִׁחְטוּ... מוֹעֵד] וְשִׁחְטוּ פִּתַּח אֵהֵל  
מוֹעֵד | 5 [אֵלּוּת... בְּהֵרְגִיזִים] עֵלּוּת וְשִׁלְמִים בְּהֵרְגִיזִים | 6 [אֵהֵל  
מוֹעֵד] אֵהֵל מוֹעֵד | 8 [הֵמְקוּם... שִׁמְ] הַמְּקוּם אִשְׁרֵי יִבְחֵר יִהוּה  
אֵלְהִיכֵם [בּוֹ לְשִׁכֵּן] אֵת שְׁמוֹ שֵׁם

If it were asked: Why should it not be conceivable that all divine sacrifices are offered in the chosen place, while He is at the same time worshipped by sacrifices offered on Mount Gerizim without it being the chosen place, rather by way of exception to the general rule of the scriptural text, in the same way as it is conceivable to stipulate that all sacrifices are offered on the altar of burnt offering [Lev 4:10] and later on, in the text that you have cited, it is stipulated that certain sacrifices should be offered on an altar of stones [Deut 27:5]?

The answer [to this question] would be [to say] that making an exception to the general meaning [of a scriptural text] is admissible, if it is evidence-based, but inadmissible without evidence, for otherwise it would be impossible for [God's] speech to constitute the grounds of stable signification.<sup>43</sup> Nothing in the text at hand entails that it has a restricted/particular meaning, and hence it does not deviate from its general meaning. It follows that Mount Gerizim must be subsumed under the general meaning of these texts.

Besides, this very question applies *a fortiori* to what the text version of the Jews entails, inasmuch as the specific sacrifices offered on Mount Ebal were exceptions

<sup>43</sup> On *istiḥnā' al-'umūm bi-dalil* in Mu'tazilī *uṣūl al-fiqh* see, for instance, 'Abd al-Ġabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī, *al-Muḡnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'adl*, vol. XVII (*al-ṣar'iyāt*), pp. 42-58; Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, Damascus: IFEAD, 1384/1964, pp. 260f. or, for that matter, any other *uṣūl al-fiqh* composition.

[ק' 41א] فإن قيل: لم لا يجوز أن تكون قرايين الله سبحانه

[9א]

وتعالى بأسرها مقربة في مقوم مبحر ويتعبد مع ذلك

3 بتقريب قرايين في هرجيزيم ولا يجب أن يكون مقوم

مبحر، بل مستثناة من النص العام، كما جاز أن ينص على

[כ 493] تقريب سائر القرايين على مزيج هعله، ثم ينص على

[ק' 41ב] تقريب قرايين ما على مزيج انيم بالنص الذي أوردتموه.

فالجواب أن استثناء العموم يجوز بدليل ويمتنع بغير

دليل، والآ لم يصح أن يثبت للخطاب وجه يدل عليه،

9 وهاهنا لا وجه يقتضي التخصيص، فلا يعدل عن عمومته.

فوجب دخول هرجيزيم تحت تلك النصوص العامة.

[ק' 42א] ثم يرد هذا السؤال على مقتضى نسخة اليهود أكثر، لأن

12 هر عييل قرب عليه هذه القرايين الخاصة<sup>1</sup> مستثناة من

1 [ لا - ינפ ] [ تكون ] יכז ( يكون ) ק1פ | 2 | ويتعبد ] ويفيد כ, وتعبد פ | ويتعبد... مبحر ] - ג | مع ] - 5 | 3 | ولا... يكون ] ولا يكون 5 | يجب أن ] - ינפ | 4 | כא ] כמא קד ( كما قد ) ק1 | ينص ] النص פ | 5 | تقريب ] - ינפ | تقريب سائر ] سائر تقريب 5 | על ] لולי ( على ) ק1 | ينص ] نص ינספ | 6 | על<sup>2</sup> ] في כנספ | أوردتموه ] أوردتوه כפ | 7 | يجوز ] يكون כנס | ويمتنع... دليل ] ومنعه بدليل ינספ | 8 | والآ ] لולא דלך ואלא ( لولا ذلك والآ ) ק1 | للخطاب ] الخطاب כספ, ללכטאב מן אלחכים סבחאנה ( للخطاب من الحكيم سبحانه ) ק1 | 9 | لا ] - כנפ | 11 | مقتضى ] מוגב ( موجب ) ק1

2 مقوم مبحر ] מקום מبحר | 3 هرجيزيم ] הרגריזים | مقوم مبحر ] מקום מبحר | 5 على... هعله ] על מזבח העלה | 6 مزيج انيم ] מזבח אבנים | 10 هرجيزيم ] הרגריזים | 12 هر عييل ] הר עייל

1 في هاشم א: أي عقل يقبل أو ينهض أن הר لا يبل يقرب عليه

to the general rule which requires that all sacrifices are offered at the chosen place. Based on the first proof, it has already been established that Mount Gerizim is the chosen place, and hence the sacrifices have to be offered on it, given that the two heights are distinct.

In answer [to this objection, our Jewish opponent would say]: In our opinion, the text in question is not a condition. We rather think that it is a report about the entrance [into the land], the place of arrival, and the settlement. It does not concern the residence in the land, but the entrance into it. For this reason, the text does not refer to some [sacrifices] to the exclusion of others. Yet, even if it was a condition, it would not impair [our position], inasmuch as the condition would only be valid during the initial phase [of the entrance into the land] without having any durable effect.

For God made it clear that these precepts<sup>44</sup> are obligatory for life and as long as [we] reside in the land, as per His saying: “All the days that you live on

.....  
<sup>44</sup> I.e. the provisions and regulations laid down after the initial phase of the entrance into the land, which are still valid in the present time.

النصّ العامّ المقتضي لتقريب سائر القرايين على مقوم  
مبحر، وقد يثبت بالدلالة الأولى | أن هرجريزيم مقوم [27 {136} 2]
   
مبحر، فوجب تقريب القرايين عليه | لتغاير الجبلين. [613 6]

جوابه: إن النصّ المذكور لم نقل بأنه شرط، بل هو [2 63 8]

عندنا خبر عن الدخول والمورد والسكنى، والكون في  
الديار لا يختصّ كما اختصّ ذلك بالدخول، فوجب أن لا 6  
تكون دلالاته مقصورة على بعض دون بعض. على أنه لو  
كان | شرطاً، لما ضرّ، لأنه إنّما كان يثبت شرطاً في [471 7]

9 البداية، لا للاستمرار.

لأنه، سبحانه، بين لزوم هذه الفرائض ما استمرت

الحياة، والمقام في البلدة لقوله كل هيميم اشر اتم حيمم عل <sup>דב' יב:א</sup>

2 وقد... مبحر] - י כ נ פ | 4 جوابه [פאלגואב (فالجواب) 2  
نقل] يقل י כ ס פ | شرط] משרוט (مشروط) 2 | 5 عندنا] -  
2 | خبر] تأخير י ס פ | عن] على 5 | والمورد]  
والموروث י כ נ ס פ | والسكنى] - 6، والتبلي 6 | والكون]  
والكرن؟ 4 | 7 تكون] יכוז (يكون) 2 | مقصورة] متصوره 6  
على] - 6 | 8 يثبت] ינית 6 | 9 البداية] الداية 6 | للاستمرار]  
لاستمرار י כ נ ס פ، פי אלאסתמרار ( في الاستمرار) 2  
10 سبحانه] سبحانه وتعالى 6 | 11 في البلدة] באלבלדה  
(بالبلدة) 2 | لقوله] כקולה (كقوله) 2

1 مقوم مبحر] מקום מבחר | 2 هرجريزيم... مبحر] הרגריזים מקום  
مبחר | 11 كل... هادمه] כל הימים אשר אתם חיים על האדמה

قرايين وقال عنه وאת הקללה על הר עיבל וינزل الذي قال عنه  
 وנתתה את הברכה על הר גרזים فرق بعيد بين مكان البركة لمكان  
 اللعنة.



the soil.” [Deut 12:1] The bottom line of what this text means is therefore that these precepts are obligatory for you from the time of your entrance [into the land] and forever, as long as life endures.

With respect to our text version, this question does not arise, because Mount Gerizim is the very place where all sacrifices have to be offered. According to our text version, no alternative place has been mentioned that would compel us to say that an exception has been made for some sacrifices to be offered there.

If it was argued: [Your point of view] entails that it would be up to us to choose on which of the two [heights] we would like to set up the Tent of Meeting and offer up sacrifices, in conformance with the two text versions. Accordingly, either of the two heights could then legitimately be regarded as the chosen place. However, this is not our position.

He would be answered as follows: the evidence proving that Mount Gerizim is the sanctuary has already been put forward. We have referred to the blessing-passage [Deut 11:27-29 (> Deut 28:1-14)] and the subsequent text [Deut 12:5-6] which stipulates that sacrifices ought to be offered on it and that it should be made an abode of divine presence. These texts necessitate that the later passage, which stipulates that sacrifices ought to be offered on Mount Ebal [Deut 27:4-7], constitutes an exception to [the general rule which requires] that all [sacrifices] ought to be offered at the sanctuary, that is Mount Gerizim. It follows that

هادمه. فصار محصول دلالة أن هذه الفرائض لازمة لكم

[534 1] مذ | تدخلون على طول الأيام واستمرار الحياة.

3 وأما بحسب نسختنا، فلا يرد هذا السؤال، لأن

هرجيزيم هو بعينه المقرب عليه جميع القرابين، إذ لم يذكر

غيره بحسب نسختنا حتى نقول بذلك إنه استثنى بعض

6 القرابين عليه.

[1ق 43 د] فإن قيل: يقتضي بحسب | النسختين أن نكون مخيرين

[53 5]

أيهما شئنا إسكان أهل موعذ وتقريب القرابين، فيكون

كل واحد من الجبلين يصلح أن يكون مقوم مبحر، |

[x{137}28 x]

[494 د] ونحن لا نقول | ذلك.

جوابه: قد تقدّم ما دلّ على أن هرجيزيم هو القدس،

12 وما ذكرناه من نص البركة وما عقبه من النص الموجب

تقريب القرابين عليه وإحلال السكينة وجب أن يكون ما

يأتي من بعد من النص على القربان بهر عيب مستثنى مما

15 يجب تقريبه في القدس، وهو هرجيزيم. فوجب أن يكون

١ دلالة [ دلالة ٥ | ٢ مذ | منذ ٥ | ٣ بحسب ] حسب ٥

٤ بعينه [ بذاته ٦ | ٥ نقول ] يقول ٥ | ٧ نكون ] يكون ٥ | ٨ شئنا [

ثبت ٦ ٧ ٥، سبباً ٥ | ٩ يصلح ] يصلح ٥ | ١٠ ذلك [ بذلك ٦

١٢ ذكرناه... القرابين ] - ٦ ٧ ٥ | ١٣ وجب ] واجب ٥ | ١٤ مما

فأ ٥

٤ هرجيزيم [ الهجريزييم | ٨ أهل موعذ ] أهل موعذ | ٩ مقوم مبحر [

مقوم مبحر | ١١ هرجيزيم [ الهجريزييم | ١٤ بهر عيب ] بهر عيب

١٥ هرجيزيم<sup>1</sup> [ الهجريزييم

Mount Gerizim is the sanctuary. If this is correct, then both text versions, in spite of their differences, concur in conveying the meaning that Mount Gerizim is the sanctuary.

If someone argued: If the text which requires that burnt offerings and communion sacrifices are offered on Mount Gerizim would indicate that the obligation to offer sacrifices on Mount Gerizim and to make it an abode of divine presence is valid forever, the same would hold true for any place where God's presence has dwelled, be it in the desert or in the land, until it eventually reached Mount Gerizim. This in turn would imply the existence of more than one sanctuary, indeed countless such places, and this is unsound.

He would be answered: The text which entails the obligation to set up places that are reserved for the worship of God only applies to the period immediately after the entrance into the land, as per His saying: "You are about to cross [the Jordan into the land of Canaan]" [Num 33:51], and likewise His saying "These are the statutes and the laws [that you shall keep to do in the land that the Lord, God of your fathers, has given you to take hold of it all the days that you live on the soil]." [Deut 12:1]

[614 פ] القدس | هرجريزيم. واذا صحّ ذلك، فالنصّين، وإن اختلفا،

لا تختلف دلالتها، على أنّ هرجريزيم هو القدس.

[ק1 46א] فإن قيل: لو دلّ بالنصّ المقتضي تقريب علوث وشليم

بهرجريزيم على وجوب إدامة التقريب بهرجريزيم وإسكان

سكينة الله به، لوجب مثل ذلك في كلّ موضع نزل به

السكينة في البرية والديار حتى وصلت إلى هرجريزيم. وفي 6

ذلك ثبوت القدس غير واحد، بل مواضع لا تحصى،

وذلك باطل.

[472 י] جوابه: إنّ النصّ المقتضي | وجوب تعمير المواضع

المؤهّلة لعبادات الله سبحانه إنّما اقتضى ذلك بعد دخول

الديار لقوله كي اتم عبريم وقوله أيضا اله هتقيم وهمشפטيم

במ' לגונא וכר'  
דב' יב:א

12 وتماه.

1 הרגריזים<sup>2</sup> | هو هرجريزيم כ | وإذا [ فإذا כ | فالنصّين ] פקד צאר

אלנצאן (فقد صار النصان) ק1 | א 3 | بالنصّ ] אלנין (النص) ק1

5 به<sup>1</sup> ] - י כ ס פ | نزله ] נזלת כ פ, תרכת ( ترکت) ק1

6 وصلت ] אלוצול (الوصول) ק1 | 7 | ثبوت ] כוז (كون) ק1

9 جوابه ] פאלגואב ( فالجواب) ק1 | | المواضع ] المواضع ס

10 سبحانه ] سبحانه وتعالى י כ נ פ

1 הרגריזים<sup>2</sup> | הרגריזים ] הרגריזים | 3 | علوث ...

بهرجريزيم] עלות ושלמים בהר גריזים | 4 | بهرجريזים<sup>2</sup> | בהרגריזים

6 הרגריזים] הרגריזים | 11 | כי ... عبرים] כי אתם עברים | اله ...

והמשפטيم] אלה החקים והמשפטים

If he then objected: The scope of legal validity of the text in question is restricted to the entrance into the land. On what grounds is it conceivable to extend its validity to people who do not fall within the scope of its restricted applicability, namely all generations of Israelites who are not part of the generation that entered the land, indeed, to them exclusively, to the extent that it cannot comprise anyone else?

Take note that some of their deluded devotees were misled merely by its name [i.e. *al-quds*]<sup>45</sup> and the fact that many gentiles accept it as genuine. As for the naming, it is not worth a rush. The fact that many gentiles accept it as genuine does not help them either, because the reason why the gentiles accept it as genuine is distinct from their reason. Unlike them, [the gentiles] do not believe it to be the *qibla* and the same applies to their other beliefs relating to the notion of 'the chosen place'. Moreover, the exact location of the place to which these beliefs are attached is not the same for them and the gentiles. The difference therefore concerns both the reason behind the belief and the location to which the belief is attached. Its size notwithstanding, the number of people in this group is not larger than the community of those who hold all kinds of erroneous beliefs about God, such as incarnation and corporealism.

.....  
<sup>45</sup> *Scil.* Jerusalem being named *al-Quds* ('The Sanctuary').

- فإن قيل: النص المذكور مشروط في الدلالة بالدخول [2q 63א]
- إلى الديار، فمن أين صحّة | تناوله لمن لا يصحّ فيه الشرط، [28א {137}ב]
- 3 وهم غير الداخلين من أجيال بني اسرائيل، وفي ذلك اختصاصاً بهم حتى لا يصحّ تعديّه إلى سواهم؟
- 6 واعلم أن بعض | المغرورين منهم اغترّ بمجرد التسمية وباعتقاد أمم كثيرة فيه. أمّا التسمية فلا اعتبار لها. وأمّا اعتقاد أمم كثيرة، فذلك لا ينفعهم، إذ ليس جهة اعتقاد الأمم فيه هو جهة اعتقادهم، لأنهم لا يعتقدونه قبلةً كما يعتقدونه، وكذلك باقي اعتقادهم في مفهوم مقوم مبحر، ولا أيضاً الموضع المعين المعتقد هو واحد لهم وباقي الأمم. [495ב]
- 9 هذا الجمع مع كثرته بأكثر من الجماعة المعتقدة | في الله [9ע {כאן}ס]
- [615פ] سبحانه وتعالى ضروب | الباطل كالاتحاد والتجسيم.

1 | فإن | فن 5 | النص المذكور | - 5 | مشروط |  
 مشروطاً | 5 5 5 | مشروط... الدلالة | مشروط دلالاته 2q  
 بالدخول... الديار | בדכול אלדיאר ( بدخول الديار ) 2q | 3 | من  
 أجيال | מן אלצדר אלأول מן אנیאל ( من الصدر الأول من  
 أجيال ) 2q | 4 | اختصاصاً | אכחצאץ מלמונה ( اختصاص  
 مضمونه ) 2q | 5 | بعض | نقض 5 | المغرورين | المغورين 5 | التسمية  
 وباعتقاد | اعتقاد 5 5 | التسمية... فيه | اعتقادات كثيرة 5  
 التسمية... وأمّا | - 1 | 6 | فيه... كثيرة | - 5 5 | أمّا... كثيرة | - 5  
 7 | فذلك | 5 | جهة | جميع 4 | 9 | كما يعتقدونه | - 1 | باقي |  
 في 4 | 10 | وباقي | والباقي 5، ولباقي 3 | 13 | كالاتحاد |  
 كالأحياز 5 5 5

9 مقوم مبحر [מקום מבחר]

You should also note that all those who contest [the existence of] the chosen place in the present time argue that its existence is contingent on God's imposition to build the Tabernacle on it, and given that the Tabernacle does not exist anymore today, the obligation to turn towards it is not applicable nowadays.

He would be answered: the meaning of *baḥar* ['he has chosen'] in Hebrew is to select what is most suitable to achieve the intended goal, and to aim for the [best] possible of its kind. The prophet, peace upon him, said, for instance: "Choose men for us and go out, [battle against Amalek tomorrow. I shall take my station on the hilltop, with the staff of God in my hand.]" [Ex 17:9], in the sense of picking those who are most suitable to fight and counting on them for this purpose. Other examples are His saying "And the man whom the Lord chooses, he is the holy one" [Num 16:7], or "And He chose their seed after them, [chose you from all the peoples as on this day]" [Deut 10:15], or "[For you are a holy people to the Lord your God.] You the Lord has chosen [to become for Him a treasured people among all the peoples that are on the face of the earth]" [Deut 7:6]. Hence, when he chooses a particular place, it means that He selects that place by assigning to it specific acts of divine worship which are exclusive to it. This is not confined to the building of the Tabernacle, but also includes other acts of divine worship that are contingent on [the chosen place]. The building of the Tabernacle is therefore a corollary [of the chosen place], rather than being its constitutive condition. The place was chosen for the purpose of enunciating the divine name.

اعلم أن جملة من طعن في مقوم مبحر في هذا الزمان في أنه مبنياً (!) على أنه سبحانه قد كلف إقامة المشكن به،<sup>3</sup> وإذا كان المشكن اليوم غير موجود، فالتكليف بالتوجه إليه اليوم منتفي.

وجوابه: إن معنى بحر في اللسان العبراني هو تمييز الأفضل مما يعود على الغرض المقصود، وإرادته له على

[x{138}29 x] الوجه الممكن في مثله، كقول النبي، عليه السلام، | بحر ش م' יז:ט

لنو انشيم بمعنى تمييز من يصلح من الناس للقتال والتعويل عليهم فيه، وقوله وهيه هايش اشر يبحر يهوه، وقوله عز

9 [473 י] وجل ويبحر بزعم احريهم، | وقوله وبك بحر يهوه الهيك. دب' י:טו

فاختياره للموضع الخالص بمعنى تمييزه بما دل المكلفين ما

دب ז:י

خصه به من عبادته. فقد دخل إقامة المشكن فيه، كما دخل فيه غيره من العبادات المتعلقة به، فصار إقامة المشكن من توابعه لا من مقوماته. لأنه اختير لشرح اسم

١ أن - | جملة [ من جملة י כ נ פ | ٢ على [ عن י כ פ | سبحانه [ سبحانه وتعالى | ٣ اليوم<sup>١</sup> | الآن | ٥ بحر [ א א א א | اللسان اللغة | ٦ مما... 15... مثله - | ٧ | وإرادته [ وأراد به כ | ٧ في - | כ פ | ٨ من [ ما | ٩ عليهم [ عليه | عليهم فيه [ عليه فيهم | ١١ فاختياره [ فاختاره י כ נ פ | للموضع [ الموضع י כ נ פ | المكلفين [ المتكلفين | ١٤ لا من [ لان | مقوماته [ مقاومته כ، مقدماته | اختير [ اختير... الله [ أخبر شرح اسمه | لشرح شرح כ פ

١ مقوم مبحر [ مقوم مبحر | ٥ بحر [ بحر | ٧ بحر... انشيم [ بحر לנו انשים | ٩ وهيه... يهوه [ وهيه האיש אשר יבחר יהוה | ١٠ ويبحر... احريهم [ ويבחר בזרעם אחריהם | وبك... الهيك [ וכך בחר יהוה אלהיך



As we have already explained, the primary linguistic usage of the name of God, mighty and exalted, refers to its enunciation, while putting it down in writing is a derivative, secondary usage. [By default, Scripture] should be interpreted according to the primary rather than the derivative use of language.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, by saying “You shall not do [thus for the Lord your God!]” after having said “and you shall make their name perish from under the heavens” [Deut 7:24 (S)], He made an exception to the rule, just as He made an exception to His commanding the eradication of idolatry by perpetuating the invocation of God’s name, mighty and exalted, which is more appropriately done verbally than in written form. The building of the Tabernacle, however, belongs to the realm of the written. The *lām* in לשכניו [Deut 12:5 (S)] is asseverative and its intended meaning is “Verily, to make it dwell”, whereby the personal suffix relates to His name, mighty and exalted. His saying תדרשו [“you shall seek it”] is understood as an imperative-command to put the intended purpose into practice. The meaning [of ‘chosen place’] is therefore “The place where God wanted your tribes to enunciate His name and to give it a dwelling place”. This then is what they mean by [chosen place] in conjunction with all other acts of worship that are contingent on [the chosen place]. [These acts are effective], as long as no new condition is introduced which applies to things such as the dwelling place of God’s presence, the sacrificial altar, the anointed priest, and other things that might be subject to a condition which does not presently exist.

<sup>46</sup> A basic principle of Mu’tazilī hermeneutics; see, for instance, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *al-Mu’tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid Allāh, Damascus: IFEAD, 1384/1964, pp. 15-38.

الله، لأننا بيننا أن اسم الله عز وجل حقيقة في المنطوق مجاز في المكتوب والحمل على الحقيقة دون المجاز.

3 وأيضا، إنه استثنى بقوله لا تعسو بعد قوله وابدت اث [د 536] دب' ז:כד

شمم متحث هشميم. فكما أنه أمر بإبادة ذكر الأصنام فاستثنى | بدوام ذكر الله عز وجل، وذلك بالمنطوق أولى [536 د]

[616 פ] من المكتوب. فيكون إقامة المشكن | من التوابع. فيكون

اللام في لشكينو للتأكيد، فيصير في التقدير شكينو ويجعل [נ"ש] دب' [496 د] الضمير في واوه راجعاً إلى اسمه، عز وجل، ويجعل قوله |

تدرشو أمراً يقصد ذلك | واعتماده. فيصير المعنى الموضوع [א 138]29 [ב]

الذي أراد الله، سبحانه وتعالى، من أسباطكم شرح اسمه به

وإسكانه فيه. فذلك يقصدونه بالعبادة المتعلقة به متى لم

يكن لها شرط متجدد نحو ما يكون له شرط متعلق [12]

بالسكينة والمذبح والإمام الممسوح إلى غير ذلك مما هو

مفقود في هذا الزمان.

1 لأننا... الله] - י כ נ פ | عز وجل] جل وعلا נ | 3 وابدت]

وابدتم א | وابدت... هشميم] ואבדתם את שמם מן המקום ההוא [דב' יב:ג] כ י | 6 التوابع] المكتوب א | فيكون] ويكون כ נ

7 اللام] الكلام י כ נ פ | 8 في<sup>2</sup>] - נ פ | واوه] وواوه נ | 10 أراد]

أراده י נ פ | أسباطكم] أسباطهم פ | شرح] لشرح כ נ פ | 11 فيه]

فيه مسكينته י، به سكينته נ | فذلك] - י כ נ | فذلك يقصدونه]

فقصودونه כ נ פ | يقصدونه] تقصدونه י | به] به تعالى י כ פ

12 متجدد] متعدد א י פ، متقدر כ، متعذر נ | 13 الممسوح]

المسوح؟ א، المسموع פ | مما א

3 لا تعسو] لا תעשו | وابدت... هشميم] והאבדת את שמם מתחת

השמים | 7 لشكينו] לשכינו | شكينو] שכינו | 9 تدرشو] תדרשו

The Passover sacrifice in turn has no original relation to the sacrificial altar, because it has its roots in Egypt. Its occurrence therefore predates God's command to establish an abode for God's presence, and even more so its actual construction. On these grounds, the fact that one ought to go there during the festivals and the pilgrimages, [as per His saying] "Three times in the year [all your males shall appear in the presence of the Master, the Lord.]" [Ex 23:17 & 34:23] and even less so the fact that people frequently return to it and also visit there outside the festival season, as per His saying: "And there you are to go, [And you shall bring there ...]" [Deut 12:5f.] by which He refers to prayers, unblemished sacrifices and other ritual acts which to itemize would take too long, all this does not relate at all to the afore-mentioned things which cannot be put into practice these days.

If someone were to say that the *lām[ed]* in לשכינו is the conjunction of a final clause, meaning that "it has been chosen in order to dwell there."

He would be answered: If by 'dwelling' you mean the enunciation of God's name, it would be in line with our view. However, this does not depend on the [existence of the] Tabernacle. If, on the other hand, you mean by 'dwelling' the building of the Tabernacle, it would be wrong, inasmuch as it would correspond to the derivative, secondary usage of the word, as we have already explained. One only abandons the primary usage of a word for the sake of a derivative, secondary usage, if it is inevitable to do so. No such inevitability exists in the case at hand.

وأما ذبيح الفسح فليس هو من القرابين المتعلقة في  
الأصل بالمذبح، لأن الأصل في وروده إنما كان بمصر، ولم  
3 يكن بعد أمر الله سبحانه وتعالى بإيجاد السكينة فضلاً عن  
كونها موجودة. وكذلك الحضور في الأعياد وفي الحجوج  
شلس فعميم بشنه وتمامه، لا سيما من يجعل الدوران به،  
ش'م' כג:יז,  
לד:כג  
[נ"ש] דב'  
יב:ה  
6 وكذلك المسير إليه في غير الأعياد لقوله تعالى وبأثم شم  
474 [474] وتمامه، وقصده بالصلوات والتيمم | وغير ذلك مما يطول  
شرحه لا يتعلق بشيء مما تقدم ذكره من الأمور المتعدرة  
9 اليوم.

فإن قيل: إن اللام في لشكينو تكون لام الغرض،  
فيصير معناها اختيار للسكن.

12 فجوابه: إنك، إن عنيت بالسكن شرح اسم الله تعالى  
فيه، فذلك مذهبا ولم يتعلق بالمسكن، | وإن عنيت  
بالسكن إقامة المسكن، فهو باطل لما بيننا أن ذلك مجاز لا  
[617 פ] حقيقة، ولا عدول | عن الحقائق إلى المجاز إلا لضرورة،  
ولا ضرورة هاهنا.

٢ بالمذبح...الأصل] - ' כנפ | كان] كان يمضي כנפ | ٤ وفي  
وهي כנפ | الحجوج] الأعياد وهي الحجوج ' | ٧ والتيمم  
والعبادات ' כנפ | ٨ المتعدرة] المتعدرة כ | ١٠ اللام  
الكلام ' כנפ | تكون] يكون ' כנפ | ١١ فيصير] - ' כנפ | اختيار  
اختبر כנפ | ١٢ فجوابه] فحواه כנפ | إن] - כנפ | ١٣ وإن] وان  
ذلك ' | ١٥ لضرورة] تضرده פ

٥ شلس... بشنه] شلس פעמים בשנה | ١٠ لشكينو] לשכינו

You should also know that it has been established to be part of God's wisdom that it is inconceivable for Him to hide the meaning of what He says from those who are subject to His Law, or that He would even impose something on them that exceeds their capacity, as this would be evil, and the Creator, exalted, is aloof of all evil. This being the case, God must not speak in a way that may reasonably be given a certain meaning, and subsequently demand from a person who is subject to His Law the exact opposite of it, be it in all or certain respects.

We have already provided solid evidence to prove that Mount Gerizim is the sanctuary and there is nothing to add. Indeed, allowing to diverge from the *prima facie* meaning without a proof would cause us to be wary of anything in His speech, until we will eventually have lost trust in anything of what His speech contains.<sup>47</sup>

Someone may then ask: On what grounds did you claim that there is no evidence showing that the general meaning of His speech should be particularised? Is it because it diverges from its *prima facie* meaning without there being any supporting evidence?

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<sup>47</sup> Another basic principle of Mu'tazilī hermeneutics; see, for instance, 'Abd al-Ġabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī, *al-Muġnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'ādī*, vol. XVI (*al-nubūwāt*), pp. 347-55, 370-377 and vol. XVII (*al-šar'īyāt*), p. 42-58.

- 1 واعلم أنه ثبت من حكمته سبحانه أنه لا يجوز أن [ק 70א]  
يلبس على المكلف مراده حتى يكلفه ما لا يطيق، لأن [537 ב]  
2 ذلك قبيح، والباري تعالى منزّه عن القبائح. وإذا كان  
كذلك، وجب أن لا يخاطب سبحانه بخطاب يصلح  
للدلالة على معنى ما، ثم يريد من المكلف خلاف ذلك،  
3 إما من كل الوجوه أو من بعضها. 6  
4 وقد بينا دلالة قطعية عن أن هرجيزيم هو القدس بما [ק 70א]  
لا مزيد عليه. فجواز إخراجة عن ظاهر دلالاته بغير حجة [497 ב]  
5 يجعلنا على غير ثقة من شيء من خطابه سبحانه، حتى لا  
نتق بشيء مما تضمنه خطابه. 9  
6 ولقائل أن يقول: لم قلم إنه لا دلالة تدل على تخصيص [ק 70ב]  
خطابه العام، لأنه لم يصل (?) وخروجه عن ظاهره؟ 12

1 واعلم [اعلم א דנ | حكمته] جملته א | سبحانه [سبحانه] وتعالى [כנפ א | يلبس] [يلبث כנ, ينبت פ | لأن] [لا פ  
2 والباري تعالى [והו סבחאנה (وهو سبحانه) ק2 | القبائح] كل  
قبيح (كل قبيح) ק2 | وإذا... كذلك [פאדא צח دلך (فإذا صح  
3 ذلك) ק2 | أن [أن] أن يكون [כנפ א | سبحانه] سبحانه وتعالى [נ  
4 معنى] - א | ثم [لم כפ | ذلك] ما اقتضته دلالاته (ما  
اقتضته دلالاته) ק2 | 6 الوجوه [וגה (وجه) ק2 | أو... بعضها] وأمما  
من וגה דון וגה (وإما من وجه دون وجه) ק2 | 7 بينا [ביננא מן  
5 قبل (بيننا من قبل) ק2 | دلالة قطعية [דלאלה אלנץ (دلالة  
6 النص) ק2 | عن [على כנפ | عن... القدس] علي كون [אלקדס הו  
7 הר גריזים (على كون القدس هو הר גريزيم) ק2 | 8 فجواز [فلا  
8 يجوز [כנספ א | يجعلنا] نجعلها [נפ, تجعلها כ | ثقة] نفسه [כ  
9 سبحانه] - ק2 | 10 نتق [يثق כנ | خطابه] كتابه [כנפ א | 11 لم]  
10 لماذا [כנפ א | 12 وخروجه] واخراجة [ק2

7 هرجيزيم [הרגריזים]

He would be told in reply: Whatever may require [the general meaning of] His speech to be particularised does not depend on the person who is obligated by His Law. It is God who furnishes evidence for its particularisation. Particularisation required as a result of rational deliberation is only thwarted by an explicit statement in the Noble Book that supersedes it, and this requires careful examination of the Book.

If [our opponent] were to claim that the particularisation is grounded in prophetic pronouncements which are at our disposal and show that [the general meaning of the text] should be restricted to Jerusalem,

he would be told in reply: This is a controversial issue amongst yourselves, inasmuch as there are people among you – and they represent the intellectual elite (*al-ḥudūdāq*) –, who do not approve of the prophecies that entail the afore-mentioned [particularisation]. Then again there are the masses (*al-jamm al-ġafīr*) who accept them, [but are unable to make a compelling case for them].<sup>48</sup> Even if what they believe were correct,

.....  
<sup>48</sup> For the sake of clarity, I have added between square brackets the translation of a phrase from the long version of the treatise (²ᗑ) that has been omitted in the abridged version (x, v).

جوابه: لأنه لم يتصل بالملكف ما يقتضي تخصيص  
 [x10 5] خطابه، لأنه ينصب له دلالة على التخصيص، | ولم  
 3 يعارضه ما يقتضي تخصيصه بالنظر إلا ما ورد في الكتاب  
 الشريف من التعويض، وذلك باستقراء ما ورد في الكتاب  
 الشريف.

فإن قيل: التخصيص ما ورد بأيدينا | من النصوص  
 [x72 2q] الدالة على أن ياروشلم تقتضي التخصيص من كلام  
 [x {139} 32 a] الأنبياء.

فجوابه: إنكم مختلفين (!) في ذلك، فمنكم من لا يرتضي  
 [x72 2q] النبوات المقتضية لما ذكرتم، وهم الحذاق، ومنكم الجم  
 [475 1] الغفير من يصححه. فلو كان ما اعتقده | هؤلاء صحيحاً،

١ يتصل [ يصل ' כנפ | ٢ خطابه [ خطابه العام כ | لأنه...إلا ] -  
 כ | ينصب [ لم ينصب ' כנפ، لم يصل כ | ٣ ما ] - ' | بالنظر إلا ] -  
 ' כנפ | إلا [ إلى ٥ | ٤ من التعويض ] - ' כנפ | وذلك...  
 الشريف ] - ٥ [ باستقراء ] باستقراء ' כנפ | ما...الشريف [ ما ورد  
 في الكتاب الشريف من النصوص ' כנפ | ٦ قيل ] - נ | ورد ] -  
 ' ק2، هو כנ | النصوص [ النصوص الشريفة ' כנ | النصوص  
 الدالة [ אלנז ( النص ) ק2 | ٧ ياروشلم [ בירושלם '، בירושלים כ،  
 ירושלם ק2 | تقتضي [ يقتضي ' כ | تقتضي التخصيص ] מקתצי  
 ללכחציז ( مقتضى للتخصيص ) ק2 | ٩ مختلفين ] תחלפון  
 (تختلفون) ק2 | فنكم ] - ٥ | ١٠ الحذاق [ אלחדאק מנכם ( الحذاق  
 منكم ) ק2 | ومنكم ] منكم '، ومنهم ' | الجم [ והם אלגם ( وهم  
 الجم ) ק2 | ١١ الغفير [ الفقير ٥ | يصححه ] נصححه ٥ | فلو ٥  
 اعتقده [ اعتقده ' כנפ ٥

٧ ياروشلم [ ירו שלם



your thought leaders and the leaders of your community are better suited to know it, [given the commitment of how they apply themselves to the task]. Considering that they harbour doubts about this issue, one should pay no heed to what the masses adhere to. [If in spite of your zeal for this issue you are unable to make a compelling case for it, this is all the more true for us, who view this issue in an entirely dispassionate manner].<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, prophecies are contingent on miraculous signs [which confirm the veracity] of those who lay claim to prophethood. For those who did not witness the miraculous signs first-hand, the pertinent knowledge depends on the transmission of concurrent reports by groups of people for whom secret agreement, collusion and deception is inconceivable.<sup>50</sup> Reports that are transmitted by people of such qualities are by necessity a means to gaining knowledge of their informative content for anyone endowed with reason who heard these reports, irrespective of whether he/she is part of the religious community to which those transmitters belong and regardless of whether the knowledge of the transmitted information is [considered to be] necessary or acquired, though all the more so for those who consider the knowledge of the transmitted information to be acquired. In view of all that and given that we are successors of previous groups [of transmitters]

<sup>49</sup> See previous note.

<sup>50</sup> The discussion follows here closely parallel chapters on concurrent reports within Mu'tazilī prophetology and/or the *aḥbār*-section in *uṣūl al-fiqh*; see, among numerous other examples, Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hārūnī al-Buḥḥānī (d. 424/1032), *al-Muḡzī fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Ġadbān, Ṣa'da 1434/2013, vol. 2, pp. 96-117.

لكان حدّاقهم وأتمّتهم بمعرفته أولى. فلما ظهر منهم الشكّ

[618 ڤ] فيه، وجب أن لا يعتبر بما عليه الجمهور.

[572 2 ڤ] وإيضاً، إنّ النبوات المرجع فيها إلى ظهور الآيات

والأعلام على المدّعي النبوة والمرجع في العلم بالأعلام لغير

من يشاهدها إلى أخبار أهل التواتر، وهم الجماعات التي لا

6 يجوز على مثلها تعمد الكذب ولا التواطؤ والتشاعر.

[538 ڤ] وأخبار من هذه حالته يجب أن تكون طريقاً للعلم بخبرها

لجميع من يسمعها من العقلاء، كان من أهل الملة التي

9 هوؤلائك المخبرون من أهلها أم لا، وسواء كان العلم بخبر

الخبر ضرورياً أم استدلالياً، لا سيما من يرى أن العلم بخبر

الخبر استدلالياً. وإذا ثبت ذلك وكما خلفاء عن سلف

١ وأتمّتهم [خانحيتهم ڤ ڤ ڤ | أولى] مع سده الاحرقن عليها اولي  
( مع شدة الحرص عليه أولى)، أولاً ٥ | الشك [ اذتشكڤ  
(التشكك) ڤ ٢ | لا] - ڤ | ٣ النبوات... فيها] الامرغع في  
النبوات (المرجع في النبوات) ڤ ٢ | الآيات والأعلام] اذاعلام  
(الأعلام) ڤ ٤ | على... بالأعلام] - ٥ | والمرجع [المؤجل ڤ ڤ  
في العلم [بالعلوم ڤ ڤ | العلم بالأعلام] بالعلم والأعلام  
بالأعلام] والأعلام ڤ ڤ | ٥ | إلى] على ڤ ڤ | التواتر] - ٥،  
متواترة ڤ | الجماعات [الجماعة اڤ ڤ ڤ | ٧ حالته  
صفته ڤ ڤ، حاله ( حاله) ڤ | تكون] يكون ڤ، يكون  
(يكون) ڤ | بخبرها] - اڤ ڤ ڤ | ٨ | لجميع] بجميع ٥ | يسمعها  
سمعه اڤ ڤ، يسمعه | العقلاء [الفضلا بالعقل ڤ ڤ | كان  
كان اذاسامع (كان السامع) ڤ | التي] - ڤ | ٩ هوؤلائك  
أؤلائك ٥ | المخبرون [المخترون ٥، المنجدون | من<sup>2</sup>] - ڤ ڤ ڤ  
أم لا] - ڤ ڤ | بخبر الخبر] بذلك ڤ ڤ | ١٠ ضرورياً  
ضرورياً | ضرورياً أم] - ڤ | أم استدلالياً] واستدلالياً ڤ ڤ، أو  
استدلالياً ڤ | لا... استدلالياً] - ڤ ڤ | بخبر الخبر] بخبر الخبر ڤ ڤ  
١١ ثبت [صح] ڤ | وكما وكما | خلفاء] خلفاء، خلف ڤ

for whom collusive lying is inconceivable, it follows by necessity that our knowledge about the qualities of those [previous transmitters] must be on a par with what they know about them. And yet, we do not have any knowledge about it. Indeed, we believe that the opposite is true and that there is no truth to it, in spite of the fact that we mixed with your community, heard your reports and read your books which contain what you ascribe to them, with no reason [for us] to be deceptive. Hence the conclusion imposes itself that there is no truth to it.

At any rate, the defense of our position concerning Mount Gerizim does not depend on rejecting the prophecies of which they approve in contrast to us. Even if we approved of it, we would still be able to defend our position by telling you: Even if we were to grant you that their prophethood is authentic, it should still be possible to infer the correct way of acting from the scriptural prooftexts [within the Torah]

[ד 498] الجماعة لا يجوز أن تتفق على الكذب، فوجب | أن نعلم ما  
يعلمونه من حالها ضرورةً. ونحن لا نعلم شيئاً من ذلك، بل  
3 نعتقد ضده وأنه لا حقيقة له مع مخالطتنا لجماعتكم  
وسماعنا | أخباركم وقرائتنا لكتبكم المتضمنة ما تسندون  
[עד כאן  
א 32 {139} ב] إليهم من غير سبب للتلبیس. فوجب إذاً القطع على أنه لا  
6 حقيقة له.

[ק 244  
א 4 |] على أننا لا نفتقر في نصرة مذهبنا في هرجزيم إلى نفي  
ما تختصون به عنا من النبوات، أذ يمكناً نصرته مع تسليم  
[ק 245] ذلك بأن نقول لكم: أليس مع تسليمنا لكم صحة نبوتهم لا  
بد أن يصح الاستدلال بصحة العمل بموجب النصوص

١ أن 1 - י פ | تتفق [ تتفق י د | نعلم ] يعلم פ | ما [ ما ] من ٥  
٢ يعلمونه [ يعلموه א ٥ | ٣ نعتقد ] אנא מעתקדון (إنا معتقدون) ק 2  
مع مخالطتنا [ بخالطنا ٥ | لجماعتكم ] بجماعتكم ד נ ٥، لجماعتكم פ  
٤ أخباركم [ لاخباركم ) ק 2 | وقرائتنا ] وقرائنا ٥  
لكتبكم [ كتبكم י د פ، في كتبكم נ | المتضمنة... له ] - י ד נ ٥ פ  
٧ في 2 - י | في هرجزيم [ פי אן מקום מבחר הו הר גריזים (في  
أن מקום מבחר هو הר גריזים) ק 2، في ان ماقوم مبحار هو  
هاركيزيم لا | نفي ] אלכלאם פי אבטאל ק 2، الكلام في إبطال لا  
٨ تختصون [ יכתצון ק 2، یختصون لا | النبوات ] אלנבוה ק 2،  
النبوة لا | אذ ימכא ] וימכא י، או ימכא ד נ פ | ימכא ] קד ימכן ק 2، قد  
يمكن لا | ٩ أليس [ ليس ד | تسليمنا لكم ] تسلמנא ד ٥ פ | لكم 2 -  
י נ | نبوتهم ] نبوته ٥ | ١٠ أن... بصحة [ מן צחה ק 2، من صحة لا  
العمل ] אלעמל במא גא בה מוסי עליה אלסלאם ק 2، العمل بما جاء  
به موسى عليه السلام لا | بموجب النصوص [ מן אלנצון ק 2، من  
النصوص لا

٧ هرجزيم [ הרגרזים

to which we referred in order to prove that Mount Gerizim is the sanctuary, up to the time when [these prophets] appeared [on the stage of history]?<sup>51</sup>

If you answered in the affirmative, we would tell you: Would you therefore concede that the first generations of the Israelites were justified to embrace Mount Gerizim as sanctuary, or would you not? If you conceded that such is the case, you would leave Judaism and affiliate yourself with us. On the other hand, if you did not concede this, we and you would still be in agreement that these texts refer to either Mount Gerizim [according to our text version] or to Mount Ebal according to your text version.

By virtue of accepting those texts, you have no choice but to either admit or dispute that they are meaningful [on their own].<sup>52</sup>

If you were to admit that they are meaningful on their own<sup>53</sup>, you would contradict yourself and openly declare that it is admissible to impose an obligation that exceeds the capacity [of the obligated subject], inasmuch as you would acknowledge that [these texts] have an intelligible meaning, while at the same time changing your mind about what that meaning actually is. This is an outright contradiction.

If you said, however, that you approve of these texts, while at the same time disputing that they have an intelligible meaning,

we would respond: We have already demonstrated that they have an intelligible meaning. So what is it that prompts you to dispute that they have

<sup>51</sup> The argument is based on the rejection of the delaying of the elucidation (*ta'hīr al-bayān*) of revealed provisions. Delayed elucidation undermines a basic principle of Mu'tazilī hermeneutics, namely that every instance of divine communication must be meaningful and intelligible in conjunction with its immediate context and/or sound reasoning. Divine communication which is not sufficiently clear to be acted upon (*ṣiḥḥat al-'amal bi-mūjib al-nuṣūṣ*) is considered an act of futility; see, for instance, the parallel discussions in Abū Ṭālib Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hārūnī al-Buṭḥānī (d. 424/1032), *Ġawāmi' al-adilla fi uṣūl al-fiqh*, ms. Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana Ar. B49, fols. 23b-24b, ed. Mohamed Abdelrahman Eissa and Gregor Schwarb (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> Meaningful in the sense of "having an intelligible meaning that can be acted upon" (cf. preceding note). The parallel passage in the longer text version makes it clear that *ṣiḥḥat dalālatihā* is here equivalent to *ṣiḥḥat al-'amal bi-mūjib mā warada bihi Mūsā*.

<sup>53</sup> I.e. without further elucidation or qualification.

التي استدللنا بها على أن هرجريزيم هو القدس إلى حين  
ورودهم؟

3 فإن قاتم < نعم >، قلنا لكم: أفتسلمون أن صدراً من

أجيال بني إسرائيل اتخذ هرجريزيم قدساً | بحق أم لا [24 ج]

تسلمون؟ | فإن سلمتم، كنتم خارجين عن اليهودية [619 ف]

ولاحقين بنا. وإن لم تسلموا، | فنحن وإياكم متفقين على [210 ح]

تلك النصوص الدالة على هرجريزيم أو على هر عييل عندكم.

ولا يخلو إما أن تسلموا مع تسليمكم تلك النصوص صحة [246 ك]

دالاتها أو بطلان دالاتها، وتمامه. 9

فإن قاتم مع صحة دالاتها على الإطلاق، فقد ناقضتم | [539 د]

وصرحتم بجواز تكليف | ما لا يطاق، لأنكم اعترفتم بصحة [476 ي]

١ [التي] الذي **د ن ف** | استدللنا | استدلالنا **د ن س ف**  
هرجريزيم | هاركريزيم **لا** | ٣ | فإن **ا ك ٢**، إن **لا** | لكم - **د ن س**  
أفتسلمون | فتسلمون **د** | صدراً | أحد **د ن س ف** | ٤ | هرجريزيم |  
هاركريزيم **لا** | قدساً... بحق | بحق | انه قدساً | بحق | **ا ت ك ا د ا**  
صحيحاً | علي حق **لا** | ٥ | تسلمون - **ك ٢**  
سلمتم | اغبتمس | علي تسليمه **ك ٢**، أجبتم | إلى تسليمه **لا** | اليهودية |  
أليهودية | وموجب | أكبارة **ك ٢**، اليهودية | وموجب | أخبارها **لا**،  
اليهود **د ن**، طريقة اليهود **ف** | ٦ | تسلموا | تسلمون **د ن س ف** | فنحن |  
فحنوا **ف** | وإياكم | وأتم **د ن ف** | ٨ | إما | ما **د ن ا ن** - **ف** | تسلموا |  
يسلموه | ٩ | وتمامه - **د ن ف** | ١٠ | فقد ناقضتم | قعدنا  
لقولهم **د ن ف** | ١١ | وصرحتم | وصرتم **د ن ف** | اعترفتم |  
اعتبرتم **د ن ف**

١ هرجريزيم | الهجريزيم | ٤ هرجريزيم | الهجريزيم | ٧ هرجريزيم |  
الهجريزيم | هر عييل | هر عيبل

an intelligible meaning, and is that all of what we should examine?

If you answered: the reason [why we dispute it] is an elucidating statement that was heard from the messenger, peace upon him, which makes it impossible for us to accept that these texts mean what you take them to mean.

We would say in reply: Given that the reason which makes it impossible for you [to accept that these texts mean what we take them to mean] is a statement of the messenger, peace upon him, provided that your tradition is valid, rather than what has been transmitted in the name of your prophets, our discussion should focus on that reason instead of the statements of those prophets. Thus, by dodging the [previous] question, you stumble into a new one. And this is a fallacy.

مدلولها ورجعتم من صحّة مفهوم مدلولها، وذلك مناقضة صريحة.

3 فإن قلتم: سلّمنا تلك النصوص، لكنّ مع بطلان مدلولها. [46 2ق]

6 وهلّ بحثنا إلاّ عنه؟ قلنا: فقد أوضحنا صحّته، فما الوجه الدالّ لكم على بطلانه،

9 فإن قلتم: الوجه هو بيان سمع من الرسول، عليه السلام، منع من اعتقاد تلك النصوص على ما اعتقدتموها.

9 فنقول: فإذا الوجه المانع ما قاله الرسول، عليه السلام، لو صحّ ما روّيته دون ما نقل عن أنبيائكم، والكلام على هذا الوجه، لا على ما نقل عن أنبيائكم. فحينئذ تركتم [499 د]

12 المسألة وعدلتم إلى غيرها، فهذا غلط.

١ ورجعتم [ورخصهم ١١١ | من] عن ١١١ | مدلولها] مدلولها على غيره ١١١، مدلولها عن غيره ١١ | ٢ صريحة] صريحة ١، صريحة ١١ | ٣ لكن] لأن ١، بل (بل) ٢ | ٥ أوضحنا] اضحنا ١، وضنا ١ | ٦ وهل] هل ١١١ | ٨ اعتقاد] انعتقاد (اعتقاد) ٢ | تلك النصوص] دلالة تلج انصوح (دلالة تلك النصوص) ٢ | اعتقدتموها] اعتقدتموها عليها (اعتقدتموها عليه) ٢، اعتقدتموها ١١١ | ٩ فإذا] ماذا ١١١ | الرسول] الرسول سيدنا موسى ١، موسى (موسى) ٢ | ١٠ ما... نقل] لا ما رويتهم (لا ما روّيته) ٢ | نقل] قيل ١١١ | والكلام] وكلامنا ١١١ | لا... نقل] أعني النقل ١١١ | فحينئذ تركتم] فتركتم (فتركتهم) ٢ | تركتم] تركتم ١ | ١٢ فهذا] وهذا (وهذا) ٢ | فهذا غلط] وهو الوجه جدل ١، وهو بوجه جدل ١، وهو بوجه جلي ١ | غلط] وجه يدل ٥



We would however argue: the reason which prevents [you from accepting] the connection between the text and its meaning, namely a report that was heard from the messenger, peace upon him, must either be [evaluated as] either feasible or unequivocally certain. If it entails feasibility only, whereas what is signified by the text is certain, then [one has to go by the rule that] what is feasible cannot invalidate what is certain.

Should you, however, insist that [the alleged report] is unequivocally certain, then let us know what exactly it is. If you then said that it had once been unequivocally certain, but is not so any more in present times, and that its transmission has been discontinued, we would reply: And whence do you know that it had formerly been unequivocally certain, if not by means of a concurrent report? A concurrent report is reiterated time after time again. So how would it be possible that it was formerly known, but has vanished into oblivion in present times?

Yet, the reason which according to your allegation is an impediment [to your accepting the default meaning of these texts], if it is valid, is only an impediment to some people, but not to others. So, if it is an impediment to people other than us, how should it perforce also be an impediment to us in view of the well-known fact that what is an impediment to Zayd is not per se an impediment to 'Umar? If this were not the case, the same thing that impedes the impure from offering a sacrifice and entering the sanctuary would likewise be an impediment to the pure, and this is manifestly not true. This being so,

على أنا نقول: الوجه الذي منع انعقاد تلك الدلالة على مفهومها، وهو نبأ سمع من الرسول، عليه السلام، اقتضى تجويز ذلك أم ثبوته. فإن اقتضى الجواز ومدلول النص يدل على اليقين، والجائز لا يرفع اليقين.

[620 ب] فإن قلتم بثبوته، نخبرونا ما هو ذلك الوجه. | فإن قلتم:

6 « ليس ثابت اليوم، بل قد كان ثابتاً من قبل وانقطع

نقله»، قلنا: «فن أين علمت ثبوته من قبل إلا بخبر التواتر، وخبر التواتر حاصل في كل زمان وزمان، فكيف أن يعلم

9 من قبل وينقطع الآن؟

على أن هذا الوجه المانع على زعمكم مانع إن صح عند

قوم دون قوم. وإذا كان هذا الوجه مانعاً لغيرنا، كيف

12 يلزم أن يكون مانعاً لنا ومعلوم أن ما منع زيد لا يمنع

عمرو. وإلا كان ما منع الطمي من القربان ودخول

القدس يمنع الطاهر، وهذا ظاهر البطلان. وإذا صح ذلك،

١ نقول [نقول لكم] 2ق | الوجه [فألوغاه (فالوجه) 2ق الذي منع] ألامانع (المانع) 2ق | انعقاد [من اعتقاد 2ق | ٢ نبأ] ما 2ق، أما 2ق، بياض (بيان) 2ق | عليه السلام] - ١ | ٣ ثبوته [ثبوته 2ق | ٤ والجائز] تגויזה שך ואלשך (تجويزه شك والشك) 2ق | ٥ فإن 1... بثبوته [فأدא כאן תאבתא (إذا كان ثابتاً) 2ق | ذلك الوجه] - 2ق | ٦ ليس [ليس هو (ليس هو) 2ق، غير 2ق | ثابتاً] ثابت 2ق | من [ومن 2ق | ٧ قلنا] قلنا لكم (قلنا لكم) 2ق | ثبوته [بثبوته 2ق، بثبوته 2ق | ٨ وخبر التواتر] - 2ق | ١٠ هذا] - 2ق | المانع [مانع 2ق | على 2ق] - 2ق | ١١ قوم [قوما 2ق 2ق 12 مانعاً 2ق] مانع 2ق | ما منع 1 [مانع 2ق 2ق | 13 عمرو] لعمرو من حيث منع زيد (عمرو من حيث منع ويد) | وإلا 2ق | ما 2ق - 2ق | منع 2ق [قنع 2ق | الطمي] الطمان، الطمي 2ق | 14 الطاهر الظاهر 2ق | وإذا [فأدא (إذا) 2ق

the reason that for someone else proved to be an impediment to inferring a meaning [from a text] does not have to be an impediment to us, unless the very same reason that relates to them also relates to us. However, nothing related to us fulfils this function. Thus, the reason you cited is invalid.

We also do not accept your argument that Joshua, peace upon him, built a dwelling place for God's glory in Shiloh. According to our view, he made it dwell on Mount Gerizim.

Note that people are in agreement that the Law of the messenger, peace upon him, will not be abrogated, and that there is no prophet but him, and that those other prophets only arose to ward off harm from the community and to prevent the spread of corruption in their midst. On these grounds, no contradiction is admissible between what they say and the texts of the Torah. What the text of the Torah signifies should therefore be hinged upon, whereas their statements should be reinterpreted whenever they are incompatible with it.

فلو كان | وجهاً ثبت عند غيرنا منعه من الاستدلال، | لم [x11 ه]  
 [540 د] ييجز أن يكون مانعاً لنا إلا بأن يتصل بنا مثل الوجه الذي  
اتصل بهم. ولا شيء | اتصل بنا هذا حاله، فبطل | ما [x47 2ق]  
 [477 ي] أوردتموه.

وأما قولكم «إن يهوشع، عليه السلام، أقام السكينة في [x48 2ق]  
 6 سيلون»، فنحن لا نصدق ذلك، بل مذهبتنا أنه أقامها في  
هرجريزيم.

واعلم أن القوم متفقين على أن شريعة الرسول، عليه  
السلام، لم تنسخ، وأن هؤلاء الأنبياء إنما جاؤوا لدفع 9  
 [x49 2ق] الضرر عن الملة وعدم سريان الفساد فيهم، وحينئذ لم ييجز  
أن يجعل بين أقوالهم، لو صحت، وبين نصوص التوراة  
 12 معارضة. فيجب أن يكون المعول على ما يدل عليه نصها  
وتأويل ما جاؤوا به مما ينافيها.

١ كان [ كان هناك ] 2ق | الاستدلال [ الاستدلال  
 الامدكور (الاستدلال المذكور) 2ق | ٢ ييجز [ ييجز ٢ ٥ ٥ ٥ | لنا ]  
 لنا من دلك (لنا من ذلك) 2ق | ٣ شيء [ شيئاً ٥ ٥ | حاله ]  
 ٥ ٦ ذلك [ بذلك ٥ ٥ | مذهبنا ] عندنا ٥ ٥ ٥ | ٩ هؤلاء  
 الأنبياء [ هو لا نبي إلا نبينا ٥ | جاؤوا ] جاء ٥ | ١٠ عن [ على ٥ | لم  
 ييجز ] لا ييجز ٥ ٥ ٥ | ييجز [ ييجز ٥ ٥ | ١١ لو صحت ] أوضحت ٥  
 ١٢ فيجب [ وحب (وجب) 2ق | المعول [ المعلوم ٥ | نصها ] ٢  
 اלתوراه (نص التوراة) 2ق | ١٣ جاؤوا به [ جاوبه ٥ | مما ]  
 بما ٥ ٥ ٥، علي ما لا (على ما لا) 2ق

٧ هرجريزيم [ هرجريزيم

Furthermore, it is their own view that none of those prophets brought along a new revealed Law (*šarī'a*) and that they were only sent to address their contemporaries. The utmost of what one can say about the mission of people of this status is that they are tantamount to someone who calls upon people to worship God and comparable to ascetics and hermits who command to do what is right and forbid what is wrong. Scholars disagree on whether it is admissible for people of this kind to perform miraculous signs. Most of the knowledgeable ones reject it and think that the appearance of such signs is limited to Lawgivers. Thus, we should not interpret statements by people of such a profile in a way that contradicts a statement by the Lawgiver, whose statements we have already accepted as true.

Note also that one of their deluded devotees argued against this based on the fact that many gentiles believe it to be true, ever since the time of David and Solomon. They rely on the fact that [the place] is called *al-Quds* ["the sanctuary"]. This argument is spurious, because even a large number of people can be wrong and mistaken. In spite of its size, this group is not larger

[2q 51x] وأيضا عندهم أنه لم يكن أحداً | من هؤلاء الأنبياء |  
 [5b 621] من ظهرت على يده شريعة، وأنهم لم يكونوا مبعوثين إلى  
 [5d 500] غير من ظهوروا فيه من أهل زمانهم. ومن كان هذه حاله،  
 3 فغاية أمره على أن يحمل على أنه كالداعي إلى الله، فيجري  
 مجرى أهل الزهد والنسك الأمرين بالمعروف الناهيين عن  
 6 المنكر. وقد اختلف أهل العلم في جواز ظهور الآيات على  
 يد من هذه حاله، وأكثر المحصلين على المنع منه وأنه لا  
 يجوز ظهورها إلا على يد أصحاب الشرائع. ومن هذه صفته  
 9 لا يجوز أن نجعل أقاويله معارضة لقول صاحب الشريعة  
 الذي قد قطعنا بأقاويله.

واعلم أنّ بعض المغرورين منهم احتجّ على ذلك باعتقاد  
 12 أمم كثيرة فيه منذ زمان داوود وسليمان واعتمادهم على  
 التسمية بالقدس. وهذا باطل، لأن الجماعة الكثيرة يجوز  
 [541 d] عليهم الخطأ والغلط. | وليس هذا الجمع مع كثرته بأكثر

١ عندهم [عندهم د | أنه [أن ١١ | يكن [يكون ١ | ٣ من [ما  
 ١١ ١١ ١١ | ظهوروا فيه [ظهر وفيه ١١ | هذه [هذا ١١، هذا  
 (هذا) 2q | ٤ | أن... على] - [يحمل | يحمل ٥ | إلى الله [إليه  
 ١١ ١١ (إليه عز وجل) 2q | فيجري [حتى يجرى في هذا الباب) 2q | ٥  
 (حتى يجري في هذا الباب) 2q | ٥ | الناهيين [والناهيين ١١  
 ٦ اختلف [اختلفوا ١١ | ظهور [ظهور ١١ | زهور ١١ | ٧ | يد - [2q | هذه  
 هذا [يحمل ١١ | وأكثر [فأكثر) 2q | المحصلين [المحصلين ١١  
 اتفقوا [ظهورها] زهورها ١١ | يد - [2q | ٩ | أن - [١١  
 نجعل [نجعل ١١، يجعل ١١ | أقاويله [أقيل ١١ | صاحب - [١١ ١١  
 ١٠ الذي [الذي ٥ | ١١ منهم [منهم من ١١ | ١٢ فيه - [١١ ١١ | زمان  
 زمان جناب ١١ | داوود [الملك داوود ١١ | ١٣ | بالقدس  
 بالقول [١١ | وهذا [هذا ٥ | باطل [باطل ١١

than the community of those who hold all kinds of erroneous beliefs about God, as for instance the Christians and others. The fact that all gentiles accept it as true does not help them either, inasmuch as the reason why other religious communities accept it as true is distinct from their reason. Given the difference of the underlying reason, it cannot serve as valid basis for an argument.

Do you not see that in this matter they do not rely on the time of the messenger, peace upon him, but on their prophets who came after him. If they relied on the time of the messenger, peace upon him, then the generations who lived prior to [those prophets] would have transmitted a report about it. Before David there was Saul, and before him there was Samson, and so forth up to [the generation of] Joshua, peace upon him. And yet, as is well-known, no such [report] was proclaimed by any of them, until eventually Samuel appeared [on the stage of history] and laid claim to prophethood. He was David's predecessor. All this is recorded in their chronicles.

من الجماعة المعتقدة في الله سبحانه وتعالى من ضروب  
 الباطل كالناصري وغيرهم. وأيضا، اعتقاد سائر الأمم | [د11 هـ]  
 3 فيه لا ينفعهم، إذ الوجه الذي يعتقدون فيه غير الوجه  
 الذي يعتقد فيه سائر الملل، فتختلف الجهة فيبطل  
 الاستدلال.

6 ألا ترى أنهم لم يستندوا في ذلك إلى زمان الرسول،  
 [478 ي] عليه السلام، بل إلى أنبيائهم اللذين | بعده، لأنه لو كان  
 يستندون إلى زمان الرسول، عليه السلام، لوجب أن  
 9 يكون ما تقدم من الأجيال أخبر به، إذا قبل داوود  
 [622 هـ] شاول | وقبله سمسون إلى أن انتهى إلى يهوشع، عليه  
 السلام. ومعلوم أن هؤلاء جميعهم لم يظهر منهم شيء من  
 12 ذلك إلى أن ظهر شموييل وادعى النبوة وقدم داوود، وهذا  
 ما ورد في أخبارهم.

١ في الله [بالله هـ | من] مع هـ، ومن د | ٢ كالناصري  
 كالنصارى هـ، بالنصاره د، - د، بالنصرانية هـ | وغيرهم وأيضا] - د  
 ٤ سائر الملل [باقي الناس ي د ن هـ | فتختلف] باختلاف ي د ن هـ  
 فيبطل [يبطل د ن هـ | ٦ لم] - ي ن هـ | يستندوا [يستندوا] ي د ن هـ  
 ٧ إلى [١] - د | أنبيائهم [اتباعهم ي | كان] كانوا هـ | ٩ من] - د  
 إذا [إذ هـ | إذا قبل] إذ قيل ي د | داوود [الملك داوود د  
 ١٠ شاول [شاوويل ي د هـ | سمسون] شمشوم ي د هـ | يهوشع  
 يهوشع هـ | ١١ من ذلك] - د | ١٢ شموييل [שמوا ل د | وهذا]  
 هذا ي د ن



## II.

When the venerable master, God's mercy upon him, had finished to expound the arguments advanced by the ancients concerning the determination of the *qibla* together with the objections against their proofs, he came up with a proof of his own making, which relies on the fact that the act of blessing is related to Mount Gerizim, be it verbally or in writing. This being the case, it is the place that is designated as "the chosen place". Hence, Mount Gerizim is the chosen place.

The elucidation of the minor premise is text-based, namely His saying: "See, I set before you today blessing and curse: [Deut 11:26] up to "And it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you to the land into which you are coming to take hold of it, I shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. [Deut 11:29]. Based on the scholars' exegesis, the meaning of the text, according to its primary linguistic usage, is confined to two things: recording in writing and recounting orally. Moreover, the [Samaritan] text version of this verse is identical with that of the [Jewish] opponents and unanimously agreed upon, as it says in the section "And Moses, and the levitical priests with him, spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be still and listen, Israel. This day you have become a people to the Lord your God. And you shall heed the voice of the Lord your God and do His commands and His statutes which I charge you today." And Moses charged the people on that day, saying, "These shall stand to bless the people on Mount Gerizim as you cross the Jordan: Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Joseph and Benjamin. And these shall stand over the curse on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad and Asher and Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali]." [Deut 27:9-13].

The elucidation of the major premise of the syllogism relates to the fact that the text which indicates the determination of the *qibla* refers to the site where the recitation of the blessing is commanded to take place, namely His saying: "But to the place that the Lord, your God, has chosen all your tribes to set His name there, to make it dwell, you shall seek it and come there. [Deut 12:5 (S)]. This text implies the selection

لما انتهى الشيخ، رحمه الله، من استدلال السلف على إثبات القبلة ووجهة النقوض على حججهم، استخرج من نفسه حجة، وهي أن هرجيزيم | تتعلّق به البركة قصصاً وتدويناً. وكما هو كذلك، فهو المشار بمقوم مبحر هرجيزيم مقوم مبحر.

[ق 2ب] بيان الصغرى بالنص لقوله رאה انכי נתן לפניכם היום דב' יא:כו

ברכה וקללה إلى قوله והיה כי יביאך יהוה אלהיך אל דב' יא:כט

הארץ אשר אתה בא שם לרשתה ונתתה את הברכה על

9 הרגריזים. وحقيقة مبنية على ما فسّره العلماء منحصرة في

[ن 542] شيتين: التدوين والاقتصاص. وهذا النص يتساو بين |

مخالفين متفق فيه على ما جاء في فصل ويدبر משה דב' כ:זט

12 והכהנים הלויים אל כל ישראל לאמר הסכת ותמאם.

وبيان كبرى القياس أنّ النصّ الدالّ على إثبات القبلة

يرجع إلى الموقع المأمور فيه بتلاوة البركة، وذلك قوله تعالى

[פ 623] כי אם אל המקום אשר | בחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל [נ'ש] דב'

שבטיכם לשים את שמו שם. فإنّ هذا النصّ يقتضي تمييز

יב:ה

1 من [פ - | علی] من י כ נ פ | 2 ووجهة [ ووجه به כ נ פ

4 وكما] وكلها י כ פ | فہر جریزیم] فہو ہر جریزیم هو כ ن ف | 6 היום [

- 5 | 9 مبنية [ بينة ی כ ف | منحصرة [ منحصرا ن | 10 يتساو بين [

بيننا وبين ی ک ف | 11 مخالفين [ الشاذين عن رأينا ن | متفق [ رأينا

متفق ی ک ف | 12 אל כל [ לכל ن | 13 كبرى [ الكبرى פ | الدال... [

إثبات] الدال على النص الدال على إثبات ی | 14 الموقع [

الموضع ی ک ن ف | 16 שם [ שמה פ

3 هرجيزيم [ הרגריזים | 4 بمقوم... مبحر<sup>2</sup>] במקום מבחר הרגריזים

מבחר

of the place where He wants our tribes to enunciate His name, or to establish His name according to one of the two interpretative options. The enunciation of [His] name is the more appropriate [interpretation], given that the primary linguistic usage of 'name' refers to the spoken, while the reference to the written is [only] a derivative, secondary usage. *šema* essentially refers to enunciation and oral recounting as per His saying: "And these are the laws that you shall set before them." [Ex 21:1], and "[And Moses came and he called to the elders of the people,] and he set before them [all these words that the Lord had charged him." [Ex 19:7], and "And they shall set My name over the Israelites, [and I Myself shall bless them.]" [Num 6:27]. But even if we were to understand this word as referring to the written, the ultimate objective would still consist in its being pronounced. The site where the blessings have been commanded to take place is the only location where we can safely proceed with the invocation of God's name in the two manners described, namely the pronounced and the written.

In conclusion, it follows that it must be the site that is referred to as "the chosen place", and this site is Mount Gerizim. By necessity, therefore, Mount Gerizim is the chosen place.

This is shown to be valid by the fact that we may tell to another person: "Pray in the house of Zayd", and subsequently we say "The house where I asked and wanted you to pray, take it as place of residence", and this can only be understood as referring to the afore-mentioned house of Zayd. Do you not see that the place which He has singled out – namely the chosen place – is determined by the letter *hey* with (following) *dagesh forte*, the Hebrew equivalent of

[479 ي] الموضع بإرادته من أسباطنا شرح | اسمه سبحانه فيه أو  
 إثباته به على أحد الوجهين المحتملين، وإن كان شرح  
 الاسم أولى، وذلك لأن الاسم حقيقة في المفظوظ مجازي في  
المكتوب، لأن سمو يفيد الشرح والقصاص بالذات

[س 12x] لقوله | آله המשפטים אשר תשים לפניهم، وقوله ويشם  
 6 לפניهم وقوله وشימו את שמי על בני ישראל [ואני  
 שמ' כ:א  
 שמ' י:ז  
 במ' ה:כז

أبركهم]. ولو أ جعلنا هذا اللفظ يدل على المكتوب، لما  
 خرج الغرض عن كونه المنطوق به. وليس لأننا تقدم ما  
 يذكر فيه اسم الله على الوجهين | المذكورين، أعني المنطوق  
 [502 ب] والمكتوب، إلا الموضع المأمور فيه بنصوص البركة.

فوجب أن يكون هو المرجع فيه إلى המקوم المبحر،  
 12 وذلك هو جبل הרגרזים، فوجب أن يكون הרגרזים هو  
 המקوم المبحر.

[ق 16ب] ومحل ذلك أن يقول أحدنا لصاحبه « صلي في دار

15 زيد»، ثم يقول بعد ذلك «الدار التي أمرتك أو أردت  
منك الصلاة بها، اتخذها مسكاً»، ولا يعقل من ذلك إلا  
 [543 ج] دار زيد المذكورة. | ألا ترى أن الموضع الذي ذكره، وهو

18 المقوم المبحر، جاء معرفاً بالهاء والشدة الجاريتين في

٧ أ جعلنا [ جعلنا ي ك ن | ٨ عين ] على ي ك ن | كونه [ كونه ي ك ن ف  
 ١١ هو ] - ك ن ف | ١٤ ومحل... ذلك [ وحل دلخ محل ( وحل ذلك  
 محل ) ك | في ] من ف | ١٥ بعد [ بعقب ( بعقب ) ك | أو أردت ]  
 وأردت س | ١٦ ولا [ فلا ي ن | ١٧ أن ] - س | الذي [ أنه ي ك ن ف  
 ١٨ جاء ] - ك س ف [ الجاريتين ] الجارين ي ك ن | في ١ ] - ف

Arabic *alif-lām* [i.e. the definite article], – and referred to by *asher* which in Arabic corresponds to [the relative pronouns] *alladī* and *allatī*.

If someone were to object: the text to which, so you say, the definite article and the relative pronoun refer, mentions not only Mount Gerizim, but also Mount Ebal [< Deut 11:29], inasmuch as the threat<sup>54</sup> is associated with it. The name of God is an integral part of the threat no less than of the blessing. So, how come that one is considered more valuable than the other? It follows that Mount Gerizim, no less than Mount Ebal, is not the chosen place.

He would be answered: His saying “and you shall set My name” [Deut 6:27(S)] only applies to the blessing, but not the curse. If God’s mighty name is meant by it, it only comes about in response to the prayer, as per His saying “And you shall set My name over the Israelites, and I Myself shall bless them” [Num 6:27 (S)]. It is one of the greatest signs of divine favour which aims at expediting the time of redemption and the fulfilment of the promises. That is also the meaning of

.....  
<sup>54</sup> The blessings represent divine promise (*wa'd*), the curses divine threat (*wa'īd*).

العبراني مجرى الألف واللام في العربية مشار إليه بقوله

אשר הגارية مجرى الذي والتي في | لسان العرب. [624 p]

فإن قيل: إن النص الذي ذكرتم أن التعريف والإشارة [ק' 18b]

يعودان إليه قد تضمن ذكر هر عييل كما تضمن ذكر

هرجرزيم لتعلق الوعيد به، وهي تتضمن اسم الله سبحانه

كما تتضمنه هبركه، فكيف صار لأحدهما فضلا مزية على 6

الآخر؟ فكما أن هر عييل ليس بمقوم مبحر فكذلك

هرجرزيم.

9 جوابه: إن قوله وشيمو את שמי إنما يصح في البركة دون

[480 p] הקללה، | لأنه، إن كان المراد به اسم الله العظيم، فإنما

جعل ذلك لاستجابته الدعا لقوله وشيمو את שמי על בני

12 ישראל ואני אברכם، وهو من أكبر أمارات الرضا،

[ק' 20a] والغرض به الإسراع في المواعيد وحلول البركة، وكذلك

١ الألف... مجرى] - י כ נ פ | ٢ الجارية] אלגארי (الجاري) ק'

في] من י נ ס | ٤ قد] ו ק ד כ פ | ٥ الوعيد] המואעיד י כ נ פ | وهي]

- נ | سبحانه] سبحانه وتعالى י כ נ פ | ٦ تتضمنه]

تضمنته י כ נ ס פ | هبركه] البركة נ | لأحدهما] לאחד אלמודלעין

(لأحد الموضوعين) ק' | فضلا] فضل ס | فضلا... الآخر] מע דלך

מן אלחט מא לים ללאכר (مع ذلك من الحظ ما ليس للآخر) ק'

٩ وشيمو] שימו י כ | ١١ لاستجابته] لأجل إجابة כ נ פ | ١٢ من]

انه כ، ان נ | الرضا] הרגא י נ

٤ هر عييل] הר עייל | ٥ هرجرزيم] הרגרזים | ٦ هبركه] הברכה

٧ هر عييل] הר עייל | بمقوم مبحر] במקום מבוחר | ٨ هرجرزيم]

הרגרזים

His saying: “[And all the peoples of the earth will see] that the name of the Lord is called over you and they will fear you” [Deut 28:10 (S)]. This is indicative of help and relief which does not form part of the curse.

Moreover, to the attendant circumstances of the *qibla* belongs the highest possible degree of joy and elation. This is achieved by way of sacrifices, making vows, offering the tithe portion, and making donations, as per His saying “you shall rejoice in all that your hand reaches” [Deut 12:7 (S)]. This would be impossible on Mount Ebal, given that it is a place that is reserved for cursing. Referring to such a place would run counter to joy, as if one were to say: “Be happy and rejoice in the place that you deem worthy of cursing”, which would amount to a contradiction in terms. Given that Mount Gerizim is deemed worthy of rejoice, the blessing must be indicative of it in light of His saying with regard to rejoicing “in which the Lord your God has blessed you” [Deut 12:7]. This can only be found on Mount Gerizim, but not on Mount Ebal.

Moreover, another sign showing that the place was chosen for the purpose of blessing is the saying of God, mighty and exalted: “In the place where I invoked My name, I shall come to you and bless you.” [Ex 20:20(S)]. What is meant by “I shall come to you” is the dwelling of angels which is precisely the meaning of

قوله כי שם יהוה נקרא עליך וייראו ממך، وذلك يدل على [נ"ש] דב'  
[כח:י]  
النصرة، وذلك مفقود في הקללה.

وأيضاً، إنَّ | من شرائط القبلة المسرّة فيه والابتهاج في  
[ס 12ב] [ק' 20א]  
גاية ما يمكن، وذلك بالقرايين والنذور وبعض الأعشار

والعطايا لقوله ושמחתם | בכל משלח ידיכם، وهذا متعذر [נ"ש] דב' יב:ז [כ 503]

6 في הר עיבל مع كون الموضع مؤهلاً للعهه الذي ذكره  
منغص المسرّة ويكون تقديره أفرح وسر حيث أهلت  
للعن، وذلك متناقض. وإذا كان הרגريזים أهل للمسرة،

9 وجب أن تكون البركة دليله بعد قوله عن المسرة אשר [דב' יב:ז]

[פ 625] ברכך | יהוה אלהיך. وهذا موجود في הרגريזים دون הר  
עיבל.

[ג 544] وأيضاً من أمارات | كون الموضع مختاراً للبركة لقوله،

عز وجل، وبمقامك אשר אזكرتني את שמי שם אבוא אליך [נ"ש] שמ' כ:כ [דב' יב:ז]  
وبرכתك، فعنى ابوا אליך حلول الملائكة، وهو المعنى

١ وذلك<sup>1</sup> وكذلك כ | ٢ وذلك<sup>2</sup> حيث כנפ | مفقود  
مفقودة כנפ | مفقود... شرائط - י | ٣ شرائط [الشرائط ס  
شرائط القبلة] الشروط الدالة على القبلة כנפ | والابتهاج  
واللכה (والبهجة) ק' | ٤ وذلك بالقرايين] مما قد يقرب فيه من  
القرايين כנפ | وبعض] - ינפ | ٥ ושמחתם [ושמחתם לפני  
יהוה אלהיכם ושם נ | وهذا] ודרך (وذلك) ק' | ٦ في... عيבל -  
ק' | ٥ كون الموضع [كونه י כנפ | الذي... للعن] - י כנפ  
٧ منغص [منقض ס | ٨ متناقض] متناقض יפ، متناقضة כ  
١٢ من [في נ | أمارات] أمارة יפ | مختاراً] מבחר י כנספ  
للبركة] البركة ינפ | ١٣ ابوا] - נ | ١٤ فعنى] هو المعنى פ  
[حلول] אחלאל (إحلال) ק'



לשכך. His saying “and I shall bless you” is equivalent to His commanding the blessing and expediting [the time of redemption]. The fact that our text version differs from that of our opponents does not impair our goal, because according to their version the blessing is enacted in every place that is deemed worthy of enhancing the greatness [of His name] [*< Ex 20:20(M)*]. All this shows that the *qibla* should be assigned to Mount Gerizim, at the exclusion of Mount Ebal.

If it were said: Even though this text refers to the place that is deemed worthy of the act of blessing, it points to the chosen place in an unspecific way, inasmuch as it contains a [necessary, but not sufficient] condition for the chosen place. And even though it refers to the place that is deemed worthy of the act of blessing, it does so only with a part of its meaningful terms, namely “You shall set My name” [Num 6:27 (S)], but not as a whole. The chosen place, on the other hand, is referred to by His saying “to make it dwell, you shall seek it”. Thus, your reference to the recitation of the blessings is insufficient to infer from it [the location of] the chosen place.

[ק' 20] بقوله لاسكن. وقوله وبرכתك هو المعنى بأمر | البركة

والإسراع بمعناها. وما بيننا وبين الخصوم في خلاف هذا

3 النص لا يقدح في الغرض، لأن عندهم هي بالموضع

الذي يؤهل للإعظام. وهذه الوجوه تدلّ على تخصيص

القبلة بهرغريزيم دون هر لىبل.

6 فإن قيل: إن هذا النصّ الدالّ على همقوم همبجر جملةً،

لأنّ من جملة شروط همقوم همبجر وإن دلّ على الموضع | [x {144} 41 x]

المؤهل للبركة، لكنّ ببعض مفهوماته، وهو قوله وشموات [נ"ש] במ' הכז

7 شمي | لا بجملة. ودلالته على همقوم همبجر قوله تعالى

لشكينو تدرشو، فما ذكرتموه ما هو كاف في الاستدلال على

همقوم همبجر، وهو تلاوة نصوص البركة.

1 بقوله لاسكن] بالسكن י כ נ ס פ | بأمر... البركة] באמרה באלברכה

בה (بأمره بالبركة به) ק' | 2 | الخصوم] الغير כ | في 1... النص] في  
خلاف هذا الخصوم في خلاف هذا النص נ | في 1... بالموضع] -

כ | 3 | في 2] الى י נ פ | هي] في י נ פ، אלברכה (البركة) ק'

بالموضع] الموضع י נ פ | بالموضع الذي] בכל מוצע ( بكل  
موضع) ק' | 4 | للإعظام] لاعطا ذكره י כ נ פ | 6 | جملة... همبجر] -

י כ נ פ | 7 | شروط] شرط 8 | للبركة] إلى البركة כ נ פ | ببعض]

بعض פ | ببعض مفهوماته] بعض مفهومات י כ נ | 9 | همقوم

همبجر] המקום המבחר بجملة لأن جملة شروط המקום המבחר י،

لأن له جملة شروط המקום המבחר כ، המקום המבחר بجملة

شروط המקום המבחר פ | قوله] لأن من جملة شروط המקום  
המבחר قوله נ 8 | 10 | كاف] في] كافي י נ פ | على] על פ

6 همقوم همبجر] המקום המבחר | 7 | همقوم همبجر] המקום המבחר

8 وشمיו... שמי] ושימו את שמי | 9 | همقوم همبجر] המקום

המבחר | 11 | همقوم همبجر] המקום המבחר

I would reply that the underlying virtual meaning of the phrase is “the place where God wanted your tribes to enunciate the name of God through the act of blessing and with the intention of making it a dwelling place for [His name]”. It is also possible that the underlying meaning is “the place where He wanted you to enunciate His name with the intention of making it an abode for Him through your acts of worship, such as the offering of sacrifices and almsgiving, and making it a dwelling place for [His name] so that it would never be vacant again”. That is why the verse comes after the destruction of the idols and the rescindment of their invocation. On this account, the text signifies God’s dwelling place.

If he then said: The recitation of the blessings only involves six tribes, whereas the text to which you have referred implies that it is an obligation imposed on all Israelites. Hence, its scope of meaning does not suffice to serve as proof.

- [ק 21 א] وأجبت بأن تقدير الكلام الموضع الذي أراد الله  
 سبحانه من أسباطكم شرح اسمه بالبركة وإسكانه فيه  
 3 تقصدون. ويجوز أن يكون أراد منكم الموضع الذي أراد  
 [פ 626] شرح اسمه فيه أقصدوا إسكانه | بعبادتم، وهو القرابين  
 [ס 13 א] والزكاوات وعمارته | بها حتى لا تخلوه بته. ولهذا ورد بعد  
 6 إخراب مواضع الأصنام وإخلاها من ذكرهم. فصار هذا  
النص دلالة على السكن.

[ק 22 ב] فإن قيل: | تلاوة نصوص البركة للسته الأسباط والنص  
 [ב 504] الذي ذكرتم يقتضي تكليفه لجملة بني اسرائيل، فهو غير  
كاف في الدلالة.

- ١ [بأن] أن ינפ | ٢ سبحانه [سبحانه وتعالى] ד | شرح [شرح] לشرح  
 بالبركة [بالبركة] فيه ס | وإسكانه [إسكانه] ק | وإسكانه فيه [في  
 إسكانه] כפ، في إسكان ד | ٣ ويجوز [وتجوزون] ד | ٤ أقصدوا  
 إسكانه [أقصد وإسكانه] יפ | إسكانه [سכנאה] (سكاه) ק  
 بعبادتم [בעבאדאתכם] (بعبادتم) ק | القرابين [القول بين  
 ٥ [الزكاوات] والزكاة כנפ | وعمارته [وعمارته]، ותעמירה  
 (وتعميره) ק | بها - [ - ] | تخلوه [تخلوه] כפ، تخلوا | بته [ - ]  
 منه יכנספ | ورد... هذا - [ - ] | بعد [טבאק] (طباق) ק  
 ٦ [إخراب] خراب כנפ | مواضع [مواضع] ס | الأصنام [עבאדאת  
 אלאצנאם] (عبادات الأصنام) ק | وإخلاها [واخلاها] ד | فصار [ - ]  
 פקד צאר [فقد صار] ק | هذا [לדא] ס | ٧ النص [אלנץ בעינה  
 (النص بعينه) ק | السكن] [וגוב אסכנאה] (وجوب  
 إسكانه وإدامته) ק | ٨ الأسباط [אסיבא] כפ | ٩ ذكرتم [ - ]  
 אחנגגתם בה [احتججتم به] ק | تكليفه [תכליפא] (تكليف) ק  
 ١٠ [كاف] كافي ד

I would reply: [The recitation of the blessings] is part of the collective duties for which one can act as a substitute for another. The fact that some [tribes] recite the blessings does not prevent the others from reciting them, and the same holds true for the threat passages. Do you not see that He commanded the nation to offer sacrifices, as per His saying: “Charge the Israelites, and you shall say to them, ‘My offering, My bread, for My fire offerings, My fragrant odor, you shall keep, to offer up to Me at its fixed time.’” [Num 28:2], while it is well-known that the offering [of sacrifices] is reserved to the priest!

If it were objected: This speech is only addressed to those who enter the land, but not to their children, whereas God’s imposition comprises both roots and the branches.

He would be answered: the text up to His saying “And not with you alone do I seal this covenant and this oath [Deut 29:13] et cetera is a speech addressed to all Israelites, those present and those absent.

And if it were said: Our text version differs from the text version of our opponents. In their text version it says “in the place that He will choose”, while in our version it says “He has chosen”.

[ק' 23א] أجت: هذا من فروض الكفاية التي البعض يقوم عن

[545 د] البعض. وكون البعض يتلوه نصوص البركة | لا يمنع تلاوة

3 البعض الآخر، وهذه التلاوة فصول الوعد. ألا ترى أنه

أمر بالقرابين للأمة لقوله صوي اث بني يسرال وامرت (د'ش) بم'

כח:ב

[א 41{144}ב] اليهم اث قربني لحمي وتماه | ومعلوم أن التقريب لا يجوز

6 إلا من الإمام.

[ק' 27א] فإن قيل: هذا الخطاب للداخلين إلى البلاد دون

أولادهم، والتكليف يعم الأصول والفروع.

[ק' 31א] جوابه: النص إلى قوله ولا ائكم لبدكم انكي كرت اث

דב' כט:יג

[ק' 31ב] هبريث هزاث وتماه | ويعم الخطاب لسائر بني اسراييل

الحاضرين والغائبين.

[ק' 32א] فإن قيل: النص الذي عندنا يخالف لنص مخالفينا،

وذلك عندهم بمقوم اشر يجر وعندنا بجر.

١ فروض [ الفروض ٥ | التي ] الذي ٦ ٧ ٨ ٩ | ٢ وكون البعض ] -

٣ ٤ | يتلوه ] يتلو ٥ ٦ ، يتلوا ٧ | ٣ التلاوة ] التلاوة هي ٤ ٥

٥ لحمي ] - ٦ ٧ | وتماه ] الى الخ ٨ | يجوز ] يكون ٩ | ٧ إلى ]

٦ ٧ | البلاد ] البلد ٨ ٩ | ٨ أولادهم ] سواهم (سواهم) ٩

٩ ١٠ | ٩ إلى ] في ١٠ ١١ | ويعم ] يعم ١٠ ١١

١٢ ١٣ ] وعندنا ] وعند ١٢ | بحر ] במקوم اشر يجر

٤ صوي ... قربني ] צוי את בני ישראל ואמרת אלהם את קרבני

[ לחמי לאשי ריח ניחחי תשמרו להקריב לי במועד ] | ٩ ولا ...

هزاث ] ולא אתכם לבדכם אנכי كرت את הברית הזאת

١٣ بمقوم ... بحر ] במקום אשר יבחר | بحر ] בחר

The answer would be: This difference does not compromise [our position], in view of preceding [scriptural] evidence that is related to it. It is valid to say “has chosen”, inasmuch as an anterior act of volition is linked to the scriptural evidence which requires the acts of worship, and it is likewise valid to say “will choose”, inasmuch as the acts of worship are posterior [to the scriptural injunction] and are not meant to take place before their allocated time. Hence, both meanings are valid and the disagreement, should it occur, amounts to the same as an agreement.

[Another] proof showing that the orientation of the *qibla* is towards Shechem/Nablus and that it is the sacred place concerns the fact that God, praise to Him, commanded [them] to inscribe the provisions of His Law, which contain His name, – on Mount Gerizim according to our version and on Mount Ebal according to the popular version (*'ind al-qawm*) – on a stone that was singled out for this purpose since the time when they crossed the Jordan. And they inscribed these very texts on it as per His saying “And it shall be, on the day that you cross the Jordan into the land that the Lord your God is about to give you, you shall set up for yourself great stones and coat them with plaster. And you shall write on them

[482 י] الجواب: | إنَّ هذا الاختلاف لا يضر، لأنه قد تعلّق به

دليل متقدّم له. فيصحّ أن يقال بـبحر لتعلّق الإرادة المتقدّمة

3 بالدليل المقتضى للعبادة، ويصحّ أن يقال بـبحر لكون

العبادة متأخرة | ولا يراد إيقاعها | إلّا في زمانها المنتظر. [627 פ]

فكلا المعنيين صحيحين، فصار هذا الخلاف كالوفاق، لو [ק1 32]

6 كان واقعاً.

ק1 36 א دليل على أنّ השכם إليها توجهه القبلة وهي المكان

المقدّس أنه سبحانه أمر أن يكتب بهرجيزيم عندنا وبهر

9 عيبيل عند القوم نصوص شريعة الله تعالى المشتملة على

اسمه، عز وجلّ، | على حجارة قد اتخذت مذ عبور الأردن. [546 ג]

وكتب عليها هذه النصوص بأعيانها لقوله وهيه بيوم אשר דב' כזב

تعبرو | اث هيردن אל هارص אשר يهوه | الهيك | נתן לך [כ 505]

והקמת לך אבנים גדלות ושדת אתם בשיד. וכתבת עליהן [ס 13]

[עד כאן א] [144}41

1 يضرّ لامة נ, يصير פ | 2 له] - י כ נ ס פ | يقال] יקאל פיה

(يقال فيه) ק1 | الإرادة المتقدّمة] אלאראדה אלמתקדמה או מא

יגרי מגראהא (الإرادة المتقدّمة أو ما يجري مجراها) | 3 | للعبادة]

לعباده כ נ, العباد פ | يقال] יקאל פיה (يقال فيه) ק1 | لكون]

בكون נ | 4 | ولا] לא נ | ولا يراد] ולא יראד מן אלמר (ولا يراد من

المرء) ק1 | 5 | فکלא] לکלא (؟) ס וכל פ | صحيحين] الصحيحين נ,

צחיחין סאיגין (صحيحين سائغين) ק1 | לו] ולו נ | 7 | השכם]

שכם י כ נ פ | إليها] إلى פ | 8 | سبحانه] سبحانه وتعالى י כ נ פ

9 | عند القوم] عندهم י כ נ פ | تعالى] - נ | المشتملة] المشتمל כ

10 | مذ] منذ נ פ | 12 | هيردن] الاردن נ, הירדן ס | לך1] לכם י

2 بحر] בחר | 3 | بجر] יבחר | 8 | بهرجيزيم] בהרגיזים | وبهر عيبيل]

ובהר עיבל | 11 | وهيه... الهيك] ביום אשר תעברו את הירדן אל

הארץ אשר יהוה אלהיך



the words of this Torah when you cross over.” [Deut 27:2-3] and His saying “And it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up these stones that I charge you today on Mount Gerizim ...” et cetera [Deut 27:4].

If this text is combined with His command by which He decreed that the place where He instructed that His name be set there is used for acts of worship and all other activities related to the chosen place in conformance with what has been stated previously as per His saying “But to the place that the Lord your God has chosen of all your tribes to set His name there, ....” et cetera [Deut 12:5 (S)], it follows from all this evidence taken together that Mount Gerizim is the chosen place and that it is the sanctuary according to our text version, whereas Mount Ebal is the sanctuary according to their text version. This disagreement does not affect the identification of Nablus with the sanctuary; it only lingers on in the case of the two heights: [According to our text version], Mount Gerizim must be identified with [the sanctuary], while according to their text version, Mount Ebal has to be identified with the sanctuary.

את כל דברי התורה הזאת בעברך ותמאם إلى قوله והיה דב' כהד:

בעברכם את הירדן תקימו את האבנים האלה אשר אנכי

3 מצוה אתכם היום בהרגריזים, ותמאם.

36 קי فإذا ضمّ إلى هذا النصّ الأمر الذي أمر بقصد الموضوع

الذي أمر بأن يثبت فيه اسمه، جلّ وعزّ، بالعبادات

6 وسائر ما يتعلّق بمקום מבחר حسب ما سلف ذكره في

قوله כי אם אל המקום אשר בחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל [נ"ש] דב'

שבטיכם לשים את שמו שם ותמאם, حصل من مجموعه أن

628 פ] הרגריזים | מקום מבחר هو القدس على نصّنا, והר לעיבל

483 י] هو القدس على نصّهم. فلا يبقى خلاف في أنّ بلد |

نابلس هو القدس ما يبقى الخلاف في حال الجبلين على

12 مقتضى הרגריזים, והר לעיבל يجب أن يكون هو القدس

على نسختهم.

1 ותמאם... قوله] وقوله 5 | 4 إلى] - 5 | إلى هذا] لهذا 6

الأمر... أمر] אמרה סבחאנה (אמרם סבחאנה) ק1 | 5 بأن] بأنه 6

بالعبادات] באלעבאדאת ואלקרב (بالعبادات والقرب) ק1

6 يتعلّق] يتعلّقه 6 | سلف ذكره] ذكره سلف 5 | 7 ألهيכם]

אלהיך 6 | 8 שבטיכם... שם] שבטיך إلى قوله לשכן את שמו

שם 6 | 9 هو] יגב אן יכוון הר (יגב אן יכוון هو) ק1, وهو 6

והר] ואן הר (ואן הר) ק1 | 10 هو] יגב אן יכוון (יגב אן

יכוון) ק1 | יתقی] ינבי 6 | 11 خلاف] الخلاف 6

بلد - 6 | 11 نابلس] نابلس 6 | 12 بل 6

وانما] ק1 | יתقی] ינבי 6, ינפי 5 | الخلاف] אלנטר

(النظر) ק1 | 12 مقتضى] מוגב אלנסכתין ותצחיה אלצחיה מנהמא

(موجب النسختين وتصحيح الصحيح منهما) | يجب... نسختهم]

قط 6

Another proof [runs as follows]: God commanded that burnt offerings and communion sacrifices are offered on Mount Gerizim, as per His saying: “[With whole stones you shall build the altar of the Lord your God] and offer upon it burnt offerings to the Lord your God. And you shall sacrifice communion sacrifices, and you shall eat there [and rejoice before the Lord your God.]” [Deut 27:6-7]. He also prohibited the offering of sacrifices after the entrance into the land with the exception of the chosen place, as per His saying “You shall not do thus for the Lord your God” [Deut 12:4 (S)], immediately after having referred to the worship of idols in all the places [and their destruction], by making an exception for the chosen place, as per His saying “You shall not do as all that we do here today, [each man what is right in his eyes.]” [Deut 12:8 (S)]. The fact that He commanded to make offerings on Mount Gerizim in the period after the entrance into the land entails its chosenness. Hence, Mount Gerizim is the chosen place. And God knows best.

- דב' כזו-ז | דلیل آخر: أمر سبحانه أن يقرب بهרגريزيم علوت | קא 38  
 [547 ג] ושלמים لقوله تعالى وهالית עליו علوت ליהוה אלהיך.
- 3 וזבחת שלמים ואכלת שם וتمامה. ونهى عن تقريب شيء  
من القرابين بعد دخول الديار إلا في الموضع المختار لقوله  
לא תעשו כן ליהוה אלהיכם بعد ذکر עבדות الأصنام في [ג'ש] דב' יב:ד  
 [506 כ] כל المواضع واستثنى במקום מבחר لقوله לא תעשו ככל |  
אשר אנחנו עשים פה היום וتمامה, وما أمر بتقريبه  
בהרגריזים, فهو بعد دخول الديار, وذلك يقتضي كونه  
מבחר, فهيرجيزيم מקום מבחר, | والله أعلم. [ס 14א]

1 سبحانه [תעלי כנ | 2 לכולה] ככולה י כנפ | לכולה תעלי [בכולה  
 (בכולה) ק1 | 3 וتمامה] - ק1 | 4 לכולה] ככולה י כנפ, בכולה  
 (בכולה) ק1 | 5 כן... 15 תעשו] - פ | 6 במקום] פי מקום כנ  
 לכולה [בכולה] (ככולה) ק1 | 7 ומה אמר] ואמר נפ | 8 כונה]  
 ויוב כונה י כנפ, וגוב כונה מקרבא ( ויוב כונה  
 מקרבא) ק1 | 9 מבחר1] במקום מבחר ק1 | פהרגריזים] והרגר נ,  
 פהר גריזים אדא הו (פהר גריזים إذا הו) ק1 | מקום מבחר  
 המקום המבחר ק1



# From Judah Hadassi to Aaron ben Joseph – A Lost Century and a Half?<sup>1</sup>

□ Daniel J. LASKER

In 1992, I published an article entitled, “Aaron ben Joseph and the Transformation of Karaite Thought.”<sup>2</sup> I began the article by noting the great difference between the mid-twelfth-century Karaite thought of Judah Hadassi, generally loyal to the classical Karaite Kalam theology of the Golden Age in the Land of Israel (late ninth-mid-eleventh centuries); and the Aristotelian-tinged philosophy two hundred years later of Aaron ben Elijah, known as the Younger (d. 1369). Aaron the Younger in his philosophical, exegetical and legal works may have defended his Karaite predecessors’ intellectual integrity, but, as I argued contra the accepted wisdom, he did not agree with many of their Kalam philosophical or theological doctrines.<sup>3</sup> I suggested that the key to understanding the changes that had occurred in Byzantine Karaite thought could be explained by an examination of the works of Aaron ben Joseph, known as

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<sup>1</sup> This article will discuss a problem in medieval Byzantine Karaite intellectual history. For a general introduction to Karaism, see Daniel J. LASKER, *Karaism. A Short Introduction to the Oldest Surviving Alternative Judaism*, London, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, in association with Liverpool University Press, 2022. Meira POLLIAK, ed., *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2003, contains a large number of scholarly articles that deal with various facets of Karaite history and thought. A good survey of Byzantine Karaism is Golda AKHIEZER, “Byzantine Karaism in the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries,” in Bonfil, *et al.*, eds, *Jews in Byzantium*, pp. 723-58. The major sages discussed herein are Yefet ben Eli (second half tenth century), Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (first half eleventh century), Tobias ben Moses (mid-eleventh century), Abraham ibn Ezra (Rabbanite, 1089-1164), Judah Hadassi (active 1148-9), Nissi ben Noah (late twelfth century), Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, Rabbanite, 1138-1204), Aaron ben Joseph (late thirteenth century), and Aaron ben Elijah the Younger (d. 1369)

<sup>2</sup> Ruth LINK-SALINGER, ed., *Torah and Wisdom: Studies in Jewish Philosophy, Halakhah, and Kabbalah: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, New York, Shengold Publishers, 1992, pp. 121-8.

<sup>3</sup> My conclusions about Aaron ben Elijah’s rejection of Kalam were presented first in Daniel J. LASKER, “Nature and Science According to Aaron ben Elijah, the Karaite,” *Daat*, vol. 17, Summer, 1986, pp. 33-42 (Hebrew); and translated and greatly expanded in Daniel J. LASKER, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi. Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2008, pp. 69-95.

the Elder, at the end of the thirteenth century. Aaron's commentary on the Bible, *Sefer ha-mivhar*, is suffused with Rabbanite material, such as from Abraham ibn Ezra's biblical commentaries, and the theology that emerges from his commentary reflects Maimonidean Aristotelianism rather than Karaite Kalam. Thus, Aaron the Elder was a natural stepping-stone on the way to Aaron the Younger's literary enterprise, but that did not answer the question as to how Aaron the Elder's views suddenly appeared in Byzantine Karaism. In light of the great differences between Aaron ben Joseph and his Karaite predecessors, I wrote, using a locution, which I had heard from Daniel Frank, that Aaron the Elder seems to have appeared on the Karaite scene *ex nihilo*.

When I republished an updated version of that article in 2008, in my book *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi*,<sup>4</sup> I started to inquire how the change from Hadassi to Aaron the Elder occurred. I offered two possible landmarks on the otherwise undocumented path from mid-twelfth-century to late-thirteenth-century Byzantine Karaite thought. The first was the fall of Byzantium to the Latin Crusaders in 1204; the second was the possibility that the shadowy figure Nissi ben Noah could somehow be involved in this process. Nevertheless, I repeated again Daniel Frank's suggestion the Aaron ben Joseph seemed to have appeared *ex nihilo*.

The invitation to participate in the conference "New Perspectives on the History of Karaism" has given me the opportunity to visit once again the question of how Byzantine Karaite thought turned away from Golden Age Kalam theology. My new conclusion is that Aaron ben Joseph did not appear *ex nihilo*; instead, with effort, we can identify some trends and literary works that form the link between Judah Hadassi and Aaron ben Joseph. Perhaps we will not find all the prime matter out of which Aaron the Elder's worldview was formed, but we can now discover some of it.

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One should begin with Judah Hadassi. As a result of the work on the partial edition and translation of Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer* (Cluster of Henna Blossoms), available under the title *Theological Encounters at a Crossroads*,<sup>5</sup> we now know the extent to which Hadassi was part of his Byzantine environment. By deciphering the copious amount of Greek words and phrases, which had been omitted in the first edition of 1836 in Eupatoria, my co-author Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis was able to outline some of the parameters of Hadassi's Byzantine education. Although it is not possible to determine fully, it is very likely that Hadassi's skepticism concerning atomism, a keystone of Karaite Kalam thought, had its origins in Aristotelian physics. While not abandoning atomism completely, Hadassi adopts the alternate view of the four

<sup>4</sup> LASKER, *Studies*, pp. 60-8.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel J. LASKER, Johannes NIEHOFF-PANAGIOTIDIS and David SKLARE, *Theological Encounters at a Crossroads: A Preliminary Edition of Judah Hadassi's Eshkol ha-kofer, First Commandment, and Studies of the Book's Judeo-Arabic and Byzantine Contexts*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2019.

elements and does not present the classical Karaite Kalam proof of creation based on the existence of atoms.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this and other slight departures from Golden Age theology, Hadassi is generally loyal to its central tenets: creation out of nothing; divine unity with attributes which are in virtue of God's self or essence (even with his use of Greek terms to describe those attributes); and theodicy based on God's absolute justice. Hadassi's frame of reference is still the literature produced in the Karaite Golden Age as mediated by Byzantine Hebrew translations and reworkings.<sup>7</sup> As Hadassi wrote concerning his sources: "I have recorded and inscribed only a small part of your wisdom, for [the rest] is written in *Sefer ne'imot/al-muhtawi*, the book of the sages of knowledge before your eyes; and in *Sefer me'irat 'einayyim*; and *Sefer mahkimat peti*; and in *Sefer gevulim* of my Enlighteners, may their souls be in Eden, who taught the unity of your God; and *Sefer matoq la- nefesh*; and *Sefer marpe' la-'azem*; and *Sefer ha-datot*; and the big book of Leviticus, *Ozar ha-nehmad*; and the like among the books of the Enlighteners of your exile."<sup>8</sup>

Not all of these books have been identified with assurance, but we see in this list the importance for Hadassi of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, author of *Ne'imot* and *Mahkimat peti*, and his student Tobias ben Moses, translator of these works and author of some of the others. It was Tobias who initiated the Byzantine Karaite translation project that made it possible for a non-Arabic reader like Judah Hadassi to be conversant with the works of earlier Karaite luminaries. In the intellectual crossroads, which was twelfth-century Byzantium, Judah Hadassi was exposed to Karaite Kalam and Greek Aristotelianism, and he generally sided with his Karaite predecessors. Rabbinic literature is treated with scorn; non-Kalam rabbinic thought, which was being developed at the same time in Iberia by such thinkers as Judah Halevi, Abraham bar Hiyya, and Joseph ibn Saddik, is unknown; Rabbanite biblical exegesis is ignored except as a target for attack.

In the 150 years between Hadassi and Aaron ben Joseph, we have no dated Byzantine Karaite compositions, which is why I repeated the suggestion that Aaron the Elder arrived on the scene *ex nihilo*. David Sklare has identified a number of theological compositions written in Egypt during this period,<sup>9</sup> but they are not part of the story being discussed here since they were written in Judaeo-Arabic and not translated into

<sup>6</sup> See Haggai BEN-SHAMMAL, "Studies in Karaite Atomism," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, v. 6, 1985, pp. 273-80. Aaron ben Elijah cited Hadassi's opposition to atomism as evidence that not all Karaites were atomists (and, therefore, his own anti-atomism was acceptable); see AARON BEN ELIJAH, *'Ez Ḥayyim. Ahron ben Elia's aus Nikomedien des Karäers System der Religionsphilosophie*, ed. by Franz DELITZSCH with notes and indices by Moritz STEINSCHNEIDER, Leipzig, Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1841, pp. 17-8; Morris CHARNER, "The Tree of Life by Aaron ben Elijah of Nicomedia," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1949, p. 29; LASKER, *Studies*, pp. 73-82.

<sup>7</sup> LASKER, *Theological Encounters*, pp. 28-42.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 300-2. Hadassi's use of the second person ("your wisdom," "your eyes," "your God," "your exile") is part of his unique literary style and not necessarily addressed to specific recipients.

<sup>9</sup> In a private communication.



Hebrew, which was the language understood by Byzantine Karaites. In addition, medieval Egyptian Karaite thought did not make the transition from Kalam to Aristotelianism that Byzantine Karaite thought did. Hence, in order to understand the changes that were happening in Byzantine Karaite thought from Judah Hadassi to Aaron ben Joseph, one needs to find Byzantine sources from that period.

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As noted above, the sacking of Constantinople by Latin Christendom in the Fourth Crusade, 1204, may have had an impact on Byzantine Karaism. Latin Christians now had a foothold in Constantinople, and much of the Byzantine Empire was exposed to western European thought. Connected to the sack of Constantinople or not, around the same time Jewish immigrants began coming from the west, especially from Iberia and Provence, and moving to Byzantium, bringing with them such cultural treasures as the biblical commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra. Despite Ibn Ezra's antipathy to Karaism, his pursuit of *peshat*, his willingness to use Karaite commentaries, especially those of Yefet ben Eli, and his clear Hebrew style endeared him to Karaites who accepted him as one of their own, going so far as to claim that Ibn Ezra was actually a secret Karaite. Ibn Ezra's influence upon Aaron ben Joseph, and then later Karaite exegetes like Aaron ben Elijah, is easily perceived.<sup>10</sup>

The imported Rabbanite literature was obviously instrumental in changing the course of Karaite thought by the end of the thirteenth century, but we can ask whether it is possible to identify other, perhaps more subtle, signs of the changes in Byzantine Karaite outlooks before they fully erupt in the works of Aaron the Elder. Are the 150 years between Hadassi and Aaron truly lost? As a result of research conducted by my student, Chief Karaite Rabbi Moshe Firrouz, and me, we can fill out some of the missing space between these two thinkers.

A good place to begin is with five Karaite theological treatises that were written in Byzantium.<sup>11</sup> These treatises have been cited on occasion but their authorship and time of composition are unclear. Those compositions are *Meshivat nafesh* ("Restoring the Soul"); *Marpe' la-'azem*<sup>12</sup> ("Healing to the Bones"); *Zidduq ha-din* ("Theodicy"); *She'elot u-teshuvot* ("Questions and Answers"); and *Sefer ha-mor* ("Book of Myrrh"). All of these compositions are based on the theology of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, and the major topics discussed are the unity of God and theodicy. Some have been attributed either to al-Baṣīr or to his student Yeshua ben Judah (mid-twelfth century), but these attributions are obviously mistaken since these works are not translations from the

<sup>10</sup> See Daniel FRANK, "Ibn Ezra and the Karaite Exegetes Aaron ben Joseph and Aaron ben Elijah," in Fernando Díaz ESTEBAN, ed., *Abraham Ibn Ezra and His Age*, Madrid, Asociación Española de Orientalistas, 1990, pp. 99-107.

<sup>11</sup> The following discussion is based upon Moshe FIRROUZ and Daniel J. LASKER, "Five Karaite Theological Treatises from Byzantium: A Description and Preliminary Evaluation," *Alei Sefer*, vol. 29, 2019, pp. 7-24 (Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> I use the biblical pausal forms, as they appear in the appropriate verses, for the titles of these two compositions.

Judaeo-Arabic. All of them have glosses in Judaeo-Arabic or Judaeo-Greek to one extent or another.

Since these treatises are similar, they have generally been considered all variations on the same theme. In addition, since Hadassi mentions some of them, until now no one has tried to look at the differences between the treatises and determine whether, indeed, they are all pre-Hadassi. In fact, Hadassi mentions only one by the name we have for it (*Marpe' la-'azem*). A second treatise, *Zidduq ha-din*, is probably what Hadassi calls *Sefer gevulim* ("Book of Definitions"), since much of the book provides definitions of key concepts. The other three, *Meshivat nafesh*, *She'elot u-teshuvot*, and *Sefer ha-mor*, are not mentioned in *Eshkol ha-kofer*.

There is a very good reason why *Sefer ha-mor* is not mentioned by Hadassi, and that is because it is definitely post-Hadassi. We know that, since one of the works the author cites is Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, completed approximately 30 years after Hadassi's *magnum opus*. As far as I know, it is the first Karaite reference to a work by Maimonides, demonstrating that Byzantine Karaites were exposed to Maimonides's works by the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth century, long before Aaron ben Joseph at the end of the thirteenth century. I do not know if Egyptian Karaites, who had the opportunity of knowing Maimonides's work in situ in Cairo, cited him, but Byzantine Karaites, who would co-opt Abraham Ibn Ezra, would also eventually adopt Maimonides as well as one of their own (despite his anti-Karaite sentiments).<sup>13</sup>

What of the other compositions, *Meshivat nafesh* and *She'elot u-teshuvot*? Although usually attributed to other authors, it is clear to us that Tobias ben Moses is the author of the first of these. In Tobias's translation of al-Baṣīr's *al-Muḥṭawī*, which Hadassi knew as *Sefer ne'imot*, the translator refers to *Meshivat nafesh* as his own book. It is most likely that Hadassi knew the book; perhaps he was familiar with it under a different name. It might have been one of books mentioned by Hadassi but not yet identified, like *Matoq la-nefesh*, whose name comes from the same verse in Proverbs 16:24 which is the source of the name *Marpe' la-'azem*.

As to *She'elot u-teshuvot*, it has some signs of being later than Hadassi's *Eshkol*. The best example is its use of the term *ba'alei ha-qabbalah*, the appellation that was standard for Rabbanites by the end of the thirteenth century, but was not used in *Eshkol ha-kofer* or the treatises that preceded it. *Ba'alei ha-qabbalah* is a neutral term, with none of the vitriol of the names used by Hadassi to describe the Rabbanites. In addition, the author uses less specifically Byzantine Karaite expressions and knows the exact length of the lunar month as found in Rabbanite literature, a value not found

<sup>13</sup> See Daniel J. LASKER, "Maimonides and the Karaites: From Critic to Cultural Hero," in *Maimónides y su época*, ed. Carlos DEL VALLE RODRIGUEZ, et al., Madrid, Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2007, pp. 311-25. On mutual influences between Maimonides and Karaites, see LASKER, *Studies*, pp. 155-89.

in *Eshkol ha-kofer* or, to my knowledge, in earlier Karaite works. Thus, if *She'elot u-teshuvot* was not written after Hadassi, it must have been approximately contemporaneous with him. Both *She'elot u-teshuvot* and *Sefer ha-mor* are still in the Karaite Kalam world, but knowledge of Rabbanite literature, such as Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, might very well be a sign of things to come.

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That takes us back to Nissi ben Noah. I noted above that, in my book, I suggested that Nissi ben Noah could have been another link between Hadassi and Aaron the Elder. I was hesitant to say this conclusively because Nissi's time and place were a matter of controversy. As a result of a misunderstanding, Simhah Pinsker, the pioneer of Karaite studies in the mid-nineteenth century, placed Nissi in the eighth century as a contemporary of Anan ben David, the schismatic who was later adopted by Karaites as one of their own.<sup>14</sup> Scholars after Pinsker all agreed that this dating is totally impossible, but they disagreed as to when Nissi actually did live. Some authors may have confused Nissi ben Noah with the eleventh-century Joseph ben Noah (or ibn Nuḥ).<sup>15</sup> Most of Nissi's reputation is based on his one extant literary work, a description of the commandments *Bitan ha-masqilim ve-ha-nevonim* (The Booth of the Enlighteners and the Wise), preceded by a short introduction usually called a commentary on the Ten Commandments, or what Leon Nemoj called a quasi-commentary.<sup>16</sup> There is also a disagreement as to whether this quasi-commentary is separate from *Bitan ha-maskilim*, but Rabbi Firrouz's examination of the manuscripts indicates that there is only one treatise and that treatise is devoted to the taxonomy of the commandments. In addition to this one short book, Nissi is better known for a statement, which is cited, apparently first by Aaron ben Joseph, that one should study Rabbinic literature since most of it is the words of our fathers (*rov ha-ma'amarim imrei avoteinu hem*).<sup>17</sup> This statement, the exact source of which in Nissi's oeuvre is not known, at least in this formulation, has been used by subsequent Karaites, especially Elijah Bashyatchi the last Karaite decisor in the fifteenth century, to justify the incorporation of Rabbanite literature into the Karaite tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Can we date Nissi so that we know whether he was one of the sages between Hadassi and Aaron, as I suggested in my book but without assurance, or was he before Hadassi and is, thus, not a significant part of the change in Karaite thought between Hadassi

<sup>14</sup> Anan is often mistakenly considered the founder of Karaism; for an authoritative corrective, see Moshe GIL, "The Origins of the Karaites," in POLLIACK, ed., *Karaite Judaism*, pp. 73-118.

<sup>15</sup> See Miriam GOLDSTEIN, *Karaite Exegesis in Medieval Jerusalem*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> See Leon NEMOJ, "Nissi ben Noah's Quasi-Commentary on the Decalogue," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 73, 1983, pp. 307-48. Nemoj provides a summary of Nissi's work based on Simhah PINSKER's edition in *Lickute Kadmoniot. Zur Geschichte des Karaismus und der karäischen Literatur*, Vienna, Adalbert della Torre, 1860, vol. 2, pp. 2-13. Moshe Firrouz is working on a new edition of this treatise.

<sup>17</sup> AARON BEN JOSEPH, *Sefer ha-mivḥar*, Gözleve, 1834, Introduction, p. 9a.

<sup>18</sup> Elijah BASHYATCHI, *Aderet Eliyyahu*, Israel, 1966, Introduction (unpaginated); p. 10.

and Aaron? Despite the disagreement among the scholars,<sup>19</sup> and with no evidence from the manuscripts one way or the other, Firrouz and I would argue that the only known work attributed to Nissi, *Bitan ha-maskilim*, was written after Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer*. Hence, we agree with the conclusion that was reached 150 years ago by Pinkus Fritz Frankl, one of the more ignored scholars of Karaism, who died at the age of 39 in 1887. Not all of Frankl's arguments are cogent, and his postulating that the historical Nissi ben Noah was not the author of *Bitan ha-maskilim* is somewhat strange.<sup>20</sup> Yet, there was no reason for later scholars to have rejected the general thrust of Frankl's proofs.

What Frankl argued, with which Firrouz and I agree, is that the similarities between *Eshkol ha-kofer* and *Bitan ha-maskilim* are indicative that Nissi is dependent upon Hadassi, and not Hadassi on Nissi. Theoretically, Hadassi could have taken the division of all the commandments according to the Ten Commandments from Nissi and expanded it greatly, though that seems unlikely. The most telling example of Nissi's dependence on Hadassi is the list of eight aspects of every book—in Niehoff-Panagiotidis's translation of the Greek: the aim, the benefit, the true, the order of reading, the reason for writing down, the division of the chapters, the way of teaching, and reference to parts of a speech.<sup>21</sup> Hadassi offers this list of Greek terms twice, and he says it is taken from the Greek sages.<sup>22</sup> Nissi records the same list in Hebrew without the Greek. If Hadassi had copied from Nissi and not from original Greek sources, what was the source of his Greek terminology?

When we look at Nissi's small treatise, there is not much new in terms of theology, since it is mainly a discussion of the commandments. Thus, just as in the case of *She'elot u-teshuvot* and *Sefer ha-mor*, this work did not serve as a direct link between Hadassi's classical Karaite Kalam and Aaron ben Joseph's Maimonideanism. Yet, there is a significant sentence towards the end of *Bitan ha-masqilim*. Nissi writes that in order to understand his book, one has to learn the Bible with its vocalization, punctuation and musical notes (*te'amim*), and to understand the Mishnah, the Talmud, the laws (*halakhot*) and the greater and lesser Toseftas.<sup>23</sup> Here is a most significant

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<sup>19</sup> The major reason for dating Nissi (significantly) before Judah Hadassi is his placement in the list of Karaite worthies as preserved in ELIJAH BEN ABRAHAM'S *Hilluq ha-Qara'im ve-ha-Rabbanim*, in PINSKER, *Lickute*, vol. 2, p. 106, where he appears among the tenth-century sages. Since that dating is hardly credible, and the earliest extant manuscripts of Elijah's work are from the sixteenth century, there is no way of knowing whether this reference is original. Elijah's dates are also unknown, and apparently, he was before Judah Hadassi, even though some versions of the *Hilluq* list Hadassi as a Karaite sage. For a discussion of this work, see Leon NEMOY, "Elijah Ben Abraham and His Tract Against The Rabbanites," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 51, 1980, pp. 63-87.

<sup>20</sup> P.F. FRANKL, *Aharei Reshe"f le-vaqer be-sifrut ha-qaraim*, Vienna, Georg Brög, 1877, pp. 19-40 (this book originally appeared in *Ha-shaḥar* vol. 7, 1875-6, pp. 646-50, 701-13; vol. 8, 1876-7, pp. 29-31, 118-27, 177-84).

<sup>21</sup> NISSI, *Bitan*, in PINSKER, *Lickute*, vol. 1, pp. 38-9; cf. FRANKL, *Aharei Reshe"f*, pp. 33-5.

<sup>22</sup> LASKER, *et al.*, *Crossroads*, pp. 234, 726, 739.

<sup>23</sup> NISSI, *Bitan*, in PINSKER, *Likutei*, vol. 1, p. 41; cf. vol. 2, p. 13. This may be the source of the attribution to Nissi of the obligation for a Karaite to study Rabbanite literature but does not include the claim that most of that literature is the work of Karaite ancestors.

departure from Hadassi who treats Rabbinic teachings with scorn, and not as a prerequisite for understanding his book. We can assume that after the early Byzantine Karaite rejection of Rabbinic sources, as exemplified best by Hadassi's caustic anti-Rabbanite polemic in *Eshkol ha-kofer*, Nissi's advocacy of the use of Rabbanite sources made it possible for later Byzantine Karaites, starting with Aaron ben Joseph, to incorporate Rabbanite materials into the Karaite worldview, sometimes at the expense of the older Karaite traditions. Previous Karaites were conversant with Rabbanite literature, but it was the object of attack and not the source of authority.<sup>24</sup> And if the superscription to the manuscripts is authentic, Nissi called himself a rabbi, another Karaite innovation adopted by Aaron ben Joseph and still in practice today with Rabbi Firrouz, even though Rabbi Firrouz informs me that for internal Karaite needs, they prefer the title *hakham* (sage). Interestingly enough, Nissi seems to have made no other impact on future Karaism other than advocating the study of rabbinic sources, and his major work fell into oblivion.

In Aaron ben Joseph's introduction to his *Sefer ha-mivhar*, he mentions the difficulty of reading the Byzantine Hebrew treatises of his Karaite predecessors. Apparently, in the period between Hadassi and Aaron, the much clearer Rabbanite works, either composed originally in Hebrew or in the translations of the Ibn Tibbon family (twelfth-thirteenth centuries), made their way into Karaite consciousness and slowly replaced the treatises written in the peculiar and difficult Byzantine Karaite Hebrew. Thus, Aaron's exegesis is closer to that of Ibn Ezra and Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak, 1160-1235) than to Yefet ben Eli's; his theology closer to Maimonides's than to Yusuf al-Baṣīr's. Did Aaron turn to Rabbanite sources only because they were easier to read than Karaite ones, or because the permission to use such sources was received from Nissi ben Noah? It should be remembered that not only did Nissi give Karaites permission to read Rabbanite works, but also he even mandated it. The author of *Sefer ha-mor* fulfilled that directive by reading Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*.

When at the end of the thirteenth century, Aaron the Elder found intellectual succor in the works of Rabbanite authors, he could be said to have been part of a process initiated by his post-Hadassi Karaite predecessors. He went one giant step further, however, as he did his best to incorporate fully Rabbanite ideas into his works, but without abandoning the Karaite legal traditions, which formed the most striking boundary marker distinguishing Karaites from the majority Rabbanites. This almost seamless assimilation of Rabbanite intellectual accomplishments into Karaite thought became standard among Byzantine Karaites and eventually among Eastern European Karaites, as well, until the nineteenth century. We cannot reconstruct with assurance the process by which this happened in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but I have attempted here to describe what we do know about the Rabbanizing trends that were going on in Karaite Byzantium during those 150 years of Karaite history, which

<sup>24</sup> See Ofra TIROSH-BECKER, *Rabbinic Excerpts in Medieval Karaite Literature*, 2 vols., Jerusalem, The Bialik Institute, 2011 (Hebrew).

are usually considered lost. Perhaps in the future we will find even more evidence to support this new narrative of events.



# Poésie et exégèse dans l'œuvre du sage karaïte Aaron ben Joseph de Constantinople

□ Joachim YESHAYA

On sait que plusieurs savants juifs au Moyen Âge écrivaient des poèmes en plus de leurs ouvrages exégétiques, juridiques, linguistiques, philosophiques ou scientifiques. Pareillement, de nombreux poètes juifs médiévaux – c'est-à-dire ceux qui sont principalement connus pour leur poésie aujourd'hui – étaient également des auteurs accomplis dans d'autres domaines<sup>1</sup>. Un de ces intellectuels polyvalents fut le médecin karaïte Aaron ben Joseph ha-Rofe (ca 1250-1320), également connu sous le nom d'Aaron l'Ancien<sup>2</sup>.

Aaron ben Joseph vécut quelque temps en Crimée – où il naquit peut-être –, mais il fut surtout actif dans la capitale de l'Empire byzantin, Constantinople. Il est principalement connu pour ses commentaires bibliques, en particulier *Sēfer ha-mibḥār*, un commentaire de la Torah qui a été bien étudié au fil des siècles. Aaron l'Ancien écrivit également un traité de grammaire et il est crédité de la réforme du livre de prières (*Siddūr*) karaïte. Un des traits distinctifs de cette refonte du *Siddūr* karaïte est l'insertion de poèmes, non seulement par de célèbres poètes espagnols rabbiniques comme Judah Halevi (ca 1075-1141) ou Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), mais aussi par Aaron lui-même. Le *Siddūr* utilisé dans la plupart des congrégations karaïtes

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<sup>1</sup> Cet article s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche financé par la Fondation allemande pour la recherche (DFG) de 2010 à 2016 : « Die Einführung liturgischer Poesie in den karaitischen Gottesdienst von Moses Dar'i bis Aaron ben Joseph » (L'introduction de la poésie liturgique dans le livre de prières karaïte, de Moïse Dar'i à Aaron ben Joseph). L'un des principaux résultats de ce projet est l'ouvrage suivant : Joachim YESHAYA et Elisabeth HOLLENDER, eds, *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2017. L'objectif du présent article s'apparente à celui-ci de ma propre contribution à ce livre (p. 207-227), intitulée « Aaron ben Joseph's Poem for *Pārāshat Yitrō* considered in light of his Torah Commentary *Sēfer ha-mibḥār* ».

<sup>2</sup> Cette épithète doit le distinguer de son successeur du xiv<sup>e</sup> siècle, Aaron ben Elijah de Nicomedia, également connu sous le nom d'Aaron le Jeune.



contemporaines contient ainsi une série de cinquante-quatre introductions poétiques d'Aaron ben Joseph, correspondant aux sections hebdomadaires du cycle annuel de lecture de la Torah<sup>3</sup>.

Aaron ben Joseph faisait preuve d'une combinaison de compétences (à savoir poésie et exégèse) rappelant Abraham Ibn Ezra, son célèbre prédécesseur rabbinique. Des éléments de créativité poétique peuvent ainsi être identifiés dans leurs œuvres exégétiques, tout comme des traces de raisonnement exégétique peuvent être discernées dans leurs compositions poétiques. Un bon exemple d'exégèse en poésie se trouve dans l'introduction poétique rédigée par Aaron l'Ancien pour la cinquante-quatrième et dernière section hebdomadaire de la Torah, *pārāshat ve-Zōt ha-bērākhā*<sup>4</sup>, qui correspond à Deutéronome 33:1-34:12.

Le poème d'Aaron ben Joseph commence par une introduction (verset 1 : « L'homme de Dieu bénit les tribus élues de Jeshurun ») qui fait référence au premier verset de *ve-Zōt ha-bērākhā*<sup>5</sup>, Deutéronome 33:1 : « Voici la bénédiction par laquelle Moïse, l'homme de Dieu, bénit les Israélites avant sa mort. » Contrairement au verset biblique, le poème évite de citer Moïse par son nom et s'appuie plutôt sur l'appellation « homme de Dieu »<sup>6</sup>, qui se trouve en Deutéronome 33:1. L'emploi par Aaron l'Ancien du nom poétique Jeshurun, au lieu d'Israël, fait allusion à Deutéronome 33:5 : « Il [Dieu] était roi en Jeshurun quand se rassemblaient les chefs du peuple et les tribus d'Israël. »

Le second verset du poème (« Voyez, la pluie de reproche et la rosée de bénédiction jaillissent de sa bouche et de sa langue [de Moïse] ») est légèrement plus éloigné de *ve-Zōt ha-bērākhā*. Aaron l'Ancien introduit ici l'idée de réprimande, qui est absente de Deutéronome 33 et semble contraire à son esprit. Il est intéressant de noter que cette même idée est incluse dans son traitement de Deutéronome 33:1 dans le *Sēfer ha-mibhār*. En fait, son commentaire nous donne la clé pour comprendre la combinaison « reproche/bénédiction » dans le second verset du poème : « *Voici la bénédiction*. Il [Moïse] a non seulement adressé des reproches les Israélites mais il les a aussi bénis avant sa mort. » Ce point est encore clarifié dans le super-commentaire du *Sēfer ha-mibhār* intitulé *Ṭirat Kesef*, écrit par Joseph Salomon ben Moïse Lutski en

<sup>3</sup> *Siddūr ha-tēfillōt kē-minhag ha-yēhūdīm ha-qārā'im*, 4 vol., Ramle, 1961-1964 (réimpression de Vilna, 1891), vol. 1, p. 264-291.

<sup>4</sup> Pour le texte original du poème d'Aaron ben Joseph pour *pārāshat Zōt ha-bērākhā* avec une traduction en anglais (et pour tous les autres textes hébreux originaux cités dans le présent article), voir Joachim YESHAYA, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/moses-blessing-through-the-eyes-of-a-karaite-poet-and-commentator>, consulté le 26 février 2021. Pour une traduction en français, voir l'annexe ci-dessous. Le texte du poème est tiré du livre de prières karaïte, voir *Siddūr ha-tēfillōt kē-minhag ha-yēhūdīm ha-qārā'im*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> Les traductions du poème hébreu d'Aaron ben Joseph sont les miennes ; le poème est rimé mais non mesuré et les quatre premiers versets forment un acrostiche avec le nom « Aaron ». Les traductions des versets de la Bible sont tirées de la traduction Segond 21 (SG21) de 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Cette appellation est appliquée à plusieurs figures bibliques en dehors de la Torah, mais Moïse est la seule personne appelée ainsi dans la Torah. Il est intéressant de noter qu'Aaron ben Joseph lui-même, dans son *Sēfer ha-mibhār*, Gozlow, Eupatoria, Finkelman, 1835, Deut 33:1, discute ce titre honorifique en mentionnant certaines de ces figures bibliques (Samuel, Élie, Iddo, David, Elkana et Pinhas).

Crimée au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et imprimé avec l'édition de 1835 du *Sēfer ha-mibḥār*. Selon ce texte, la conjonction *ve* au début des mots *ve-Zōt ha-bērākḥā* (« et voici la Bénédiction ») reliait la Bénédiction de Moïse à ses paroles de réprimande dans le Cantique de Moïse, suggérant qu'elles étaient prononcées en même temps. En d'autres termes, la « pluie de reproche » fait référence au Cantique de Moïse en Deutéronome 32 – qui est sur un ton négatif – tandis que la « rosée de bénédiction » fait allusion à la Bénédiction de Moïse dans Deutéronome 33 – qui est sur un ton positif. Les images poétiques de la « pluie de reproche » et de la « rosée de bénédiction » sont expliquées dans un autre type de commentaire, qui visait à expliquer, non l'exégèse, mais les poèmes d'Aaron ben Joseph. Ce commentaire, intitulé *Sēfer tūb ta'am*, fut écrit par Berakha ben Joseph ha-Kohen en Crimée, au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>7</sup> :

Voyez, la pluie de reproche et la rosée de bénédiction jaillissent de sa bouche et de sa langue [de Moïse]. *Et le rabbin [Aaron ben Joseph] voulait dire que tout ce qui sortait de la bouche de Moïse notre maître – que la paix soit sur lui – non seulement sa réprimande mais aussi sa bénédiction, tout était pour le bien d'Israël. Ils pourraient bénéficier de l'enseignement sortant de sa bouche, tout comme la pluie et la rosée saturent la terre et la font germer et pousser des plantes. Tout comme la rosée et la pluie sont très utiles pour la terre, de même la bénédiction et la réprimande de Moïse notre maître – que la paix soit sur lui – sont très utiles pour Israël. Et par conséquent, le rabbin [Aaron ben Joseph] a décrit la bénédiction et la réprimande de Moïse notre maître – que la paix soit sur lui – en termes de rosée et de pluie, tout comme Moïse notre maître – que la paix soit sur lui – a décrit et comparé ses paroles à la rosée et à la pluie, comme il est écrit : Que mes instructions se déversent comme la pluie, que ma parole tombe comme la rosée [Deutéronome 32:2].*

Berakha ben Joseph ha-Kohen ajoute ici un élément important, à savoir que dans son poème, Aaron l'Ancien utilise des images du Cantique de Moïse en Deutéronome 32 pour introduire la Bénédiction de Moïse en Deutéronome 33, liant les deux poèmes bibliques, comme le fait son commentaire sur la combinaison « reproche/bénédiction » dans le *Sēfer ha-mibḥār*.

Le verset 3 (« Il [Moïse] ouvrit ces mots avec "l'Éternel est venu sur le Sinaï" (Deutéronome 33:2) dans une splendeur majestueuse ») cite sûrement les premiers mots de la Bénédiction de Moïse. Pourtant, la préposition attachée ici au mot Sinaï est « sur le Sinaï », et non « du Sinaï », comme dans le texte biblique. Il ne s'agit pas simplement d'une question d'orthographe ou de choix de mots : cela change la signification du texte. Aaron ben Joseph discute également ce détail important dans son *Sēfer ha-mibḥār*, à propos de Deutéronome 33: 2 : « *L'Éternel est venu du Sinaï*. Certains disent que la [lettre hébraïque] *mēm* est à la place d'un *bēt* ». Autrement dit,

<sup>7</sup> *Sēfer tūb ta'am lē-ha-Rāb Bērākḥā ben Yōsef ha-kōhēn*, éd. Joseph ALGAMIL, Ramle, Makhōn Tif'eret Josef, 2000, p. 408-421 (poème pour *pārāshat ve-Zōt ha-bērākḥā*).

même si le texte biblique dit « du Sinaï » (avec la lettre *mēm*), cela signifie « sur le Sinaï » (avec *bēt*, correspondant à l'histoire d'Exode 19, où l'Éternel descend sur le mont Sinaï pour révéler son message à Israël). Malheureusement, Aaron l'Ancien cite rarement ses sources de manière explicite ; ses commentaires sont parsemés d'expressions comme « Certains disent ». Là encore, le super-commentaire sur le *Sēfer ha-mibḥār* de Joseph Salomon ben Moïse Lutski est particulièrement utile, puisqu'il note explicitement la source d'Aaron ben Joseph : « *Certains disent que la [lettre hébraïque] mēm est à la place d'un bēt. C'est le rabbin Saadia Gaon qui a interprété de cette façon.* » Ce que nous apprenons du poème qui ne se trouve pas dans le commentaire est qu'Aaron l'Ancien adopte l'interprétation de Saadia Gaon (882-942) et la considère comme correcte, bien que Saadia ait souvent polémique de façon agressive contre les karaïtes<sup>8</sup>.

Le verset 4 (« Il [Moïse] a donné à son peuple la Torah, la justice, la loi et la droiture ») fait allusion à la première moitié de Deutéronome 33:4 : « Moïse nous a donné la loi ». Le verset 5 (« Il [Moïse] a certainement béni ses précieux fils [de Jacob] ») constitue une bonne introduction à la majeure partie du poème – la bénédiction des tribus d'Israël (versets 6-18). Alors qu'il réécrit les bénédictions bibliques, Aaron l'Ancien suit l'ordre des tribus dans *ve-Zōt ha-bērākḥā*, de Ruben à Asher, y compris l'omission de Siméon. Contrairement au texte biblique, dans lequel Lévi et Joseph reçoivent des éloges étendus, dans le poème chaque tribu n'est mentionnée que dans un verset seulement, avec deux exceptions : Ruben et Lévi ont chacun deux versets. Pour avoir une idée de la façon dont Aaron l'Ancien réécrit les bénédictions, nous examinerons ici deux exemples : la bénédiction de Ruben (versets 6-7) et la bénédiction de Nephthali (verset 17).

La bénédiction de Ruben commence par une citation de Deutéronome 33:6 : « Que Ruben vive et ne meure pas. » Pour conclure ce même verset 6, Aaron l'Ancien ajoute « la mort des rebelles ». Cela semble se référer à la mort horrible des Rubénites Dathan et Abiram, mentionnée dans Nombres 16 dans le contexte de la révolte de Koré contre Moïse. Mais cette addition poétique pourrait également faire allusion à l'inconduite sexuelle de Ruben avec Bilha, la concubine de son père (Genèse 35:22). Cette affaire

<sup>8</sup> Selon toute vraisemblance, Aaron a adopté cette lecture de Saadia Gaon via le commentaire à Deutéronome 33:2 d'Abraham Ibn Ezra, voir *The Commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra on the Pentateuch*, trad. Jay F. SHACHTER, New York, Ktav, 2003, vol. 5, p. 171 ; *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trad. Samuel ROSENBLATT, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948, p. 164-165. Il convient de noter qu'Aaron cite également des travaux d'exégètes karaïtes antérieurs comme Yefet ben 'Eli (actif à Jérusalem au x<sup>e</sup> siècle) dans ses propres compositions. Cependant, vu qu'Aaron ne connaissait pas le judéo-arabe, sa connaissance de ces sources karaïtes antérieures aurait été dérivée de traductions et de compilations hébraïques qui ont été produites ou diffusées à Byzance du xi<sup>e</sup> au xiii<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pour plus d'informations sur l'utilisation par Aaron des sources karaïtes et rabbiniques, voir Joachim YESHAYA, « Aaron ben Joseph's Poem for *Pārāshat Yitrō* considered in light of his Torah Commentary *Sēfer ha-mibḥār* », dans Joachim YESHAYA et Elisabeth HOLLENDER, éd., *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2017, p. 220-222.

est également mentionnée dans le *Sēfer ha-miḇhār*<sup>9</sup> sur Deutéronome 33:6 : « Certains disent : Que Ruben vive dans le Monde à Venir (*ha-ōlām ha-bā*), et qu'on ne se souvienne pas de l'iniquité avec la concubine de son père. » Le verset suivant (7 : « qu'il ne manque aucun de ses hommes ») reflète également la Bénédiction de Moïse (Deutéronome 33:6 : « et que ses hommes soient nombreux ! ») et l'exposé dans le *Sēfer ha-miḇhār* sur Deutéronome 33:6 :

Que Ruben vive. C'est-à-dire, sa tribu, car [Ruben] est le premier-né et l'aîné, et le sens est que lorsqu'ils sortent comme des fers de lance devant leurs frères, les Israélites, il ne manquera pas un homme dans la guerre contre l'ennemi, car ils quitteront la guerre sans aucun homme disparu ou décédé ; plutôt, leur peuple et leurs hommes seront en pleine mesure, comme dans [le verset] : « Tes serviteurs ont fait le compte des soldats qui étaient sous nos ordres et il ne manque pas un homme parmi nous [Nombres 31:49]. »

Aaron ben Joseph s'appuie ici sur plusieurs sources bibliques. Premièrement, il explique que la raison pour laquelle Moïse s'inquiète de Ruben est que cette tribu (en compagnie de Gad) a promis d'être l'avant-garde lors de la guerre à Canaan. En outre, il interprète la bénédiction comme un souhait qu'aucun soldat de Ruben ne soit tué, conformément à ce qui s'est passé pendant la guerre contre Madian, au cours de laquelle aucun Israélite n'a été tué.

Un autre bon exemple d'exégèse en poésie est le traitement de la bénédiction de Nephthali (verset 17) : « Nephthali sera rassasié de faveurs, sans aucun manque. » La première partie de ce verset est clairement tirée de Deutéronome 33:23 : « Nephthali, toi qui es rassasié de faveurs et comblé des bénédictions de l'Éternel. » La deuxième partie, cependant, reformule la description positive « comblé des bénédictions » par « sans aucun manque ». Le lien entre ces deux phrases est établi dans le *Sēfer ha-miḇhār* sur Deutéronome 33:23 : « *Rassasié de faveurs*. Comme "son plus ancien serviteur" [d'Abraham, Genèse 24:2], qui ne manque de rien et qui est comblé des bénédictions de l'Éternel. » Cet exemple de l'introduction par Aaron ben Joseph de mots identiques ou similaires dans ses traitements du texte biblique en poésie et prose montre que ses poèmes doivent être étudiés en relation avec ses écrits exégétiques (mais aussi en relation avec autres travaux exégétiques, comme l'illustre l'exemple suivant).

Nous avons déjà noté plus haut un exemple (verset 3) où Aaron l'Ancien a adopté l'explication de Saadia Gaon, *via* Abraham Ibn Ezra, comme l'interprétation correcte, bien que ces derniers ne fussent pas karaïtes mais rabbanites. En fait, Aaron l'Ancien

<sup>9</sup> L'affaire est également traitée dans le super-commentaire du *Sēfer ha-miḇhār* par Joseph Salomon ben Moïse Lutski et dans le commentaire des poèmes d'Aaron ben Joseph par Berakha ben Joseph ha-Kohen. Pour les conceptions karaïtes byzantines du Monde à Venir, voir le chapitre intitulé « Afterlife and Eschatology », dans Daniel LASKER, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2008.

a utilisé d'autres travaux exégétiques rabbiniques pour écrire son poème. Un bon exemple en est la section sur la mort de Moïse (versets 19-21 ; cf. Deutéronome 34:1-12) :

19 : *Le prophète de l'Éternel [Moïse] monta [Deutéronome 34:1] sur le mont Abarim<sup>10</sup>.*

20 : *et il mourut là [Deutéronome 34:5] par un baiser du Plus Puissant [Dieu].*

21 : *Il [l'Éternel] l'enterra [Deutéronome 34:6] avec de la myrrhe coulante<sup>11</sup> dans la poussière de la terre.*

Le texte biblique ne mentionne pas ce « baiser de la mort » du verset 20. Dans le passage correspondant du *Sēfer ha-mibhār* sur Deutéronome 34:5, Aaron ben Joseph écrit : « Il est vrai qu'il [Moïse] est mort par un baiser, mais c'est un grand secret. » Ce secret est basé sur l'idiome de la Bible hébraïque, dans lequel « bouche » transmet le sens d'« ordre », utilisé dans les mots *'al pī ādonāy* trouvés à la fin de Deutéronome 34:5 : « Moïse, le serviteur de l'Éternel, mourut là, dans le pays de Moab, conformément à l'ordre de l'Éternel. » Et pourtant, la signification littérale de *'al pī ādonāy* est « par la bouche de l'Éternel », ce qui a suscité la légende midrashique trouvée dans plusieurs textes rabbiniques (et adoptée par des rabbins célèbres comme Rachi [1040-1105] et Maïmonide [1138-1204]), selon laquelle Moïse est mort par un baiser divin. Certes, c'est l'un des rares cas où Aaron ben Joseph privilégie une interprétation *dērāsh* (homélitique) plutôt qu'une lecture *pēshāṭ* (sens plein, littéral), même si cette dernière se trouve dans l'exégèse d'Abraham Ibn Ezra, qu'Aaron l'Ancien utilise souvent<sup>12</sup>. Afin d'expliquer ce choix inhabituel, Berakha ben Joseph ha-Kohen suggère dans son commentaire sur le poème<sup>13</sup> :

*Il semble que ce baiser dont les sages ont parlé est une interprétation dērāsh (homélitique), mais le rabbin [Aaron ben Joseph] l'a approuvé, comme il l'a dit dans Sēfer ha-mibhār, « Il est vrai qu'il [Moïse] est mort par un baiser, mais c'est un grand secret. » C'est-à-dire que le baiser détient un secret non pas selon son*

<sup>10</sup> Aaron ben Joseph mentionne le nom de la chaîne de montagnes Abarim, tandis que Deutéronome 34:1 mentionne les noms de Pisga (la partie nord d'Abarim) et du mont Nebo (le plus haut sommet de Pisga). Selon Deutéronome 34:1-5, c'est de là que Moïse contempla la terre promise avant de mourir.

<sup>11</sup> La myrrhe était utilisée dans les rites funéraires anciens comme matériau d'embaumement, offrande aux décedés et moyen de masquer l'odeur du cadavre.

<sup>12</sup> Selon toute vraisemblance, Aaron l'Ancien a tiré cette interprétation de Moïse Maïmonide, voir le chapitre intitulé « Maimonides and Karaism: Mutual Influences » dans Daniel LASKER, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2008. Pour la légende midrashique, voir Michael FISHBANE, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1994, p. 17-19, 24-26. Pour d'autres poèmes hébreux qui ont conservé cette légende, voir Ted CARMİ, *Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, New York, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 95, 266-274 ; Leon WEINBERGER, *The Death of Moses in the Synagogue Liturgy*, doctorat, Brandeis University, 1963. Le motif apparaît également plus tard, dans un contexte différent, dans le poème allemand de Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) sur la mort de Moïse, voir <http://rainer-maria-rilke.de/100188dertodmoses.html>, consulté le 17 avril 2020 ; *Samtliche Werke*, Frankfurt am Main, 1963, vol. 2, p. 102-103.

<sup>13</sup> *Sēfer tūb ṭa'am*, op. cit., p. 408-421 (poème pour *pārāshat ve-Zōt ha-bērākāhā*).

*sens plein mais se réfère à un dvēqūt (attachement) interne, comme nous l'avons expliqué.*

En d'autres termes, le baiser est considéré ici comme faisant référence à l'union mystique de l'âme avec Dieu au moment de la mort<sup>14</sup>. Selon Berakha, qui semble gêné par l'adoption d'un motif purement rabbinique, Aaron ben Joseph n'a pas vraiment accepté la légende midrashique, mais il l'a utilisée comme métaphore de son propre secret allégorique.

Le poème se termine par deux autres sections. Les versets 22-27 traitent de l'incomparabilité prophétique de Moïse (voir par exemple les versets 22-23 : « Car qui est comme Moïse parmi toutes les créatures ? Que l'Éternel connaissait face à face (Deutéronome 34:10) rayonnante »), alors que les versets 28-35 sont consacrées à la sanctification de Dieu, y compris la référence aux anges qui proclament « Saint, saint, saint est l'Éternel » dans Ésaïe 6:3 (lignes 28-29) : « Mes amis, sanctifiez Dieu, qui l'a choisi [Moïse] parmi les élus, en répétant le mot *qādōsh* "saint" trois fois et avec chants de louange. » Le poème est conclu par un florilège des trois premiers versets d'Ésaïe 6 (y compris la sanctification de Dieu) et est suivi d'un colophon, inclus dans le livre de prières karaïte<sup>15</sup> : « Voici la fin des poèmes, qui sont épurés comme l'argent, que notre rabbin Aaron ben Joseph a composés – que son âme soit liée dans les liens de la vie éternelle ! »

En conclusion, on peut noter que les poèmes d'Aaron l'Ancien et son commentaire sur la Torah, *Sēfer ha-mibhār*, ainsi que les commentaires criméens qu'ils ont générés, peuvent aider à reconstruire le monde intellectuel du karaïsme byzantin médiéval. Le fait qu'Aaron ait écrit à la fois de la poésie et de l'exégèse nous permet de comprendre de nombreux passages à première vue inexplicables dans sa poésie et de voir comment l'exégèse sous-tend certains passages obscurs. Finalement, on peut noter que, bien qu'il fût karaïte, Aaron connaissait et utilisait l'exégèse rabbinique, non seulement les lectures *pēshāṭ* (sens littéral) de son modèle Abraham Ibn Ezra, mais même des interprétations *dērāsh* (homélitique) de la tradition midrashique.

<sup>14</sup> Le concept mystique de *dvēqūt* a inspiré également Judah Gibbor – l'un des principaux érudits karaïtes de Constantinople au début de la période ottomane (de la seconde moitié du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la première ou la deuxième décennie du xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle) – dans son poème pour *pārāshat ve-Zōt ha-bērākāhā*, voir *Siddūr ha-tēfillōt kē-minhag ha-yēhūdīm ha-qārā'im*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 393. Les poèmes d'Aaron l'Ancien et de Judah Gibbor sont toujours récités dans les synagogues karaïtes en Israël. Je remercie les professeurs Daniel Lasker et Miriam Goldstein et le grand rabbin karaïte Dr Moshe Firrouz pour cette remarque.

<sup>15</sup> *Siddūr ha-tēfillōt kē-minhag ha-yēhūdīm ha-qārā'im*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 291.

## Annexe : Poème d'Aaron ben Joseph pour *pārāshat Zōt ha-bērākhā* (traduction française)

L'homme de Dieu bénit les tribus élues de Jeshurun.

Voyez, la pluie de reproche et la rosée de bénédiction jaillissent de sa bouche et de sa langue.

Il ouvrit ces mots avec « L'Éternel est venu sur le Sinaï » dans une splendeur majestueuse.

Il a donné à son peuple la Torah, la justice, la loi et la droiture.

Il a certainement béni ses précieux fils [de Jacob].

Que Ruben vive et ne meure pas la mort des rebelles,

Qu'il ne manque aucun de ses hommes.

Voici [ce qu'il dit] sur Juda : que le Seigneur le secoure contre ses ennemis !

Sur Lévi il dit : porte le *thummim* et l'*urim*<sup>16</sup>

Brise les reins de ses adversaires et que les rebelles ne se relèvent plus !

Benjamin, le bien-aimé de Dieu, reposera dans les habitations pures de Dieu.

Sur Joseph il dit : Son pays soit béni, c'est à lui que revient le droit d'aînesse.

Zabulon se réjouira avec des ruisseaux de miel pur,

et Issacar [se réjouira] dans ses tentes et examinera en profondeur.

Gad se couchera comme une lionne, en déchirant comme des lions.

Dan sera comme un jeune lion qui donne la victoire sur les héros.

Nephtali sera rassasié de faveurs, sans aucun manque,

et Aser sera béni parmi ses fils [de Jacob] ! Qu'il soit agréable à ses honnêtes frères.

Le prophète de l'Éternel monta sur le mont Abarim

et il mourut là par un baiser du Plus Puissant [Dieu].

Il l'enterra avec de la myrrhe coulante dans la poussière de la terre.

Car qui est comme Moïse parmi toutes les créatures

Que l'Éternel connaissait face à face rayonnante ?

« Au commencement » et « Voici les noms », il a dit, ainsi que « Voici les paroles. »

Comment la lumière des deux lumières [c'est-à-dire, le soleil et la lune] sera agréable par rapport à sa lumière [de Moïse] ?

Une voix appellera devant lui : Ouvrez les portes !

Un [peuple] pur et juste entrera entre les deux lumières.

Mes amis, sanctifiez Dieu, qui l'a choisi parmi les élus,

en répétant le mot *qādōsh* (« saint ») trois fois et avec chants de louange.

Et dites avec crainte et révérence : qu'Il soit assis sur le trône le plus glorieux,

celui qui est assis sur un trône très élevé ; le bord inférieur de son vêtement remplissait le

temple. Des séraphins se tenaient au-dessus de Lui. Ils avaient chacun six ailes : deux dont

ils se couvraient le visage, deux dont ils se couvraient les pieds et deux dont ils se servaient pour voler.

Ils se criaient l'un à l'autre : « Saint, saint, saint

est l'Éternel, le maître de l'univers ! Sa gloire remplit toute la terre ! »

Voici la fin des poèmes, qui sont épurés comme l'argent, que notre rabbin Aaron ben Joseph a composé – que son âme soit liée dans les liens de la vie éternelle !

.....

<sup>16</sup> Des éléments du pectoral porté par le grand prêtre selon la Bible hébraïque, e.g. Exode 28:30 : « Tu placeras dans le pectoral du jugement l'*urim* et le *thummim*, et ils seront sur le cœur d'Aaron lorsqu'il se présentera devant l'Éternel » ; ils sont généralement considérés comme des objets divinatoires dont le grand-prêtre d'Israël se servait pour connaître la volonté de Dieu pour le peuple.

# Ibn Ezra, la Tradition et les karaïtes<sup>1</sup>

□ Stefan GOLTZBERG

Cet article étudie l'ambivalence d'Abraham Ibn Ezra (m. 1167) envers deux courants qui lui sont partiellement contemporains :

- (a) les karaïtes, qui refusent le concept de Tora orale<sup>2</sup>, et
- (b) les talmudistes, qui adhèrent à une conception de la Tora orale par rapport à laquelle Ibn Ezra prend ses distances. Afin de distinguer les auteurs du Talmud, qu'il respecte par-dessus tout, et ceux, plus récents, que critique Ibn Ezra, nous appellerons ceux-ci « les talmudistes de son temps ».

Ambivalence envers les karaïtes<sup>3</sup>, car il les critique vertement tout en les citant abondamment et parfois avec approbation<sup>4</sup>. Ambivalence envers les talmudistes de son temps, parce qu'ils auraient assuré la transmission du savoir tout en se trompant

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<sup>1</sup> Je tiens à remercier pour leurs relectures attentives Raphaël Etedgui, Ephraïm Kahn, Ishti Hayyeqara ainsi que Guillaume Dye et les évaluateurs anonymes.

<sup>2</sup> Les raisons qui motivent les karaïtes à rejeter le concept de Tora orale tiennent notamment au caractère peu fiable des chaînes de transmission et à l'idée qu'une transmission fiable n'aurait pas comporté de controverses, voir Meira POLLIACK, « The Karaite Inversion of "Written" and "Oral" Torah in Relation to the Islamic Arch-Models of Qur'an and Hadith », *JSQ*, vol. 22, 2015/3, p. 243-302, notamment p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> Les karaïtes font également preuve d'« ambivalence » envers la « tradition » des Juifs rabbanites. Voir Meira POLLIACK, *ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>4</sup> L'édition du commentaire du Pentateuque établie par Asher Weiser contient une section consacrée aux auteurs cités par Ibn Ezra : un quart d'entre eux sont des karaïtes. Voir Abraham IBN EZRA, *Commentaire du Pentateuque* (en hébreu), éd. Asher WEISER, Jérusalem, Mosad haRav Kook, 1977, p. 59-71. Sur son attitude « ambivalente » envers les karaïtes, voir Irene LANCASTER, *Deconstructing the Bible. Abraham ibn Ezra's introduction to the Torah*, Londres, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, chapitre 6, notamment p. 121. Ajoutons que les karaïtes, pour leur part, tantôt le critiquent, tantôt le citent avec approbation, voir Pinchas WEIS, « Ibn Ezra, the Karaïtes and the Halakha » (en hébreu), *Melilah*, 1944, n° 1, p. 35, ainsi que Jean-Christophe ATTIAS, *Penser le judaïsme*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2010, p. 68.



parfois sur la manière de comprendre les Sages de l'époque talmudique<sup>5</sup>. Nous n'étudierons pas ici les rapports complexes entre rabbanites et karaïtes en général, ni leur rapport avec les thèses développées par les auteurs musulmans qui remettent notamment en question la mise par écrit de la Tora orale<sup>6</sup>. Nous nous concentrerons sur la *représentation* qu'Ibn Ezra se fait de la pensée karaïte et des talmudistes de son temps. Pour identifier le positionnement d'Ibn Ezra, il est nécessaire de clarifier sa philosophie des sources du droit et sa théorie du *peshat* (souvent traduit par « sens littéral »<sup>7</sup>, mais cette traduction ne sera pas retenue ici). Or, sa philosophie des sources du droit et sa théorie du *peshat* sont sous-tendues par la notion de tradition. Source du droit, *peshat* et tradition : ces trois éléments permettront de saisir son rapport ambivalent aux karaïtes.

La notion de tradition recouvre des éléments hétéroclites. Elle évoque notamment les coutumes locales, les pratiques régionales : ce sont *les traditions*. Nous nous intéresserons dans ce texte à la notion de Tradition en tant que source du droit : avec majuscule et au singulier. Ibn Ezra utilise de multiples termes pour désigner la Tradition : *qabbala* (réception), *masoret* (transmission), *ha'ataqa* (copie), *shemu'a* (tradition orale, littéralement : une chose entendue) et pour désigner les transmetteurs : *anshey ha-masoret* (les hommes de la Transmission), *ha-ma'atiquim* (les copistes), *ha-qadmonim* (les Anciens), *qadmoneynu* (nos Anciens), *ha-hasidim* (les pieux), l'acronyme *hazal* (les Sages de mémoire bénie). Chaque appellation mériterait un examen circonstancié ; nous nous contenterons, dans le cadre de ce texte, de parler uniformément de Tradition, que nous identifions peu ou prou à la Tora orale.

Pour simplifier, et bien que les choses soient beaucoup plus nuancées, nous synthétisons trois positions, celle des karaïtes, celle d'Ibn Ezra et celle des talmudistes de son temps. Nous mobilisons la distinction entre le concept et la conception<sup>8</sup>. On peut disposer (ou non) du concept de Dieu, par exemple, et si tel est le cas, on peut diverger quant à la conception qu'on s'en fait. Le concept désigne l'existence même de la catégorie : on peut ne pas posséder une catégorie donnée. En revanche, la conception est la manière de *comprendre* une notion. Deux personnes peuvent partager le concept de Dieu (pour simplifier, croire en Dieu) et diverger quant à la conception (être déiste ou théiste).

<sup>5</sup> L'attitude d'Ibn Ezra serait d'après certains *au mieux* ambivalente : « *ibn Ezra's (at best) ambivalent attitude to intense Talmud study* », Martin I. LOCKSHIN, « Lonely Man of Peshat » *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99:2 (Spring 2009), p. 291-300, en particulier p. 296.

<sup>6</sup> Pour une série d'études très utiles et éclairantes, voir Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2003. Plus récemment, sur l'inversion stratégique des karaïtes de la Tora orale et écrite à la lumière du discours musulman, voir Meira POLLIACK, « The Karaite Inversion of "Written" and "Oral" Torah in Relation to the Islamic Arch-Models of Qur'an and Hadith », *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Sur la signification du mot *peshat* chez Ibn Ezra, voir Mordechai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation. Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2011, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> L'opposition entre concept et conception, que l'on trouve notamment chez Rawls et Dworkin, semble introduite par Walter Bryce GALLIE, « Essentially Contested Concepts », *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series*, vol. 56, 1955-1956, p. 167-198.

Cette opposition entre concept et conception peut éclairer notre triangulation entre les karaïtes, Ibn Ezra et les talmudistes de son temps :

- 1) les karaïtes rejettent jusqu'au *concept*, c'est-à-dire jusqu'à l'existence, de la Tora orale<sup>9</sup> ;
- 2) les rabbanites, anti-karaïtes, ont en commun d'admettre le *concept* de Tora orale mais différent dans leurs *conceptions* respectives de la Tora orale :
  - a) Ibn Ezra ;
  - b) les talmudistes de l'époque d'Ibn Ezra.

Ibn Ezra se maintient donc à bonne distance à la fois des karaïtes (qui nient le concept de Tora orale) et des talmudistes de son temps (qui promeuvent une autre conception que lui de la Tora orale). Il retient des rabbanites l'*idée* de Tradition tout en y opérant un tri. Les rabbanites ne sont en effet pas tous d'accord entre eux, mais reconnaissent au moins l'existence de la Tradition, sous le nom de Tora orale (*tora she-be'al pe*). La Tradition est un *concept* non défini – plus précisément, au-delà de l'origine sinaïtique qui lui est attribuée (*Avot* 1,1), on ne sait guère quel est le contenu exact de la Tradition (Mishna, littérature tannaïtique, principes herméneutiques ?). Cette absence de définition permet de fédérer les rabbanites, qui s'opposent par ailleurs quant à leur *conception* de la Tora orale.

## Critique des karaïtes

Ibn Ezra s'exprime à plus d'un endroit à propos des karaïtes. Nous nous concentrerons sur deux textes principaux : son commentaire du Pentateuque et le *Yesod Mora*<sup>10</sup>. Dans l'introduction au commentaire du Pentateuque, Ibn Ezra distingue cinq voies dans l'interprétation du texte biblique. Les quatre premières voies sont présentées comme erronées et la cinquième, correcte, se trouve être la sienne. Cette introduction distinguant cinq voies a connu deux versions : la version standard et la version dite alternative. Par ailleurs, le corps de son commentaire mentionne souvent des auteurs karaïtes, parfois pour les railler, parfois en tant qu'autorités apparemment respectables.

<sup>9</sup> Certains karaïtes citent pour leur part abondamment la littérature talmudique. Voir Ofra TIROSH-BECKER, « The Use of Rabbinic Sources in Karaite Writings », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2003, p. 319-138 ainsi que *Rabbinic Excerpts in Medieval Karaite Literature*, 2 vol., Jérusalem, The Bialik Institute & Hebrew University, 2011 (en hébreu). La méthode non littéraliste du midrash est également mobilisée dans la littérature karaïte, Daniel FRANK, « The Limits of Karaite Scripturalism, Problems in Narrative Exegesis », in Meir BAR-ASHER et al. (éds), *A Word Fitly Spoken, Studies in Medieval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, and the Qur'an*, Jérusalem, Ben-Zvi Institute for the History of Jewish Communities in the East, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi & Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007, p. 41-82.

<sup>10</sup> *Yesod Mora* est un ouvrage de philosophie du droit talmudique, rédigé en hébreu, portant notamment sur la manière dont il convient de bâtir une éducation décloisonnée (grammaire, Talmud, loi juive, sciences profanes), la signification des commandements et sur l'importance de la Tora écrite et orale, et dont le titre complet est *Sefer Yesod Mora ve-sod Tora*, « Livre du fondement de la crainte et du secret de la Tora ». Nous utilisons l'édition critique annotée, révisée de Joseph COHEN et Uriel SIMON, Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007. Voir aussi H. Norman STRICKMAN « Abraham ibn Ezra's 'Yesod Mora' », *Hakirah, the Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought*, 2011/12, p. 139-169.

Voici, dans la version alternative, un extrait de la deuxième voie, consacrée aux karaïtes, qu'il appelle les « saducéens », *Commentaire du Pentateuque*, tome 1, p. 138 :

*Ils nient les paroles des copistes (ha-ma'atiquim), qui étaient tous des justes [...]. Ces personnes frappées d'aveuglement ne devraient-elles pas savoir, ou avoir entendu, que tout comme nous avons reçu la Tora écrite de nos pères, nous avons entendu la Tora orale de leur bouche ? Et le ciel nous garde de l'idée qu'ils aient ajouté ou retranché à ce que nous avons reçu et entendu. Car si la Tora orale n'était pas vraie, la Tora écrite ne tiendrait pas debout, tant il n'y a dans la sainte Tora pas le moindre commandement [totalement] explicite. Car la Tora écrite ne précise pas combien les interdits de shabbat ont de principes (avot) et de dérivés (toladot), ni quelles sont les règles et les mesures concernant la cabane (sukka). Elle ne mentionne pas la manière dont les dates de la Pâque dépendent des lunaisons, et si le blé ne pousse pas, comment décider. Cela a de quoi surprendre, sachant que chaque année tous doivent se garder de manger du pain levé durant la Pâque sous peine de retranchement, ainsi que [jeûner] durant Kippur. Et nous avons vu que Moïse – qu'il repose en paix – a indiqué extensivement, au savant comme à l'étudiant, les règles concernant le lépreux et le signe de chaque plaie. Or, cette règle ne concerne qu'une personne et ne trouve pas toujours à s'appliquer, c'est donc le signe que la lecture [correcte] des textes concernant les fêtes a été confiée aux pieux (ḥasidim). Et ainsi, nous avons trouvé chez Ézéchiass qui consulte les Anciens (2 Chroniques 30, 2) [afin de déterminer la date de la fête de Pâque lors du second mois]. Et voici que les fêtes sont données en fonction des consultations, selon ce qu'ont transmis (hé'tiqu) les hommes de foi qui sont cités dans la Mishna. Que Dieu, qui leur a donné la sagesse, leur donne une pleine récompense ! Et cela ne suffit pas aux faibles d'esprit d'être dénués de foi, au point de sortir le mot de son usage (tekhuna), car ils ignorent les règles de grammaire (diqduq ha-lashon) d'une langue à laquelle ils n'entendent rien. Citons Ben Zuta qui s'est trompé dans tout son commentaire ; il a interprété l'interdiction de monter au moyen de marches (ma'alot) (Exode 20 : 22) comme dérivant la racine M'L, comme si le M faisait autant partie du radical que le N de N'L. Et [on dit] au pluriel des chaussures usées (na'lot balot) (Josué 9 : 5). Mais si la forme était telle qu'il le prétend, be-ma'alot se dirait bi-m'alot. La forme est plutôt celle de ma'alot sheva<sup>11</sup> (« sept degrés »). Et Ben Zuta avait le culot de vainement prétendre monter les marches de la sagesse, et le voilà déculotté ! [jeu de mots difficilement traduisible, qu'il suffise de rappeler que l'interdiction de monter sur l'autel tenait au risque que les sous-vêtements du prêtre soient aperçus].*

Ce texte, assez touffu, dénonce la démarche des karaïtes et leur oppose une démonstration de la nécessité de l'adhésion à la Tradition. Le ton y est volontiers

<sup>11</sup> Le verset biblique comporte une lettre supplémentaire : *shiv'a* (Ézéchiel 40 : 26).

sarcastique envers les karaites. Ce passage gagne à être lu à la lumière d'un extrait du *Yesod Mora*, chapitre VI, 1.

*[Sources et révélations des commandements : la Tora écrite et la Tora orale]*  
 Il y a des commandements explicités (mev'arot) dans la Tora et il y a des commandements dont nous ne connaissons l'interprétation véridique (perusham be-'emet) que parce que les justes (ha-kedoshim ha-ma'atiqim<sup>12</sup>) ont transmis<sup>13</sup> [la Tora orale], chaque fils l'ayant reçu de son père, chaque élève de son maître. Et sans cette tradition (luley ha-qabbala), chacun pourrait les interpréter différemment (perush aher). Et il y a des commandements que nous avons reçus d'eux sans mention (zekher) dans la Tora. Et d'une manière générale : sans les hommes de la Grande Assemblée et les hommes de la Mishna et du Talmud, la Tora de notre Dieu serait déjà perdue, oublié son souvenir, car tous ceux-ci ont établi la chose parfaitement et ont très bien expliqué les commandements et toutes leurs règles telles qu'ils les ont reçus. Et il y en a qui trouveront un témoignage clair dans la Tora, d'autres [sont extraits] par l'interprétation (derash) ou encore par la voie du simple soutien (asmakhta be'alma). Et l'intelligent saura reconnaître quand on formule une interprétation textuelle (peshat) et quand on énonce une interprétation (derash), car leurs explications ne sont pas d'un seul type.

Si on lit ensemble ces deux textes, on perçoit que l'argumentation d'Ibn Ezra est triple : un conditionnel, un raisonnement *a fortiori* et une mise en garde contre l'arbitraire. Ces trois arguments figurent dans les deux textes, avec quelques nuances.

### L'argument conditionnel

Le *Yesod Mora* offre une typologie des commandements qui éclaire son commentaire biblique. Ibn Ezra y distingue en effet trois types de commandements :

- (1) ceux qui sont explicites dans la Tora écrite,
- (2) ceux qui n'ont qu'une mention/rappel/trace (*zekher*) dans la Tora écrite et
- (3) ceux qui n'ont même pas de mention/rappel/trace (*zekher*) dans la Tora écrite.

Si les catégories (2) et (3) présupposent clairement l'acceptation de la Tora orale, il ne faudrait pas croire qu'il en va autrement de la catégorie (1). En effet, les commandements qui sont explicites dans la Tora écrite supposent également la Tora orale pour le *détail* de l'application des commandements<sup>14</sup>. Selon Ibn Ezra, il n'y a guère de commandement que l'on puisse appliquer entièrement sans la Tora orale.

<sup>12</sup> Littéralement, on devrait dire les « saints justes ».

<sup>13</sup> Le terme de copiste (*ma'atiq*) traduit mal l'idée de scribe, transmetteur. Ce terme désignera également au Moyen Âge les traducteurs. Ici, pour la traduction de ce verbe, nous avons opté pour « transmis ».

<sup>14</sup> Saadia Gaon, pour sa part, tendait à montrer que même les détails des commandements pouvaient trouver une source dans les versets, voir Pinchas WEIS, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Tant dans son introduction à son commentaire du Pentateuque que dans le *Yesod Mora*, il fonde son approche sur un conditionnel contrefactuel<sup>15</sup> – un contrefactuel est un raisonnement qui part d'une hypothèse que l'on sait fautive pour en mesurer les conséquences. Ici, il s'agit de prouver l'existence de la Tora orale en envisageant les conséquences de son inexistence. Voici donc le raisonnement conditionnel visant à prouver la nécessité de la Tora orale : sans la Tora orale, on ne saurait appliquer entièrement le moindre commandement ni déterminer quand tombent les jours de fête durant lesquels une série de commandements doivent être accomplis. Il est donc nécessaire de souscrire à la Tora orale. La formule récurrente est *luley ha-qabbala* : sans la Tradition... (notamment *Yesod Mora* II, 13, VI, 1-2). Ce conditionnel est nécessaire pour l'élaboration de l'étape suivante, le raisonnement *a fortiori*.

### Raisonnement *a fortiori*

Deux types de commandements sont comparés par notre auteur : ceux qui régissent les mesures concernant certains types de lèpres, la manière d'identifier le type de plaie, d'isoler le porteur (le confinement avant la lettre) et ceux qui concernent la manière d'établir le calendrier dont dépendront les dates de tous les jours chômés. À cela s'ajoute que parmi les interdits concernant les jours chômés, certains sont assortis d'une peine de retranchement (*karet*), et tel n'est pas le cas des commandements cités qui ne concernent que certains individus. Or, si les règles entourant les plaies sont exposées assez explicitement, avec moult détails, dans le Pentateuque, on ne peut pas en dire autant de la marche à suivre pour établir la nouvelle lune, dont dépend tout le calendrier. Le raisonnement d'Ibn Ezra prend la forme d'un *a fortiori* : si la Tora a pris la peine de détailler par le menu des commandements qui n'incombent qu'à peu de gens et seulement de temps en temps, il est certain qu'elle aura prévu de fournir les règles du calendrier (incombant à tous et assortis, eux, d'une peine de retranchement). Il découle que la Tora orale doit exister. Ce raisonnement *a fortiori* est adossé à un argument par les conséquences d'un refus de la Tradition : ce refus conduirait à verser dans l'arbitraire.

### Mise en garde contre l'arbitraire

Enfin, Ibn Ezra met en garde contre le risque d'arbitraire. Sans cette Tora orale, l'interprétation du texte biblique serait vouée à verser dans l'arbitraire : *ve-khol ish kirtsono yefaresh ha-pesuqim*, « et chacun à sa guise interprétera les versets » (Introduction, deuxième voie, version standard, p. 2). Cet argument est classique dans l'histoire des religions<sup>16</sup> et en particulier dans l'histoire de l'interprétation juridique

<sup>15</sup> On peut comparer ce raisonnement à ce que les historiens de la philosophie appellent « l'argument de la suppression », Alain DE LIBERA, *L'Art des généralités : théories de l'abstraction*, Aubier, Paris, 1999, p. 64-65.

<sup>16</sup> En résumant la critique du protestantisme de Maistre s'inspirant de Charron, Jean-Yves PRANCHÈRE écrit que le rejet de la Tradition qui ferait « de l'inspiration privée le critère de la vérité religieuse reviendrait [...] à dissoudre la religion dans l'arbitraire le plus radical » (nous soulignons), Jean-Yves PRANCHÈRE, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières. La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre*, Genève, Droz, 2004, p. 289. Toutefois, la comparaison commode que nous faisons implicitement entre protestantisme et karaïsme ne devrait pas être prise trop au sérieux. Ce qui nous importe ici, c'est de souligner l'argument qui lie le rejet de la Tradition au risque d'arbitraire.

– la mise en garde contre l'arbitraire est moins efficace en interprétation non juridique/halakhique, puisque dans la *aggada* (matériau non juridique de la Tora écrite et orale), plusieurs interprétations peuvent coexister sans que cela pose un problème particulier<sup>17</sup>. La *aggada* est pluraliste par principe, alors que la *halakha* (matériau juridique) ne l'est qu'à contrecœur. L'idée que sans la Tora orale l'interprétation serait arbitraire et varierait d'une personne à l'autre, d'un moment à l'autre, est souvent acceptée sans autre forme de procès mais devrait, en toute rigueur, être vérifiée empiriquement : voit-on, dans les droits qui renoncent, refusent ou ignorent une Tradition, la Tradition, pulluler les interprétations arbitraires ? Les cultures qui rejettent une telle source du droit versent-elles automatiquement – ou même davantage – dans une situation de pluralisme, voire de relativisme ? Nous ne pouvons répondre à cette question. Ce qui est certain, c'est que cette *ligne traditionaliste* est typique : invoquer la nécessité de la lecture traditionnelle (à l'aune de la Tradition) *sous peine* de donner lieu à l'arbitraire. Appelons cette stratégie un appel à la *panique*, proche en un sens de l'argument de la pente glissante, puisqu'on envisage une situation effrayante à laquelle conduirait une décision (refuser la Tradition) pour justifier un choix (souscrire à la Tradition). Bien que l'argument de la pente glissante soit parfaitement rationnel en soi, certaines de ses variantes sont irrationnelles<sup>18</sup>. L'appel à la panique est parfois rationnel (si l'immeuble brûle), parfois l'est moins (si l'on suppose sans raison qu'il pourrait brûler).

Si le *concept* de Tora orale est la pomme de discorde entre les rabbanites et les karaïtes, ce qui oppose Ibn Ezra aux (autres) rabbanites est la *conception* de la Tora orale.

## Critique des talmudistes de son temps

Le reproche adressé aux « talmudistes de son temps » ne vise pas les Sages du Talmud – c'est-à-dire les autorités citées dans le Talmud –, qui sont pour ainsi dire infaillibles<sup>19</sup> selon Ibn Ezra (*ha-ma'atiqim she-hayu kullam tsadiqim*, « les copistes, qui étaient tous

<sup>17</sup> Il arrive qu'Ibn Ezra cite un matériau aggadique assimilant Sarah et Yiska et ajoute que « s'il s'agit d'une tradition, alors nous l'accepterons » (*ve'im qabbala, neqabbel*), voir son commentaire sur Genèse 11 : 29. Dans la version alternative Genèse 11 : 28, à propos du midrash selon lequel Abraham fut envoyé dans la fournaise, il écrit : « et si c'est une Tradition, nous l'accepterons comme des paroles de la Tora » (*ve'im qabbala, neqabbel ke-divrey tora*). Voir Mordechai Z. COHEN, *The Rule of Peshat. Jewish Constructions of the Plain Sense of Scripture and Their Christian and Muslim Contexts, 900-1270*, Philadelphie, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, p. 212. Mais cet article met l'accent sur le rôle de la Tradition dans le raisonnement juridique, et non aggadique.

<sup>18</sup> Ruwen Ogien appelait souvent l'argument de la pente glissante un argument de la « pente fatale » et y voyait, à tort, une erreur de raisonnement. Nous ne nous prononçons pas sur le bienfondé de cet argument de la pente glissante anti-karaïte, nous nous contentons de décrire sa structure et son caractère non nécessairement inacceptable. Voir Ruwen OGIEN, *L'Influence de l'odeur des croissants chauds sur la bonté humaine et autres questions de philosophie morale expérimentale*, Paris, Grasset, 2011, p. 179-182 et 316. Pour une exposition plus favorable de la structure de cet argument, voir Stefan GOLTZBERG, *L'Argumentation juridique*, Paris, Dalloz, « Connaissance du droit », 2021 (5<sup>e</sup> édition), p. 57-61.

<sup>19</sup> Sur les degrés de l'autorité reconnue aux Sages du Talmud, voir Menachem KELLNER, *Maimonides on the 'Decline of the Generations' and the Nature of Rabbinic Authority*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996.

des justes », Introduction au commentaire du Pentateuque, deuxième voie, version standard, p. 10) ; le reproche vise en effet le courant des talmudistes *de son temps*, en terre grecque et romaine (*ha-ḥakhamim ba-'aratsot yevanim ve-'edomim*, « les sages dans les pays grecs et romains », p. 7), donc des auteurs qui *s'appuient* sur le Talmud : les talmudistes de l'ère post-talmudique – après la clôture du Talmud de Babylone (qui a eu lieu en 500). La nuance qui est faite ici entre les Sages du Talmud et les talmudistes de son temps peut sembler subtile, puisque souvent ils disent la même chose – Ibn Ezra se demande d'ailleurs quel intérêt il y a à redire ce que les Sages ont déjà dit (p. 7) ! Il semble que la différence entre ces deux groupes tient dans le *sérieux* accordé à certains énoncés : deux locuteurs peuvent en effet prononcer les mêmes énoncés tout en se distinguant uniquement par le degré de prise en charge (*commitment*) de certains énoncés<sup>20</sup>. L'un peut par exemple soutenir sérieusement un énoncé *p* alors que l'autre soutient *p* ironiquement ou à titre de fiction. La critique des talmudistes de son temps porte sur le sérieux, le manque de recul, avec lequel ils lisent certains passages talmudiques ; ce n'est pas à dire que les Sages du Talmud manquaient de sérieux lorsqu'ils semblaient fonder une règle sur un verset biblique, mais plutôt qu'ils s'expriment souvent sur cette règle à titre d'*obiter dictum*<sup>21</sup>, terme qui désigne un passage d'une décision de justice qui est dit *en passant*, c'est-à-dire sans que cela constitue une *ratio decidendi* (une raison déterminant la règle). Autrement dit, Ibn Ezra donne l'impression que les Sages du Talmud saisissent l'opportunité du verset pour *associer* une règle connue par Tradition à ce verset : on n'assiste donc plus à l'identification du fondement de la règle (*ratio decidendi*) mais à un *rapprochement* entre une règle et un verset (*obiter dictum*). Le grief tient alors à la façon dont certains commandements sont présentés comme issus de l'exégèse des versets plutôt que de la Tora orale.

Dans son Commentaire court d'Exode 21 :8<sup>22</sup>, Ibn Ezra écrit :

*[C]ar il y a dans la Tora des endroits connus que nos Sages ont établis comme appuis (asmakhta). Et l'essence ('iqqar) [de la règle] leur était déjà connue [par Tradition], comme « il héritera d'elle », (Nombres 27 : 11). Car il était connu par Tradition (ha'ataka) que l'homme hérite de sa femme, et ils ont interprété ce verset comme un rappel (zekher) [de cette règle]. Car tout juif connaîtrait l'interprétation du verset conforme à son sens littéral (ke-mashma'o ufshuto) [à savoir, que le verset ne parle pas de ce cas], car il n'était pas possible que quelqu'un dise « donnez l'héritage de Ruben à Simon », en signifiant l'inverse, à savoir de donner l'héritage de Simon à Ruben. Pour preuve [que « elle » dans « il héritera d'elle » ne désigne pas l'épouse, mais la succession], il est écrit : « et*

<sup>20</sup> Sur la notion de prise en charge (*commitment*), voir Philippe DE BRABANTER et Patrick DENDALE (éds), « Commitment », *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, 2008/22.

<sup>21</sup> Stefan GOLTZBERG, *100 principes juridiques*, Paris, PUF « 2<sup>e</sup> édition », 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Ce passage est cité par Mordechai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation, op.cit.*, p. 371. Il figure dans le commentaire court, tome 2, p. 291 de l'original hébreu.

*si le père n'a pas de frère... » (Nombres 27 :11) et cela n'aurait pas de sens (ta'am) car que signifierait « vous donnerez son héritage au frère de son père », alors qu'il a dit : si le père n'a pas de frère, vous lui donnerez l'héritage de sa femme. En outre, il n'était pas approprié (ra'uy) que l'homme hérite de sa femme si le père avait des frères. Et ce qui est correct, c'est que le verset est comme son peshat, et ils ont ajouté une raison (ta'am) en tant que tradition (qabbala).*

Afin de saisir sa critique issue de son commentaire biblique, il est opportun de rappeler une distinction mentionnée plus haut et d'en introduire une autre.

La première distinction oppose les trois types de commandements :

- (1) ceux qui sont énoncés clairement dans le verset,
- (2) ceux auxquels le verset se contente de faire allusion (*zekher*) et
- (3) ceux auxquels le verset ne fait même pas allusion (bien qu'ils soient le cas échéant rattachés *a posteriori* à des versets).

Les talmudistes de son temps ont selon Ibn Ezra tendance à gonfler les catégories (1) et (2) et à quasiment vider la catégorie (3) – comme si chaque commandement se voyait *promu* en se rapprochant de la catégorie (1), c'est-à-dire de la Tora écrite. En effet, les auteurs ayant écrit sur les 613 commandements ont eu tendance à vouloir les rattacher à des versets bibliques. Ibn Ezra affirme que les commandements de la troisième catégorie n'ont donc, par hypothèse, pas de support dans le texte biblique, et insiste sur le fait que cette catégorie n'est pas vide. Or, les Sages du Talmud ont l'habitude de sélectionner des versets qui « soutiendraient » ces commandements : les règles *semblent* passer alors de la catégorie (3) à la catégorie (2). Ce serait selon Ibn Ezra une erreur de catégorie de prendre la chose trop au sérieux, c'est-à-dire de croire que le verset est dans ce cas le *fondement* de la règle plutôt qu'une simple construction *a posteriori* – erreur de catégorie à laquelle se livreraient les talmudistes de son temps. Ibn Ezra utilise la notion de *asmakhta be'alma*, « simple appui » pour désigner ce phénomène éminemment artificiel qui consiste à rattacher un verset à une règle qui est – en réalité – transmise exclusivement par la Tora orale<sup>23</sup>. Il y a donc une différence essentielle selon Ibn Ezra entre un commandement sans appui dans le verset – catégorie (3) – et avec un appui partiel – catégorie (2). Et il existe une différence entre faire *comme si* un verset était la source d'une règle (catégorie 3) et fonder véritablement une règle par un verset (catégorie 1 et partiellement 2). Dans la catégorie (3), le verset est une source subsidiaire ou optionnelle, tandis que la source au sens fort, le fondement, relève de la Tradition.

La seconde distinction oppose, d'une part, la règle et, d'autre part, sa méthode d'élaboration, son fondement, la manière dont la règle est apprise. Cette interprétation

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<sup>23</sup> Sur la notion d'*asmakhta*, Jean-Christophe ATTIAS, *Le Commentaire biblique. Mordekhai Komtino ou l'herméneutique du dialogue*, Paris, Cerf, 1991, « Patrimoines Judaïsme », voir p. 49 et 65-60, ainsi que Mordechai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, op. cit., p. 365, 371-372.



du verset donnant lieu à l'exposition de la règle s'appelle *midrash*. Or, on distingue deux phénomènes, qui sont également deux approches de la littérature talmudique, selon que le *midrash* soit *yotser* (« qui crée ») ou *meqayyem* (« qui établit »). Dans le *midrash yotser*, les Sages du Talmud appliquent au verset certaines règles herméneutiques et *découvrent* le résultat, à savoir la règle de droit. Dans le *midrash meqayyem*, en revanche, les Sages disposent déjà de la règle de droit (par Tradition, coutume ou décret, voire par réflexion<sup>24</sup>) lorsqu'ils se proposent de lier cette règle à un verset donné. L'exercice est alors tout différent : le *midrash meqayyem* remplit une fonction mnémotechnique et pédagogique, mais ne constitue pas le *fondement* de la règle<sup>25</sup>. Ibn Ezra semble considérer que toute une série d'interprétations talmudiques des versets bibliques relèvent du *midrash meqayyem* et pour cette raison relèvent de la catégorie (3), celle des commandements qui n'ont guère de trace dans le texte biblique. Cette distinction rappelle immanquablement l'opposition entre formalistes et réalistes en philosophie du droit américaine<sup>26</sup>. En effet, alors que les formalistes considèrent que le juge doit appliquer les règles au cas d'espèce et *découvrir* quelles conséquences s'ensuivent, les réalistes soutiennent que le juge forme sa décision dans un premier temps, à la faveur d'un « *hunch* », une appréciation intuitive, et s'enquiert dans un second temps des sources du droit qui pourraient justifier une telle décision. Les formalistes conçoivent leurs décisions comme un *midrash yotser*, les réalistes comme un *midrash meqayyem*. Cette comparaison ne doit pas oblitérer une différence capitale : les réalistes conçoivent – non sans cynisme – que le juge prend sa décision avant de mener sa recherche dans les sources du droit ; Ibn Ezra ne pense pas que les Sages auraient *décidé* de la règle puis l'auraient rattachée artificiellement à un verset. Au contraire, il conçoit la Tradition comme le canal par lequel les Sages ont eu accès à cette règle, le verset étant simplement une source secondaire, *a posteriori* – et non le fondement – de la règle.

On peut donc marquer son accord avec l'existence et la nature de la *règle* tout en exprimant son désaccord concernant la *méthode* qui a donné lieu à son élaboration. Ibn Ezra remet souvent en question la *méthode* menant censément à l'établissement de la règle tout en reconnaissant ladite *règle*. Mais, dans ces cas-là, d'où la règle provient-elle ? De la Tora orale. La catégorie (3) n'est pas aussi vide qu'on peut le penser en lisant une littérature talmudique médiévale : elle est pléthorique – la conception de la Tora orale d'Ibn Ezra est celle d'une tradition très riche. Sa conception de la Tora orale est pour ainsi dire inflationniste. Beaucoup de commandements sont transmis oralement et relèvent de la catégorie (3). Que l'interprétation ait pris le soin de tisser des liens – artificiels – entre de si nombreux commandements et des versets doit être

<sup>24</sup> Dans le *Yesod Mora*, Ibn Ezra écrit qu'on ne connaît l'interprétation (*perush*) de certains commandements que par réflexion (*sevara*), chapitre 1, § 3, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Sur cette distinction, voir Menachem ELON, *Droit hébraïque* (en hébreu), Jérusalem, Magnes, 1973, chapitre 9, notamment p. 243-263.

<sup>26</sup> Sur le formalisme et le réalisme, voir François-Xavier LICARI, « Le formalisme juridique comme science du matériau juridique pur », *Cahiers de méthodologie juridique*, p. 1817-1858, ainsi que Stefan GOLTZBERG, *Les Sources du droit*, Paris, PUF, « Que sais-je ? », 2018 (2<sup>e</sup> édition), p. 12-14.

compris selon lui comme un phénomène secondaire, *mnémotechnique* : l'erreur que décèle Ibn Ezra consiste à confondre la perspective intentionnelle (ce que l'auteur a voulu dire) et l'exercice *attentionnel* (entièrement dû au lecteur) de la mise en lien entre ces commandements de la catégorie (3) et des versets bibliques.

Pour prendre une analogie, certaines juridictions des systèmes de *common law* (comme la Cour suprême des États-Unis) ainsi que des juridictions européennes (comme la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme) autorisent les juges à rédiger – et à signer – des opinions séparées. Ces opinions peuvent exprimer un désaccord sur la décision même (opinions dissidentes) ou marquer un accord sur la décision, mais un désaccord sur la motivation de cette décision (opinions concordantes). Autrement dit, un juge peut être d'accord avec la décision tout en remettant en question la manière dont elle est justifiée<sup>27</sup>. Si l'on garde à l'esprit les limites de la comparaison (les opinions séparées relèvent de la jurisprudence, donc des décisions de justice), Ibn Ezra formule une *sorte* d'opinion concordante : il est d'accord avec la règle de droit – donc avec la *halakha* –, mais pas avec la manière dont la règle est présentée comme déduite des versets. Ce n'est pas qu'il rejette cette possibilité (les catégories (1) et (2) ne sont pas vides), mais à propos du nombre de commandements qui n'ont pas d'appuis réels dans le verset – de la catégorie (3) –, le Talmud identifie des versets comme appuis et Ibn Ezra qualifie cette justification comme une justification artificielle, *a posteriori* : comme un simple appui (*asmakhta be'alma*).

## Littéralisme et sources du droit

Le karaïsme peut être défini comme un scripturalisme, c'est-à-dire une théorie qui refuse d'autres sources du droit que le texte biblique<sup>28</sup>. Le courant rabbanite, souscrivant au *concept* de Tora orale – sans préjuger de la *conception* de cette Tora orale –, refuse donc le scripturalisme. Le scripturalisme implique-t-il forcément un littéralisme ? Il peut en effet être tentant de déceler dans le courant karaïte une tendance plus littéraliste et dans le courant rabbinique une tendance moins littéraliste. C'est ce que propose Meira Polliack : « *Scripturalism in Judaism is best defined as a fundamentalist religious stance, which endorses a literal-typed, linguistic-contextual interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and rejects a freer, tradition-based, transmitted form*

<sup>27</sup> Sur les opinions séparées, on consultera Stefan GOLTZBERG, *Les Sources du droit*, *op. cit.*, p. 68-69.

<sup>28</sup> Certains karaïtes seront versés dans la Tora orale et plus généralement dans la littérature rabbanite, dont ils s'inspireront le cas échéant. Mais alors la Tora orale n'est plus une source contraignante, mais une source optionnelle. Le courant rabbanite souscrit à la Tora orale en tant que source contraignante et non seulement optionnelle. Daniel Frank propose une autre typologie : les rabbanites ne verraient plus dans le verset une véritable (*actual*) source du droit (les sources véritables étant la tradition, l'interprétation, la législation, la coutume et le raisonnement juridique), alors que les karaïtes continueraient à inclure le verset parmi les sources principales (*primary legal source*), voir Daniel FRANK, « Karaites Exegetical and Halakhic Literature in Byzantium and Turkey », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2003, p. 529-589, en particulier p. 529.

*of interpretation.* »<sup>29</sup> Le lien entre scripturalisme et littéralisme serait alors intrinsèque<sup>30</sup>. Cette proposition expliquerait plusieurs phénomènes, notamment l'écart patent entre le verset et la règle de droit dans les interprétations talmudiques. Selon cette approche, les karaïtes suivraient une démarche scripturaliste *et donc* littéraliste, *et donc* plus proche du texte biblique. Les rabbanites, en revanche, dans la mesure où ils refusent le scripturalisme, s'écarteraient davantage de ce texte biblique à la faveur d'une interprétation talmudique et seraient, dès lors, moins littéralistes.

Le problème de cette description est qu'elle présuppose deux choses : que le texte biblique est ce dont le littéraliste ne peut pas s'écarter et que la Tora orale promeut *eo ipso* une approche non littérale. Ces deux présupposés sont liés. Il me semble que le premier fait preuve de bibliocentrisme et que le second repose sur la croyance que plus une lecture est ancienne, plus elle est littérale. Mais ne pourrait-on pas penser la possibilité pour un rabbanite d'adopter une démarche littérale ou littéraliste ? Un karaïte, parce qu'il est scripturaliste, est-il condamné – ou automatiquement enclin – au littéralisme ? Peut-on déduire du *fait* du scripturalisme la *méthode* du littéralisme ? Ce lien est-il nécessaire ? Nous en doutons. Au contraire, on peut facilement imaginer une lecture doctrinale postérieure qui lirait littéralement, voire plus littéralement, un texte antérieur : l'ancienneté de la lecture n'est pas forcément un gage de littéralité – pas plus que la nouveauté d'une lecture n'est un frein à la littéralité.

Afin de proposer une autre approche, deux distinctions seront utiles : (1) la distinction entre le verset et la règle de droit, et (2) la distinction entre l'élaboration de la règle et l'application de la règle.

### (1) Le verset n'est pas la règle de droit

Quiconque comparerait la teneur du verset à la règle de droit telle qu'elle est dégagée dans le Talmud pourrait mesurer toute la distance qui les sépare. C'est d'ailleurs devenu un lieu commun de souligner cette distance tout en se gaussant du caractère artificiel du lien entre le verset et la règle de droit<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Meira POLLIACK, « Rethinking Karaism: Between Judaism and Islam », *JSQ Review*, vol. 30/1, 2006, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Pourtant, Meira Polliack a également écrit sur les tendances littéralistes et non littéralistes dans le karaïsme, voir Meira POLLIACK, « Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries », in Meira POLLIACK (éd.), *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2003, p. 375-413, en particulier p. 374-388.

<sup>31</sup> Des blagues mettent en scène cette discripance entre le verset et la règle qui en est issue :

« Dieu dit à Moïse :

- "Tu ne cuiras pas le chevreau dans le lait de sa mère".
- Ah oui, je comprends, répond Moïse, tu veux qu'on ne cuise pas la viande dans un quelconque produit laitier.
- Non, dit Dieu, je te dis simplement : "Tu ne cuiras pas le chevreau dans le lait de sa mère".
- Je saisis, dit Moïse, tu veux qu'on attende six heures entre la consommation de la viande et la consommation des produits laitiers...
- Non, s'impatiente Dieu, je te dis simplement : "Tu ne cuiras pas le chevreau dans le lait de sa mère".
- Ah, je comprends mieux à présent, tu veux dire que je dois avoir une vaisselle pour la viande et une vaisselle pour les produits laitiers...
- Oh, et puis fais comme tu veux... (Autre chute possible : ça fait trois fois que je te le dis !)

## (2) L'élaboration de la règle n'est pas l'application de la règle

La seconde distinction oppose deux moments : l'élaboration de la règle et l'application de la règle. Pour simplifier, l'élaboration de la règle relève ici de la *doctrine* (puisque le droit talmudique est largement doctrinal) et l'application de la règle relève de la dimension *judiciaire* du droit. On peut imaginer une approche non littérale lors de l'élaboration de la règle, par exemple une *interprétation* talmudique complexe qui s'éloignerait manifestement du sens littéral du verset, tout en envisageant une approche littéraliste dès lors qu'il s'agit d'*appliquer* la règle. Après tout, la mission du juge rabbinique appliquant la loi est assez différente de celle des Sages du Talmud, qui élaborent les règles de droit.

Une fois que sont claires les distinctions entre le verset et la règle et entre l'élaboration et l'application de la règle, on saisit mieux ce qui peut conduire à dire que les karaïtes adoptent une approche plus littérale que les rabbanites : la Tora orale aurait pour effet un éloignement du sens littéral du verset. Mais cette description ne prend pas suffisamment en considération le fait que la Tora orale étant une source du droit au même titre que la Tora écrite<sup>32</sup>, la question qui se pose n'est pas – uniquement – de savoir si l'élaboration de la règle de droit s'éloigne de la littéralité du verset (ce qui est le cas), mais de savoir si l'élaboration de la règle s'éloigne de l'ensemble des sources du droit contraignantes, y compris la Tora orale. Donc si l'on résiste à la tentation consistant à mesurer la littéralité uniquement à la proximité du verset (lequel n'est pas la règle de droit) et si l'on prend en considération l'ensemble des sources du droit, on comprend mieux qu'il serait malheureux de parler du caractère en soi littéraliste du courant karaïte et de la tendance non littéraliste du courant rabbanite. En outre, si toutefois une comparaison était viable sur ce point, il s'agirait de ne comparer que des interprétations juridiques (ou non juridiques) entre elles et ne pas se livrer à une comparaison entre l'interprétation non littérale des matériaux non juridiques (« aggadiques ») du courant rabbanite avec l'interprétation littérale des matériaux juridiques du courant karaïte.

Cette comparaison pourrait porter sur l'interprétation des versets (en gardant à l'esprit que le verset n'est qu'une des sources du droit chez les rabbanites), ou bien sur l'application des règles de droit par les juges rabbanites et karaïtes respectivement. Il ne saurait être question ici de suggérer une réponse. Notre objectif était simplement de mettre en garde contre une opposition biaisée par la non-prise en compte des différentes théories des sources du droit.

En l'occurrence, Ibn Ezra soutient une théorie de l'interprétation encore plus éloignée du sens littéral des versets que les autres rabbanites. Autrement dit, il serait encore

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<sup>32</sup> Il faut maintenir à l'esprit la distinction entre trois paramètres : au niveau sémiotique, la Tora écrite s'oppose à la Tora orale ; au niveau juridique, les règles bibliques s'opposent aux règles rabbiniques (moins fortes) ; au niveau historique, la Tora orale précède, au titre de document, les premières mises par écrit de la Tora orale (Mishna). Une erreur courante consiste à confondre ces trois paramètres.

davantage la cible de la critique des karaïtes, puisqu'il envisage régulièrement que la justification à partir du verset ne constitue guère la source du droit principale de la règle de droit mais n'est qu'un support artificiel et *a posteriori*. Ibn Ezra a une approche qu'on ne saurait appeler littéraliste sans plus de précision. Le mot *peshat* est souvent traduit par « sens littéral », mais cette traduction rend mal compte de son approche<sup>33</sup>. En effet, Ibn Ezra souscrit à l'axiome de Saadia Gaon selon lequel le sens littéral bénéficie d'une présomption réfragable : il doit être suivi sauf s'il contredit un autre verset, la raison ou la tradition. Ibn Ezra a, on l'a vu, le plus grand respect pour le Talmud et la Tradition – même s'il peut se montrer critique à l'égard des talmudistes de son temps. Il retient notamment de Rashi l'idée que le *peshat* jouit d'un grand prestige tout en lui reprochant de ne pas se livrer au *peshat* mais au *derash*<sup>34</sup>. Selon lui, si le sens littéral (*mashma'*) bénéficie d'une présomption réfragable, tel n'est pas le cas du *peshat* : ce dernier est toujours vrai (toujours vrai halakhiquement) mais ne coïncide pas nécessairement avec le sens littéral<sup>35</sup>. Il arrive même qu'Ibn Ezra reconnaisse ne pas bien saisir les explications talmudiques qui s'éloignent du sens littéral, mais même dans ce cas, il souscrit à cette interprétation dans la mesure où elle coïncide avec le *peshat*. En termes plus contemporains, on dirait que cela se rapproche de la théorie de l'unique réponse correcte (*right answer*<sup>36</sup>). Dans la mesure où il souscrit à une théorie très forte du *peshat* – le *peshat* est toujours vrai –, son approche est à l'opposé des karaïtes. En effet, alors que ceux-ci nient le concept de Tora orale, au sens de source du droit contraignante, et qu'Ibn Ezra témoigne d'une vision inflationniste de la Tora orale, l'écart ne saurait être plus grand entre eux. Pourtant, il cite de nombreux karaïtes dans ses commentaires et certains karaïtes reconnaissent une dette envers Ibn Ezra.

## Conclusion

Ibn Ezra a tâché de proposer – et de mettre en œuvre – une théorie de l'interprétation du texte biblique qui réponde à deux courants auxquels il s'oppose avec une force variable. Aux karaïtes, il répond avec véhémence que la lecture du Pentateuque sans une Tora orale est un leurre. Le concept de Tora orale est nécessaire à la compréhension

<sup>33</sup> Sur la signification du mot *peshat* à l'époque talmudique et post-talmudique, voir David WEISS HALIVNI, *Peshat & Derash. Plain and applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 1991. Concernant le rapport d'Ibn Ezra au *peshat*, voir p. 27-28. Après avoir mentionné que le mot *peshat* est « ordinairement et parfois à tort présenté comme désignant le sens littéral », Jean-Christophe Attias écrit tout de même que Saadia Gaon et Ibn Ezra « préfèrent » le *peshat* « tant qu'il n'entre pas en contradiction avec la raison, la tradition ou un autre passage – auquel cas le sens obvie doit être dépassé ». Ceci suggère qu'Ibn Ezra abandonne le *peshat* en cas d'une telle contradiction. Or, il semble qu'Ibn Ezra est prêt à dépasser le sens littéral, mais pas le *peshat*, voir Jean-Christophe ATTIAS, *Le Commentaire biblique. Mordekhai Komtino ou l'herméneutique du dialogue*, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Mordechai Z. COHEN, *The Rule of Peshat*, op. cit., p. 211, 223, 225.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Ezra n'appelle pas *peshat* une interprétation qu'il rejette, voir Mordechai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Voir Ronald DWORKIN, « No Right Answer? », *New York University Law Review*, vol. 53, n° 1, avril 1978, p. 1-32. Sur le caractère unique de l'interprétation retenue par Ibn Ezra, voir Mordechai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, op. cit., p. 82-83.

et à l'application des règles contenues dans le Pentateuque et à plus forte raison aux règles qui n'y sont contenues que partiellement, voire qui en sont absentes. Aux talmudistes de son temps, il répond qu'ils se sont éloignés de la ligne des Sages du Talmud. Ceux-ci ne se trompaient guère et lorsqu'ils semblaient s'éloigner du bon sens, c'est qu'ils avaient accès à des vérités qui nous échappent désormais.



# Maimonides and Maimonideans on Karaites and *aggadot*

□ David LEMLER

Karaite thinkers, such as Jacob al-Qirqisānī (ca 890–ca 960), viewed many *aggadot* as irrational imaginings that shatter the authority of the oral tradition as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Proposing a response to these charges was one of the concerns of the Rabbanites, at the peak of the Karaite crisis, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this period, two major attitudes can be observed among the rabbis. The first is the one found among several important *Geonim* who dissociated *aggadah* and *halakhah* and denied or belittled the authority of *aggadot*.<sup>2</sup> The second attitude consists in going over the plain meaning of “irrational” *aggadot* and claiming that it is an allegory for a profound and secret meaning. This attitude was that of Maimonides in his youth, by the time of the writing of the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, in which he projects writing an exhaustive commentary of difficult *aggadot* “in a manner which agrees with the truth”,<sup>3</sup> that is as allegories of the Aristotelian sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> Marc SAPERSTEIN, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10, quoting the words of Sherira Gaon: “We do not rely on *aggadic* utterances”, and of his son Hai Gaon: “*Aggadic* sayings are not like authentic tradition. Rather, each sage expounded as it occurred to him.” Echoes of this apologetic response against the critique of *aggadot* can still be found in the words of Nahmanides during the disputation of Barcelona in 1263: “We have a third text [in addition to the Bible and the Talmud] which is called *midrash*, that is to say sermons, such as when the bishop stands and delivers a sermon and one of the listeners enjoys it and writes it down. He who believes in this text, well and good; he who does not believe in it does no harm.” (NAHMANIDES, *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Hayim Dov CHAVEL, Jerusalem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963, p. 308, trans. in Robert CHAZAN, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. 97).

<sup>3</sup> Moses MAIMONIDES, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Introduction to *Sanhedrin*, chpt. 10 (from now on “Introduction to *Pereq Heleq*”), ed. of the Arabic text and Hebrew translation Yosef KAPAH, Jerusalem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1965, p. 209. I quote the English translation found at [https://www.sefaria.org/Rambam\\_on\\_Mishnah\\_Sanhedrin.10.1?lang=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Rambam_on_Mishnah_Sanhedrin.10.1?lang=en), with changes when necessary.



Identifying and explaining contradictions in Maimonides' writings has been one of the major tasks of his interpreters, in both traditional and scholarly literature. When faced with contradictory statements between his main "Talmudic" writings, his *Commentary on the Mishnah* and *Mishneh Torah*, and his "philosophical" one, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, a classical response has been that Maimonides adapted his discourse to the intended audience of each text.<sup>4</sup> The necessity to hide some truths to the vulgar was indeed a recurrent idea in Maimonides' writing, in particular in the *Guide*.<sup>5</sup> However, the differences found between the two sets of texts might also reflect the fact that his views simply changed on a number of subjects between his youth and his maturity. As a reminder, a first draft of the *Commentary on the Mishnah* was completed in 1167–8, while Maimonides was around thirty years old (even though he kept annotating his own manuscript over the years), the *Mishneh Torah* was completed in 1177–8, while he was around forty, and the *Guide* in 1191, while he was in his fifties.<sup>6</sup> In recent scholarship, many studies endeavored to show that such changes of attitude between a young and mature Maimonides occurred regarding important issues, such as the problem of creation *vs* eternity of the world, miracles or the possibility of a change in divine will.<sup>7</sup>

Some scholars also count the *halakhic* status of the Karaites on the one hand, and Maimonides' attitude towards *aggadot* on the other hand, among those subjects in which a change of position can be discerned. As time went on, Maimonides seems to have softened his attitude towards Karaites.<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously, in his latest major work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, he announced having abandoned his project of writing a treatise of allegorical interpretations of *aggadot* and at times expresses an open critique on rabbinic *derashot* – that is, the type of interpretations of Biblical verses found in classical rabbinic text (Talmud and Midrash).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See the introductory remarks in Y. Tzvi LANGERMANN, "Maimonides and Miracles. The Growth of a (Dis)-Belief", *Jewish History*, t. 18, 2004, pp. 147-72, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> Moses MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Hā'irīn*, ed. Salomon MUNK and Issachar JOEL, Jerusalem, Azrieli, 1931, Introduction, 1:31–4 *et passim*. English translations are taken from: *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo PINES, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963.

<sup>6</sup> For those dates, Herbert A. DAVIDSON, *Moses Maimonides: the Man and his Works*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 9, p. 205, p. 322.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Leo STRAUSS, "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge", in Efraim E. URBACH, Raphael J. Z. WERBLOWSKY and Chaim WIRSZUBSKI, eds, *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday by Pupils Colleagues and Friends*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967, pp. 269-83; Y. Tzvi LANGERMANN, "Maimonides and Miracles. The Growth of a (Dis)-Belief", *op. cit.*; Charles H. MANEKIN, "Divine Will in Maimonides' Later Writings", in Arthur HYMAN et Alfred L. IVRY, eds, *Maimonidean Studies: Vol. 5*, New York, Yeshivah University Press, 2008, pp. 189-221.

<sup>8</sup> Notably, Moses MAIMONIDES, *Commentary to Mishnah, Hullin* 1:2, ed. Yosef KAPAH, Jerusalem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1967, p. 176, n. 33; Daniel J. LASKER, "The Influence of Karaism on Maimonides" (Hebrew), *Sefunot. Studies and Sources on the History of the Jewish Communities in the East (New Series)*, t. 5, 1991, pp. 145-61; *Id.*, "Maimonides and the Karaites: From Critic to Cultural Hero", in Carlos DEL VALLE (ed.), *Maimonides y Su Época*, Madrid, Sociedad Estatal de Commemoraciones Culturales, 2007, pp. 311–25; Gerald J. BLIDSTEIN, "Maimonides' Approach to the Karaites" (Hebrew), *Teḥumin*, t. 8, 1987, pp. 501–10; *Id.*, "The 'Other' in Maimonidean Law", *Jewish History*, t. 18, 2004, fasc. 2/3, pp. 173–95; Yaacov SHAPIRA, "The Jewish Law Perspective on Karaites – Policy and Tradition in Jewish Law" (Hebrew), *Bar-Ilan Law Studies*, t. 19, 2002, fasc. 1, pp. 285-361, pp. 293-9.

<sup>9</sup> Yair LORBERBAUM, "Changes in Maimonides' Approach to *aggadah*" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, t. 79, 2008, fasc. 1, pp. 81-122, *Id.*, "Incline Thy Ear, and Hear the Words of the Wise, and Apply Thy Heart unto My Knowledge":

In this paper, we draw on the well-grounded hypothesis that Maimonides changed his view on both these issues. While these two subjects have been previously studied separately, we propose to understand them as correlated. We argue that, by the time he was writing the *Guide*, Maimonides thought that the difference between Karaites and Rabbanites was not a significant one regarding the “science of the Law according to the truth”<sup>10</sup> and that therefore, the allegorization of *aggadot* was no longer needed.

We will first show that both issues happen to be textually correlated through an analysis of the two occurrences of the term “Rabbanite” in the *Guide*. Basing on the idea of an evolution of Maimonides’ views on both subjects, we will propose to read a number of crucial passages of the *Guide*, in which Maimonides defines his purported reader, as potentially including Rabbanites as well as Karaites. We will then turn to Maimonides’ posterity and observe how the interpretation of *aggadot* was indeed linked to the Karaite challenge, among his disciples. We will first study a passage from a text by Maimonides’ own son, Abraham, in which the link is explicitly made between the two issues, something which might be telling of latent ideas in the father’s teaching. In a concluding paragraph, we will survey intriguing quotations, found in Karaite writings, of the Provençal scholar Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche (ca 1245–ca 1315), which provides evidence for a Karaite concern about the philosophical interpretations of *aggadot* in the Maimonidean filiation.

## Maimonides

### The terms “Karaites” and “Rabbanites” in Maimonides’ *Guide*

It has been underlined that the term “Karaite” appears only once in the *Guide*.<sup>11</sup> In chapter 1:71, Maimonides assimilates the Karaite theological thought (as well as that of the *Geonim*) with the Mutazilite *kalām* he criticizes in the last chapters of the first part of the *Guide*.

*As for that scanty bit of argument regarding the notion of the unity of God and regarding what depends on this notion, which you will find in the writings of some Gaonim and in those of the Qaraites, it should be noted that the subject matter of this argument was taken over by them from the Mutakallimiin of Islam and that this bit is very scanty indeed if compared to what Islam has compiled on this subject.*<sup>12</sup>

Criticism of *aggadah* in *The Guide of the Perplexed*” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, t. 79, 2009, fasc. 2, pp. 203-30.

<sup>10</sup> Moses MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, ed. Salomon MUNK and Issachar JOEL, Jerusalem, Azrieli, 1931, p. 2. English trans.: *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo PINES, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> LASKER, “The Influence of Karaism on Maimonides”, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, 1:71, trans. PINES, p. 176.

The two occurrences of the term “Rabbanite” were less scrutinized by the readers of the *Guide* even in the context of the study of Maimonides’ attitude regarding Karaism. They appear in two passages which are instrumental in the scholarly discussion about a possible change of attitude of Maimonides towards the *aggadot* and more generally the authority of the oral tradition. We will start with the second occurrence and continue with the first which requires a longer analysis.

In chapter 3:43, while discussing the meaning of the four species of the Sukkot bunch, Maimonides calls the rabbinic *derashot* on the subject mere “poetical conceits” (*al-nawādir al-shi’riyya*) and suggests this applies also to many more *derashot*. He concludes the passage with the following note:

*I have deviated from the subject [of the chapter] (ḥarajtu ‘an al-gharaḍ), but this is a useful observation that may be needed by everyone endowed with intellect among those who profess the Law and are Rabbanites (al-mutasharri’in wal-rabbānīn).*<sup>13</sup>

In the general introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides warns his reader that such deviations are paradoxically the mark that an important issue is at stake.

*[W]hen reading a given chapter, your intention must be not only to understand the totality of the subject of that chapter, but also to grasp each word that occurs in it in the course of the speech, even if that word does not belong to the intention (gharaḍ) of the chapter.*<sup>14</sup>

This remark inspired Abraham Nuriel his method of esoteric reading of the *Guide*: when an unexpected term appears in a passage, this might be the indication of a secret doctrine. Tracking the different occurrences of this term in the *Guide* might help conjecture the hidden message.<sup>15</sup> This is the method we propose to implement here with regards to the word “Rabbanite”.

The second occurrence of the term appears in this same introduction. Maimonides explains why he abandoned his project, announced in his youthwork the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq* (which belongs to his *Commentary on the Mishnah*), to write two books: the “*Book of Prophecy*” and the “*Book of Correspondence*”, dedicated to the allegorical interpretation of, respectively, prophetic parables and rabbinic “*derashot*”

<sup>13</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, 3:43, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 420, trans. PINES, p. 573, n. 15 *ad loc*, Pines notes “This term [Rabbanites] is probably used in contradistinction to the term Qaraites.”

<sup>14</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, trans. PINES, p. 15, emphasis ours.

<sup>15</sup> See, among other studies, ABRAHAM NURIEL, “The Question of a Created or Primordial World in the Philosophy of Maimonides”, in *Concealed and Revealed in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 2000, pp. 25-40.

(Maimonides uses here this word to refer to difficult *aggadot*).<sup>16</sup> In the introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides gives two reasons for abandoning this project. The first is that it would have been contradictory to explain to the vulgar what the prophets and the Sages had found fit to conceal to him through parables. It is in the formulation of the second reason – which concerns only the interpretation of rabbinic *aggadot* and not that of prophetic parables – that the word “Rabbanite” is found.

*We also saw that [1] if an ignoramus among the multitude of Rabbanites (jāhil min jumhūr al-rabbānīn) should engage in speculation on these Midrashim, he would find nothing difficult in them, inasmuch as a rash fool (jāhil), devoid of any knowledge of the nature of being, does not find impossibilities hard to accept. If, however, a perfect man of virtue (kāmil faḍīl) should engage in speculation on them, he cannot escape one of two courses: [2] either he can take the speeches in question in their external sense and, in so doing, think ill of their author and regard him as an ignoramus – in this there is nothing that would upset the foundations of belief (laysa fī dhalika hadd fī qawā'id al-i'tiqād); or [3] he can attribute to them an inner meaning, thereby extricating himself from his predicament and being able to think well of the author whether or not the inner meaning of the saying is clear to him.*<sup>17</sup>

This text parallels a passage from the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, in which Maimonides listed three classes of men, according to their attitude towards the words of the Sages in *derashot*. The numbers 1–3 we have added to sequence our quotation from the *Guide* indicates the number of the corresponding “class” in the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*. Two of them take these words literally. The first class, whom we might designate as the “submissive literalists”, considers that the literal interpretation of the Sages’ teachings is always true. Since this class of men lacks any knowledge of the science of nature, they do not perceive any difficulty in so doing. The second class – the “derogative literalists” – considers that since their teachings taken literally at times contradict the philosophical knowledge of nature, this ruins their credibility (at least on speculative matters). Only the third class – that of the “respectful allegorists” – considers these strange *aggadot* as parables that should be interpreted allegorically, and therefore preserves both the philosophical knowledge and the authority of the Sages. The same three attitudes are found in our passage of the *Introduction of the Guide* but, as analyzed in detail by Yair Lorberbaum, the terms Maimonides uses to refer to each of them are very different.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn*, trans. PINES, p. 9, n. 23 and in Munk's French translation: *Le Guide des égarés*, trans. Salomon MUNK, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003, p. 15, n. 1.

<sup>17</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, pp. 5-6, trans. PINES, pp. 9-10 (we added the numbers).

<sup>18</sup> LORBERBAUM, “Changes in Maimonides' Approach to *aggadah*”, *op. cit.*

In the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, Maimonides notes that the “submissive literalism” is mostly seen among “the preachers (*al-darshanin*) who inform the masses of the people about what they [=the preachers] do not know”. He also criticizes them at length and in very harsh terms, accusing them of “destroy[ing] the beauty of the Torah and darken[ing] its splendor”. In the introduction of the *Guide*, Maimonides refers to these men as “ignoramus[es] among the multitude of *Rabbanites*”. He considers now that their mistake is not something which deserves to be corrected through the allegorization of the *aggadot*, even though they were described in the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq* as “lowering [the Sages] to the lowest depths”.<sup>19</sup>

The men of the second class, the “derogative literalists”, were described in Maimonides’ youth, as “even more foolish (*ajhal*) than the first class”. At that time, Maimonides wrote on their account:

*most of those who stumble in this error are those with pretense to the medical sciences and those who carry on about the laws of the constellations; since they are – according to their thinking – understanding and wise in their [own] eyes and sharp and philosophers. And how far are they from humanity, according to those who are truly wise and philosophers.*<sup>20</sup>

It is well-known that Maimonides considered astrology as a mystification and a false science akin to idolatry. In the introduction of the *Guide* however, the position of the “derogative literalist” is presented as one of the two possible attitudes towards the Sages adopted by “a perfect man of virtue”. And Maimonides adds that this position implies “nothing that would upset the foundations of belief.” In Maimonides’ youth, the men of the second class were to be classified as foolish, together with those of the first class: taking the words of the Sages literally was a sign of foolishness. In his maturity, those men may be “perfect men of virtue” just like those of the third class, the “respectful allegorist”. It thus appears that paying respect to the Sages is no longer considered to be a condition of perfection, neither something that is in any way correlated to the foundations of belief.

The following table compares the main characterizations of the three classes of men in the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq* and in the introduction of the *Guide*.

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<sup>19</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, ed. KAPAH, p. 201.

<sup>20</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, ed. KAPAH, p. 202.

	<b>Intro. Pereq Heleq</b>	<b>Intro. Guide</b>
“submissive literalist”	“... the preachers ( <i>al-darshanīn</i> ) who inform the masses of the people about that which they [=the preachers] do not know” “To them all the impossibilities are necessary occurrences”	“an ignoramus among the multitude of Rabbanites” ( <i>jāhil min jumhūr al-rabbānīn</i> )  “does not find impossibilities hard to accept”
“derogative literalist”	“Even more foolish ( <i>ajhal</i> ) than the first class” “They consider themselves to be intellectuals and wise philosophers but how far removed they are from humanity when they are compared to true philosophers”	“A perfect man of virtue” ( <i>kāmil fādīl</i> ) “Thinking ill” about the Sages implies “nothing that would upset the foundations of belief” ( <i>laysa fī dhalika hadd fī qawā'id al-i'tiqād</i> )
“respectful allegorist”	“Few and scattered individuals” Their writings indicate “their perfection ( <i>kamāluhum</i> ) and that they attained the truth”	A perfect man of virtue ( <i>kāmil fādīl</i> ) “able to think well of the author (of a <i>aggadah</i> )”

According to Yair Lorberbaum, these differences imply that Maimonides’ view of the Sages as a whole changed radically.<sup>21</sup> While by the time of the writing of the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, he still thought the Rabbis were all accomplished philosophers who concealed the philosophical truths in parables; by the time of the writing of the *Guide*, he did not think so anymore. In several passages of the *Guide*, besides the previously quoted passage from 3:43, he even expressed open critics of the Sages’ opinions on speculative matters.<sup>22</sup>

It is quite intriguing that the term “Rabbanite” should appear in the general introduction of the *Guide*, while it is absent from the *Introduction to Pereq Heleq*, precisely in a passage so crucial about the *aggadot*. This might suggest that the question of a possible change of attitude of Maimonides regarding the *aggadot* should be investigated in association with another issue: that of his possible similar change of attitude regarding Karaism and the Karaites.

<sup>21</sup> LORBERBAUM, “Changes in Maimonides’ Approach to *aggadah*”, *op. cit.* For an alternative reading, see J. STERN, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides’ Guide*, Cambridge, London, Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 49, n. 38: “Maimonides’ change of plan may also have been due to his growing skepticism about human knowledge of metaphysics, hence, the impossibility of giving definite interpretations of many *midrashim*. [...] It is clear that Maimonides changed his view. The question is of what: *aggadah* or knowledge of metaphysics?” One may object to Stern that Maimonides did not have qualm providing alternative interpretations of one and a same prophetic parable in the *Guide*, so that it seems that the impossibility to provide a definite interpretation of a text did not prevent him, by then, from writing down one or even several interpretations.

<sup>22</sup> LORBERBAUM, “‘Incline Thy Ear, and Hear the Words of the Wise, and Apply Thy Heart unto My Knowledge’: Criticism of *aggadah* in *The Guide of the Perplexed*”, *op. cit.* See STERN, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides’ Guide*, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-6 for another reading of the phrase “poetic conceit” in *Guide* 3:43. More generally, for a thorough analysis of Maimonides’ view on the value of *midrashic* exegetical method, see Morderchai Z. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides’ Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu*, Leiden, Brill, 2011.

## Maimonides' evolving attitude regarding the Karaites

Regarding the *halakhic* status of the Karaites and the way to behave with them, contrasted statements are found in Maimonides' writings that may be explained as an evolution toward a more lenient attitude from his youth to his maturity. A strong argument in favor of such a change is found in a passage of his *Commentary on Mishnah Hullin* 1:2. In the first draft of this commentary, Maimonides rules, as he does in other passages of the *Commentary on the Mishnah* and in the *Epistle to Yemen*, written in the same period at the beginning of the 1170s, that the Karaites are the contemporary equivalent of the sectarian groups of the Second Temple and that therefore they may be put to death by anyone without trial.<sup>23</sup> Later on probably at the end of his life, as was underlined by Yosef Kapah basing on graphological considerations in his edition of the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides added a marginal note to his own copy, in which he specified that the death sentence is only applicable to the founders of such sects, while contemporary Karaites fall into the category of "*anusim*" (acting under duress) and "*tinuq she-nishbah*" (a child taken captive by non-Jews): they only follow the error they inherited from their ancestors, for which they are not liable.<sup>24</sup> This position coheres with the one found in the *Mishneh Torah*, where he adds that contemporary Karaites should be treated with moderation and that one should try to reintegrate them into Rabbanite Judaism.<sup>25</sup> In an undated *responsum*, he went as far as ruling that one is allowed to visit them in their home and to circumcise them even on Shabbat.<sup>26</sup>

Among the scholars who admit an evolution of Maimonides' position on the subject,<sup>27</sup> the divergent interpretations of Gerald Blidstein and Daniel Lasker are noteworthy for our present discussion. Both of them agree that Maimonides changed his view on

<sup>23</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Commentary to Mishnah Avot*, 1:3, ed. Yosef KAPAH, p. 410; Id., *Epistle to Yemen*, Eng. trans. in Abraham HALKIN, *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985, p. 114.

<sup>24</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Commentary to Hullin* 1:2, ed. KAPAH, p. 176, n. 33.

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore, efforts should be made to bring them back in repentance (*le-haḥaziran bi-teshuvah*), to draw them near by friendly relations (*le-moshkham be-divrey shalom*), so that they may return to the strength-giving source, i.e., the Torah (*'ad she-yahzeru le-eytan ha-Torah*), and one should not hurry to kill them (*lo yemaher adam le-horgam*)." Moses MAIMONIDES, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Mamrim* 3:3 (trans. in BLIDSTEIN, "The 'Other' in Maimonidean Law", *op. cit.*, p. 185). According to SHAPIRA, "The Jewish Law Perspective on Karaites", *op. cit.*, p. 296, the last words "one should not hurry to kill them", which were omitted in most printed editions, but found in Yemenite manuscripts, may be interpreted as a correction of a previous ruling. Cf. Yuval SINAI, "Maimonides' Contradictory Positions Regarding the Karaites: A Study in Maimonidean Jurisprudence", *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, t. 11, 2008, fasc. 2, pp. 277–91, pp. 288–9).

<sup>26</sup> Moses MAIMONIDES, *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. Joshua BLAU, Jerusalem, Mekitse Nirdamim, 1960, no. 449, pp. 729–32.

<sup>27</sup> For alternative interpretations of these contradictions, see Isaac SHAILAT, *Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides* (Hebrew and Arabic), Jerusalem, Maaleh Adumim, 1995, who contests the attribution of the undated letter (pp. 668–9) and considers Maimonides had a coherent position over the years. He simply did not find fit to specify the distinction between the two categories of Karaites (founders vs followers) in the first draft of the *Commentary on the Mishnah* (p. 142). SINAI, "Maimonides' Contradictory Positions Regarding the Karaites", *op. cit.*, proposes to see in these contrasted statements a consequence of Maimonides' general view of the indeterminacy of law (he phrases "judicial discretion"), which dictates a nuanced normative position in order to leave room to the judges in their application of the law. As Sinai admits: "my proposal does not

Karaites after he settled in Egypt and became a communal leader, realizing that the Karaites constituted an essential component of the Jewish community. Then, the Karaite issue became a major question with concrete implications, while before that it was a rather theoretical question.<sup>28</sup> At some stage, as a result of a more or less long evolution, he revised his previous views on the issue. The debate is on the meaning of this evolution.

According to Gerald Blidstein, Maimonides' change of attitude is mainly strategic. He felt more efficient to socialize with the Karaites and to bet on their progressive assimilation, than to exclude them, even though his view of the Karaite doctrine as such did not change. What changed though was that "the 'later Maimonides' [was] less tolerant of error in matters of metaphysical doctrine than of error with respect to *halakhah*".<sup>29</sup>

According to Daniel Lasker,<sup>30</sup> the change of attitude reflects growing "Karaite tendencies" in Maimonides' own thought as time went on. It is maybe a perception of such "tendencies" that led some Karaite thinkers, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onward, starting with Eliyahu Bashyatsi, to allege that Maimonides secretly adhered to the Karaite doctrine. More recently, some scholars have argued that Maimonides' repeated affirmation that the Oral Torah was revealed in Sinai at the same time as the Written Torah, was only an exoteric means to strengthen the tradition, but that he actually believed the Oral Torah was a human creation that was amenable to change with time.<sup>31</sup> Without going as far as postulating any such esoteric doctrine, Lasker notes that on some important issues, Maimonides' view is closer to the Karaites' stance than to the position of most Rabbinite thinkers of his time. Already in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides defended a minimalist definition of the Oral Torah (*Torah she-be-'al peh*). Contrary to most *Geonim* who considered that most rabbinic rulings were part of the Sinaitic revelation, Maimonides reduced the Oral Torah to a restricted and finite nucleus of legal interpretations of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> As we progress chronologically

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contradict the theory of Kapah and his supporters (Lasker and Blidstein) regarding a change in Maimonides approach to the Karaites" (pp. 290-1). This theory seems indeed reasonable in view of the textual material.

<sup>28</sup> See also SHAPIRA, "The Jewish Law Perspective on Karaites", *op. cit.*, p. 296 (our translation): "The *Epistle to Yemen* was composed during his first years in Egypt and it is possible that with the years of his stay in Egypt, Maimonides got acquainted with the Karaites' way of life and nuanced his view on the possible danger they could represent." As a matter of fact, in Maimonides' time, the Rabbanite-Karaite relationship was one of appeased coexistence in the East, while it had been one of brutal rivalry in Iberia, Maimonides' native land. See Marina RUSTOW, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: the Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2008, notably pp. 349-55.

<sup>29</sup> BLIDSTEIN, "The 'Other' in Maimonidean Law", *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> LASKER, "The Influence of Karaism on Maimonides", *op. cit.*; *Id.*, "Maimonides and the Karaites: From Critic to Cultural Hero", *op. cit.* See also, Omer MICHAELIS, "'For the Wisdom of Their Wise Men Shall Perish': Forgotten Knowledge and Its Restoration in Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* and Its Karaite Background", *The Journal of Religion*, t. 99, fasc. 4, 2019, pp. 432-466.

<sup>31</sup> See notably Jacob LEVINGER, "The Oral Law in Maimonides' Thought" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz*, t. 37, 1968, fasc. 3, pp. 282-93.

<sup>32</sup> For a good synthesis on Maimonides' view on the Oral Torah in his *halakhic* works, see Shlomo KASSIERER and Shlomo GILCKSBURG, *From Sinai to Sanhedrin: the Oral Law in the thought of Maimonides and Nachmanides*



in Maimonides' writings, new such "Karaitic tendencies" appear such as the criticism of *derashot* expressed in the *Guide* and his focus, in this later work, on the Written Torah as regards the motivations of the commandments.<sup>33</sup>

## Karaites as possible readers of the *Guide*?

To recapitulate the point where we have got so far, there are strong textual reasons to believe that Maimonides' view evolved from his youth to his maturity on two issues. In the *Guide*, he did not consider relevant any more to engage in the systematic allegorization of *aggadot*. By that time, he also had softened his *halakhic* position on the Karaites and would favor their progressive assimilation to the Rabbanite law, rather than their brutal repression. Moreover, the two occurrences of the term "Rabbanite" in the *Guide* appear in two contexts in which Maimonides minimizes the importance of *aggadot* (or "*derashot*") and of their allegorization. This, we propose, suggests that Maimonides' change of strategy regarding the *aggadot* is linked to his change of view on the Rabbanite-Karaite relationship. By specifying that this matter is only relevant for Rabbanites, Maimonides may be suggesting that they are not the sole addressees of his treatise. Now, the nature of Maimonides' change of view on this Rabbanite-Karaite relationship is debated: Blidstein considers it to be purely strategic, Lasker more profound and doctrinal. This bears consequences as to the implications of Maimonides' renunciation to the allegorization of the *aggadot*.

In line with Blidstein's view regarding Maimonides' change of attitude towards the Karaites, renouncing to the redaction of the *Book of Concordance* could be viewed as part of the strategy to assimilate progressively the Karaites into the Rabbanite stream. By the time of the redaction of the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides considered vital to defend the rabbinic tradition against potential heresies. He therefore took a different stance than that of the *Geonim*, faced with the Karaite criticism of *aggadot*. As mentioned above, the *Geonim* tried to preserve the authority of tradition on *halakhic* matters by minimizing the authority of *aggadic* passages. On the contrary, Maimonides felt fit to reaffirm the authority and the truth of *aggadot* through their allegorization. Later on, he considered tactically more efficient to offer

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(Hebrew), Ramat Gan, The Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute of Advanced Torah Studies – Bar Ilan University, 2007, pp. 26-9.

<sup>33</sup> See most notably Maimonides' statements on "*lex talionis*": "And he who has deprived someone of a member, shall be deprived of a similar member: *As he hath maimed a man, so shall it be rendered unto him* (Lev 24:20). You should not engage in cogitation concerning the fact that in such a case we punish by imposing a fine. For at present my purpose is to give reasons for the [Biblical] texts and not for the pronouncements of the legal science. Withal I have an opinion concerning this provision of legal science, which should only be expressed by word of mouth." MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Hā'irīn*, 3:41, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 409, trans. PINES, p. 558. COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, chpt. 3, in particular pp. 181-4, suggests that Maimonides' attempt at interpreting the Biblical Law in the *Guide* independently of the rabbinic legal interpretations is not to be understood as an implicit critique of *halakhah*, but rather as the affirmation of the literal meaning of Scripture as a legitimate independent field of investigation with its own coherence.

an interpretation of the “science of the Law in its true sense” (*‘ilm al-sharī‘ah ‘alā al-ḥaqīqah*),<sup>34</sup> as he calls the issue of the *Guide* in his introduction, which may be accepted by Rabbanites and Karaites alike, and therefore convince the latter rather than confront them.

However, rather than a purely tactic operation, Maimonides’ substitution of a book dedicated to the “science of the Law in its true sense” (that is the *Guide*) to his initial project of writing two exegetical books on prophetic parables and rabbinic *aggadot* might reflect a more profound reevaluation of the importance of the very difference between Rabbanites and Karaites – as might be derived from Lasker’s interpretation. The use of the term “Rabbanite” in the passage of the *Guide* may be read as a hint that the difference between Rabbanites and Karaites is actually indifferent as regards the “science of the Law in its true sense.” By rereading a series of key passages of the *Guide*, in which Maimonides defines explicitly or implicitly his intended reader, we now propose to test the hypothesis that this readership might include both Rabbanites and Karaites.<sup>35</sup>

In the passage of the introduction of the *Guide*, only the first type of literalist reader of *aggadot* is identified as a Rabbanite. For sure, the third type of men who take pains to find a secret meaning to the strange words of the Sages are also Rabbanites, but not so those of the second type who despise the Sages. And yet as we saw above, this does not prevent them from being referred to as “perfect men of virtue”.

Maimonides’ expression according to which despising the Sages implies “nothing that would upset the foundations of belief (*qawā‘id al-i‘tiqād*)” appears to conflict with the formulation of the eighth principle (*qā‘ida*) of belief, in his famous list of thirteen principles (*qawā‘id*)<sup>36</sup> established in the *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*. There, the belief in the revelation of the Torah (*Torah min ha-shamaim*, in Hebrew in the original) included both the Written Torah and its received interpretation (*tafsīruhā al-marwī*).<sup>37</sup> *Tafsīr marwī* refers, in the context of the eighth foundation as elsewhere in Maimonides’ writings,<sup>38</sup> to a received interpretation in *halakhic* matters. Therefore,

<sup>34</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā‘irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 2, trans. PINES, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> This idea that Maimonides’ intended readership was composed of both Rabbanite and Karaite may find resonance in his role as communal leader: “Although we have no explicit evidence of that, it is likely that in his capacity of *ra‘īs al-yahūd* Maimonides represented also the Karaites toward the Muslim authorities.” (Sarah STROUMSA, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 40). A possible objection could be that Maimonides was the first to rule, in a *responsum*, that the Karaite bill of divorce was invalid according to Rabbinic law (MAIMONIDES, *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, ed. BLAU, no. 351, pp. 628–9), a ruling that was interpreted, by some later jurists, as an implicit prohibition of marriages between Rabbanites and Karaites and consequently as a way to set a clear separation between the two communities. First of all, this text may antedate Maimonides’ possible shift. Secondly, an interesting aspect of this *responsum* is precisely that it recognizes the marriage between the two communities and, as a matter of fact, such unions continued after his ruling. See RUSTOW, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

<sup>36</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. KAPAH, p. 210.

<sup>37</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. KAPAH, p. 214.

<sup>38</sup> See the indexed references, COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, p. 548, s.v. *Tafsīr marwī*.

disrespecting the Sages' words in *aggadah* and consequently their philosophical knowledge does not formally contradict this principle of belief. Still, it is reasonable to think that the faith in a tradition of interpretation involves showing respect to those who transmit it. It thus seems that Maimonides had a different conception of the foundations of belief at the time of the redaction of *Guide* from that of his youthwork, or at least that the type of foundations he refers to in the introduction of the *Guide* is different from the one in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the portrait Maimonides makes of his “perplexed” addressee could be read as neutral regarding the faithfulness to the rabbinic tradition. The perplexed is “a religious man for whom the validity of our Law (*ṣiḥḥat shari'atinā*) has become established in his soul” and is “perfect in his religion (*dīn*)”. The term *shari'ah*, religious law, may refer to the Scriptures and their oral interpretation. But in the very next sentence, *shari'ah* is clearly used to refer to Scriptures only:<sup>40</sup> after studying the words of the philosophers, the perplexed is “distressed by the externals of the Law (*ẓawāhir al-shari'ah*)”,<sup>41</sup> that is the external manifest sense of Biblical verses. Perfection in religion may therefore depend on the belief in the truth of the sole Written Torah.

Maimonides' following clause at the opening of the introduction regarding the issue of the *Guide* could also be understood accordingly:

*The purpose of this Treatise is not [...] to teach those who have not engaged in any study other than the science of the Law (‘ilm al-shari’ah) – I mean the legalistic study of the Law (fiqhihā). For the purpose of this Treatise and of all those like it is the science of Law in its true sense (‘ilm al-shari’ah ‘alā al-ḥaqīqah).*<sup>42</sup>

There are two “sciences of the Law”, the science of the Law with no other qualification which refers to the traditional legalistic study (here, in his classical Hebrew translation, Samuel Ibn Tibbon renders the Arabic *fiqh*, by “Talmud”)<sup>43</sup> and the science of the Law “in its true sense”. If the treatise does not address those who did not study anything else than the science of the Law, this might be taken to mean that the access to the science of the Law “in its true sense” requires previous command of the science of the

<sup>39</sup> Leo STRAUSS, “How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*”, in MAIMONIDES, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. PINES, p. XXXI, remarked: “[Maimonides] is alive to the question raised by the Karaites. As he puts it, not only does criticism of the Talmudic Sages do no harm to them – it does not even do any harm to the critic or rather to the foundations of belief.”

<sup>40</sup> COHEN, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, op. cit., p. 97, n. 13.

<sup>41</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 2, trans. PINES, p. 5. On the meaning of the term *shari’ah* in the *Guide*, see Joel KRAEMER, “*Shari’a* and *nāmūs* in the Philosophy of Maimonides” (Hebrew) *Te’udah*, t. 4, 1986, pp. 185-202 and Abraham NURIEL, “On the Meaning of the Term *shari’ah* in the *Guide of the Perplexed*” (Hebrew), in *Concealed and Revealed*, op. cit., pp. 165-71, pp. 169-70.

<sup>42</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 2, trans. PINES, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Moses MAIMONIDES, *Sefer Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, Heb. trans. Samuel IBN TIBBON, ed. Yehudah EVEN-SHEMUEL, Jerusalem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1987, p. 4.

Law – that is the oral tradition<sup>44</sup> – along with something else – that is the philosophical sciences. But an alternative reading could be that the science of the Law “in its true sense” is totally independent from the science of the Law *simpliciter*.<sup>45</sup> That those who studied *only* the science of the Law, that is the common Rabbanite students, are not the addressees of the *Guide*, may be construed as meaning either that the addressee has to be a *more than common* Rabbanite or that being a Rabbanite student is *not* a necessary characteristic of the *Guide*’s aimed reader.

In the famous final parable of the palace at the end of the *Guide* (3:51), describing the different sort of men as more or less distant from the King chamber (an image of the knowledge of God), one could wonder to which category of men the Karaites belong. They could be assigned to those who turn their back to the palace, because of a “faulty speculation” or an “erroneous tradition”. Maimonides insists these men “are those concerning whom necessity at certain times impels killing them and blotting out the traces of their opinions lest they should lead astray the ways of others”.<sup>46</sup> This clearly refers to those who profess doctrines Maimonides identifies as idolatrous, in line with the Biblical obligation to destroy such beliefs. But this permission/obligation to kill also echoes Maimonides’ ruling regarding Karaites in his youth, while he constantly described them as inscribed in an “erroneous tradition”.<sup>47</sup>

Accordingly, the parable would read as a linear graduation, in which holding the authority of the Oral Torah is a requisite to access true knowledge of God: idolaters and Karaites turn their back to the palace, Rabbanite “ignoramuses who observe the commandments (*amei ha-areš ha-’osqim ba-mišwot*)”<sup>48</sup> face the palace but remain too far to catch a glimpse of it, Rabbanite “jurists” (*fuqahā*) “who believe true opinions on the basis of traditional authority [...], but do not engage in speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion (*’uṣūl al-dīn*)”<sup>49</sup> are those circling the palace without finding its entrance, those Rabbanite “jurists” who *also* engage in such a speculation alone are those who have entered the palace.

But nothing hinders including Karaites among the mass of the “ignoramuses who observe the commandments”, or among the “jurists” since they have their own legal tradition, or even among those who “engage in speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion”, provided that the “principles of religion” are not

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<sup>44</sup> See MAIMONIDES, *Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah*, 4:13, according to which entering the “Pardes” (that is studying physics and metaphysics identified as the deepest secrets of the Torah) requires the previous study of the *halakhah*.

<sup>45</sup> On whether the “science of Law in its true sense” can/ought to be separate from the “science of the Law”, see Leo STRAUSS, “The Literary Character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*”, in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 38-94, p. 39 and Isaac TWERSKY, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (Mishneh Torah), New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980, p. 360.

<sup>46</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 455, trans. PINES, p. 619.

<sup>47</sup> See above, n. 23.

<sup>48</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 455 (in Hebrew in the text), trans. PINES, p. 619.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

identified to the thirteen principles listed in Maimonides' youth, but are given the wider meaning of a philosophical justification of the belief in God.<sup>50</sup> In this second reading, being a Rabbanite Jew is not a condition to enter the King's palace, that is to access true knowledge of God.<sup>51</sup>

As is the case with most of the texts of the *Guide*, there is no possibility to propose a final interpretation of these passages. But Maimonides was evasive enough there to suggest that his treatise might be addressed to both Rabbanite and Karaite readers. And if being a Karaite does not impede the access to the science of the Law "in its true sense", then interpreting the *aggadot* allegorically is no longer a priority, while interpreting prophetic parables, as Maimonides did occasionally in the *Guide*, remains relevant.<sup>52</sup>

## Karaites as a target of Abraham Maimonides' classification of *aggadot*

The interpretation of the *aggadot* was a central issue for the disciples of Maimonides, especially in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>53</sup> Maimonidean thinkers both in the East and in the West took over Maimonides' abandoned project of offering allegorical interpretations of the *aggadot*. If Karaism played a role in the change of Maimonides' approach to *aggadot*, did it play any role among his followers who revived the "younger Maimonides'" exegetical project?

A passage from a text of Maimonides' own son and close disciple, Abraham, reveals that the issue of Karaism was indeed at stake in his own approach to *aggadot*. After the death of his father, Abraham Maimonides became the leader of the Egyptian Jewish community, being appointed *Nagid* in 1213. As recalled by Paul Fenton, the Egyptian

<sup>50</sup> On the debates about the meaning of *'uṣūl al-dīn* in this passage, see Andrew L. GLUCK, "The King in His Palace: Ibn Gabirol and Maimonides", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 91, 2001, fasc. 3/4, pp. 337-57, p. 346, n. 19. Some scholars, like Menachem M. KELLNER, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1990, pp. 13-31, interpret the expression in reference to the 13 beliefs.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the role of Torah in the access to the King's palace, see Howard KREISEL, *Maimonides' Political Thought: Studies in Ethics, Law, and the Human Ideal*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1999, pp. 191-3, who suggests Maimonides' second explanation of the parable – which classifies the different types of men according to their mastery of the diverse philosophical sciences – might be hinting at an access to the King's palace that is totally independent from the Torah. See also NURIEL, "On the Meaning of the Term *sharī'ah*", *op. cit.*, pp. 169-70, according to whom the term *sharī'ah* in the parable refers to a the idea of a divine law in general and not necessarily Judaism.

<sup>52</sup> Actually, Maimonides mentions having replaced his project to write a book dedicated to the allegorical interpretation of prophetic parables by his statements on prophethology in the *Guide*: "With regard to the meaning of prophecy, the exposition of its various degrees, and the elucidation of the parables occurring in the prophetic books, another manner of explanation is used in this Treatise." (MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, p. 6, trans. PINES, p. 10). No such substitute is found with regard to the interpretation of *aggadot*, see LORBERBAUM, "Changes in Maimonides' Approach to *aggadah*", *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>53</sup> See lately, the essays gathered in Howard KREISEL, *Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the Medieval Jewish Philosophers of Provence*, Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2015.

historian Joseph Sambari related that many Karaites rallied to Rabbanite Judaism under the influence of Abraham Maimonides.<sup>54</sup> However, the precise role played by Abraham Maimonides in these rallying remains unclear. According to Fenton, the Sufi orientation of his thought and practices may have contributed to seduce the Karaites, receptive to his pietist form of Judaism.

Abraham Maimonides' approach to *aggadot* may also have played a role in this phenomenon. In a passage belonging probably to his *Compendium for the Servants of the Lord* (*Kifāyat al-‘ābidīn*), completed circa 1232, he proposes a classification of the *aggadot*. This passage achieved posterity as its Hebrew translation was placed at the opening of most editions of the popular compilation of the *aggadic* passages of the Talmud, *‘Eyn Ya‘aqov*, under the title “Discourse on the *derashot*” (*Ma‘amar ‘al odot derashot Ḥazal*). To this day, only fragments (which do not include the passage that we are interested in) of the original Arabic text have been found.<sup>55</sup>

Abraham Maimonides' classification of the diverse types of *aggadot* aims at determining the exegetical attitude that is appropriate to each type. The reader should therefore be led to identify those *aggadot* which do contain an inner meaning and should be interpreted allegorically. At the end of his *Ma‘amar ‘al odot ha-derashot*, he associates explicitly his classification of *aggadot* with the struggle against Karaism:

*And I trust that the explanations I have offered, will be sufficient for every thoughtful man (mevin); and that henceforth it will be easy for everyone to determine the exact part to which every derash [DL: here, an equivalent of aggadah] or deed (ma‘aseh) belongs. And through this, he will avoid spreading evil reports (le-hoši’ dibbot) upon their authors (medabberim), blessed be their memories, in the manner of the Karaites, the fools and their like (ha-qara‘im we-ha-kesilim we-ka-yoše’ bahem). This will also prevent a man from sinking in the mud of foolishness by believing in what is impossible, thus causing him to invent things which do not exist and events that never happened, and in this way, finally leading him to false conceptions about God, through His corporealization and the like. And this would happen to him because he interprets these derashot literally and believes in them in such a way (be-farsho otam ha-derashot ‘al pi peshuṭam we-he‘mino otam ‘al derekh ha-hu).<sup>56</sup>*

<sup>54</sup> Paul B. FENTON, “Karaism and Sufism”, in Meira POLLIACK, ed., *Karaite Judaism: a Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 199-212, p. 207.

<sup>55</sup> Eleazar HURWITZ, “*Derashot Ḥazal le-Rabbeinu Avraham ben ha-Rambam*”, in Sydney B. HOENIG and Leon D. STITSKIN, eds, *Joshua Finkel Festschrift*, New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1974, pp. 139\*-68\*.

<sup>56</sup> Abraham MAIMONIDES, *Ma‘amar ‘al odot ha-derashot Ḥazal*, in *Milhamot ha-Shem*, ed. Reuven MARGALIT, Jerusalem, Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1953, p. 98 (trans. Shmuel T.-H. GLICK, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ein\\_Yaakov\\_\(Glick\)/Introduction](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ein_Yaakov_(Glick)/Introduction), with some changes, emphasis added).

Abraham clearly takes over the description of the different classes proposed by his father in the *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, as the terminological closeness of the two texts manifests.

Understanding the different sorts of *derashot* will prevent the “thoughtful man” (*mevin*) from “spreading evil reports” (*le-hoši’ dibbot*) upon the Sages, just like Maimonides father wrote of the men of the second class (the “derogative literalists”), in the *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq* that “they come to [...] bring ill-repute to that which has no ill repute” (Arabic: *wa-tashnī’ mā laysa bi-shanī’* and, in the classical medieval Hebrew translation of Salomon bar Joseph ben Jacob ha-Rofe’: *moši’im dibbah ‘al mah she-eyn bo dibbah*).<sup>57</sup> The “risk of sinking in the mud of foolishness by believing in what is impossible (*yiṭba’ be-yiven ha-sikhlut ba-devarim ha-nimna’im*)” corresponds to the first class of men of the *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, about whom Maimonides father wrote: “For him, the impossible things are all of necessary existence (Ar.: *wa-taṣayyar ‘indahu al-mumtani’āt kulluhā wājibat al-wujūd*, Heb.: *ha-nimna’ot kullan hen ešlam meḥuyyavot ha-meši’ut*).<sup>58</sup> In the introduction to the *Guide*, he wrote referring to those men that: “a rash fool (*jāhil*), devoid of any knowledge of the nature of being, does not find impossibilities (*mumtani’āt*) hard to accept”.<sup>59</sup> Both of these mistakes stem, according to Abraham Maimonides, from “interpret[ing] the *derashot* literally and believ[ing] in them in such a way (*be-farsho otam ha-derashot ‘al pi peshuṭam we-he’emino otam ‘al derekh ha-hu*), just like the men of the first and second classes of Maimonides father’s *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq* did (1<sup>st</sup> class: Ar.: *taḥmiluhu ‘alā zhāhirihi wa-lā tata’wwaluhu bi-wajh*, Heb.: *ma’aminim otam ‘al peshuṭam we-eyn soverin bahem perush nistar be-shum panim*;<sup>60</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> class: Ar.: *ḥamluhu ‘alā zhāhirihi*, Heb.: *we-hevinu otam kefi peshuṭam*).<sup>61</sup> For all these similarities, an element which is absent from his father’s text appears in that of Abraham: Abraham explicitly assimilates the category of the “derogative literalist” to the Karaites.

It seems that Abraham Maimonides adopted a new approach to the issue of Karaism, that involved starting anew his father’s abandoned project regarding the interpretation of *aggadot*. While the mature Maimonides father neutralized the difference between Karaites and Rabbanites in his exposition of the “science of the Law in its true sense”, Abraham reaffirmed this difference by proposing a defense of *aggadot* based on their precise classification. In the *Guide*, Maimonides included the men of the second class, the “derogative literalists”, among the “perfect men of virtue”. Abraham, just like his father in his youth, qualifies them as “fools” and includes Karaites among them. But he also gambles on the capacities of every “thoughtful man” (*mevin*) to avoid the

<sup>57</sup> The translation of Salomon bar Joseph ben Jacob ha-Rofe’ is found facing the Arabic text in Moses MAIMONIDES, *Einleitung to Chelek*, ed. Joshua HOLZER, Berlin, M. Poppelauer’s Buchhandlung, 1901, p. 9, cf. Id., *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. КАПАХ, p. 200 (and Kapah’s note 43 on the translation).

<sup>58</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Einleitung to Chelek*, ed. HOLZER, p. 8, cf. Id., *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. КАПАХ, p. 200.

<sup>59</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, Introduction, ed. MUNK-JOEL, pp. 5-6, trans. PINES, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Einleitung to Chelek*, ed. HOLZER, p. 8, cf. Id., *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. КАПАХ, p. 201.

<sup>61</sup> MAIMONIDES, *Einleitung to Chelek*, ed. HOLZER, p. 9, cf. Id., *Introduction to Pereq Ḥeleq*, ed. КАПАХ, p. 201.

mistakes of the literalist readers of *aggadot*. And possibly Karaites might be included among those who share these common faculties of comprehension. On the one hand, his classification of *aggadot* aims at responding the Karaite critique in order to strengthen the Rabbanite belief. On the other hand, it might be a way to help rallying Karaites, already attracted by his own Sufi version of Rabbanite Judaism, by lifting the obstacle constituted by some *aggadot* which are liable to harm the credibility of the oral tradition as a whole.

It is not unreasonable to envisage the writings of Maimonides' descendants as inscribed in the continuation of the direct teaching of the master, therefore disclosing and amplifying ideas that were already present in his thought even though not expressed explicitly. Some scholars thus envisage the Sufi orientation of Maimonides' son and grandsons as a sign that the *Guide's* secret doctrine was actually a mystical one inspired by Islamic mysticism.<sup>62</sup> In any event, Abraham Maimonides' association of Karaism with the necessity to provide the appropriate interpretation of *aggadot* may be interpreted either as a strategical change vis-à-vis his father or a hint that both subjects were already linked in the father's approach.

### Concluding remarks: hints of a Karaite reception of philosophical interpretations of *aggadot*

In the West, especially in Provence in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the allegorical interpretation of prophetic texts and rabbinic *aggadot* constituted an important part of the literary activity of Maimonidean philosophers. It is not surprising that Karaites should not be mentioned among the people against whom the *aggadot* ought to be defended, since these authors did not have any direct contact with Karaites. When Moses Ibn Tibbon justifies his project to interpret allegorically the *aggadot* in the Introduction of his *Sefer Pe'ah*, he rather mentions the "Gentiles who despise us and the Sages who composed the Talmud, because of the *aggadot* which seems beyond comprehension and are impossible according to nature".<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, one mention of the Karaites in one of the most important treatises of allegorical interpretation of the *aggadot* written in Provence had a remarkable posterity in the Karaite discourse. It is taken from Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche's *Livvat Hen*, a 13<sup>th</sup> century treatise divided into two parts: part one is an encyclopedia

<sup>62</sup> These interpretations are mostly based on *Guide*, 3:51. See David R. BLUMENTHAL, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006 and Warren Z. HARVEY, "Du mysticisme au-delà de la philosophie: Maimonide et Spinoza", in Danièle COHEN-LEVINAS, Géraldine ROUX, et Myriam SEBTI, eds, *Mystique et philosophie dans les trois monothéismes*, Paris, Hermann, 2015, pp. 341-6. For the writings of Maimonides' grandsons, see 'Obadyah MAIMONIDES and David MAIMONIDES, *Deux traités de mystique juive*, ed. Paul B. FENTON, Lagrasse, Verdier, 1987.

<sup>63</sup> Moses IBN TIBBON, *Sefer Pe'ah*, in *Kitvei Mosheh Ibn Tibbon*, ed. Howard KREISEL and Colette SIRAT, Ben Gurion University Press, Beer Sheva, 2010, p. 83.



of the Aristotelian sciences and part two a series of philosophical-allegorical exegeses of Biblical and rabbinic texts. Like his Provençal colleagues, Levi ben Abraham of Villefranche did not refer to the Karaites to justify his practice of interpreting the *aggadot* allegorically. However, in one passage, he criticizes the “Sadducees and the Karaites” for starting counting the Omer the day after the first shabbat after Pessah and not after the first day of the festival itself like the Rabbanites do.

Even though the passage criticizes a Karaite practice and associates it with that of the Sadducees, this text was quoted by the Byzantine Karaite thinker Caleb Afendopolo in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, next to Yehuda Halevy, in order to prove that even Rabbanite thinkers distinguished between the Sadducees and the Karaites and that therefore, the two groups are indeed different.<sup>64</sup>

*Likewise, in his book Livyat Hen, 3<sup>rd</sup> discourse, 2[0]<sup>th</sup> gate, the Rabbanite sage R. Levi ben R. Abraham ha-Levi wrote, when he mentions the fixation of the Christian festival [Passover] always on Sunday: “The reason why they fix the festival always on Sunday is their taking the words the day after shabbat (Lev 23:16) literally, like the Sadducees and the Karaites do.”<sup>65</sup> From the words of both of these men [Yehuda Halevi and Levi ben Abraham], it appears that the Karaites are distinct from the Sadducees and the Baytosites.*

The quotation from Levi ben Abraham was later on quoted by several Karaite authors and paved its way until the 18<sup>th</sup> century Crimea in the *Dod Mordekhai* of Mordekhai ben Nissan<sup>66</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania in the writings of Simḥah Isaac Lutzki's *Orah Šaddiqim*<sup>67</sup> and the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium with Joseph ben Moses Beghi's *Qiryah Ne'emanah*.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Caleb AFENDOLOPO, *Aseret Ma'amarot*, IV, Bodleian Library MS. Oppenheim Add. 4° 123, 63b. <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/Discover/Search/#/?p=c+0,t+,rsrs+0,rsps+10,fa+,so+ox%3Asort%5Easc,scids+,pid+ffb1f24a-5608-4026-9320-c541b1c04afb,vi+85c00849-39f5-4db1-9509-1d3cd2ff5075>.

<sup>65</sup> The quoted passage is found in the part of the *Livyat Hen* dedicated to astronomy, see LEVI BEN ABRAHAM BEN ḤAYYIM, *Livyat Hen*, III, chap. 20, Ms Vatican ebr. 383, 92a. The chapter is mistakenly referred to as III, 2, in the quoted ms of Afendopolo's text – a mistake that is found repeatedly in later Karaite quotations of the text. A similar text on the fixation of Passover and *Shavu'ot* is found in LEVI BEN ABRAHAM BEN ḤAYYIM, *Livyat Hen: The Quality of Prophecy and the Secrets of the Torah*, ed. Howard KREISEL, Beer-Sheva, Ben Gurion University Press, 2007, VI, chap. 18, p. 482. There, the Karaites are not quoted but only the Sadducees and the Christians. In another passage, the assimilation of the Karaites with the Sadducees is clear: “Many in this generation were leaning towards the Sadducees and the Karaites, believing only in what there is a proof-text in Scriptures.” LEVI BEN ABRAHAM BEN ḤAYYIM, *Livyat Hen: The Secrets of the Faith and The Gate of the Haggadah*, ed. Howard KREISEL, Beer-Sheva, Ben Gurion University Press, “*Sha'ar ha-Haggadah*”, p. 237.

<sup>66</sup> Mordekhai BEN NISSAN, *Dod Mordekhai*, Vienna, Schmid, 1830, 2a. See Jean-Christophe ATTIAS, “Conférence de M. Jean-Christophe Attias”, *Annales de l'École pratique des hautes études*, t. 105, 1996, p. 260.

<sup>67</sup> Simḥah Isaac LUTZKI, *Orah Šaddiqim*, 20a, in Mordekhai BEN NISSAN, *Dod Mordekhai*, *op. cit.* Many thanks to Prof. D. Lasker for communicating me these references.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Jacob MANN, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2: *Karaitica*, New York, Ktav Publishing House, 1972, p. 307. On this author, see Ofer ELIOR, “Attitudes toward Science in the Karaite Community of Istanbul: The Case of Joseph Beghi”, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, t. 108, 2018, fasc. 3, pp. 295-315.

Why should Afendopolo have read so closely Levi ben Abraham's *Livyat Hen*? Though this question would deserve further investigation, we can venture two provisional answers. First, Byzantine Karaites would certainly find interest in the first part of *Livyat Hen* forming an encyclopedia of the Aristotelian sciences, at a time when their main scientific frame had moved from the *kalām* still reflected in Aharon ben Eli's influential *Eṣ Ḥayyim* (14<sup>th</sup> century) to Aristotelianism.<sup>69</sup> But it should also be recalled that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Rabbanite masters played a key role in the training of important Byzantine Karaite scholars in the sciences, such as Mordekhai Komtino,<sup>70</sup> the Rabbanite master of Afendopolo and Eliahu Bashiatsi. It is therefore possible that in such a milieu of Rabbanites teaching Karaites, *Livyat Hen* was being circulated not only for its encyclopedic part, but also for its second part dedicated to the allegorical interpretation of *aggadot*, as a polemical tool against such Karaite pupils. In any event, these Karaite quotations from *Livyat Hen* are yet another invitation to envisage the Maimonidean tradition of allegorical interpretation of *aggadot* against the background of the Rabbanite-Karaite confrontation.

The well-founded idea that Maimonides' view changed between his youth and his maturity, on both the necessity to allegorize *aggadot* and on the status of the Karaites, as well as the contexts in which the term "Rabbanite" features in the *Guide*, led us to the conclusion that both subjects were indeed linked in Maimonides' eyes. His renunciation to write a systematic treatise of allegorical interpretation of *aggadot* in favor of the redaction of the *Guide* may be understood as a tactic change of attitude toward the Karaite: it was a way to attract them in the Rabbanite camp by offering a text which did not depend much on the admission of the rabbinic tradition. It may also bear the stronger consequence that, for Maimonides by the time he was writing the *Guide*, belonging to the rabbinic tradition was not a prerequisite to access the "science of the Law in its true sense". While the link between allegorizing the *aggadot* or not and Karaism remains silenced in Maimonides' texts, it is explicit in the writings of his son Abraham. Finally, the fact that Karaites were acquainted with Levi ben Abraham's *Livyat Hen*, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, suggests that, by then, referring to the allegorization of *aggadot* by a Maimonidean philosopher may still have been a strategy used by Rabbinites to rally their Karaite pupils.

<sup>69</sup> For an overview of the study of science among Byzantine Karaites in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, see ELIOR, "Attitudes toward Science in the Karaite Community of Istanbul", *op. cit.*, pp. 295-302.

<sup>70</sup> On Komtino, see Jean-Christophe ATTIAS, *Le commentaire biblique : Mordekhai Komtino ou l'herméneutique du dialogue*, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 1991.



# Between the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans

## The Karaite and Rabbanite Jews of the Crimea in Early Modern Times

□ Mikhail KIZILOV

### Introduction: Crimean Muslims and the Crimean Jews

After the Ottoman annexation of Crimea in 1475 and until the Russian conquest of 1774/1783, the Crimean peninsula was divided into two parts: the Crimean Khanate (*Kırım Hanlığı*), which was a Tatar vassal-state of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Crimea (the so-called “Kefe province” or *Eyālet-i Kefê*). The local Jewish community was then divided into two parts: non-Talmudic Karaites, on the one hand, and Rabbanite (Talmudic, or Rabbinic) Jews, on the other. Although we do not know the exact numerical data, it seems very likely that in the late fifteenth – beginning of the sixteenth century, the Crimean Karaites were much more numerous than the local Rabbanites. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Karaites constituted about 75% of the Crimean Jewish community and the Rabbanites only 25%.<sup>1</sup> Such a situation was highly unusual, because in the rest of the world the Karaites normally were a minority in comparison to their more numerous Rabbanite neighbours. The fact that both types of Crimean Jews soon became culturally Turkicized, and started speaking dialects (or, rather, ethnolects) of the Crimean Tatar and Ottoman Turkish languages, was another interesting feature of the local community. Their everyday customs and traditional dress were also almost identical with those of the Crimean Tatars.

The relations between the Crimean Jews (Karaite and Rabbanite alike) and their Muslim neighbours (Tatars and Ottoman Turks) were not uniform. On the one hand, Crimean Tatars and Ottomans eagerly participated in the trade with the local Jews;

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<sup>1</sup> Mark КУПОВЕЦКИЙ, “Динамика численности и расселения карaimов и крымчакoв за последние двести лет,” in *География и культура этнографических групп татар в СССР*, Moscow, 1983, p. 77.

they also often placed them in important administrative positions, and granted them numerous privileges. The fact that the local Karaites and Rabbanites spoke local Turkic vernaculars (dialects or ethnolects of the Crimean Tatar and Ottoman languages) as their *Umgangssprachen*, played important role in this. On the other hand, written sources are full of references to oppressive measures from the Khans' and Ottoman administrations towards the Crimean Karaites and Rabbanites, and to a rather pejorative attitude to them on an every-day level. For example, seventeenth and eighteenth-century sources show that, despite the existence of the official term *yahudi*, on the everyday level the Tatars rather used the pejorative *çufut* when referring to the Jewish subjects of the Khanate (both Rabbanite and Karaite alike).<sup>2</sup>

As all the Jews who lived in the countries of the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Jews received the status of *dhimmis*. *Dhimmis* or *ahl ad-dhimmah* ("the people of the covenant") were protected non-Muslim minorities living in Muslim countries. The position of the Jews among the Muslims was quite varied, depending on a country and a time period. In some countries, like, for example, in Islamic Spain under the Almohads, they were harshly persecuted, while in fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkey, on the contrary, they received favourable treatment.<sup>3</sup>

According to the so-called "pact of 'Umar" (*shurūṭ 'Umar*),<sup>4</sup> Jews in Muslim countries, on the one hand, received many privileges (e.g. the right to settle down in Muslim lands and to be protected by Muslim authorities). On the other hand, they had to pay *jizya* (a poll-tax) and were subjected to numerous economic and ideological restrictions. *Dhimmis* were not allowed, for instance, to build new religious monuments or houses overtopping the houses of Muslims, to manifest their religion publicly, to sell fermented drinks, and to ride horses. They had to show respect towards Muslims, wear special distinctive garments, and give board and lodging to travelling

<sup>2</sup> Evliyâ ÇELEBİ, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, ed. Yücel DAĞLI, Seyit Ali KAHRAMAN and Robert DANKOFF, vol. 7, Istanbul, 2003, pp. 218-9; Antoni NOWOSIELSKI [Antoni MARCINKOWSKI], *Stepy, morze i góry. Szkice i wspomnienia z podróży*, vol. 2, Vilno, 1854, p. 42. The meaning of this word is similar to the Russian *zhid*. Crimean *sicils* preserved one interesting legal case from Kirk Yer from 1609. Bath attendant Musa (it is unclear whether he was really Jewish or not) opened a case against another bath attendant, Hacı Hüseyin, who "without any reason called me *çuhud* (*çufut*)" (Oleg RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi Krymskogo khanstva: issledovaniia, teksty i perevody*, Simferopol, Mediatcentr im. I. Gasprinskogo, 2017, p. 134). Thus, this word indeed was so offensive that one could even appeal to a court when it was applied.

<sup>3</sup> For the general information about the Jews in Muslim countries, see Ye'or BAT, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, Madison/Teaneck, NJ, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985; Martin GILBERT, *In Ishmael's House: a History of Jews in Muslim Lands*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010; Norman STILLMAN, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, Philadelphia, PA, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979; Irma FADEEVA, *Evreiskie obshchiny v Osmanskoi imperii: stranitsy istorii*, Moscow, IV RAN, 2012; Avram GALANTI (GALANTÉ), *Türkler ve Yahudiler*, Istanbul, Tan Matbaası, 1947; *idem*, *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*, Istanbul, Isis, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> For the debate regarding the dating and origin of this set of rules concerning the status of non-Muslims in Muslim countries, see Bernard LEWIS, *The Jews of Islam*, London, 1984, pp. 24-5; Milka LEVY-RUBIN, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 58-87; Anver M. EMON, *Religious Pluralism and Islamic Law: Dhimmi and Others in the Empire of Law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 71; Arthur Stanely TRITTON, *Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar*, London, Routledge, 2008, pp. 5-6.

Muslims.<sup>5</sup> Some of these restrictions had exclusively economic and administrative significance; others, however, were aimed at emphasizing the inferior and humiliating status of the *ahl al-dhimma*. Moreover, the *cizya* was not only a tax, but also a symbolic expression of subordination.<sup>6</sup>

The study of the relations between the Crimean Jews and Muslims has recently become especially topical in view of the fact that in the 2000s and 2010s scholars began to analyze and translate important first-hand sources pertaining to this issue, namely, the texts of the Crimean sharia court records (*şer'iye sicilleri*).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, several recent articles have published some of the records that were related to the Muslim-Jewish relations in Crimea.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, most of the scholars who have worked with this unique type of sources usually interpreted all the mentions of *Yahudiler* (Jews), which can be found in in these records, as referring to the Karaites.<sup>9</sup> In my opinion, however, such an approach is not entirely accurate. Indeed, most of these *Yahudiler* were undoubtedly Karaite (after all, as has been mentioned above, ca. 75% of the local Jews were Karaite). This fact is testified, for example, by several typical Turkic names mostly specific to the Karaites (e.g. Baba, Babaş, Çubar, Kıskaçı) or by indication of their geographic origin – the community of Kale (Çufut Kale), which was inhabited almost exclusively by the Karaites.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, in some sharia court records, it was indicated that these *Yahudiler* had non-Karaite names (e.g. Andon and Santun) or lived in Karasubazar and Bahçesaray. As I shall demonstrate below, these mentions should be interpreted as referring to Crimean Rabbanite Jews. Thus, one needs a much more

<sup>5</sup> "We [*dhimmis*] shall not built new monasteries... We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way... We shall not manifest our religion publicly... We shall show respect towards the Muslims... We shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords nor bear any kind of arms..." (Bernard LEWIS, ed. and trans., *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, pt. 2, New York / Oxford, 1987, pp. 217-9).

<sup>6</sup> According to Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (1075–144), "the *jizya* shall be taken from them [from *dhimmis*] with belittlement and humiliation... The collector shall seize him [a *dhimmi*] by the scruff of the neck, shake him, and say: 'Pay the *jizya*!'" (LEWIS, *Jews of Islam*, op. cit., pp. 14-5).

<sup>7</sup> These sources became accessible to scholars only since the beginning of the 1990s. This is why it was only recently that first translations and analyses of the *sicils* began to appear (RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi*, op. cit.; FIRAT YAŞA, *Bahçesaray (1650–75)*, Doctoral Thesis, Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2017; FEHMI YILMAZ, "On Sekizinci Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Kırım'da Gayrimüslimler," in *Osmanlı Araştırmaları Dergisi Sayı*, vol. 33, 2009, pp. 237-68; *idem*, *Kırım Hanlığı Sicilleri Kataloğu* (in the press)); NURI KAVAK, "Slavery and Slave Prices in the Crimean Khanate (According to Religious Court Records)," in *Journal of International Eastern European Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2019, pp. 59-72.

<sup>8</sup> FIRAT YAŞA, "Did Kirazuy Have to Divorce Her Non-Muslim Husband? A Controversial Case of Apostasy and Conversion to Islam in the Bahçesaray Court," in *Al-Qalam*, vol. 8, 2018, pp. 159-67; MEHMET CANER ÇAVUŞ, "67 A 90 Numaralı 1077-80 (1666-70) Kırım Kadiasker Defterine (Şer'iyye Siciline) Göre Yahudilerin Sosyo-Kültürel Hayatı," in *Vakanüvis – Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi / International Journal of Historical Researches*, vol. 4, issue 1, 2019, pp. 117-41; KATARZYNA STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowna – tom 10. jako źródło wiedzy o Karaimach z Krymu," in *Almanach Karaimski*, vol. 7, 2018, pp. 109-27; *eadem*, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie na Krymie w XVII wieku," in *Almanach Karaimski*, vol. 4, 2015, pp. 65-78.

<sup>9</sup> ÇAVUŞ, "67 A 90 Numaralı 1077-80 (1666-70) Kırım Kadiasker Defterine," op. cit.; STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowna," op. cit.; *eadem*, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie," op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Only a few Rabbanites lived in Çufut Kale in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Mikhail KIZILOV, "Gurdzhi i Achkinazi, ili krymchaki v gorode Chufut-Kale," in *Krymchakhar (Krymchaki)*, vol. 4, 2009, pp. 12-5; *idem*, "Novye materialy o vzaimootnosheniakh karaimskoi i ravvinisticheskoi (krymchakskoi) obshchin Kryma v XVIII – nachale XIX veka," in *Materialy XX Mezhdunarodnoi Konferentsii po Iudaïke*, vol. II, Moscow, Sefer, 2014, pp. 127-39.

careful approach while analyzing sources that use the term *Yahudiler* (or *жиды* or *Judei*) with regard to the Crimean Jews: in most cases these terms were used to designate Crimean Karaites, but sometimes they denoted local Rabbanites.<sup>11</sup>

There have been only a few studies that analyzed relations between Crimean Jews and Muslims so far. Most of them focused only on the Crimean Karaites and did not study the local Rabbanite Jews.<sup>12</sup> This paper is the first attempt at analyzing the relations between Crimean Muslims and local Jews (both Karaite and Rabbanite) using all types of written sources in the Ottoman Turkish, Crimean Tatar, Hebrew, Karaim, Polish and Russian languages. I place a special emphasis upon the following sources: accounts of European and Oriental travelers; records of Crimean Tatar sharia court (*şer'iye sicilleri*); *yarlıklar* (orders) of the Crimean khans; Russian official documents; letters of Polish ambassadors; *ketubbot* (marriage contracts) of the Crimean Jews; chronicles by Crimean Karaite, Rabbanite and Crimean Tatar chroniclers; community documents in Hebrew (especially the seventeenth-century Karaite *pinkas* from Kefe); a *piyyut* (poem) by Joseph ben Yeshuah in the Turkic Karaim language, and some other.

The paper examines specific features of the legal status of Crimean Karaite and Rabbanite Jews and analyzes relations between these two communities and the local Muslim (Tatar and Ottoman) administration. I also dedicate my attention to the economic relations between Crimean Jews and their Muslim environment and to the issue of the conversion of Jews to Islam. For the Arabic and Turkic names and toponyms, I normally use modern Turkish spelling (thus, e.g. *Çufut Kale* and not *Chufut-Kale*, *Kırk Yer* and not *Qırq Yer*, *Receb* and not *Rejeb*, etc.).

## Muslims and Karaites

In contradiction to the words ascribed to 'Umar I ("Do not appoint Jews and Christians to public office...") and a responsum of the thirteenth century prescribing that no Jew is allowed to be appointed inspector of coins,<sup>13</sup> there are references to Karaites who were treasurers (*emin* or *hazinedar / haznadar*) of the Khans' mint (*darabhane*) in Bahçesaray and Gözleve.<sup>14</sup> For example, in 1644, a certain "Jew Bereka" (a corruption

<sup>11</sup> For more information regarding the necessity of careful differentiation between the references to the Karaite and Rabbanite Jews of the Crimea in non-Jewish sources, see Mikhail KIZILOV, *Krymskaia Iudeia: ocherki istorii evreev, khazar, karaimov i krymchakov na territorii Krymskogo poluostrova s drevneishkikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, Simferopol, Dolia, 2016, pp. 112-13.

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail KIZILOV, *Karaites through the Travelers' Eyes. Ethnic History, Traditional Culture and Everyday Life of the Crimean Karaites According to Descriptions of the Travelers*, New York, al-Qirqisani Center for the Promotion of Karaite Studies, 2003, pp. 102-7; STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowa", *op. cit.*; STEFANIAK-RAK, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie", *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> LEWIS, *Jews of Islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Bahçesaray was the capital of the Crimean Khanate starting from the sixteenth century. A highly interesting, but simultaneously quite biased, article of Seraja Szapszał (Shapshal) on the role of the Karaites at the court of

of the Hebrew name *Berakhah*; he was most likely a Karaite from Çufut Kale) served as a treasurer<sup>15</sup> of the *kalga* Gazı Geray and *nureddin*. Moreover, this enterprising Karaite even took part in the political life of the country, constantly lending money to Moscow ambassadors and reporting secret information to the Russian envoys Neronov and Golovnin, who stayed in Çufut Kale in July 1644.<sup>16</sup>

In 1612 the master of the Khan's mint in Gözleve was a Karaite, Harun veled-i Yako (Aharon ben Yakov); several other Karaites were involved in the minting of coins in this *darabhane*.<sup>17</sup> During the reign of Adil Geray (1666–71), a Jew (apparently a Karaite) was the head of the Khan's mint in Bahçesaray.<sup>18</sup> A court case from 1676–8 informs that the whole team that was engaged in actual technical process of minting coins included at least six Karaites (furthermore, five more names also appear to belong to the Karaites, although the source did not mention whether the owners of these names were Jewish (*Yehudi*) or not). Especially interesting is the fact that all four coin engravers were Jewish: İsrail (Israel), Mortukay (Mordecai), Muşi (Moses), and İlya (Elijah).<sup>19</sup>

Aubry de la Motray, who visited Bahçesaray in 1711, mentioned that the head of the Khan's mint was a certain Jew named Abraham.<sup>20</sup> It seems that this "Jew Abraham" was in fact a Karaite, Abraham ben Josiah, the author of *Emunah Omen*, a philosophical-theological treatise written in 1712, and published in Gözleve (modern Eupatoria, in Crimea) in 1846.<sup>21</sup> He was the father of Samuel ben Abraham ben Josiah (1716–69), a Karaite merchant who received the status of *Ağa* (i.e. "elder brother" or "noble authority") and fulfilled the duties of manager of the Khan's mint.<sup>22</sup> Samuel left the title of *Ağa* to his posterity. One of them, Benjamin ben Samuel *Ağa*, was appointed financial advisor of the last Crimean Khan, Şahin Geray, and master of the mint.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it seems that the hereditary status of financial advisor of the Crimean Khan was in the hands of the Karaite clan of *Ağa* for at least a hundred years, from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 1783. If we

the Crimean khans is: Seraja SZAPSZAŁ, "Karaimi w służbie u chanów krymskich," in *Myśl Karaimska*, vol. 2, issue 2, 1929, pp. 5–22.

<sup>15</sup> The source uses the term *казнодар* which is the Russian corruption of the Persian *haznadar* (treasurer).

<sup>16</sup> A.A. NOVOSELSKII, *Bor'ba moskovskogo gosudarstva s tatarami v pervoy polovine XVII veka*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1948, p. 333. In the Russian original text, his name is indicated as *жидовин Берека*.

<sup>17</sup> YAŞA, *Bahçesaray (1650–75)*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>18</sup> Nuri KAVAK, "XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Kırım Hanlığı'nda Gayr-i Müslimlerin Yeri (Şer'iyye Sicillerine Göre)," in *21. Yüzyılda Eđitim Ve Toplum*, vol. 4, issue 12, 2015, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi*, op. cit., pp. 235–6.

<sup>20</sup> Aubrie DE LA MOTRAY, *Travels through Europe, Asia and into Part of Africa*, vol. 2, London, 1723, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Philip MILLER, *Karaite Separatism in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Joseph Solomon Lutski's Epistle of Israel's Deliverance*, Cincinnati, 1993, p. 55, ft. 34.

<sup>22</sup> His name is also mentioned in the *yarlık* of Krym Geray Khan of 1768, which appointed the Karaite merchant Samuel to be the head of the aforementioned mint. The *yarlık* characterizes Samuel as "a man of noble fame, experienced and honest" (Zaria FIRKOVICH, ed., *Sbornik starinnykh gramot i uzakonenii Rossiiskoi imperii kasatel'no prav i sostoiania rusko-poddannykh karaimov*, St. Petersburg, 1890, pp. 104–5).

<sup>23</sup> Jacob MANN, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2: *Karaitea*, Philadelphia, 1935, p. 10.



keep in mind that the fifteenth-century khan's mint was located in the territory of Kirk Yer (earlier name of Çufut Kale, the main seat of the Karaite Jews in the Crimea),<sup>24</sup> it is very tempting to suppose that the Karaites fulfilled these duties from much earlier periods.

According to Michalon Lituanus (Mikhail Litvin), a Crimean Jew was the head of the custom office (*teloneum*) in mid-sixteenth century town of Or (Perekop), in the north of Crimea.<sup>25</sup> There is evidence that the Ottoman administration of Crimea also appointed Karaites to important positions. The diaries of the Dominican monks from 1663 testify that the large fortress of Mangup, which was the capital of the Mangup *kadılık* (judicial circuit), was managed by a certain *Ebreo Castellano*, i.e., most likely, a local Karaite since there were only a few Rabbanites living in Mangup at that time. Furthermore, the Karaites (*Hebrei*) were also the guards of the monks who were imprisoned in Mangup.<sup>26</sup> It is unclear whether they were allowed to carry arms in order to fulfill their duties as guards. Nevertheless, the very fact that Karaite *dhimmis* were entitled to guard important prisoners testifies that they could have been entrusted with important tasks which were normally fulfilled only by Muslims.

One of the articles of the "pact of 'Umar" postulates that non-Muslims should not "seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the turban, the footwear, or parting of the hair."<sup>27</sup> However, both the Crimean Karaites and Rabbanites not only adapted the language and many customs of the Crimean Tatars, but they also began to dress and wear their hair in Tatar fashion, so that sometimes a traveler could hardly tell a Karaite from a Tatar.<sup>28</sup>

Especially interesting was the status of the Karaites of Çufut Kale. On the one hand, they suffered many limitations. For example, in spite of the fact that the Karaites had a number of shops in Bahçesaray, the capital of the Crimean Khanate, they were not allowed to stay there overnight. Therefore, the Karaites had to descend from Çufut Kale in the morning and return back in the evening (around a 10–12 kilometer journey). Evliya Çelebi reported that a one-way trip from Çufut Kale to Bahçesaray

<sup>24</sup> See more about this mint in SZAPSZAL, "Karaimi," *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> Michalon LITUANUS, *Traktat o nravakh tatar, litovtsev i moskovitian*, V.I. MATUZOVA, transl., Moscow, 1994, pp. 72-4.

<sup>26</sup> Raffaele Maria FILAMONDO, ed., *Raguaglio del viaggio fatto da'padri dell'ordine de'Predicatori, inviati dalla Sagra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide missionarii apostolici nella Tartaria minore l'anno 1662 aggiuntavi la nuova spedizione del p. maestro F. Piscopo in Armenia e Persia*, Napoli, per li Socii Dom. Ant. Parrino, e Michele Luigi Mutii, 1695, pp. 91, 95, 96.

<sup>27</sup> LEWIS, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>28</sup> Ebenezzer HENDERSON, *Biblical Researches and Travels in Russia*, London, 1826, p. 314; Peter Simon PALLAS, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in die südlichen Statthaltschaften des Russischen Reichs in den Jahren 1793 und 1794*, vol. 2, Leipzig, 1801, p. 36; D.B. [D.N. BANTYSH-KAMENSKI?], "Otryvok iz puteshestviya po Krymu," in *Syn Otechestva*, vol. 36, issue 8, 1817, p. 46; Edward Daniel CLARKE, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, part 1: *Russia, Tahtary, and Turkey*, vol. 1, London, 1816, pp. 189, 194.

took around an hour for the Karaite merchants.<sup>29</sup> This peculiar detail of the everyday routine of the Karaites of Çufut Kale was noted by practically all travelers who visited this place from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>30</sup> Apparently, the regulation forbidding the Karaites' staying in Bahçesaray was issued in order to make this capital city free of Jewish presence.

According to the pact of 'Umar, non-Muslims were not allowed to bear and use arms as well as ride horses.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in order to ascend Çufut Kale and fetch drinking water there, they used mules and asses. Xavier Hommaire de Hell, a nineteenth-century traveler, left a quite curious remark about this. Apparently, the Karaites were actually allowed to ride on horseback, but were bound to alight and proceed on foot when arriving opposite the khans' palace in Bahçesaray.<sup>32</sup> It seems that the prohibition to bear arms may well explain Evliya Çelebi's remark that the local Karaites did not use rifles and cannons, and had to gather heaps of stones on the slopes of the fortress in order to defend it. His information that the Karaites of Çufut Kale "did not have courage" and "were afraid of the noise" produced by rifles and cannons seems to reflect his preconception that the Jews could not fight.<sup>33</sup> In fact, however, they were not allowed to use firearms by the law. Furthermore, the Karaites were forbidden to erect any buildings in the part of their settlement called *Burunçak* (*Burunçik*), since the khans used it as a place for deer hunting or various holidays and festivities.<sup>34</sup> Still, Evliya Çelebi was so much amazed to see this large and mighty fortress being left in the disposal of the Karaites that he stated: "there is no such a Jewish fortress in any other country".<sup>35</sup> According to Evliya Çelebi, already in 1666, duties of the commandant, garrison, guards, and door-keepers of Çufut Kale were fulfilled by the local Karaites. At the end of the seventeenth century the duties of the *kapuçı* (here in the sense "commandant of the fortress," not just a "door-keeper") of Çufut Kale were fulfilled by the Karaite Saltık.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, duties of the armed guards for the prisoners kept in the fortress were fulfilled by Tatar *sekbans*.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Evliyâ ÇELEBİ, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, *op. cit.*, p. 219. This journey, in all probability, was not the most secure one: Samuel b. Abraham Ağa, one of the most distinguished Karaite leaders and master of the khans' mint, was murdered while travelling from Bahçesaray to Çufut Kale in 1769 (MANN, *Texts*, *op. cit.*, p. 318).

<sup>30</sup> For the earliest data regarding this detail of the status of the Karaites, see Ambrosius ESZER, "Die Beschreibung des schwarzen Meeres und der Tartarei des Emidio Portelli D'Ascoli," in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, vol. 42, 1972, pp. 233-4.

<sup>31</sup> "We [*dhimmis*] shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords, nor bear any kind of arms..." (LEWIS, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, p. 218).

<sup>32</sup> Xavier Hommaire DE HELL, *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus*, London, 1847, p. 364. In all probability, this softening of a very rigorous Islamic rule could have been introduced very lately, a short while before 1783.

<sup>33</sup> Evliyâ ÇELEBİ, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>34</sup> See PALLAS, *Bemerkungen*, *op. cit.*, p. 37; MOTRAY, *Travels*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> *Hakkâ ki bir diyârda böyle çufud kal'ası yokdur* (ÇELEBİ, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, *op. cit.*, p. 219).

<sup>36</sup> "Spisok so stateinogo spiska pod'yachego Vasiliia Aytemireva, posylannogo v Krym s predlozheniem mirnykh dogovorov," in *Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, vol. 18, issue 2, 1895, pp. 35-6, 42-3.

<sup>37</sup> "Spisok so stateinogo spiska," *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9. *Sekban* means literally "a keeper of hounds." In the Crimea *sekbans* constituted a special detachment of the Khan's army equipped with muskets. The Karaite Jews could

The “pact of ‘Umar” also prescribes that *dhimmis* should not seek to built houses of prayer overtopping those of Muslims – or should not build new houses of prayer at all. It seems that this proscription was sometimes followed in Crimea as well. Although the Karaite community lived in the town of Gözleve (modern Eupatoria) from the end of the sixteenth – seventeenth century, the location of its early synagogue has not been discovered so far. According to the information which the nineteenth-century Polish traveler Antoni Nowosielski received from the local inhabitants in Eupatoria, this can be explained by the fact that under the Turkish and Tatar dominion, the local non-Muslims did not have the right to erect houses of prayer on the ground. As a result, the Karaites had to establish their synagogues in underground caves.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that the Tatar khans could arbitrarily arrest and put Jews to prison is confirmed by several sources. A Karaite pilgrim to Jerusalem, Joseph ben Yeshuah from Derażno (at present the village of Derazhnia in Western Ukraine), composed (in the western dialect of the Turkic Karaim language) a sorrowful *piyyut* (poem), entitled *Karanhy bulut* (“Black cloud”), that described his Crimean imprisonment. According to the source, he came to Crimea to collect alms for the community in the Holy Land in 1666. However, someone informed the Crimean khan (*melekh Qedar*) about this. Being accused of espionage, Joseph ben Yeshuah was thrown into a prison in Bahçesaray “in the Khan’s palace with the chain on the neck.” His prayer for delivery from the harsh captivity was soon fulfilled. The traveller was released, but the Khan (most likely, Mehmed Geray IV) confiscated the money which the Jewish pilgrim needed to travel to Jerusalem. Therefore, Joseph ben Yeshuah could not realize his plans of travelling to the Holy Land and was forced to stay in Çufut Kale.<sup>39</sup> In the eighteenth century, Kırım Geray khan (ruled from 1758–64, 1768–9) put to prison for three months the administrator of the khan mint, Samuel Ağa (for more information about him, see above).<sup>40</sup> The archival document says that Kırım Geray ordered that the young Karaite, Joseph Sirakçı, be forcibly taken to the group of the Khans’ dancers, despite the protests of the latter and the attempts of the Çufut Kale community to rescue him from captivity. And this is “only one of a thousand plunders” as the document expressively writes.<sup>41</sup>

A Russian document testifies that in 1657 detachments of the Cossacks, which gathered in the area adjacent to Perekop (Or Kapı), seriously threatened the stability of the Crimean Khanate. In order to defend the Crimea from the Cossacks *kalga Kazı* (Gazi) Geray rushed to Perekop; however, as his army was not strong enough, he ordered that

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hardly fulfill the duties of armed guards of prisoners – as non-Muslims according to the *dhimmi* rules they were not allowed to bear arms.

<sup>38</sup> NOWOSIELSKI, *Stepy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 36.

<sup>39</sup> For the original text of the *piyyut*, see Manuscript Department of the Library of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (hereafter *MS LMAB*), F. 305, no. 220, fols. 17r–20v; Jan GRZEGORZEWSKI, “Caraimica. Język Łach-Karaitów,” in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. 2, issue 2, 1916–18, pp. 268–70, 274–80.

<sup>40</sup> Manuscript Department of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (hereafter: *OR RNB*), F. 946, Evr. I Doc. I 54; *ibid.*, Doc. I 55–7 (Doc. 40).

<sup>41</sup> MANN, *Texts*, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

Murtaza Ağa of Bahçesaray immediately gather local Tatars, Armenians and Jews and send them to Perekop to defend the peninsula.<sup>42</sup> This means that in time of need, Crimean Jews (most likely, Karaites of Çufut Kale) could be recruited into the Crimean Tatar army.

On the other hand, the Karaites enjoyed certain privileges, namely, they were exempted from many public works and additional taxes. Claude de Peyssonel (1753) explained how they obtained these privileges. He states that a certain Karaite physician (*Médecin Juif*) cured *Ouloukhani*,<sup>43</sup> the sister of *Hadjiselim-Guerai-Khan*<sup>44</sup> from a mortal disease. As a consequence, the Karaites of Çufut Kale were transferred under the direct patronage of this *Ouloukhani*, and exempted from the public works aimed at the renovation of the Khans' palace, mosques, and fountains. However, in exchange, they had to provide *Ouloukhani* with "everything that was necessary for her household, such as timber, coal, coffee and many other provisions of this kind."<sup>45</sup>

Peyssonel's information which describes the eighteenth-century situation is, however, somewhat legendary. The *yahudiler* (most likely, the Karaites are meant here) are mentioned as the inhabitants of Kırk Yer (earlier name of Çufut Kale) in the earliest *yarlıklar* (charters) of the Crimean Khans of 1459, 1468, and 1478/79.<sup>46</sup> Khans' charters demonstrate that the Karaites enjoyed a number of privileges at least from the early sixteenth century. These documents prohibited the local Tatar officials to exact additional taxes from them, to take their horses and other animals, to confiscate carts, to stay overnight in their houses, and to take food from them during festivities such as marriages or religious feasts.<sup>47</sup> Thus, certain privileges were accorded to the Karaites of Kırk Yer much earlier than Peyssonel's times.

Ebenezer Henderson mentioned another interesting privilege conceded by the Khans to the Karaites. In conformity with the ordinance of Nehemiah,<sup>48</sup> they were allowed to shut the gates of Çufut Kale at sunset on Friday evening and not open them until the end of the Sabbath.<sup>49</sup> Once again, this privilege directly contradicts the decree of the "pact of 'Umar" which says: "We [the Jews] shall keep our gates wide open [to the

<sup>42</sup> Gennadii SANIN, *Otnosheniia Rossii i Ukrainy s Krymskim khanstvom v seredine XVII veka*, Moscow, 1987, p. 226.

<sup>43</sup> "Ouloukhani" is not a name, but a corruption an official term *ulu hanım* ("Great lady"), i.e. khan's wife.

<sup>44</sup> I.e. Haci Selim Geray khan.

<sup>45</sup> Claude Charles DE PEYSSONEL, *Traité sur le Commerce de la Mer Noire*, vol. 2, Paris, 1787, pp. 320-1. Peyssonel's testimony contradicts the remark of the Russian ambassador, Nikiforov, who mentioned that in 1764 (i.e. only ten years after Peyssonel's visit) Kırım Geray khan forced the local Jews (i.e. the Karaites) to take part in the construction works for the palace in Ashlama dere without payment ("Donesenie rossiiskogo rezidenta pri krymskom khane Nikiforova," *Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, vol. 1, 1844, pp. 376-7).

<sup>46</sup> V.D. SMIRNOV, "Tataro-Khanskije yarlyki iz kollektzii TUAK," in *Izvestiia Tavricheskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, 1918, pp. 9-10; István VÁSÁRY, "A Contract of the Crimean Khan Mängli Giräy and the Inhabitants of Qırq-Yer from 1478/79," in *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 26, 1982, pp. 289-300.

<sup>47</sup> FIRKOVICH, *Sbornik*, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-105.

<sup>48</sup> "The gates should be shut and... should not be open till after the Sabbath" (Nehemiah, xiii, 19).

<sup>49</sup> HENDERSON, *Researches*, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

Muslims].”<sup>50</sup> Although in some countries local Muslim authorities issued orders which did not allow *dhimmi*s to own slaves,<sup>51</sup> the Karaite and Rabbanite Jews of the Kefe province and Crimean Khanate (and the Ottoman Empire in general) were allowed to possess slaves, provided that the slaves were not Muslims.<sup>52</sup>

One fascinating legal case demonstrates that the Crimean Jews could even punish a Muslim with death if the guilt of this Muslim was proven in court. In 1767 or 1768, during the first rule of the Khan Maksud Geray, a slave killed a Crimean Jewish slave-owner in his own vineyard. Before to be taken to the court, the slave converted to Islam hoping to get pardon. The Khan, nevertheless, said: “I would deliver my brother to him if he was guilty.” Having been found guilty, the murderer was sentenced to death and delivered into the hands of the Jewish community. Nevertheless, a serious obstacle appeared: the Jews, who were not allowed to shed human blood, could not chop off the culprit’s head. Therefore, Maksud Geray allowed the Jewish community to use Old Testament precepts, and the culprit was stoned to death.<sup>53</sup>

Many scholars contend that, from the end of the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, relations between the *dhimmi*s and the Ottomans started to deteriorate.<sup>54</sup> These tendencies were reflected in the Crimea as well, at least from the reign of the eighteenth-century khan Kırım Geray, whose name had already been mentioned above. Toward the second half of the eighteenth century, the Khans tried to exact enormous payments from the Karaites, in addition to the *cizya* and *harac / kharadj*. For example, in 1764, Kırım Geray extorted from the Jews (i.e. the Karaites of Çufut Kale) “considerable sums” of money and made them work free for the construction of the palace in Aşlama dere.<sup>55</sup> Peter Simon Pallas mentioned that in order to get from the Karaites monetary contributions, the Crimean Khans used to threaten them with the extirpation of the trees growing in the valley of Jehosaphath.<sup>56</sup>

The Karaite chronicler Azariah ben Eliah described tensions between the Karaites and Crimean Tatars, and the oppressions that the Karaites suffered during the last years before the Russian annexation of the Crimea. In 1777, the Karaites were forced to pay an enormous sum of money under the pretext that they allegedly found and concealed a certain vessel containing a golden hoard. This, however, was not the end of the plight of the community. The same year the Karaites suffered greatly during the

<sup>50</sup> LEWIS, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>51</sup> LEWIS, *Jews of Islam*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8; YAŞA, *Bahçesaray (1650-75)*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>52</sup> For more details, see Mikhail KIZILOV, “Slaves, Money Lenders, and Prisoner Guards: The Jews and the Trade in Slaves and Captives in the Crimean Khanate,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 58, issue 2, 2007, pp. 189-210; *idem*, “Slave Trade in the Early Modern Crimea from the Perspective of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources,” in *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 11, issue 1-2, 2007, pp. 1-31.

<sup>53</sup> François DE TOTT, *Memoirs of Baron de Tott, Including the State of the Turkish Empire and the Crimea, during the Late War with Russia*, transl. from French, vol. 1, pt. 2, London, 1785, pp. 95-6.

<sup>54</sup> Norman STILLMAN, *Jews of Arab Lands*, Philadelphia, Jewish Society of America, 1979, pp. 91-3.

<sup>55</sup> “Donesenie rossiiskogo rezidenta,” *op. cit.*, pp. 376-7.

<sup>56</sup> PALLAS, *Bemerkungen*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

internal military conflict between Devlet and Şahin Geray. During this conflict the Tatars, who attacked the village of Büyük Özen Baş, “caught several Karaites, including women and children, torturing them with various tortures, demanding the issuance of gold and silver and showing those houses where the prey was.” Subsequently, they attacked the village of Küçük Özen Baş. According to Azariah’s chronicle, several dozen Karaites were killed as a result of the attack, and the rest were forced to leave their property and flee to Çufut Kale.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, two more Karaites were hanged by the khan in Gözleve and Bahçesaray on the denunciation of the local Armenians.<sup>58</sup>

A late Karaite legend testifies that by the eighteenth century the relations between the Karaite community of Kefe and the local Ottoman administration also became quite tense. According to this legend, Ahmet *paşa* (the head of the Kefe province) demanded that the Karaites weave a huge amount of expensive yarn for him or, instead, give a boy from each Karaite family to be recruited to the janissaries. It seemed that nothing could save the Karaites from the merciless hand of the ruler. However, Ahmet *paşa* soon drowned in the Black Sea during the boat trip in the vicinity of Kefe. As a result, the community was saved. From that moment on, in memory of this miraculous salvation, the Karaites of Kefe have arranged a special holiday called *Ağa dumpa* (“the ruler fell through” or “turned over”) or *gop-gop-Ağa*. This legend may well be a reflection of real historical events, considering that the confiscation of children for subsequent education as janissaries was normal practice in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>59</sup>

## Muslims and Rabbanite Jews

The relations between the Crimean Muslim authorities and the local Rabbanite Jews were highly similar to those that were formed between the Muslims and the Crimean Karaites. On the one hand, the Crimean Rabbanites enjoyed a number of privileges. For example, they were allowed to possess slaves and were appointed on important positions in the Crimean Khanate and Kefe province. In 1597 and 1742 the Rabbanites of the town of Karasubazar (located in the Crimean Khanate; today’s Belogorsk) received from the Crimean Khans *yarlıks* (charters) which prohibited the local Tatar officials to exact additional taxes from them, to slaughter their sheep, take horses, and stay overnight in their houses. The text of these charters is highly similar to those that

<sup>57</sup> Golda AKHIEZER, *Zavoevanie Kryma Rossiiskoi imperiei glazami karaimskikh khronistov*, Jerusalem-Moscow, 2015, pp. 146-7.

<sup>58</sup> AKHIEZER, *Zavoevanie*, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>59</sup> It is still celebrated by the Feodosia (Kefe / Caffa) Karaite community on the first of Adar; on that day a special sweet cake made from sugar and flour and called *stupech* is eaten. One may notice the typological similarity between this Karaite holiday and the biblical holiday of Purim. For the full text of the legend, see Isaac SINANI, *Istoriia vozniknoveniia i razvitiia karaimizma*, Simferopol, 1888, pp. 78-81; Viacheslav EL’IASHEVICH, “Veselyi prazdnik Aga Dumpa. Ob odnoi samobytnoi traditsii feodosiiskikh karaimov,” in Viacheslav ELIASHEVICH and Mikhail KIZILOV, ed., *Karaimy Feodosii. Istoriia – Religiiia – Kul’tura*, Simferopol-Theodosia, Tavrida, 2018, pp. 89-98.

were given to the Karaite community about the same time.<sup>60</sup> In 1684 the *emin* and officers of Karasubazar received a document from the Khan prohibiting them to insult and oppress the local Rabbanite Jews.<sup>61</sup>

It is also known that several local Rabbanites played an important role in the late medieval and early modern Crimea. A merchant from Kefe, Hoca Bikeş Gökğöz (in Russian sources *Hozia Kokoz*), who was, perhaps, the most influential medieval Crimean Jew, had special dealings with the Russian Tsar Ivan III concerning redemption of the Russian prisoners in the 1470s. In spite of the fact that the Russian merchants, who had been captured by the Şirin bey Mamak, were very grateful to Hoca and even donated him some money, the Jewish merchant tried to get additional money and cheat the Russian tsar. Nevertheless, he certainly played a crucial role in the release of these captives.<sup>62</sup> The last reference to this interesting person dates back to 1487–90.<sup>63</sup> Highly interesting is the destiny of another Jewish merchant, Meir Ashkenazi (d. in the second half of the sixteenth century), who was born in Poland, lived for some time in Ottoman Kefe, and was appointed Tatar ambassador to Poland ca. 1567.<sup>64</sup>

As has been shown above, for some reason, the Tatar administration did not allow the Karaites of Çufut Kale to stay overnight in the capital city of Bahçesaray. It seems, however, that individual families of the Rabbanite Jews were permitted to live in this city. This is testified by two marriages, which were concluded by the Rabbanite Jews in Bahçesaray in 1699 and 1774. In my opinion, the families of the people mentioned in these two documents were most likely allowed to live in Bahçesaray.<sup>65</sup> Thus, in this respect the Tatar legislation regarding the Rabbanites was more advantageous than that with regard to the Karaites.

On the other hand, there is evidence that the Crimean Rabbanite Jews often suffered from injustice of the Ottoman and Tatar administration and limitation imposed on

<sup>60</sup> Isaac KAIA, "Khanskie iarlyki, dannye krymchakam," in *Evreiskaia starina*, vol. 7, issue 1, 1914, pp. 102-3.

<sup>61</sup> KAVAK, "XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Kırım Hanlığı'nda Gayr-i Müslimler Yerı," *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii Moskovskogo gosudarstva s Krymskoyu i Nogaiskoyu ordami i s Turtsiei*, vol. 1: *S 1474 po 1505 god*, in *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 41, 1884, p. 8. Hoca Bikiş / Bikeş, a Jew, son of Gökğöz, an influential merchant in Kefe (also called "Bikiş son of Gökğöz"), is mentioned in the Caffa register of 1487 (Halil İNALCIK, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea*, vol. 1: *The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487-90*, Harvard, 1996, p. 74, document A58). Previous scholars could not identify the proper name of this interesting person and called him according to a corrupt Russian spelling "Hozia Kokos." Cf. VI. ОГОРОДНИКОВ, "Ivan III i zarubezhnye evrei," in *Sbornik statei v chest' Dmitriia Alexandrovicha Korsakova*, Kazan', 1913, pp. 57-63; *Regesty i nadvpisi. Svod materialov dlia istorii evreev v Rossii*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg, 1899, pp. 77-9; Yulii GESSEN, *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rosii*, vol. 1, Petrograd, 1916, pp. 23-4.

<sup>63</sup> İNALCIK, *Sources and Studies*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Maurycy HORN, "Udział Żydów w kontaktach dyplomatycznych i handlowych Polski i Litwy z zagranicą w XV-XVII w.," in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, vol. 3-4, 1990, p. 7; cf. Igor' ACHKINAZI, *Krymchaki*, Simferopol, 2000, p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Four persons with Ashkenazic names were mentioned in these two *ketubbot* as those who are about to get married and nine as witnesses (OR RNB, F. 946, Heb. I, doc III 17 (Cr. 15) (marriage contract concluded in Bahçesaray in 1699 between Abraham ben Yehuda Ashkenazi and Sarah bat Moshe Ashkenazi); F. 946, Heb. I, doc III 27 (Cr. 23) fol. 2v (marriage contract concluded in Bahçesaray in 1774 between Ber ben Aharon and Simha bat Mordechai Meir).

*dhimmis*. In the nineteenth century, the Rabbanites of Karasubazar informed Petr Lakub that during the Tatar times, when the streets of the town had been covered with mud because of inclement weather, the local Jews were supposed to carry Tatars on their shoulders so that the latter would not get dirty and wet. The Jews who refused to do so would be thrown on the ground and used as “live bridges” which could be used to reach a dry place.<sup>66</sup> This interesting information should be taken with a grain of salt: for understandable reasons, the nineteenth-century Crimean Karaites and Rabbanites often exaggerated to Russian audience the villainy and meanness of the Muslim administration.

Episodes of 1697 and 1705, which were described by the chronicler David ben Eliezer Lehno, can be used as picturesque illustrations to the problem of Tatar-Jewish relations in Crimea. In 1697, Muslims of Karasubazar informed khan Selim Geray that the Rabbanites and Christians of the town violated one of the decrees of the Caliph ‘Umar by expanding buildings of two churches and a synagogue. This was reported to the khan who ordered this problem to be solved. As a result, both churches were destroyed. The Rabbanites, however, realizing that a similar punishment would be soon applied towards their prayer house, decided to partially destroy the roof of the building. The Khan was pleased with the obedience of the Jews and allowed them to continue using the synagogue. These events happened during the fast of Esther, which the local Jews interpreted as a deliverance from the danger similar to the events described in the book of Esther.<sup>67</sup>

The next attempt to destroy the Karasubazar synagogue was undertaken in 1705 by *sheikh* Khamid Efendi. The synagogue was saved from destruction thanks to the intervention of important members of the community, Matatyahu Mando and the physician Chaim Immanuel Grasini, who applied to the Tatar administration for help. David Lehno subsequently wrote an excited and grateful hymn in honor of the salvation of the synagogue.<sup>68</sup> However, the same year the Rabbanites of Karasubazar wrote a letter to Moshe Sinani, the head of the Karaite community of Çufut Kale, asking him to help to rebuild two synagogues partially destroyed by *zarim* (lit. “aliens, strangers”; certainly, here this term was used to designate Tatar authorities) in the port of Gözleve on the Crimea’s western shore. It appears from the text of the letter that the Rabbanites had previously received some money from the Karaites to rebuild their synagogues. Although the answer of the Karaite community is not preserved, it seems that the conflict between the Rabbanites and the Muslim administration of the city was settled.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Petr LIAKUB, “Vnutrennii i obshchestvennyi byt krymchakov,” in *Golos*, issue 42, 11.02.1866.

<sup>67</sup> Avraam HARKAVY, “Radostnyi post Esfiri v Karasu-Bazare,” in *Russkij evrei*, issue 9, 1881, p. 338.

<sup>68</sup> David LEHNO, “Devar sefataim,” transl. I. FINKEL, *Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, vol. 2, 1848, p. 696.

<sup>69</sup> OR RNB, F. 946, Heb. I. Doc. I 33 (Cr 16). The letter was composed by David Ben Eliezer Lehno; it was signed by Isaac Ashkenazi, Abraham ben Matatyahu Mando, Yaakov ben Menachem Mando, Haim ben Elia Bakshi, Moses



As has been mentioned above, both the Crimean Karaites and Rabbanites wore the traditional dress which was almost identical with that of the Crimean Tatars. This is why, in order to make the Jews easily recognized, local Tatar authorities had to introduce distinguishing signs, which would clearly point out non-Muslims. The seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler, Evliya Çelebi, noted that the local Tatars and *re'âyâ* (i.e. Greeks, Armenians and Karaite Jews) wore hats called *şıpirtma* (*şepertma*). In order to be distinguished from the Tatars, the Karaites of Karasubazar had to wear a piece of yellow fabric sewn to their hats.<sup>70</sup> There is no doubt, however, that there was no Karaite population in Karasubazar at that time: the first Karaite settlers appeared there only at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, there was a large Rabbanite community in Karasubazar. Thus, one can conclude that the Ottoman traveller's remark should be understood as a reference to the dress of the local Rabbanites.

However, there was a different problem: how to distinguish non-Muslims in a public bath (*hammam*) where differences in costume do not matter? According to Evliya Çelebi, in Karasubazar the problem was solved in the following way: local *dhimmis* (Jews, Greeks and Armenians) were not allowed to wear special wooden shoes in the baths and were ordered to bind small bells to their ankles when visiting the public baths. The sound of bells would immediately warn a Muslim about the approach of a Jew; furthermore, when in a public bath, the Jews had to use a special separate room for bathing.<sup>72</sup> In other parts of the Ottoman Empire, when attending public baths, *dhimmis* were supposed to wear distinguishing signs suspended from cords around their necks, so that they might not be mistaken for Muslims when disrobed.

## Economic relations between Crimean Jews and Muslims

There is no doubt that the Crimean Jews were actively involved in financial matters of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman province of Kefe. Some Jews provided financial assistance to the highest Muslim authorities of the area. For example, according to Russian sources, in 1644 a certain "Jew Bereka" (undoubtedly, this is a corruption of the Karaite name *Berakhah*) lent substantial sums of money to *kalga* and *nureddin* who were important Khan's officials.<sup>73</sup> Not only were Karaites often

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ben Shabbetai Rikomi, and Matatyahu ben Yosef Mando (the latter took an active part in the successful resolution of the conflict with Muslims in Karasubazar in 1705).

<sup>70</sup> ÇELEBI, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>71</sup> I express my gratitude to Viacheslav-Iosif Eliashevich for this insightful information. Cf. Viacheslav ELIASHEVICH, "Istoriia karaimskogo molitvennogo doma (kenasy) Karasubazara", in *Izvestiia dukhovnogo upravleniia karaimov Respubliki Krym*, issue 22 (33), 2017, pp. 19–25; *idem*, "Iz istorii usad'by Simkhi Solomonovicha Bobovicha Gan Yafe v Karasubazare," in *Materialy XX Mezhdunarodnoi ezhegodnoi konferentsii po iudaike*, Moscow, Sefer, 2016, pp. 265–85.

<sup>72</sup> ÇELEBI, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>73</sup> NOVOSELSKII, *Bor'ba*, op. cit., p. 333.

appointed financial advisers and masters of the mint (see above), they also carried out financial transactions with Muslims on a daily basis. *Sicils* are full of descriptions of financial dealings between Crimean Jews and Muslims. Below we would like to analyze several most important and fascinating cases of this type that are documented in the seventeenth-century Crimean court registers.

There is no doubt that Jews often lent money to Crimean Tatars living in Bahçesaray and Karasubazar area. In case of a sudden death of a Muslim debtor, his debt was supposed to be paid by his/her heirs or relatives. One interesting case shows how this was done: the overall debt of the deceased Latif Çelebi to a certain unnamed Jew was thirty *kuruş* (a large coin equal to 120 *akçe*). It consisted not only of money, but also of three calves, two cows, one three-year-old calf, and a Damascus sword. This sum was paid back to this Jew by Latif Çelebi's relatives.<sup>74</sup> This rule functioned also in the opposite direction: if a Jew had borrowed money from a Muslim, who subsequently died, he was supposed to pay the debt to the relatives of the deceased. The Karaite Ilya, son of Kıskaçı, had a very substantial debt of 1,100 *kuruş* to Ayşe Hatun. After the latter's death, he was supposed to pay this sum back to her son, Mehmed Bek, son of Ali.<sup>75</sup>

The Jews could borrow money from the Muslims without any religious or legal restrictions. For example, in 1614 Reziye Hatun, daughter of Hacı Mehmed from Gözleve, stated that she had lent 3,000 Ottoman *akçe* (small silver coin) to the Jew Avraham, son of Yaku (i.e. Abraham ben Jacob) of Kale<sup>76</sup>; he, in return, had been supposed to provide her carpets made of thick wool.<sup>77</sup> Even religious Muslim authorities could be engaged in dealing with the Jews: Ali, *muezzin* in the Beyiğ mosque, who was "from the inhabitants of the protected city of Gözleve," stated in the court that he gave to a Jew named Abraham, son of Baba (apparently a Karaite), ten *akça* expecting to get ten percent interest from the latter. Two years later, however, the Karaite gave back neither interest nor the money itself.<sup>78</sup>

The Jews were allowed to possess lands and gardens and sell them to Muslims. In 1667, the Jew Mordecai, son of Isaac, sold to Mustafa efendi, son of Mevlud, his orchard located near the Belbek river in the vicinity of the stone bridge.<sup>79</sup> There is a similar case concerning the sale of a garden in the valley of the Belbek river by the Jew Konak Moşi, son of Simcha, to el-Hac Abd el-Baki, son of Hızır Çelebi.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowa," *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>75</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowa," *op. cit.*, p. 120. Stefaniak-Rak read this Karaite's name as Kesicki, which does not seem to be correct.

<sup>76</sup> This means that he was Karaite.

<sup>77</sup> MS LMAB, F. 143, call no. 1177, fols. 2v-3r. This call number contains twentieth-century copies of several legal cases, apparently copied from some hitherto unidentified *sicil* records by the Karaite scholar and religious leader, Seraya Shapshal (1873-961) and his assistants.

<sup>78</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie," *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>79</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie," *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>80</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowa," *op. cit.*, p. 120.

Crimean Jews (especially Karaites) were actively engaged in the trade of slaves and prisoners of war and also used slaves for their domestic needs.<sup>81</sup> Jews could pay ransom fees for Muslims who happened to be caught by Christians during military campaigns. Thus, for example, in 1614, Abraham ben Berakhah (apparently, a Karaite) paid a ransom of 120 florins for a Nogay, Mamay bin Mehmed. The latter was supposed to pay this money back to him and agreed to do so in the court.<sup>82</sup> Marcin Broniewski (1578) mentioned that the ambassadors from Christian countries were usually trying to bribe Jews or Tatars in order to ransom Christian captives for a lower price than that which would be offered to them in case of a trade directly with Tatar officials.<sup>83</sup>

It is highly interesting that quite often, instead of solving their financial and legal problems in the Jewish *beit din*, Jews turned to the sharia court of justice in Bahçesaray. For example, two Karaite inhabitants of Çufut Kale, Eliyahu ben Mordecai and Baba ben Solomon, turned to Muslim court to solve their conflict regarding the sale of the land and garden in Ak Yar.<sup>84</sup> Was it done because the decisions of the Muslim court were considered to be legally more binding than those of Karaite *beit din*? The question remains open.

Jews and Muslims could lend each other goods to be sold. In 1608 Cafer Paşa ibn-i Abdullah Er-racil stated that he had given to the Jew Muşa (Moses) four sable furs; the latter negated this claim and said that he had received only two furs.<sup>85</sup> The Karaite Ezra veled-i Braha (i.e. Ezra ben Berakhah) gave to Lâle Fatma hatun ibnet-i Abdullah two expensive finger rings, one with rubies, the other with turquoise. Lâle Fatma's daughters broke the rings: this fact was confirmed by Lâle Fatma in the court. Nevertheless, Ezra ben Berakhah for some reason refused to take oath in the court; as a result, he lost the case.<sup>86</sup>

Jews could be keepers of the property belonging to Muslims. Thus, in the seventeenth century, Halil bin Ağış Sofu transferred his male slave to Şumail veledi Danyel (i.e. Samuel ben Daniel) to be temporarily kept by the latter. At the same time, this slave remained the property of Halil bin Ağış Sofu. However, Samuel ben Daniel claimed that "during the night we slept in a house and he [the slave] disappeared." This fact was registered by the court after Samuel ben Daniel took an oath on the Torah. Apparently, he was not forced to reimburse the price of the slave to his owner.<sup>87</sup> This

<sup>81</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Księga sądowa," *op. cit.*, pp. 121–2; YAŞA, *Bahçesaray (1650–75)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–82, 187.

<sup>82</sup> MS LMAB, F. 143, call no. 1177, fols. 3v–4r.

<sup>83</sup> Martinus BRONIOVIUS, *Tartariae Descriptio*, Colonia, 1595, pp. 21–2; cf. Martin BRONIEVSKII, "Opisanie Kryma," transl. I.G. SHERSHENEVICH, comm. N.N. MURZAKEVICH, *Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, vol. 6, 1867, pp. 363–4.

<sup>84</sup> STEFANIAK-RAK, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie," *op. cit.*, p. 72. *Nota bene*, this is the first evidence to the presence of the Karaites in this Crimean settlement, located in the territory of modern Sevastopol.

<sup>85</sup> RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–1.

<sup>86</sup> RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi*, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>87</sup> MS LMAB, F. 143, call no. 1177, fol. 4. Unfortunately, the document was undated, but one may suppose that this event took place in the seventeenth century.

case is extremely interesting because it specifically states that, although the court itself was Muslim, the Jews were allowed to take their oaths on the Torah. In other court cases, however, it seems that they were forced to take an Islamic oath in the name of Allah<sup>88</sup> which certainly sounds rather strange when taking into account the fact that the Jews were not Muslims.

On the whole, one can come to the conclusion that, although the Jews who appeared in the Muslim court in the Crimea obviously did not profess Islam, the courts remained rather unbiased and objective: a legal case could be solved both in favour or against a Muslim or a Jew irrespective of their religious affiliation.

## The question of conversion

The conversion of Jews to Islam was certainly permitted in the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate. Although we do not know exactly how the procedure of conversion looked like, François Dalerac's information that the Jews were supposed first to convert to Christianity and only then embrace Islam seems to be fanciful and not related to a real situation.<sup>89</sup>

Although there are only a few sources about such Crimean Jewish converts, one can safely claim that there were two types of conversions: voluntary and forcible ones. The converts were supposed to receive a new, Muslim name, often followed by the patronymic "son of Abdullah" (the name Abdullah means "slave/servant of God" in Arabic). They usually sold their immovable property and moved to the quarters inhabited by Muslim population. This can be clearly seen in the case of a Karaite from Çufut Kale, who came to Bahçesaray court in 1660 declaring that he became a Muslim with the name of Receb, son of Abdullah. His son Ilya (Eliyahu), nevertheless, remained Karaite; he purchased his father's house and other properties in Çufut Kale.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to voluntary conversions to Islam, there certainly were cases made by force. In the eighteenth century Kırım Geray khan (ruled from 1758–64, 1768–9) imprisoned for three months the administrator of the khan mint, Samuel Ağa (for more information about him, see above). In addition, the khan tried to convert the Karaite to Islam. According to a Karaite legend, appreciating the firmness of the Karaite in his faith, the Khan awarded him with honorable clothes and retained him in the position

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<sup>88</sup> E.g. STEFANIAK-RAK, "Karaimi w szariackim sądzie," *op. cit.*, p. 72; RUSTEMOV, *Kadiaskerskie knigi, op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>89</sup> François DALERAC, *Les Anecdotes de Pologne, ou memoires secrets du Regne de Jean Sobieski III. du Nom*, vol. 1, Amsterdam, 1699, p. 307.

<sup>90</sup> YAŞA, "Did Kirazuy Have to Divorce Her Non-Muslim Husband?" *op. cit.*, p. 161.

of the manager of the mint.<sup>91</sup> The same Kırım Geray ordered that the young Karaite dancer, Joseph Sirakçı, be forcibly converted to Islam.<sup>92</sup>

Were there any cases of Muslims' conversion to Judaism? On the one hand, such a change of faith was supposed to be punished by the Muslim law with death penalty. On the other hand, theoretically, such secret conversions could take place. Unfortunately, one does not have exact data about this issue. To give an example, there is a seventeenth-century sharia record mentioning a certain *Yahudi* with the name "Teleş Dede bin Mehmed". Such a name is highly unusual for Crimean Jews of that time. This is why Mehmet Caner Çavuş, who published a full text of this sharia record, put forth a suggestion that this Teleş Dede bin Mehmed was in fact a Turk, who converted to a Karaite or Rabbanite version of Judaism.<sup>93</sup> Although this hypothesis sounds highly tempting, one cannot be sure that here one indeed deals with the case of a Muslim's conversion to Judaism.

There is a reference to a certain Leah of Constantinople, who got married to the Karaite Abraham of Mangup in 1654. Prior to the marriage she underwent a process of conversion: the documents call her *ha-giyyoret* (Heb. "a converted one"). However, additional information that she had *ktav ha-shihrur ve-ha-hofesh* (Heb. "a writ of liberation and freedom") tells us that she had been a slave. The fact that a Muslim normally was not supposed to be enslaved, makes much plausible a suggestion that this Leah had been originally Christian or Rabbanite, and then converted to Karaism.<sup>94</sup>

To sum up, at the moment we have at our disposal only a few documented cases of Jews' conversion to Islam in the early modern Crimea and not a single reliable source telling us about a Muslim's conversion to Judaism.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the sources demonstrates that, in general, the status of the Crimean Jews was similar to that of their brethren in all other regions of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, the legal status and relations between Crimean Jews and Muslims certainly had its own specific features: certain new restrictions were imposed upon the Crimean Jews; some traditional ones were softened. Moreover, they often received special privileges and were exempted from many taxes imposed on other *ahl al-dhimma*.

<sup>91</sup> OR RNB, F. 946, Evr. I Doc. I 54; *ibid.*, Doc. I 55-7 (Doc. 40).

<sup>92</sup> MANN, *Texts*, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

<sup>93</sup> ÇAVUŞ, "67 A 90 Numaralı 1077-80 (1666-70) Kırım Kadiasker Defterine," *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3; for the full text of this record, see *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 132, Ek-1.

<sup>94</sup> Viacheslav EL'IASHEVICH, "Pinkas Medinat Kefe kak novyi istochnik po istorii karaimov Feodosii perioda Osmanskoi imperii i Krymskogo khanstva," in Viacheslav ELIASHEVICH and Mikhail KIZILOV, ed., *Karaimy Feodosii. Istoriiia - Religiiia - Kul'tura*, Simferopol-Theodosia, Tavrida, 2018, p. 82.

As well as the Ottoman Jews, those of the Crimea were allowed to carry out financial dealings with Muslims, possess lands and gardens. They also traded in slaves, possessed them and used slave labour. Crimean Jews, both Karaite and Rabbanite alike, were important merchants and were often appointed at such offices as supervisors of the khan's mint, treasurers, heads of custom offices, and even fulfilled functions of the castellan of the Ottoman fortress of Mangup. They wore dress similar to that of their Muslim neighbours and spoke dialects of the Ottoman Turkish (in the Kefe province) and Crimean Tatar languages (in the Crimean Khanate). The Crimean Jews were allowed to bring their cases to the local sharia courts in Bahçesaray and Karasubazar where they normally received unbiased and objective treatment irrespective of the fact that they were non-Muslims. Furthermore, even though sharia courts were Muslim, Jews were allowed to take an oath on the Torah there. Rabbanite and, especially, Karaite Jews of the Crimea received from the khans exemptions from a number of burdensome public duties such as public works aimed at the renovation of the khans' palace, mosques, and fountains.

On the other hand, one should not overestimate the harmony of the relations between Crimean Jews and Muslims, especially in the eighteenth century when the relations between the *dhimmis* and the Ottomans started to deteriorate practically everywhere in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>95</sup> In the eighteenth century, local Jews were sometimes maltreated both by the Ottoman and Khans' administration. Attempts to destroy Rabbanite synagogues in Karasubazar and Gözleve at the beginning of the eighteenth century are highly significant in this respect. In 1777, during the internal political turmoil related to the enthronization of the khan Shahin Geray (ruled 1777-82; 1782-3), some Karaites were deprived of their property or even killed in several Crimean localities.

In 1783 Crimea was annexed by the Russian Empire. In accordance with the laws of the new regime, all Muslim restrictions were abolished, and Crimean Jews were allowed to settle throughout the whole Russian Empire. Soon small Karaite colonies were to be found almost in every large trade city of Russia, especially in Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Warsaw, Wilno, Nikolaev, and many others. The Turkic-speaking Crimean Rabbanites, however, for the most part remained in Crimea. In the 1840s, in order to be differentiated from the European (Ashkenazic) Jews of the Russian Empire, they began to be called *krymchaki* in Russian, *Qrimchakim* in Hebrew, and *Kırımçahlar / Kırımçahlar* in Crimean Tatar. In spite of the growing Russification, both the Crimean Rabbanites and Karaites continued actively using their Turkic languages until the mid-twentieth century.

At the moment of writing (2021), there are only about 200 Krymchaks and 350 Karaites living in the Crimea.

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<sup>95</sup> STILLMAN, *Jews of Arab Lands*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-3.



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# Perspectives sur l'histoire du karaïsme

## *Perspectives on the History of Karaism*

Guillaume Dye (dir. / Ed.)

Le karaïsme est un mouvement religieux juif qui apparaît au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en Iraq et en Palestine, en opposition au judaïsme rabbinique et à la notion de Torah orale. Ce courant important du judaïsme médiéval, présent aussi dans le monde byzantin et plus tard, à l'époque moderne, dans le monde ottoman, en Crimée et en Europe orientale, est un exemple remarquable de la complexité et de la variété du judaïsme.

Depuis trois décennies, le karaïsme est l'objet d'études novatrices qui ont considérablement renouvelé la compréhension de son histoire, mais qui restent mal connues hors du cercle des spécialistes. L'objectif de cet ouvrage est de fournir une dynamique nouvelle aux études karaïtes dans le monde francophone, en faisant dialoguer spécialistes du karaïsme et spécialistes d'autres branches des études juives : un tel dialogue se révèle particulièrement fructueux, non seulement pour analyser les débats, polémiques et développements à l'intérieur même du judaïsme, mais aussi pour comprendre l'inscription des diverses formes de judaïsmes dans leurs contextes sociaux, culturels et religieux.

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Karaism is a Jewish religious movement that emerged in the 9th century in Iraq and Palestine, opposing rabbinic Judaism and the notion of an oral Torah. This important trend of medieval Judaism, which was also found in the Byzantine world, and later, in modern times, in the Ottoman world, in Crimea, and in Eastern Europe, constitutes a remarkable example of the complexity and variety of Judaism.

For the past three decades, Karaism has been the subject of innovative studies that have considerably renewed our understanding of its history. It remains, however, little-known outside a small circle of specialists. The aim of this book is to provide a new dynamic to Karaite studies in the French-speaking world, by bringing together specialists in Karaism and specialists in other fields of Jewish studies: such a dialogue proves particularly fruitful, not only for analysing debates, polemics, and developments within Judaism itself, but also for understanding the inscription of various forms of Judaism in their social, cultural, and religious contexts.

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