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The Commentary on the Story of Hannah (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608)

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Polemical Aspects in an Early Judeo-Persian Bible Exegesis

The Commentary on the Story of Hannah (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608)

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ABSTRACT The article discusses the attitude towards Christians, Muslims, and the “foreign sciences” based on one of the only extant polemical texts written in Early Judeo-Persian—a passage from an unpublished commentary on story of Hannah preserved in the National Library of Russia (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608). In addition, the article attempts to define the relation of this commentary to the broader intellectual environment of the medieval Jewish world. A close examination of this passage reveals a possible connection to Karaite exegetical works written in Judeo-Arabic during the tenth century, particularly those of Yefet ben ‘Eli. Therefore, the article may serve as a case study of intellectual contact and transmission of knowledge between different Jewish groups in the Islamicate world.

KEY WORDS Polemics; Bible exegesis; Karaite; Yefet ben ‘Eli; Early Judeo-Persian; Judeo-Arabic

The Jewish presence in the Iranian world in the first centuries of Islam (up to the Mongol invasion in the early thirteenth century) is well-attested. Various texts by Jews and Muslims alike point to the existence of Jewish communities from Khuzestan in the southwestern corner of present-day Iran to the city of Samarqand in present-day Uzbekistan (see, for example, Gil 2004, 520–532). Yet, most of the textual production of these Jewish communities did not survive. The extant non-documentary texts written in Early Judeo-Persian (henceforth EJP) amount to about a thousand pages of various genres, including liturgy, poetry, medicine, and, most extensively, Bible exegesis. The bulk of Judeo-Persian exegetical texts are preserved

in the Russian National Library (henceforth RNL) and in the British Library (henceforth BL).

Among the manuscripts in the RNL collection, the commentary on Ezekiel (RNL Yevr.-Arab I 1682), the longest EJP text known to us, has been studied the most (Salemman 1900; Shaked 1986; MacKenzie 2003; Gindin 2003; Gindin 2004; Gindin 2008). It has also been recently edited and translated into English (Gindin 2007).¹ The linguistic features of two other manuscripts from the RNL—the commentary on the first weekly portion of the Book of Genesis (RNL Yevr.-Arab I 4605) and a fragment of a commentary on Jeremiah (RNL Yevr.-Arab I 4611)—have also been discussed (Shaked 2003; Shaked 2009). The abovementioned studies have clarified the unique linguistic features of EJP and facilitated a further investigation into various aspects of EJP Bible exegesis.

In this paper, I discuss one aspect of EJP Biblical exegesis, namely the attitude towards Christians, Muslims, and the “foreign sciences” as reflected in a polemical passage from a commentary on the prayer of Ḥannah (RNL Yevr.-Arab I 4608). To the best of my knowledge, this is the only source in the EJP exegetical corpus from both libraries where a direct polemic against these groups is found. By discussing this passage, I will also attempt to situate it in the broader intellectual environment of the medieval Jewish world and to define its connection with the medieval exegetical literature written in Hebrew and in Judeo-Arabic.

1 In this context, see also Paul (2013), a comprehensive study of the grammar of Early Judeo-Persian.

The Early Judeo-Persian Bible Exegesis: Dating and Provenance²

The exegetical corpus from both libraries consists of nine manuscripts (RNL Yevr-Arab. I 1682, 4605–4611, BL Or. 2549–2460) containing commentaries on selected portions of the Pentateuch and of the Prophets. The dating of these manuscripts relies heavily on paleography.³ According to George Margoliouth, the two manuscripts from the BL (Or. 2549–2460) were copied by Rabbanites during the sixteenth century or even later (Margoliouth 1899, 184–185). However, my research into the manuscripts in both libraries, as well as their paleographical examination (Edna Engel, pers. comm.), suggests that they were copied during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with the exception of RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4606, which was authored/copied during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The orthographical, morphological, and syntactical features of the BL manuscripts are shared by other pre-Mongol Judeo-Persian texts, as identified by a number of scholars (Gindin 2004; Shaked 2009; Paul 2013). Moreover, my research shows that the linguistic features and the handwritings of the BL manuscripts are similar, if not identical, to those of manuscripts in the RNL. Based on their content, it is evident that some of the manuscripts in both libraries belong to the same codex. For example, RNL Yevr.-Arab I 4609, which contains a commentary on 2 Sam. 6, is the direct continuation of BL Or. 2460. In addition, the missing text in the

2 This section is a general survey of my initial findings regarding the EJP manuscripts from the BL and the RNL. I am currently studying these manuscripts as part of my Ph.D. dissertation on Early Judeo-Persian Bible exegesis and its connections with Karaite and Rabbanite exegetical literature in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic from the ninth to eleventh centuries.

3 A thorough paleographical study of the manuscripts written in Early Judeo-Persian is currently being conducted by Dr. Edna Engel (The National Library of Israel).

middle of BL Or. 2460 (between folios 18 and 19) can be found within the commentary on the first weekly portion of Genesis in RNL (RNL Yevr.-Arab. 4605, fol. 4). Other manuscripts, however, were apparently grouped together at a certain point in time due to similar physical features and should be treated separately (e.g., the various quires of BL Or. 2459).

The manuscripts must have been copied by the same group of scribes, as the same handwritings reappear in different parts of the corpus. While it is possible that this group of scribes copied works from various sources of no common origin, there is a strong possibility that most of these manuscripts originate from a certain exegetical school that existed among Persian-speaking Jews during the eleventh century.

At this point, we have yet to identify the place of composition or copying of these manuscripts. Although the commentary on 1 Sam. 1:11–2:10 (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608, 1r–6r) contains a colophon, the place of composition or copying mentioned in the colophon is illegible. We do, however, learn that the work is titled *Ošar neḥmad* and that the name of the scribe (who may also be the author) is Geršon ben Yefet the teacher (*melammed*). To the best of my knowledge, the name Geršon ben Yefet is not attested in other sources. The colophon also mentions the name of Geršon's teacher, Ya'aqov ben 'Eli. A certain Ya'aqov ben 'Eli (died before 1211) is mentioned in texts from the Cairo Genizah from the second half of the twelfth century. This Ya'aqov, who is also called *reš be rabanan*, was the pupil of Šamu'el ben 'Eli, the head of the Jewish academy in Baghdad. He was sent by Šamu'el to various Jewish communities to take care of material as well as spiritual matters. At a certain point, Ya'aqov may have emigrated from Baghdad to Fustat (Gil 2004, 480). Whether Geršon's teacher is the same Ya'aqov ben

‘Eli is difficult to ascertain. If the commentary is Karaite, this suggestion appears to be even less likely.⁴

As stated above, a number of EJP manuscripts in the RNL is directly connected to one of the manuscripts found in the BL, namely BL Or. 2460. Therefore, the EJP manuscripts from both libraries were apparently in the same location before they were purchased in the nineteenth century. The most likely source of these manuscripts is the Karaite synagogue Dar Simha in Cairo. The EJP manuscripts in the RNL belong to the first Judeo-Arabic series (RNL Yevr.-Arab I). This series was formerly part of the second Firkovich collection, named after Avraham Firkovich, a Karaite communal leader and scholar who collected an impressive array of manuscripts from different locations during his lifetime. After Firkovich’s death, the second collection was sold to the Public Imperial Library (now the RNL) in 1876 (Sklare 2003, 895). A significant portion of the manuscripts in the second Firkovich collection originate from the Dar Simha synagogue (Elkin and Ben-Sasson 2002, 65–71; Sklare 2003, 895). It seems possible that the EJP manuscripts in this collection were also found there. As for the EJP manuscripts in the BL, they were purchased in 1882 from Wilhelm Moses Shapira together with a large group of manuscripts, most of which are Karaite (Hoerning 1889, v; Sklare 2003, 896, 899–900). It seems that

4 Karaism is a religious movement whose proponents reject the authority of Jewish oral law, which was accepted by the Rabbanites, and claim to adhere to a more scripture-based Judaism. Karaism (or proto-Karaism) emerged during the eighth century in present-day Iran and Iraq. The movement flourished between the late ninth and the eleventh centuries, especially in Jerusalem, where the Karaite community known as ‘the Mourners of Zion’ produced an impressive amount of compositions in an array of subjects, such as Bible exegesis, theology, and Hebrew grammar. For an overview of the history of the Karaite movement in the medieval Islamic world, particularly of the Karaite community of Jerusalem, see Polliack (2003a, 73–252); for a survey of Karaite scholarship and literature, see Polliack (2003a, 255–413).

Shapira also acquired manuscripts from the Dar Simha synagogue (Elkin and Ben-Sasson 2002, 77; Sklare 2003, 896).⁵

The possible origin of these EJP manuscripts in Cairo does not necessarily suggest that they were composed or copied there. These manuscripts may have been brought to Cairo by Jewish immigrants of Persian origin, whose presence in the city is well-attested from the tenth century onwards. Several dozen EJP texts discovered in the Genizah of the Ibn Ezra synagogue indicate this (Shaked 1985, 25–27). Evidence for the activity of (Karaite) Jews of Persian descent in the area between Cairo and Damascus also exists in the manuscripts from the Dar Simha synagogue, since many of them contain family names denoting a Persian origin (Ben-Shammai 2006, 99–101). Furthermore, their possible origin in a Karaite synagogue does not necessarily support the conjecture that the EJP manuscripts are Karaite, as many Rabbanite works or fragments thereof have been found in the Dar Simha synagogue (Ben-Shammai 2010, 46–47).

Several commentaries on selected portions of the Pentateuch are clearly Karaite, as becomes apparent in the commentary on the first weekly portion of the Book of Genesis (Shaked 2003, 202–204) and the commentary on the third weekly portion of the Book of Numbers (BL Or. 2459, 1r–32v). However, the religious affiliation of the commentaries on the sections from the Prophets remains unclear. There are several passages in the texts that may suggest that they are Karaite. For example, both the commentary on Ezekiel (Gindin 2007, vol. 1, 227; trans. vol. 2, 385) and BL Or. 2460 (13r:16)

5 Another possible source of the EJP manuscripts is the Karaite community of the town of Hit in Iraq. Some of Shapira's manuscripts may have come from there (Hoerning 1889, v; Sklare 2003, 896). It is also possible that the Karaite community of Hit sent manuscripts to Firkovich (Elkin and Ben-Sasson 2002, 62–63).

contain the phrase *the shepherds of the Exile* (רועי גלות, *ro'e galut*),⁶ a term which was used by the Karaites when referring to the Rabbanite leadership of the Jewish diaspora (Erder 1998, 65).

Another issue related to the question of the religious affiliation of this exegetical corpus is its polemics against the views of Jewish and non-Jewish groups. As far as I have been able to discern, most of the commentaries contain almost no direct polemical discussions.⁷ Although the author of the commentary on Ezekiel occasionally rejects exegetical explanations concerning a certain word or phrase (Gindin 2000, 43), he rarely refers to matters pertaining to religious thought, such as arguing against the doctrine of prophetic immunity from sin (Gindin 2007, vol. 1, 35; trans. vol. 2, 15-16). In addition, the explanations and views rejected by the author are anonymous (Gindin 2000, 43), making it difficult to trace their sources. One exception is the commentary on the first weekly portion of the Book of Genesis. This commentary includes attacks against the Rabbanites, especially against R. Sa'adya Ga'on (d. 942) and his views on the Jewish calendar (Shaked 2003, 202-204). Except for the Rabbanites, almost no other group is criticized for its doctrines and beliefs. As for

6 In view of the fact that this study is based on texts written in different languages and scripts, I employ different systems of transliteration. The transliteration of Arabic words follows the system of the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES). Transliteration of biblical Hebrew is according to the system of Brill's *Handbook of Jewish Languages*, except that *seghol* and *ḥaṭeph seghol* are transliterated as -e- and -ě-, respectively. Non-biblical Hebrew is transliterated according to the system of Brill's *Handbook of Jewish Languages* for post-biblical Hebrew. See Kahn and Rubin (2016, XVII-XVIII). EJP texts are accompanied by a letter-for-letter transliteration.

7 In general, the amount of extant polemical texts written in EJP is very small. One of the few texts that may be regarded as apologetic is a fragmentary manuscript (BL Or. 8659) discussing the prophethood of Moses and the precepts of the Torah. It was identified as an introduction to a Karaite *sefer mišvot* (see Rosenvasser 1968, 41). For an edition of the text entitled "Early Jewish-Persian Argument", see MacKenzie (1968, 249-269). See also Shaked (1971, 178-180).

Christians and Muslims (commonly referred to as 'Edom and Ishma'el, respectively), they are mentioned throughout the corpus with reference to their fate in the time of salvation. References to their doctrines, beliefs, and attitude towards the Jews in exile are virtually non-existent. It seems that the commentary on the story of Ḥannah is the only text in the corpus openly criticizing the views of Christians and Muslims, as well as those of philosophers and astrologers.

The Commentary on the Story of Ḥannah (RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608, 1r-6r)

The manuscript of the commentary, dated to the second half of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century and authored or copied by Geršon ben Yefet, is not complete and starts in the middle of the discussion of 1 Sam. 1:11. In addition, the first few pages have been badly preserved, making them only partly legible.

Like other EJP commentaries on portions from the Prophets, it is difficult to determine whether this text is Karaite or Rabbanite. There are almost no terms or discussions that might lead to a definitive conclusion. However, the term *maskilim*, which was used extensively in Karaite literature (Wieder 2005, 104-110), does make one appearance. According to the commentator, the phrase *He raises up the poor from the dust*⁸ refers to the Remnant of Israel and to the *maskilim*.⁹ The fact that the term is integrated

8 1 Sam. 2:8: מְקִיִּים מֵעֹפָר דָּל (*mēqīīm mē-‘āpār dāl*). English translations of the biblical text are according to the New Revised Standard Version (henceforth NRSV), if not noted otherwise.

9 RNL Yevr.-Arab I 4608, 5r:9-10: מְקִיִּים מֵעֹפָר דָּל שְׂאֲרֵית וּמְשִׁכִּילִים הַנֹּד (*mqym m'pr dl š'ryt wmškylym hnd*, 'He raises up the poor from the dust', are the *Remnant of Israel* and the

into a non-Hebrew text and not as part of a biblical quote may suggest that the text is Karaite. Furthermore, as will be shown below, the commentator may have known and relied partially on the writings of authors from the tenth century, mainly the Karaite exegete Yefet ben 'Eli, who was a member of the Karaite community of Jerusalem known as the "Mourners of Zion." Yet this does not necessarily mean that the commentator of the discussed treatise was Karaite, as later Rabbanite scholars directly or indirectly also relied on the works of Yefet (see, for example, Polliack and Schlossberg 2009, 97-100).

The extant commentary is divided into twenty-eight units (as the number of the extant verses), each of which consists of several elements. Each unit begins with the first few words of the Hebrew verse, followed by the (partial or full) word-for-word translation of the verse into EJP. This is followed by a separate treatment of each portion of the verse. The commentator first gives the literal-contextual interpretation of the text, followed by an actualizing reading of it, referring to the hardships of the people of the exile (גלותיאן, *glwty'n*) or to the welfare of the kingdoms of 'Edom and Ishma'el.¹⁰ Some units end with a promise of the salvation of Israel or the punishment of the gentiles, or both, supported by various biblical verses.

Not every unit includes all the elements specified above. Some lack, for example, a complete word-for-word translation or a prognostic exegetical explanation referring to the people of the exile or to 'Edom and Ishma'el. However, this structure may be demonstrated in several units, such as that discussing 1 Sam. 1:15 (*But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman*

maškilim).

10 By "actualization", I refer to the tendency to interpret scripture according to contemporary events. For a discussion of the literal-contextual and actualizing approaches in Karaite exegesis, see Polliack (2003b, 372-396).

deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord").¹¹ In this verse, Ḥannah answers the high priest ‘Eli, who rebuked her for being drunk after seeing her praying silently by moving her lips:

But Ḥannah answered. And Ḥannah answered and said: “No, (my) lord, I am a hard-souled woman and I did not drink wine and an intoxicating (drink), and I am pouring out the bitterness of my soul before the Lord.”

Ḥannah answered him when she heard this (‘Eli’s rebuke) and said to him: “No, (my) lord.” She said two things to him: The first—she said: “No, no, O lord, no, I am not drunk.” The second—“I want the happiness that the Israelites [have?], but *I am a hard-souled woman*. [There is] much bitterness and sorrow in my heart, and (as for) myself, *I did not drink wine*

read: *and an intoxicating (drink)*.”¹²

And just as Ḥannah said about herself: “*I am a hard-souled (woman)*,” likewise he said about the people of the exile: *For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man’s youth when she is cast off, says your God* (Is. 54:6). And just as the Lord made Ḥannah happy, likewise the Lord will make the people of the exile happy, as he said: *O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice* etc. (Joel 2:23).

11 *wat-ta’an Ḥannā wa-tōmer lō ’āḏōnī ’iššā qəšaṭ rūaḥ ’ānōkī wə-yayin wə-šēkār lō šāṭīṭī wā-’ešpōk ’eṭ naṗšī liṗnē YHWH*.

12 Graphic signs used in this article: 1) Square brackets indicate lacunas in the manuscript, in which partly legible letters, words, or phrases are suggested. 2) Round brackets indicate complementary suggestions for translation of letters, words, or phrases not written in the original text. 3) Passages written above the line or glosses in the margins of the original manuscript are given in superscript.

And I am pouring out my soul before the Lord. She said: “I am pouring out the bitterness of my soul before the Lord, so he will grant me my will.” Likewise, these people of the exile say: *I pour out my complaint before him* etc. (Ps. 142:3, NRSV 142:2); *These things I remember as I pour out my soul* etc. (Ps. 42:5, NRSV 42:4).¹³

The discussion of this verse closely follows the structure outlined above. It begins with a short quote from the Hebrew verse and its almost word-for-word translation (‘the bitterness of,’ תהלי, *thly*, is an addition by the commentator). The commentator then explains the meaning of Ḥannah’s words: “I am a hard-souled woman and I did not drink wine and an intoxicating (drink).” The next element is the actualization of the biblical text by comparing the people of the exile to Ḥannah. The treatment of the first portion of the verse ends with a statement that God will make the people of the exile rejoice, just as he made Ḥannah. The commentator similarly deals with the second part of the verse: *and I am pouring out my soul before the Lord*. He first paraphrases Ḥannah’s words and then compares the people of the exile to Ḥannah. The two verses quoted here describe the people of the exile’s plea to God. As with the verse said by Ḥannah, they contain verbs from the Semitic root שפך (‘to pour’). However, unlike the discussion of the first portion of the verse, there is no reference here to the time of salvation.

The tendency to actualize the biblical text with or without a reference to time of salvation is quite apparent in this commentary. This could be explained by the fact that the commentator considered Ḥannah’s prayer a prophetic text. That Ḥannah was considered a prophetess is already attested in early Rabbinical works. Ḥannah is one of the seven prophetesses

13 For the EJP text, see Appendix, I.

enumerated in the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli, Megilla, 14a). According to the Aramaic translation of the prophets (Targum Yonatan), Ḥannah prayed in the spirit of prophecy.¹⁴ Jewish medieval commentators also adopted the view of Ḥannah's prayer being prophecy. For example, Yefet ben 'Eli writes that Ḥannah said that her prayer was by the Holy Spirit, and that it was divided into two parts: the first part described the deeds constantly done by God and the second part described God's deeds that he would do for Israel at the time of salvation (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 271).¹⁵ Similarly, R. David Qimḥi (d. 1235) states that most of Ḥannah's prayer is a prophecy concerning the hardships of Israel and their subsequent salvation (Cohen 1993, 11).

The fact that Ḥannah prophesied is clearly stated in a few places in the EJP text. After raising the possibility that 'Eli was still convinced that Ḥannah was intoxicated and that she had denied this only out of fear of him, the commentator explains: "Know that Ḥannah's heart was just and [because of] this He gave her two things: the first—a son; the second—the prophecy of the future."¹⁶ Furthermore, in a partially legible passage discussing 1 Sam. 1:28–2:1, it is written that "The Lord endowed her (i.e., Ḥannah) with the Holy Spirit" (רוח הקודש, *ruah ha-qodeš*).¹⁷ Further on, following the literal translation of 1 Sam. 2:1, the commentator states: "[...] this, from the beginning to the end, all (of it) is future events" (אין סר תא בון המא עתידות) *היסת, 'yn sr t' bwn hm' 'tydwt hyst*; Appendix, II).

14 1 Sam. 2:1: וצליאת חנה ברוח נבואה (*wə-šali'at ḥanā bə-rūah nəḇū'e*).

15 In general, the Holy Spirit, which originates in inspiration (*ilhām*), was considered a form of prophecy by Yefet ben 'Eli. See Ben-Shammai (1977, 269–273; 2015a, 130–135, specifically p. 133, where Ḥannah is mentioned).

16 For the EJP text, see Appendix, III.

17 For the EJP text, see Appendix, II.

Polemics in the EJP Commentary on the Story of Ḥannah

In the commentary on the story of Ḥannah, we find quite a few discussions that are detached from the immediate context of the biblical text and concern the difficult present conditions of Israel in exile or the time of salvation. However, the discussion of the first part of 1 Sam. 2:3 (*Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth*) is unusual.¹⁸ It is aimed against several groups whose arrogance and pride are manifested in their practices, sayings, or beliefs. The commentator starts by giving a literal translation of the first part of the verse mentioned above and then turns to describe these groups in the following manner:

Talk no more. Do not talk anymore so very proudly, so very highly (lit. ‘proud, proud, high, high’), and may abomination not come out of your mouth.

Know that Ḥannah said these things concerning two matters. The first—concerning the astronomers and the philosophers of the world who do not believe in the prophets. And they say: “The creation of the world was thus,” which should be said or written, all of which David abhorred and said: *O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me* (Ps. 131:1). For they say about the sun: “Its size (lit. ‘length’) is this much,” and they say about the moon: “It is larger (lit. ‘longer’) than the earth.” They say about the stars this much and such. And they say many things about

18 אַל תַּרְבוּ וְתִדְבְּרוּ גְבוּהָ גְבוּהָ: יֵצֵא פִּיכֶם מִיִּפְיָם ('*al tarbū tēḏabbērū gəḇōhā gəḇōhā yēsē 'āṭāq mip-pīkem*).

the Lord, who is God, and do not believe in the prophets. And they say other (things) about God that should not be said.

The second matter—she said (it) about the kingdom of 'Edom and Ishma'el. For 'Edom says that Jesus is in heaven, and he says: "As long as the world exists, my kingdom shall exist." As he said: "*Your proud heart has deceived you, you that live in the clefts of the rock, (whose dwelling is in the heights.) You say*" etc. (Obad. 1:3). Ishma'el says worse than this, as he said: "In the prophecy of Isaiah (it is written that) the *pasul* will appear." And he (i.e., Isaiah) says this: "*You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High*" (Is. 14:13-14). And he (i.e., Ishma'el) said many things (of) heresy.

And Asaph said about this: "*They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression*" (Ps. 73:8). And Moses said about them: "*They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast*" (Ps. 94:4).

*Let not arrogance come from [your mouth]. Its interpretation (is) may arrogance not come from your mouth.*¹⁹

The passage above describes three different groups: "the astronomers and philosophers of the world," 'Edom, and Ishma'el. These groups are divided into two sections: those who believe in prophecy and those who deny it. The deniers of prophecy are the astronomers and philosophers of

19 For the EJP text, see Appendix, IV.

the world, whereas those who believe in it are 'Edom and Ishma'el, namely the Christians and the Muslims, respectively.

A similar division in accordance with the belief in prophecy is attested in earlier Jewish texts which were possibly known to our commentator and served as background for his own division. For example, in the thirteenth chapter of his work *'Ishrūn maqāla*, the ninth-century Jewish theologian Dawud b. Marwan al-Muqammas writes that there are two groups of monotheists (*man aqarra bi-l-tawhīd*)—those who deem prophecy necessary and those who deny it. The latter are the *barāhima* (Stroumsa 1989, 254–255).²⁰ Another example is Yefet ben 'Eli's commentary on Psalms, where he distinguishes between Christians and Muslims, on the one hand, and various sects and religions, on the other. In his discussion of Psalms 139:19–22, Yefet writes that verses 19–20 refer to Christians and Muslims, whereas verses 21–22 are directed against those who believe in the eternity of the world (*dahriyya*), pagans, and the *barāhima* who deny (God's) law (*al-shar'*; Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 320–321).

On Astronomers and Philosophers

According to passage IV, “the astronomers and the philosophers of the world” deny the concept of prophecy. The commentator does not state that they deny the existence of God. It is more likely, therefore, that he considers them monotheists. The denial of prophecy is not the sole reason for his criticism of the astronomers and the philosophers. The commentator adds to this a number of forbidden practices, namely saying unworthy

20 For further discussion of the identity of the *barāhima* in Islamic and Jewish traditions, see Stroumsa (1999, 145–162); Crone (2009).

things about the creation of the world and about God, as well as discussing the properties of the celestial bodies. It is possible, therefore, that he refers to scholars who adhere to the writings of the Greek philosophers and deal with the natural sciences.

The commentator does not specify the views of the astronomers and philosophers concerning God and the creation of the world. It is possible that the “unworthy things said of God” are anthropomorphic descriptions. The EJP Bible exegesis seems to reject such descriptions. Thus, for example, in the commentary on Jer. 1:9, the word יד (*yād*, ‘hand’) in the phrase *Then the Lord put out his hand* is rendered by the word ‘prophecy’ (נבואה, *nbw’h*; BL Or. 2460, 1v:17).²¹ A verse from Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:1) is given in the same context: *The hand of the Lord came upon me* (BL Or. 2460, 1v:17–18).²² Interestingly, the translation of this verse in the commentary on Ezekiel is *the prophecy of the Lord was upon me* (Gindin 2007, vol. 2, 418).²³

As for the creation of the world, the commentator may be disputing various views here, such as the belief in the eternity (*dahr*) of the world in contrast to the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. The rejection of the belief in the eternity of the world is attested in the writing of several Rabbanite and Karaite scholars who lived during the tenth century, such as R. Sa’adia Ga’on (Davidson 1987, 95–106), and the Karaites Ya’qūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben ‘Eli (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 174–190). It is plausible to assume that, like these scholars and the author of the commentary on the first weekly portion of Genesis (see, for example, RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4605, 16v:15–17r:3), our author was a supporter of the view of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*.

21 Jer. 1:9: $\text{וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת יָדוֹ}$ (*way-yišlah YHWH ‘et yādō*).

22 Ezek. 37:1: $\text{הָיָתָה עָלַי יַד יְהוָה}$ (*hāyātā ‘ālay yad YHWH*).

23 Gindin (2007, vol. 1, 242): $\text{בִּי בּוֹד אֲבַר מִן נְבוּאָת יְיָ}$ (*by bwd ‘br mn nbw’t y’y*).

At the same time, it is possible that the commentator did not intend to debate with the astronomers and philosophers directly about specific issues, but rather to highlight that it is forbidden to deal with what is beyond the limits of human knowledge. This can be deduced from the fact that in the middle of the discussion, the commentator quotes Ps. 131:1, which conveys the same idea, “O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me”.²⁴ It is worth noting that the same verse is also quoted by Yefet ben ‘Eli while discussing the phrase *for the Lord is a God of knowledge*.²⁵ Yefet cites it to clarify that God disapproves of the discussion of hidden things (*khafiyyāt*) known to Him (but not to human beings).²⁶ As for the interpretation of Ps. 131:1 itself, Yefet identifies the subjects that are beyond human knowledge, the first of which are the wonders of creation. He stresses that this subject has preoccupied the sages of the gentiles (חכמי הגוים, *ḥaḳme ha-goyim*), who speak of the dimensions of the

24 Ps. 131:1: הַנְּהָ לֹא גָבַהּ לִבִּי וְלֹא כִמוּ עֵינַי וְלֹא הִלַּכְתִּי בְגִדְלוֹת וּבְנִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי (YHWH lō gābah libbī wə-lō rāmū ‘ēnay wə-lō hillaḳtī bi-ḡdōlōt u-b-niḡlā’ōt mimmennī).

25 1 Sam. 2:3: הַנְּהָ כִּי אֶל דְּעוֹת הַנְּהָ (kī ‘ēl dē’ōt YHWH).

26 BL Or. 2547, 47v:3-7:

(3) ... ثم قالوا كي ايل ديعو[ت] (4) ‘‘ (1 Sam. 2:3) وفيه قولان الواحد ... والآخر ان الله عارف الخفيات عن الناس فمن تعاطا الكلام (6) عليها فقد تكلم بما ينكره الله عليه وفي مثل ذلك قال داود عليه السلام (7) **ولوا هلاختي بغدولوث وبنيفلاوث ممانى** (Ps. 131:1).

(3) ... *thumma qālū kī ‘ēl dē’ō[ṭ]* (4) **YY’** (1 Sam. 2:3) *wa-fīhi qawlān al-wāḥid ... wa-l-ākhar anna allāh ‘ārif al-khafiyyāt ‘an al-nās fa-man ta’āṭā l-kalām* (6) *‘alayhā fa-qad takallama bi-mā yunkiruhu allāh ‘alayhi wa-fī mithl dhālika qāla dāwūd ‘alayhi al-silm* (7) **wə-lō hillaḳtī bi-ḡdōlōt u-b-niḡlā’ōt mimmennī** (Ps. 131:1)

This manuscript is most likely one of the oldest Karaite manuscripts written in Arabic characters. For its description, see Margoliouth (1899, 207-208); Hoerning (1889, 45-60). For studies concerning Karaite manuscripts of the Bible in Arabic characters, see Hoerning (1889); Khan (1990). For the importance of the manuscripts of Yefet ben ‘Eli’s commentaries written in Arabic characters, see Ben-Shammai (1976).

celestial spheres (*aflāk*), the stars, and the (ends of) the seas and the earth (Vajda 1971, 129, 230; Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 101).

The rejection of the sciences appears to be typical of some Jewish groups in the Iranian world. The tenth-century Karaite scholar Ya‘qūb al-Qirqisānī attacks “those who are said to be Karaites”—some of whom are Persians, such as a group among the Tustarīs—who “find fault with those who engage in intellectual speculation (*naẓar*), i.e. by means of secular (*barrānī*; lit. ‘external, foreign’) sciences, either dialectics or philosophy” (Nemoy 1939, vol. 1, 3-4; transl. Chiesa and Lockwood 1984, 93-94; see also Gil 1981, 61-62; Rustow 2008, 141-142). The rejection of the foreign sciences is also apparent in the writings of the Karaite scholar Daniel al-Qūmiṣī, one of the founders of the Karaite community in Jerusalem, whose name indicates his Iranian origin (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 105 with relevant references).

The condemnation of “foreign sciences” was not exclusive to certain Persian-speaking Jewish circles, whose affiliation with the Karaite movement is questioned by al-Qirqisānī, or to early Karaites who originated in Iran. It also occurs in the works of several tenth-century Jewish scholars—Karaite and Rabbanite alike, such as the Karaite commentators Salmon ben Yeruḥim (Robinson 2012, 127-135) and Yefet ben ‘Eli (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 101-108; Sasson 2016, 108-120), as well as R. Sa‘adia Ga‘on (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 104). The commentator of the EJP text might have drawn on the views reflected in the writings of these scholars for his argument.

Another aspect of our discussion is the association of the denial of prophecy with the advocating of “foreign sciences”. Islamic sources quite often describe the deniers of prophecy as followers of a rationalistic approach who argue for the supremacy and sufficiency of the human intellect. Arguments concerning the human intellect are connected, for

example, to figures such as Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 860 or 912; Stroumsa 1999, 79–81) or Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925 or 935; Stroumsa 1999, 111–112). They are attested in Jewish sources as well. For example, in his commentary on the Book of Proverbs, Yefet ben ‘Eli attributes the title *lešim* (לצים, ‘scoffers’) to those who follow the “foreign sciences”, on the one hand (Prov. 9:13), and to those who reject prophecy, on the other (Prov. 1:22; Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 105–106; Sasson 2016, 110–112).

On ‘Edom

The commentator presents two arguments regarding ‘Edom in order to demonstrate the latter’s pride and arrogance. The first argument, namely that Jesus is in heaven, is theological, and possibly alludes to the belief in the resurrection of Jesus²⁷ or to his divine nature as the Son. The second argument is the perpetual existence of the kingdom of ‘Edom, expressing ‘Edom’s confidence in its political and military superiority. As evidence, the commentator quotes a verse from the prophecy of Obadiah: *Your proud heart has deceived you, you that live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is in the heights. You say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to the ground?”*²⁸

It is no surprise that the commentator chooses to quote Obadiah’s prophecy on ‘Edom, particularly the third verse, in which the latter talks proudly and doubts his future demise. The answer to ‘Edom’s question does not appear in the EJP text. However, the commentator might have trusted the reader to know it and understand the final fate of ‘Edom, as

27 I thank Dennis Halft for drawing my attention to this matter.

28 Obad. 1:3: זָדוֹן לִבְךָ הַשִּׁיאָבְךָ שִׁכְנִי בְּחַגְוִי סִלַּע מְרוֹם שְׁבִיתוֹ אִמְרָ בְּלִבּוֹ מִי יוֹרִידֶנִי אֶרֶץ (zəḏōn libbəkā hiśśī’ekā šōkənī bə-ḥagwē sela’ mərōm šibtō ’ōmēr bə-libbō mī yōriḏēnī ’āreṣ).

it is prophesied by Obadiah: *Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord.*²⁹

The commentator applies the prophecy of Obadiah to both Jesus and 'Edom, assuring the falseness of Christian beliefs and the demise of Christendom. As for Yefet ben 'Eli's commentary on Obadiah, in the discussion of Obad. 1:3, Yefet suggests that the phrase *Your proud heart has deceived you* (לָדוֹן לִבְךָ הַשִּׁיחָךְ; *zəḏōn libbəkā hiśśī'eḵā*) refers to the insolence of 'Edom, who invented the Trinity, attributed a son to God, anthropomorphized God, and claimed that the Torah was abrogated. In addition, 'Edom accused Israel of killing the son of God, and subsequently thought that all of Israel should suffer annihilation (Polliack and Schlossberg 2001, 73–74; Zuran 2012, 145–147). Another reason for 'Edom's arrogance is the fortifications of his land, manifested in the phrase *you that live in the clefts of the rock* (שְׂכְנֵי בְּחַגְוֵי סֶלַע; *šōḵənī bə-ḥaḡwē sela'*). According to Yefet, the phrase *the clefts of the rock* (חַגְוֵי סֶלַע; *ḥaḡwē sela'*) refers to the land of Byzantium, which is like an inaccessibly high mountain (Polliack and Schlossberg 2001, 74; Zuran 2012, 147–148).

Though not as elaborate as Yefet, the commentator of the EJP text adopts a similar approach. 'Edom's sense of pride is manifest in two different ways: his (false) theological doctrines and his sense of confidence due to his geographical location. Unlike Yefet, the commentator does not attack 'Edom for his harsh treatment of Israel based on the accusation that Israel was responsible for the death of Jesus.³⁰

29 Obad. 1:4: אִם תִּגְבִּיחַ כְּנֶשֶׁר וְאִם בֵּין כּוֹכָבִים שִׁים קִנְךָ מִשָּׁם אֲוִרִידְךָ נְאֻם-יְהוָה ('*im taḡbīah kan-nešer wə-'im bēn kōḵābīm śīm qinneḵā miš-šām 'ōrīḏəḵā nə'um YHWH*).

30 See also the discussion of Yefet ben 'Eli's commentary on Ps. 53 (Erder 1997, 43–44).

On Ishma'el

The last group mentioned by the commentator is Ishma'el, who argues that the prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the prophet Muhammad. Due to a lacuna in the text, it is impossible to determine whether the word is רסול (*rasūl*, 'messenger') or פסול (*pasul*, 'unfit, improper'). The word *pasul* is a widely-attested term for the Prophet Muhammad in medieval Jewish polemical writing (see, for example, Ben-Shammai 1984, 14, no. 47).³¹ Furthermore, as in the case of Jesus, who is designated ישו rather than ישוע in this passage, it seems plausible that the commentator (or the copyist) would refer to Muhammad with the derogatory term *pasul*.

Certain biblical verses were interpreted by Muslim authors as predicting the arrival of Muhammad and the rise of Islam. They extensively used the Book of Isaiah as proof (Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, 75–110; Adang 1996, 141–162). The commentator, however, does not discuss those verses from Isaiah that were widely used by Muslim authors; instead, he refutes the Muslim argument by quoting the verses from the same book (Is. 14:13–14) which depict the demise of Hēlēl ben Šāḥar, who was traditionally identified by medieval Jewish commentators as Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,³² and whom the commentator of the EJP text identifies as the kingdom of Ishma'el. This identification is borne out by the following passage:

He brings low, he also exalts (1 Sam. 2:7).³³ The fact that he expelled the Israelites, as he says: *He has thrown down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel* etc. (Lam. 2:1); and that is what the master (*sayyid*,

31 This term also appears in another EJP exegetical text on the Book of Daniel (Shaked 1982, 319).

32 See, for example, R. Sa'adia Ga'on's mention of the verse in Qafih (1976, 30).

33 1 Sam. 2:7: מַשְׁפִּיל אֶף מְרֹמֵם: (*mašpīl 'aḥ mārōmēm*).

Moses) said by the Holy Spirit: *The Lord uprooted them from their land in anger* etc. (Deut. 29:27, NRSV 29:28); and they said in (their) prayer: *Because of your indignation and anger* etc. (Ps. 102:11, NRSV 102:10). And in the end, he will expel the kingdom of Ishma'el, as he said to him: *How you are fallen from heaven, Hēlēl ben Šāḥar!*³⁴ etc. (Is. 14:12).³⁵

In general, throughout the commentary, Ishma'el seems to be identified with Babylon:

*But she who has many children is forlorn.*³⁶ It is the kingdom of 'Edom and Ishma'el, for concerning 'Edom, he said: *And there shall be no survivor of the house of Esau* etc. (Obad. 1:18). And concerning Ishma'el, he said: *and I will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring* etc. (Is. 14:22). Because of this he said *but she who has many children is forlorn.*³⁷

And about the kingdom of Ishma'el, he said: *Come down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter Babylon! Sit on the ground without a throne, daughter Chaldea! For you shall no more be called tender and delicate* (Is. 47:1).³⁸

What is the meaning of saying (lit. 'that he said') *nobles*³⁹ (Ps. 113:8: נְדִיבִים, *nəḏīḇīm*) again? Why was there a need to say *with the nobles of his people*? Answer: There are (times) when he calls the kingdom of Ishma'el *nobles*, as in *the oracle concerning Babylon*, (where) he said: *wave the hand for*

34 NRSV: 'O Day Star, son of Dawn!'

35 For the EJP text, see Appendix, V.

36 1 Sam. 2:5: וְרַבְּבַת בְּנִים אֶמְלֶלָה (*wə-rabbat bānīm 'umlālā*).

37 For the EJP text, see Appendix, VI.

38 For the EJP text, see Appendix, VII.

39 NRSV: 'princes'.

them to enter the gates of the nobles (Is. 13:2). He said: *with the nobles of his people*; He will not seat them, with the kingdom of Ishma'el, but *with the nobles of his people*.⁴⁰

In order to support his arguments against Islam, the commentator quotes biblical verses from two prophecies on Babylon from the Book of Isaiah (chaps. 13–14, 47). The commentator's choice of Isaiah's prophecies appears deliberate, since it demonstrates that Isaiah did not foretell the coming of Muhammad, but rather the destruction of Ishma'el. Yefet ben 'Eli links these two prophecies to Islam and the Muslims as well. According to Ben-Shammai, chapters 13 and 14 most likely target the house of Muhammad, possibly referring to the Abbasids, whereas chapter 47 contains general accusations against Islam (Ben-Shammai 1977, 319–322; *idem* 1984, 16–18). To the best of my knowledge, other commentators did not interpret the prophecies of Babylon as referring to Ishma'el. For example, there is no information concerning Ishma'el, Islam, or Islamic rule in the extant fragments of these chapters in R. Sa'adia Ga'on's commentary on Isaiah (Ratzaby 1993, 170–171, 217).⁴¹

We have seen several similarities between the arguments presented by the commentator of the EJP text and those of Yefet ben 'Eli. A closer examination shows that Yefet's discussion of the first portion of 1 Sam. 2:3 is not without resemblance to the EJP text. Yefet starts by saying that *talk no more so very proudly* refers to the enemies mentioned in the discussion of the phrase *my mouth derides my enemies* (רַחֵב פִּי עַל-אֹיְבָי, *rāḥab pī 'al*

40 For the EJP text, see Appendix, VIII.

41 However, in Ga'onic literature, the city of Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, is occasionally called Babylon. Furthermore, Baghdad was sometimes named *'adina* ('delicate'), a title taken from Is. 47:8 (Gil 2004, 492). Perhaps the identification of Babylon with Baghdad led to the association of Babylon with the kingdom of Ishma'el.

'ōyəḅay; 1 Sam. 2:1). The latter phrase refers to the people of Israel, who hear the attacks on the Torah by their enemies but cannot speak the truth because they are in exile. However, when God reveals the truth, the enemies of Israel will acknowledge the truth of their religion and propagate it.⁴² Yefet also writes that the meaning of the phrase *Talk no more so very proudly* is to reject haughty (*shāmikh*) words about the Creator and his law.⁴³ Furthermore, after a discussion of the possible meaning of the word קָדַח ('āṭāq), Yefet states that the phrase *Talk no more so very proudly* refers to the haughtiness and ridicule (*al-shamkh wa-l-iskhāf*) of three opinions (*aqāwīl*): the opinions of the people of the Trinity (*aṣḥāb al-thālūth*, Christians) concerning the creator itself, the opinions of the Ḥashwiyya of

42 BL Or. 2547, 46r:14–46v:1:

(14) ... [و]قولها **راحب في عل اوبياي** (1 Sam. 2:1) هو في مـ[عنى اشتهاار] (15) الذين اد كانوا في الجالية يسمعون الطعن على التورية ولا يقدررون ينـ[طفون] (16) بالحق كقوله **[نا]الامني دوميا** **هاحشيني مطلوب** (Ps. 39:3; NRSV Ps. 39:2) فاذا اظهر الله [الحق] (17) وانفسد عند الاعدا دينهم [وتحققـ]. وا ان الحق مع يسرايل دون غيرهـ[م] (p. 46v, line 1) ذلك الوقت يتكلمون بالدين ويشهروه كما قالوا في هذا المعنى **هامانتي** (2) **كي اذبير اني عانيشي ماوذ** (Ps. 116:10) فهذا هو معنى **راحب في عل اوبياي**.

(14) ... [wa-]qawluhā **rāḥab pī 'al 'ōyəḅay** (1 Sam. 2:1) huwa fī ma[ʿnā ishtihār] (15) *alladhīna idh kānū fī l-jāliya yasma'ūna l-ṭa'n 'alā l-tawriya wa-lā yaqdirūna yan[tiqūna]* (16) *bi-l-ḥaqq ka-qawlihi ne'ēlamtī dūmiyyā heḥshēṭī miṭ-ṭōḅ* (Ps. 39:3; NRSV Ps. 39:2) *fa-idhā aḏhara allāh [al-ḥaqq] (17) wa-infasada 'inda l-a'dā dīnuhum [wa-taḥaqqaq]ū anna l-ḥaqq ma'a yisrāyil dūna ghayrihi[m] (p. 46v, line 1) dhālika l-waqt yatakallamūna bi-l-dīn wa-yashharūhu ka-mā qālū fī hādhā l-ma'nā he'ēmanti (2) kī 'aḏabbēr 'ānī 'āniṭī mē'ōd* (Ps. 116:10) *fa-hādhā huwa ma'nā rāḥab pī 'al 'ōyəḅay*

43 BL Or. 2547, 47r:10–12:

(10) ... وقالوا **جيوها غيوها** (1 Sam. 2:3) فانكروا الكلام الذي هو (11) شامخ وهذا الكلام هو في معنى الخالق وفي معنى شريعته وقد ذكره (12) اساف بقوله **شتو بشاماييم فيهام** (Ps. 73:9) ولذلك قالو **جيوها غيوها** مكرر.

(10) *wa-qālū gəḅōhā gəḅōhā* (1 Sam. 2:3) *fa-ankarū l-kalām alladhī huwa* (11) *shāmikh wa-hādhā l-kalām huwa fī ma'nā l-khāliq wa-fī ma'nā sharī'atihi wa-qad dhakarahu* (12) *Āsāf bi-qawlihi šattu ḅaš-šāmayim pīhem* (Ps. 73:9) *wa-li-dhālika qālū gəḅōhā gəḅōhā mukarrar*

Ishma‘el⁴⁴ (Muslims), and the opinions of those who reject the opinion of the *Ḥashwiyya*, namely the people of unity and justice (*aṣḥāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-‘adl*, the *Mu‘tazila*).⁴⁵ All three groups believe that the Torah was abrogated (Ben-Shammai 1977, vol. 1, 30, no. 120).

Yefet’s explanation of the first portion of 1 Sam. 2:3 focuses on theological matters, mainly on the abrogation of the Torah. Although the commentator of the EJP text chooses not to do so, his treatment of this passage, i.e. referring to the ambitious pretensions of three different groups, is somewhat similar to that of Yefet. Other commentaries on the Book of Samuel, for instance those of Rashi (d. 1105) and R. David Qimḥi, do not refer to such issues at all. Rashi states that this verse refers to those who become haughty at the time of their good fortune: according to the *pəšaṭ* (plain meaning), Ḥannah refers to Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, and, according to the *dəraš* (homiletical meaning), Rashi, following the Targum Yonatan, interprets the verse as addressed to Nebuchadnezzar (Cohen 1993, 10). At the same time, R. David Qimḥi interprets it in accordance with its literary and historical context, saying that it is aimed against Peninnah and those who made Ḥannah upset (Cohen 1993, 10).⁴⁶

44 In Islamic polemical writing, *Ḥashwiyya* is a derogatory term used mainly by rationalists against traditionalist groups, such as *ahl al-ḥadīth*. For more on this term, see Ben-Shammai (2015b, 235, no. 43 with references).

45 The *Mu‘tazila* is a theological school that was founded at Basra in the first half of the eighth century and flourished during the early Abbasid period. The proponents of this school argued for the primacy of reason in religion and theology. For further reading, see el-Omari (2016), Bennett (2016), Schmidtke (2016).

46 As stated above, he claims further on in his commentary that most of Ḥannah’s prayer is a prophecy concerning the hardships of the people of Israel and their subsequent salvation.

Conclusion

Among the hundreds of pages of the EJP exegetical corpus from the BL and the RNL, there is only one passage which contains a direct polemical discussion aimed against non-Jewish groups. The passage, found in the commentary on the story of Hannah, provides a glimpse into the commentator's attitude towards three groups: the advocates of the "foreign sciences" (called here "the astronomers and philosophers of the world"), Christians, and Muslims, who are all criticized by him for their religious beliefs and the investigation of the wonders of creation.

As I have attempted to show, the arguments presented by the commentator of the EJP text are also attested in the writings of other medieval Jewish scholars who wrote in Hebrew and in Judeo-Arabic, in particular Yefet ben 'Eli. It is not clear whether the commentator was Karaite or whether he was able to read Judeo-Arabic. In any case, the examination shows that he could have relied (directly or indirectly) on exegetical literature written in Judeo-Arabic, and especially on Yefet's works. At the same time, the similarities might reflect certain widely known interpretations adhered to by exegetes from various intellectual circles in the medieval Jewish world.

This paper has dealt with only one aspect of the EJP exegetical corpus. Further study of the corpus would undoubtedly contribute to a much better understanding of the literary world and religious thought of Persian-speaking Jews during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, of which too little is known as yet. In this regard, a fruitful path would be a comprehensive and systematic comparison of our corpus with the Karaite and Rabbanite literature written in Hebrew and in Judeo-Arabic; such a comparison would facilitate its proper contextualization and shed light on the exchange of

ideas and the transmission of knowledge between various Jewish groups in the Islamic world.

Appendix: Excerpts from RNL Yevr.-Arab. I 4608⁴⁷

[1] (11) ... **ותען חנה ות[אמר]**. (12) וגואב דאד חנה וגופת נא סייד זני סכת ג'אן הום מן ונביד ומוסכיר (13) נא הינגיסתום והמי ריזום תהלי⁴⁸ גאן מרא פא פיש י'י. **ותען חנה**. תא (14) תא גואב [דאדי]ש חנה צון ש[ניד] אין רא וגופתיש לא אדני. **ב** ציז (15) גופתיש. יכי גופת נא נא אי סייד נא נא הום מסת. דויום המי כואהום (16) שאדי כי [היסת?]⁴⁹ ישראלן רא וליכין **אשה קשת רוח אנכי**. סכת (17) תהליהא וגמי [היסת] פא דיילי מן וכוד **יין ושכר** ⁴⁹ **לא שתיתי**. וצון חנה (18) גופת כוישתן רא **קשת רוח אנכי**. המצונין גלותיאן רא גופת כי (19) **כאשה עזובה ועצובת רוח קראך י'י ואשת נעורים. כי תמאס אמר** (20) **אלהיך**. וצון כי חנה רא שאד כרד י'י המצונין שאד כונד י'י אין (21) גלותיאן רא: **צה'ג ובני ציון גילו ושמתו וג' ואשפוך את נפשי לפני י'י**. גופת כי המי ריזום תהלי (22) גאן מן רא פיש י'י תא מוראדי מן בידה. המצונין אין גלות[י]אן (23) המי גוינד **אשפוך לפניו שיחי צרתי לפניו וג' אלה אזכרה ואש[פכ]ה** (24) **עלי נפשי כי אעבור וג'**: (1v:11-24)

(11) ... **wt'n ḥnh wt[mr]**. (12) *wgw'b d'd ḥnh wgwpt n' syyd zny skt g'n hwm mn wnbyd wmwskyr* (13) *n' hyngystwm whmy ryzwm thly g'n mr' p' pyšy y'y. wt'n ḥnh. t'* (14) *t' gw'b [d'dy]š ḥnh šwn š[nyd] 'yn r' wgwptyš l' 'dny. b" šyz* (15) *gwptyš. yky gwpt n' n' 'y syyd n' n' hwm mst. dwywm hmy*

47 Images of the manuscript are now available online at "Ktiv: the International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts" (National Library of Israel in partnership with the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society): http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS000156302.

48 For this word, see Paul (2013, 50).

49 A gloss written in the right margin.

kw'hw m (16) *š'dy ky [hyst?] yšr'in r' wlykyn 'šh qšt rwḥ 'nky. skt* (17) *thlyh' wgmy [hyst] p' dyly mn wkwd yyn* ^{wškr q} *l' štyty.* *wšwn ḥnh* (18) *gwpt kwyšt n r' qšt rwḥ 'nky. hmšwnyn glwty'n r' gwpt ky* (19) *k'šh 'zwbh w'šwbt rwḥ qr'k y'y w'št n'wrym. ky tm's 'mr* (20) *'lhyk. wšwn ky ḥnh r' š'd krd y'y hmšwnyn š'd kwnd y'y 'yn* (21) *glwty'n r': š'h'g' wbn y sywn gylw wšmḥw wg' w'špwk 't npšy lpny y'y.* *gwpt ky hmy ryzwm thly* (22) *g'n mn r' pyšy y'y t' mwr'dy mn bydhd. hmšwnyn 'yn glwt[y]'n* (23) *hmy gwynd 'špwk lpnyw šyḥy šrt y lpnyw wg: 'lh 'zkrh w'š[pk]h* (24) *'ly npšy ky 'bwr wg:*

[III] (22) ... ורפת [פ]א סוי נימאז כי [...] (23) כרד. וי' רוח הקודש אברו או אפרוד אברד ואב[ר]ד[אשת] [...] עתיד ...] (24) אבר זואן או רואניסת: **ותתפלל חנה**
 [ותאמר. וני]מ[אז] (25) כרד חנה וגופת ראמישן בוד דילי מן פא י' בולונד בוד [...] י מן פא י' [...] (26) בוד [...] [מנ] דהן מן אבר דושמנאן מן כי שאד בודום פא פרגי [תו] [...] (27) יכי פסוק רא עילימאן⁵⁰ אבר חנה המי ניהא[ד]נד כ[י] ... סוי ... גופת [...] (28) [...] אין סר תא בון המא עתידות היסת. (3r:22-28)

(22) ... *wrpt [p]' swy nym'z ky [...]* (23) *krd. wy'y rwḥ hqwdš 'brw 'w 'prwd 'brd w'b[r d]'št [... 'tyd ...]* (24) *'br zw'n 'w rw'nyst: wttpll ḥnh [wt'mr. wny]m[z]* (25) *krd ḥnh wgwpt r'myšn bwd dyly mn p' y'y bwlwnd bwd [...]y mn p' [y'y ...]* (26) *bwd [[mn]] dh n mn 'br dwšmn'n mn ky š'd bwdwm p' prgy [tw ...]* (27) *yky pswq r' 'ylym'n 'br ḥnh hmy nyh'[d]nd k[y ... swy ... gwpt ...]* (28) [...] *'yn sr t' bwn hm' 'tydwt hyst.*

[III] (13) ... בידאן כי דיל חנה ראסת בוד ו[אבר] אין בַ ציז דאד אוירא. יכי (14) פרזנד. דיוום נבואה עתיד.⁵¹ (2r:13-14)

50 The word עילימ is the *imāla* form of Ar. *‘ālim*. For the *imāla* in EJP, see Paul (2013, 48).

51 The phrase נבואה עתיד (*nbw'h 'tyd*) should apparently be read with an *iḏāfa* between the two words.

(13) ... *byd'n ky dyl ḥnh r'st bwd w[br] 'yn b" šyz d'd 'wyr'. yky* (14) *prznd. dwywm nbw'h 'tyd.*

[IV] (16) **אל תרבו תדברו**. מא בסיאר פֿינית כֿנית⁵² (17) סכון גויית גשי בולונדי בולונדי ומא בירון הי⁵³ אייד זישתי אז (18) דהן שומא. בידאן כי אין סכון רא גופת חנה אבר בֿ רוי. יכי. אבר (19) מונג'מאן ופילסופאן ג'האן כי נא המי וארוינד⁵⁴ פא נביאים. והמי (20) גוינד כי אפרינישן ג'האן צונין בוד כי נא שאהד⁵⁵ גופתן וניביסידן. (21) אן כי דויד זישת כרד אין המא רא וגופת י'י **לא גבה לבי ולא רמו עיני** (22) **ולא הלכתי בגדולת**⁵⁶ **ובנפלאות ממ:** כי המי גוינד כי אפתאב רא צנדין (23) היסת דראזי או: ומאנג רא המי גוינד כי דראז תֿרי אז זמי. ואסתארגאן (24) רא צנדין וצונין המי גוינד. ואבר י'י כי כודאה היסת בסיאר ציזיהא (25) מי גוינד ונא המי וארוינד פא נביאים. ואבר י'י ית' שמ' אניהא המי גוינד (26) [כי נא] שאהד גופתן. דויום רוי גופת אבר מלכות אדום וישמעאל. כי (27) [אדו]ם המי גויד כי ישו פא אסמאן היסת. והמי גויד כי תא ג'האן בוד (28) [ממ]ל[כ]תי מן בוד. צון גופת **זדון לבך השיאוך שוכני בחגוי** [[ה]]**סלע אומ'** **וג**⁵⁷ (29) [ישמע]אל אז אין בתר המי גויד. צונאן כי גופת פא נבואתי ישעיהו (30) [פס]ל⁵⁸ פידא אייד ואין גויד **ואתה אמרת בלבבך השמים אעלה ממעל** (31) **[לכוכבי] אל ארים כסאי ואשב בהר מועד בירכתי צפון**. **אעלה על במתי** (32) **[עב אדמ]לעליון**. ובסיאר ציזיהא גופת כופר. וגופת אסף פא סוי אי[ן] (33) **[ימיקו וידברו] ברע עשק ממקום ידברו**. ומשה גופת פא סוי (p. 4r, line 1) אישאן **יביעו ידברו עתק**

52 A gloss written in the right margin. The meaning of the letter *qof* is not clear. Perhaps it stands for קרי.

53 For the use of the hortative particle *hē-*, see Shaked (2003, 207); Paul (2013, 122-123).

54 For additional occurrences of *w'rw-* ("to believe") in EJP texts, see Shaked (2003, 215); Paul (2013, 45).

55 See Paul (2013, 49).

56 MT – בגדלות (*bi-ḡdōlōt*).

57 MT – זדון לבב השיאך שכני בחגוי-סלע מרום שבתו אמר בלבו מי יורדני ארך – *(zəḡōn libbəkā hiššī'eḡā šōḡānī ḡə-ḥaḡwē sela' mārōm šīptō 'ōmēr bə-libbō mī yōriḡēnī 'āreṣ)*.

58 Alternative reading: [רס]ול (*rasūl*, "messenger"). See above, p. 22.

יתאמרו כל פעלי און. יצא עתק מ[פיכם]. תפסיר (2) [אוי] אַל יצא עתק מפיכם.
(3v:16–4r:2)

(16) **'l trbw tdbrw. m' bsy'r k^wnyt k^wnyt q' (17) skwn gwyyt gšy gšy bwlwndy bwlwndy wm' byrwn hy 'yyd zyšty 'z (18) dhn šwm'. byd'n ky 'yn skwn r' gwpt ḥnh 'br b" rwy. yky. 'br (19) mwng'ym'n wpylswp"n g'yh'n ky n' hmy w'rwyynd p' nby'ym. whmy (20) gwynd ky 'prynyšn g'yh'n šwnyn bwd ky n' š'hd gwptn wnybysydn. (21) 'n ky dwyd zyšt krd 'yn hm' r' gwgpt **y'y l' gbh lby wl' rmw 'yny** (22) **wl' hlkty bgdwlt wbnpl'wt mm'**: ky hmy gwynd ky 'pt'b r' šndyn (23) hyst dr'zy 'w: wm'ng r' hmy gwynd ky dr'z try 'z zmy. w'st'rg'n (24) r' šndyn wšwnyn hmy gwynd. w'br y'y ky kwd'h hyst bsyy'r šzyyh' (25) my gwynd wn' hmy w'rwyynd p' nby'ym. w'br y'y yt' šm' 'nyh' hmy gwynd (26) [ky n'] š'hd gwptn. dwywm rwy gwpt 'br mlkwt 'dwm wyšm'li. ky (27) [d'w]m hmy gwyd ky yšw p' 'sm'n hyst. whmy gwyd ky t' gyh'n bwd (28) [mm][k]ty mn bwd. šwn gwpt **zdown lbk hšy'wk šwkny bḥgwy [[h]]sl' 'wm' wg'** (29) [yšm']'l 'z 'yn btr hmy gwyd. šwn'n ky gwpt p' nbw'ty yš'yhw (30) [ps]wl pyd' 'yyd w'yn gwyd **w'th 'mrt blbbk hšmym 'lh mm'l** (31) **[lkwkby] l' 'rym ks'y w'šb bhr mw'd byrkty šp"wn. 'lh 'l bmty** (32) **['b 'dm]h l'lywn. wbsy'r šzyyh' gwpt kwpr. wgwpt 'sp p' swy 'y[n]** (33) **[ymyqw wydbrw] br' 'šq mmqwm ydbrw. wmšh gwpt p' swy** (p. 4r, line 1) **yš'n yby'w ydbrw 'tq yt'mrw kl p'ly 'wn. yš' 'tq m[pykm]. tpsyr** (2) [wy] **'l yš' 'tq mpykm.****

[V] (26) ... משפיל אף מרומם. אן כי (27) אבגסת ישראלן רא צה'ג השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל וג'. ואן (28) היסת כי סייד פא רוח הקדש גופת ויתשם י' מעל אדמתם באף וג'. (29) וגופתנד פא נימאז מפני זעמך וקצפך וג'. ופא סרנגאם מלכות ישמעאל (30) [ר]א בי אבגנד. צון גופת אוירא איך נפלת משמים היליל בן שחר וג'.
(4v:26–30)

(26) ... **mšpyl 'p mrwmm. 'n ky (27) 'bgst yšr'ln r' š'h'g' hšlyk mšmym 'rš tp'rt yšr'l wg'**. w'n (28) hyst ky syyd p' rwh ḥqdš gwpt **wytšm y'y**

m'l 'dmtm b'p wg'. (29) *wgwptnd p' nym'z mpny z'mk wqšpk wg'*. *wp' srng'm mlkwt yšm'ol* (30) *[r]' by 'bgnd. šwn gwpt 'wyr' 'yk nplt mšmym hyl'yl bn šhr wg'*.

[VI] (10) ... **ורבת בנים אומללה**. מלכות אדום וישמעאל הסת (11) כי פא סוי אדום גופת **ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו וג'**. ופא סוי ישמעאל גופת (12) **והכרתי לבבל שם ושאר ונין וג'**. אבר אין גופת **ורבת בנים אומללה**: (4v:10-12)
 (10) ... **wrbt bnym 'wmllh**. *mlkwt 'dwm wyšm'ol hst* (11) *ky p' swy 'dwm gwpt wl' yhyh šryd lby't 'šw wg'*. *wp' swy yšm'ol gwpt* (12) **whkrty lbbl šm wš'r wny'n wg'**. *'br 'yn gwpt wrbt bnym 'wmllh*:

[VII] (13) ... **ומלכות ישמעאל רא גופת (14) רדי ושבי על עפר בתולת בת בבל שבי לארץ אין כסא בתולת בת כשדים (15) כי לא יוסיף יקראו לך רכה וענו**:
 (5r:13-15)
 (13) ... *wmlkwt yšm'ol r' gwpt* (14) **rdy wšby 'l 'pr btwlt bt bbl šby l'rš 'yn ks' btwlt bt kšdym** (15) *ky l' ywsyp yqr'w lk rkh w'nw'*:

[VIII] (19) צ'י מעני כי **נדיבים** גופת אבאז צ'י המי אבאיסת גופת **עם נדיבי עמו** (20) גואב כי היסת כי מולכת ישמעאל רא **נדיבים** המי כואנד. צון פא **משא** (21) **בבל** גופת **הניפו יד ויבואו פתחי נדיבים**. גופת **עם נדיבי עמו**. נא אבא (22) מלכות ישמעאל נישאנד אישאן רא. אילא **עם נדיבי עמו**. (5r:19-22)
 (19) *š'y m'ny ky ndybym gwpt 'b'z š'y hmy 'b'yst gwptn 'm ndyby 'mw*
 (20) *gw'b ky hyst ky mwlkt yšm'ol r' ndybym hmy kw'nd. šwn p' mš'* (21) **bb'l gwpt hnypw yd wybw'w pth'y ndybym**. *gwpt 'm ndyby 'mw. n' 'b'*
 (22) *mlkwt yšm'ol nyš'nd 'yš'n r'. 'yl' 'm ndyby 'mw*.

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