



Rabbanite Views and Rabbinic Literature in Judeo-Persian Karaite Exegesis

OFIR HAIM

Mandel Scholion Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

ABSTRACT This article discusses the outlook of Judeo-Persian Karaite authors on Rabbanite law and rabbinic literature based on an exegetical corpus written in Early Judeo-Persian from the eleventh century, which mostly remains in manuscript form. A close examination of this corpus demonstrates the authors' complex attitude towards their contemporary Rabbanites and early Jewish literature. By relying on the teachings of the Karaite community of Jerusalem (the "Mourners of Zion"), the corpus' authors criticize certain Rabbanite views and concepts, while still accepting other parts of the rabbinic tradition which did not challenge their ideology. In so doing, the authors establish themselves as part of the Karaite exegetical tradition, and, more broadly, of the Jewish intellectual world.

KEYWORDS polemics, calendar, Bible exegesis, Karaites, Rabbanites, Early Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Arabic

Introduction

Among the extant Early Judeo-Persian (henceforth, EJP) writings (Shaked 1985, 2003, 2009; Paul 2013), a group of nine manuscripts stands out. These manuscripts apparently hail from the Karaite synagogue of Dar Simḥa in Cairo and are currently held at the Russian National Library (henceforth, RNL; Evr. Arab. 1682, 4605, 4607–4611) and the British Library (henceforth, BL; Or. 2459–2460). A meticulous examination of the manuscripts, including their reorganization according to physical features and content, shows that they contain eleven works on selections from the Pentateuch and Prophets.¹ The examination also reveals that the works

1 In the article, I use the following abbreviations for these works (the order of the manuscripts in parentheses is based on my suggested reconstruction of the works): **MS A** (commentary on Ezek. 1–39; RNL Evr. Arab. I 1682); **MS B** (commentary on selected portions of the Prophets; RNL Evr. Arab. I 4608, RNL Evr. Arab. I 4611, BL Or. 2460, fols. 1–18, RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fols. 4 and 4a, BL Or. 2460, fols. 19–33, RNL Evr. Arab. I 4609 RNL Evr. Arab. I 4607, fol. 2); **MS C** (commentary on Is. 11:10–12:1; RNL Evr. Arab. I 4610); **MS D** (commentary on Gen. 1:1–4:10; RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fols. 1–2, RNL Evr. Arab. I 4607, fol. 1, RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fols. 3, 5–26); **MS E/1** (commentary on Num. 8:12–12:16; BL Or. 2459, fols. 1r–32v);

were copied by the same group of scribes during the eleventh to twelfth centuries. Moreover, it is quite likely that these commentaries were composed in a Karaite exegetical circle whose members were well-versed in Arabic and had strong literary ties to the famous “Mourners of Zion,” the Karaite community of Jerusalem during the ninth to the eleventh centuries (Haim 2018, 163–70, 2021).

The provenance of the manuscripts is unclear. Although their last location was the Karaite synagogue Dar Simḥa in Cairo, they may have been brought to the eastern Mediterranean by immigrants from the Persian-speaking world (Haim 2018, 168). However, in view of the literary ties to the “Mourners of Zion,” it is possible that the EJP exegetical corpus was composed by immigrants from Iran to the eastern Mediterranean, where they encountered the vast literature of the Karaites of Jerusalem. Its provenance notwithstanding, the EJP exegetical corpus presents a hitherto little-known perspective on the literary heritage of Persian-speaking Jewish communities during the first centuries of Islam, and places it in the broader intellectual environment of the Jewish world. It is particularly instructive for understanding how Persian-speaking Karaites perceived the Rabbanites of their age. [2]

In general, criticism against the Rabbanites is not prevalent in the EJP corpus. This stands in clear contrast to early Karaite authors, such as Daniel al-Qūmisī (fl. late ninth to early tenth centuries; Ben-Shammai 1985, 51–54) and Salmon ben Yeruḥim (fl. mid-tenth century; Davidson 1934), whose works are replete with criticism of Rabbanite customs, practices, and beliefs. The EJP commentaries were composed in a later period, namely the late tenth and eleventh centuries, when anti-Rabbanite sentiment was less present in Karaite exegesis (e.g., Polliack and Schlossberg 2009, 34–40). For example, unlike al-Qūmisī, the EJP authors seldom use designations of the Jewish leadership in exile, which reflect the authors’ negative attitude towards it (Haim 2021, 42–49). Moreover, the anti-Rabbanite polemic in the EJP exegetical corpus is limited to certain themes that stood at the heart of the conflict between the Rabbanites and Karaites. As shown below, this is particularly apparent in MS D. [3]

While some EJP authors express their utter rejection of Rabbanite law and doctrine, others rely on rabbinic materials in their works, as do other Karaite authors of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Although the main bone of contention between the Rabbanites and Karaites was the authority of the Oral Torah (Cook 1987; Ben-Shammai 1992; Frank 2007; Polliack 2006, 2016),² Karaite sages did not reject the rabbinic tradition entirely. Karaite exegesis relied on rabbinic and Rabbanite literature (Ben-Shammai 1985). In their exegetical discussions, these sages refer to rabbinic sources and embed rabbinic opinions quite often (Tirosh-Becker 2011, 2:15–42; Khan 2000b, 3–4; Polliack and Schlossberg 2009, 84–88; Zawanowska 2012, 94–95). This habit is best summarized by Polliack’s statement regarding the presence of rabbinic texts in Judeo-Arabic Karaite works: “When these sources offered conceptions, methodologies or interpretations that appeared to the Karaites as logically sound or contextually based they [4]

MS E/2 (commentary on Hos. 2; BL Or. 2459, fols. 33r–63r); MS E/3 (treatise on Proverbs; BL Or. 2459, fols. 64v–70r); MS E/4 (glossary of words from the first chapters of Genesis; BL Or. 2459, fols. 70v–71v); MS E/5 (sermon on Is. 40:1; BL Or. 2459, fols. 72v–75r); MS E/6 (sermon on the Ten Commandments; BL Or. 2459, fols. 75v–80r); MS E/7 (commentary on Ex. 1:1–4:17; BL Or. 2459, fols. 80v–123v).

2 Significantly, the authority of the Oral Torah is not mentioned in the discussed corpus. The absence of any reference to this major point of dispute may be merely coincidental, as the corpus consists of fragmentary manuscripts. It is worth noting that the rejection of the Oral Torah is discussed once in a Karaite commentary on Deuteronomy 33 preserved in the RNL (Evr. Arab. I 4606). The paleographical and orthographical features of this manuscript suggest that it was copied in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, i.e., during the Ilkhanid period. Albeit quite late, it is possible that this manuscript is a copy of an earlier work linked to our EJP exegetical corpus. Further study is required in order to determine this.

were quite capable of adopting and developing them even further, as an intellectual source for their own reasoning and argumentation” (Polliack 2003, 365–66).

Moreover, in one particular instance, the author of MS C expresses his hope for the end of the “envy and rancor” (חַסַד וְכִינּוּן; *ḥasad wa-kīn*)³ between the Karaites and the Rabbanites. This passage is integrated into the discussion of Isaiah 11:13,⁴ predicting the end of hostility between the Ten Tribes of Israel and the tribe of Judah:⁵

Then Ephraim’s envy shall cease (Is. 11:13) ... Know that from that time when Jeroboam, son of Nebat, rose up, enmity befell between these Ten Tribes and Judah. And envy always existed for that (reason, namely) that Judah was the greatest in rank. The Ten Tribes were envious of them for that (reason) which existed. And also, these envy and rancor that exist in exile between the [Karaites] and between the Rabbanites shall be removed. All shall return to Judah together, for the kingship is from Judah, as Ezekiel explained in the chapter *Take a stick* (Ezek. 37:16).⁶

After providing the historical background for the hostility between the Ten Tribes and Judah, the author of MS C notes that like them, the Rabbanites and Karaites would resolve their differences in the messianic future. They all would return to Judah with the Davidic messiah, as described in Ezekiel’s prophecy (37:15–28).⁷ The conciliatory approach of the author may be explained by the fact that MS C concerns a prophetic text, which is not the typical platform for Karaite-Rabbanite disputes. Rather, the EJP authors often state that the prophetic texts, and the commentaries thereof, aim at providing comfort for the Jews in exile. At the same time, the assumed date of composition of the EJP commentaries, ca. the eleventh century, should be considered as well.

The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate the complex attitude towards the Rabbanites and rabbinic literature as reflected in the different EJP commentaries. Through the introduction and discussion of unpublished manuscript materials, I attempt to show that like their fellow Karaites who wrote in Judeo-Arabic, the EJP authors criticized certain Rabbanite views and concepts, while still accepting other parts of the rabbinic tradition.

3 This study is based on texts written in different languages and scripts and therefore contains different systems of transliteration. The transliteration of (Judeo-)Arabic and (Judeo-)Persian words follows the system of the Deutsche-Morgenländische Gesellschaft (DMG), except that the Arabic definite article *al-* is retained in all cases and that no difference between Persian and Arabic is made in transliterating *ث, ذ, ض, ڤ*, and they are rendered according to the transliteration for Arabic. Transliteration of biblical Hebrew is according to the system of Brill’s *Handbook of Jewish Languages*, except that *seghol* and *ḥateph seghol* are transliterated as *-e-* and *-ě-*, respectively. Post-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). Hebrew text appearing in passages in Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian is given in boldface type.

4 *Then Ephraim’s envy shall cease and Judah’s harassment shall end; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.* Unless stated otherwise, English translations of the biblical text are according to the New Jewish Publication Society of America Tanakh (henceforth, NJPS).

5 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 the 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.

6 For the EJP text, see Appendix, I.

7 The prophecy is broadly discussed in MS A, where the Karaites and Rabbanites are not mentioned. See Gindin (2007, 1:245–249; trans. *ibid.*, 2:425–431).

Reliance on Rabbinic Sources in the EJP Corpus

Like Karaite authors who wrote in Judeo-Arabic, the authors of the EJP exegetical corpus occasionally embed exegetical opinions originating in rabbinic works, particularly the Mishna, Tosefta and aggadic midrashim. With very few exceptions, the rabbinic opinions are cited anonymously and occasionally attributed to the “sages” (עילימאן, *‘elimān*; sg. עילים (*‘elim*), from Arabic *‘ālim*), the “Rabbis” (or “Rabbanites”; רבבנן, *rabbanān*),⁸ or to “people” (in MS A; מרדומאני, *mardumān-i*), making it difficult to trace the specific rabbinic sources used by the authors. [9]

Significantly, rabbinic language and texts were employed by the EJP authors to justify their interpretation of unclear words and phrases in the biblical text. This may be exemplified by the following passage concerning the phrase *hiššāpēk nəḥuštēk* (Ezek. 16:36) in MS A:⁹ [10]

And saying *hiššāpēk nəḥuštēk*. People explained *nəḥuštēk* as “emission of semen,” and others said that it is “anklet.” And we have not seen that this kind (of thing) is called *nəḥošet*. Another manner (of interpretation) – they said that *nəḥošet* is “self.” That is, you threw your human body until they did that kind of prohibited (things) to you. And its meaning is idolatry. And those people who interpret *nəḥošet* as “body” say that in the rabbinic language they call the body of a thing *nəḥōšet*, as they said in the Mishna: *The vermin touched the bottom of an oven*, and they said its meaning is the body of the oven, that is the body of the floor of the oven.¹⁰ [11]
(Translation based on Gindin 2007, 2:153)

The author supports the opinion that the noun *nəḥošet* should be interpreted as “self” (*dāt*) and “body” (*tan*), while rejecting the interpretation “anklet” (*pāšarinḡān*)¹¹ or “emission of semen” (*šikābat zera*). This is evident in the translation section, where the word *nəḥuštēk* is rendered as “your body” (*tan-i tu*).¹² In order to strengthen his argument, the author provides a short mishnaic excerpt containing the phrase *nəḥošto šel tannur*, which he understands as “the body of the floor of the oven.” As indicated by Gindin, the precise excerpt does not exist in the Mishna, and the author may have referred to the following phrase from tractate Kelim: *If a vermin is found beneath the bottom of an oven, (the oven remains) pure* (השרץ שנמצא למטה) *haš-šereš sēn-nimša ləmaṭa min-nəḥošto šel tannur ṭahor*; Kelim 9:3; Gindin 2007, 2:153, n283). [12]

Like other commentators on the book of Ezekiel, Karaites and Rabbanites alike, the author of MS A embeds the mishnaic expression *nəḥošto šel tannur* into the discussion of the phrase [13]

8 The translation of the term *rabbanān* depends on the context. When appearing together with the EJP term “Karaites” (קריתאן or קראיאן, *qarrā’ān*]; see, e.g., RNL Evr. Arab. I 4610, fol. 1v:34–35), it should be translated as “Rabbanites”; however, when preceding a passage probably originating in rabbinic literature, it is more likely that the term refers to the rabbinic sages, as in the EJP phrase לוגת רבבנאן or לוגת רבבנן (*luḡat-i rabbanān*; “rabbinic language”).

9 *Thus said the Lord God: Because of your brazen effrontery, offering your nakedness to your lovers for harlotry – just like the blood of your children, which you gave to all your abominable fetishes.*

10 For the EJP text, see Appendix, II.

11 For further discussion of this form, see Appendix.

12 Gindin (2007), vol. 1, p. 107: זונין גופת יי כודאה גאדה ריכתה אמדן תני תו ואשכארה כרדה אמד שרמקאה תו פא: פא (čünin guft *adonay ḥ*” *adāh ḡāda-yi riḥta āmadan-i tan-i tu wa-āškāra karda āmad šarmgāh-i tu pa wahārīhā-yi tu abā dūstān-i tu wa-abā hamā butīhā-yi zištīhā-yi tu wa-čün hūniha-yi pūsārān-i tu ān ki bi-dādi pa išan*).

hiššāpēk nəhuštēk.¹³ It is no wonder, therefore, that he makes the connection between the biblical and mishnaic texts in his commentary. In view of the widespread usage of the mishnaic phrase in this context, the author of MS A did not feel obligated to turn to a copy of the Mishna. Instead, he quoted the phrase from memory.

An interesting parallel to the passage from MS A is given in *Kitāb al-Diqduq*, a grammatical commentary composed by the Karaite grammarian and exegete Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ (fl. second half of the tenth-early eleventh centuries):¹⁴ [14]

Because of your brazen effrontery (Ezek. 16:36). There are those who interpreted (it) “the pouring of your fetter,” that is “the pouring of your anklet.” This is an improbable interpretation, for it is not the people’s custom to make their anklets from copper. [15]

And *nəhuštēk* was interpreted “you yourself,” that is “your body.” And the native speakers used (it) in their writings. When they wanted to say “the very same thing,” they would say the “*nəhošet* of so-and-so,” as we found them writing *nəhošet ha-tannur* (i.e., “the oven itself”).¹⁵ [16]

Ibn Nūḥ presents two interpretations for the word *nəhuštēk*: “anklet” and “self,” whose meaning is extended to “body.” He rejects the meaning “anklet” in favor of “body,” based on the expression *nəhošet ha-tannur* attested in the writings of the native speakers (*ahl al-luḡa*), which refers here to the people of the Mishna. Similarly, the author of MS A rejects the meaning “anklet” (*pāḥṣaringān*) and supports the meaning “body” (*tan*), which he extracts from the Arabic *dhāt*. Based on this instance and others,¹⁶ it seems that the author of MS A consulted Ibn Nūḥ’s works, particularly the *Diqduq*, directly, in order to solve grammatical difficulties. The preference for grammatical analysis over polemics in Ibn Nūḥ’s *Diqduq* (Khan 2000b, 139–40) is apparent in this EJP commentary. [17]

The term “rabbinic language” (*luḡat-i rabbanān*; lit., “the language of the Rabbis”) appearing in the discussion of Ezekiel 16:36 in MS A provides yet another piece of evidence corroborating the use of rabbinic materials or terms in the EJP exegetical corpus. Judeo-Arabic Karaite authors commonly integrate rabbinic terms and expressions (Tirosh-Becker 2011, 2:1:145–147). Likewise, we occasionally find rabbinic terms and expressions in the EJP text in order to explain the language of the Scriptures, introduced by the term “rabbinic language.” In MS B, the term appears once in relation to the phrase *and give strength to your bones* (*wə-‘ašmōtekā yaḥālīs*; Is. 58:11):¹⁷ “In rabbinic language, they say *ḥilluṣ ‘ašamot*,”¹⁸ which should be understood as “bolstering of the bones.” An expression analogous to the term “rabbinic [18]

13 See, e.g., Yefet ben ‘Eli’s rendering of the phrase *hiššāpēk nəhuštēk*, referring to vaginal discharge: “the pouring of the water of your pudendum” (انسفاك ماء فرجك) [*insifāk mā’ farǧiki*]; BL Or. 2549, fol. 235r:4). Further on, Yefet states that “(the word) *nəhuštēk* means ‘your pudendum,’ which derives from the Rabbis’ saying *nəhošteḥ dā-tannura*. Its interpretation is ‘the hole of the oven’” (نخستين فرجك يشق من قول الرابانيين) [*nəhuštēk farǧuki yašūqu min qawl al-rabbānīn nəhošteḥ dā-tannura tafsiṣiruhū taqb al-tannūr*]; BL Or. 2549, fol. 235r:11–13).

14 On the *Diqduq* and its author, see Khan (2000b).

15 For the Judeo-Arabic text, see Appendix, III.

16 The relationship between MS A and Ibn Nūḥ’s *Diqduq* will be discussed elsewhere. For a discussion of another grammatical commentary in EJP and its connection to Ibn Nūḥ’s *Diqduq*, see Khan (2000a, 241–331).

17 *The Lord will guide you always; He will slake your thirst in parched places and give strength to your bones. You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail.*

18 BL Or. 2460, fol. 21r:4. פא לוגת רבנאן חילון עזמות גוינד (*pa luḡat-i rabbanān ḥilluṣ ‘ašamot gūyand*).

language” is the “language of the Sages” (*lašon haḳamim*), found in MS D and employed in relation to the creation of the seas on the third day: “And it is that great sea which is located in the four sides of the world, and it is called in the language of the Sages ‘ocean’.”¹⁹

The integration of rabbinic materials for non-polemical purposes is particularly typical of MS B. Its author usually integrates this material in a succinct manner, as it appears, for example, in the discussion of the sacrificial work in the Temple. The author begins by enumerating the seven priests (*imēmān*; sg. *imēm*, from Arabic *imām*) who offered sacrifices to God prior to the establishment of the Tabernacle. According to the author, “The third priest was Shem, son of Noah, and he offered a sacrifice before God, as he said, *And he was a priest of God Most High* (Gen. 14:18).”²⁰ However, the latter description refers to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and not to Shem. The author relies here on the identification of Shem with Melchizedek attested in the Palestinian Targumim (Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragment Targum; Hayward 1996, 72–74), as well as in rabbinic literature (e.g., BT, Nedarim 32b; Leviticus Rabba 25:6 (Margulies 1953–1960, 3:580)). The author seems to adopt the identification of Shem with Melchizedek without hesitation, although other Karaite exegetes, such as Yefet ben ‘Eli, offer it as a possibility.²¹

Rabbinic materials, particularly aggadic midrashim, were also integrated into the EJP texts in order to arouse interest among the readers and enrich the exegetical discussion of a specific verse or a group thereof. This is quite discernible in the first part of MS B (the commentaries on Jer. 1–2 and the historical narrative), which concerns the sins of the people of Judah and the subsequent destruction of the Temple. An interesting case of the use of midrashim is the occurrence of two different versions of the same midrashic tale, which is attested in the Palestinian Talmud and later sources (PT, Ta‘anit 69b; Lamentations Rabba 2:4 (Vilna ed., 1924, 42–43); Midrash Tanḥuma, Yitro:5 (Warsaw ed., 1875, p. 94)).²² The tale tells of 80,000 apprentice priests who fled from the Babylonians to the Ishmaelites. Thirsty from the long journey, the priests asked the Ishmaelites for water. The Ishmaelites brought them salty food and skins that seemed to be filled with water. After eating the food, the priests put the skins to their mouths only to find out that they were filled with air, not water, and they choked. Many sources connect this tale to Isaiah’s prophecy on Arabia, which begins with the phrase *The oracle concerning Arabia* (*maššā ba-‘arab*; Is. 21:13–17).

By contrast, the two versions in MS B diverge from the known ones and are not associated with Isaiah’s prophecy on Arabia. The first version appears in the discussion of Jeremiah 2:25:²³

And your throat from thirst (Jer. 2:25) – that is, your throat from thirst. That is, you will walk thirsty and hungry, and no one will give you drops of water, as he said: *Assuredly, my people will suffer exile for not giving heed, its multitude victims of hunger and its masses parched with thirst* (Is. 5:13).

19 RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 8r:25–26: וְאוּ אֵן דִּירְיָאָהּ בּוּזוּרְגִי פֶּאֲדִ סוּי עֵאלֶם כִּי הֶסֶת וְאוּרָא פֶּאֲ לִשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים אֲוִקְנָנִים (wa-ū ān dīryāh-i buzurg-i pa čahār sūy-i ‘ālam ki hast wa-ū-rā pa lašon haḳamim ‘oqyanos gūyand).

20 RNL Evr. Arab. I 4607, fol. 2r:24–25: סִיּוּם אֵימִים שֵׁם בֶּן נַח בּוֹד וְקִרְבָּן פִּישׁ בְּרֵד פִּישׁ יִי צֹון גּוֹפֶת וְהוּא כְּהֵן לֵאלֹהִים (siyum imēm šem ben noah būd wa-qurbān piš burd piš-i ‘adonay čun guft wa-hū kōhēn la-‘ēl ‘elyōn).

21 Zawadowska (2012), p. 56*: וַיִּמְכַּן אֲנָהּ שֵׁם בֶּן נַח אִזְ אַחַד אֲלִמְפָצְלִין פִּי אֲלִזְמָאן (wa-yumkin annahu šem ben noah aw aḥad al-mufaddalīn fi al-zamān).

22 Saadiah Gaon also mentions this midrash when commenting on Is. 21:13. See Ratzaby (1993, 176, translation in 1993, 278).

23 Jer. 2:25: *Save your feet from going bare, and your throat from thirst. But you say, “It is no use. No, I love the strangers, and after them I must go.”*

[19]

[20]

[21]

[22]

And the Rabbis²⁴ say that they would take many people, prepare salty food and place (the people) in the desert. Those Israelite captives said: “We are thirsty.” These enemies blew up empty skins and placed them far away. They said: “Behold, those are skins of water!” They ate the salty (food). They went to the skins. All were empty. And he said about this: *(They) lay in wait for us in the wilderness* (Lam. 4:19). And Isaiah said: *Your sons lie in a swoon at the corner of every street – like an antelope*, etc. (Is. 51:20).²⁵ [23]

According to the author, the Israelites did not heed Jeremiah’s warnings. The latter’s prophecy was consequently realized, namely that the Israelites would walk hungry and thirsty, and not be given water by anyone. A proof-text from Isaiah is provided (Is. 5:13) describing the hunger and thirst that the Israelites experienced in exile. The author then embeds a passage attributed to “the Rabbis,” relating the death of many Israelites from thirst. The Ishmaelites mentioned in rabbinic sources are replaced with a very general and vague term – “the enemies.” In addition, there is no hint as to when the event took place. However, it can be assumed that the author refers here to the destruction of the First Temple, since the passage appears in the first section of MS B, which concerns the last days of the kingdom of Judah. Furthermore, rather than linking the tale to the prophecy on Arabia by Isaiah (Is. 21:13–17), the author integrates verses from Lamentations (Lam. 4:19) and Isaiah (Is. 51:20) conveying similar notions. [24]

The second version describes one of the tragedies that befell the Jews during the destruction of the Second Temple. In this case, the Ishmaelites are replaced by the Romans led by the Emperors Titus and Vespasian. No biblical verses are attached to this passage: [25]

That (i.e., the destruction) of the Second Temple (was) even²⁶ worse. Titus and Vespasian did (it). Know that they took out many people from among the Israelites and said: “We are taking you to a (certain) place.” One day (has passed), two days (have passed, and they became) hungry and thirsty. At that time, they were in the desert. (The Romans) put before (them) empty skins blown-up with air and prepared salty food. They said: “Eat!” The Israelites said: “We are thirsty.” Then they said: “Behold, water! Full water skins (are) placed (there).” They ate the salty food. When they went to the skins, they saw (that) the skins (were) empty. They cried and many of them died of thirst.²⁷ [26]

Each of the two versions given above refers to a different period. While the first one, appearing in the commentary on Jer. 2:25, refers to the death of many Israelites following the destruction of the First Temple, the second describes their suffering after the destruction of the Second Temple. The use of the same tale in two different contexts demonstrates how the author of MS B saw no problem in embedding rabbinic literature into his work. Moreover, he fashioned this material according to his own intentions, while omitting or changing details existing in rabbinic literature. [27]

The paraphrases of midrashic materials are accompanied by Hebrew quotations that are reminiscent of those known to us from rabbinic sources. For example, the commentary on Is. 57:14–58:14 in MS B is preceded by a short Hebrew passage titled “Ten things are called [28]

24 The word was deleted, possibly by a later reader of the text.

25 For the EJP text, see Appendix, IV.

26 Lit., “also.”

27 For the EJP text, see Appendix, V.

precious in the Bible” (עשרה דברים נקראו יקרים במקרא) *‘ašara dəḇarim niqrəʿu yaqarim bam-miqra*; BL Or. 2460, fol. 17v:7–18). This passage is attested in Leviticus Rabba (2:1 (Margulies 1953–1960, 1:34–35) and later midrashic compilations (e.g., Midrash Tehillim 116:5 (Buber 1891, 139a); Midrash Samuel 8:7 (Buber 1893, 71–72)). Whereas different versions of the passage above are attested in rabbinic literature, I was unable to find parallels in several cases, such as the following one explaining the name Jeremiah:

And the Rabbis²⁸ said: Why was he called Jeremiah? Because in his days, the people of Israel were disobeying (*mamrim*) the Lord. Another interpretation: They shall raise (*yarimu*) their hand against the Lord.²⁹ [29]

While the rabbinic origin of these explanations is clearly stated in the passage, they differ from the one given in Ecclesiastes Rabba 1:1: “Why was he called Jeremiah? Because the Temple became a waste (*erimiʿa*, from Greek ἐρημία) in his days” (Hirshman (2016), 6: למה לא היה בית המקדש אירימיה? נקרא שמו ירמיהו. על שם שבימיו נעשה בית המקדש אירימיה *lama niqra šmo yirmiyahu? ‘al šem še-be-yamav na‘aša bet ha-miqdaš erimiʿa*) and are unattested in extant sources. [30]

Rejection of Rabbanite Views

As shown above, rabbinic sources were used to support certain arguments and interpretations offered by the EJP authors. However, the latter also criticized Rabbanite beliefs and practices in specific places. This is particularly visible in MS D, where several opinions ascribed to the Rabbanites are rejected. For example, the author of MS D rejects the Rabbanites’ opinion that the sun and moon were created during the daytime of the fourth day of creation, and not during the previous evening (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 11r:32–34). Another Rabbanite opinion opposed by the author is that the world was created on the twenty-seventh of Elul and that the beginning of Tishrei occurred on the fourth day.³⁰ According to the author, the world was created in Nissan (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fols. 6r:9–15, 11v:9–10).³¹ In addition, the fourth day of creation cannot be the first day of Tishrei, as this stands in stark contrast to the postponement rules of the Rabbanites’ calendar (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 11v:2–4). [31]

In some cases, rabbinic statements are used in order to attack the Rabbanite opponents of MS D’s author. A consummate example in this regard is the reference to Saadiah Gaon’s opinion that the lights of the fourth day were created from the light of the first day (Zucker 1984, 116, translation in 1984, 229). Saadiah’s opinion is refuted by a rabbinic statement that the first light was concealed by God, which is attested in many rabbinic sources (e.g., BT, Ḥagiga 12a; Genesis Rabba 3:6 and 42:3 (Theodor and Albeck 1965, 3:1:21–22 and 405, respectively)). Thus, Saadiah is portrayed as transgressing the ways of his predecessors: [32]

And Fāyṣūmī, the head of the academy, said that He divided that light of the First Day into three (parts), and created from them the sun, moon, and stars. And we [33]

28 The word was deleted, possibly by a later reader of the text.

29 For the EJP text, see Appendix, VI.

30 Most manuscripts of Leviticus Rabba 29:1 indicate the twenty-fifth of Elul as the day on which the world was created. However, one manuscript (BL, Add. MS 27,169) has the twenty-seventh of Elul as the first day of creation. See Margulies (1953–1960, 3:668).

31 Similarly, the Babylonian Talmud (Rosh ha-shana, 10b–11b) presents a discussion of the month in which the world was created, i.e., in Tishrei or Nissan. According to R. Eliezer, the world was created in Tishrei, while R. Joshua, like the author of MS D, asserts that it was created in Nissan.

wondered at him, for how did he (dare) transgress the saying of all his Sages? For all his Sages said that He concealed that light for the righteous ones in the future. It (is) more correct (to follow) the following: These lights were created from nothing.³²

Notwithstanding the occasional references to these opinions, the major criticism against the Rabbanites, especially Saadiah Gaon, appears in connection with the interpretation of the phrase *they shall serve as signs for the set times* (Gen. 1:14)³³ and its ramification for the Jewish calendar. Saadiah Gaon attributes the phrase to the day and night in his commentary on Genesis (Zucker 1984, 36–37, translation in 1984, 227–28) and *Kitāb al-tamyīz* (Zucker 1984, 436, translation in 1984, 441–42). Like his Karaite predecessors and contemporaries, the author of MS D objects to Saadiah’s interpretation. Instead, he asserts that the phrase refers to the lights of the fourth day, particularly to the moon, which is used to indicate the beginning of a new month. Therefore, he writes: “And likewise, the moon separates between one month and the other by its appearance in the west. And these *set times* (are) the times of the beginning of the month, for the separation between the beginning of the next month and the (end of the) previous one occurs by their appearance.”³⁴ In order to corroborate his argument, the author elaborates on the role of the moon in fixing the holy days.

He begins by describing the three methods of determining the new moon among the Jews: 1) the *sod ha-‘ibbur* (lit., “secret of intercalation”) of the Rabbanites; 2) the theory of conjunction (or *milād/molad*, lit., “birth”), according to which the new moon occurs at the moment when the moon passes between the sun and the earth;³⁵ 3) lunar sighting. The affiliation of the author of MS D with the proponents of lunar sighting is reflected in his arguments against the two other calculation-based methods.

The author of MS D dedicates most of the discussion to arguing against the Rabbanites and their calendar calculation. His arguments are quite common in early Karaite works written in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, such as Salmon ben Yeruḥim’s “The Book of the Wars of the Lord” (*Sefer milḥamot ha-shem*; Davidson 1934, 51–77) or the discussion against the proponents of intercalation in al-Qirḳisānī’s *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqīb* (Nemoy 1939–1945, 4:804–814). The Hebrew term *‘ibbur* (lit., “intercalation”) may refer either to the addition of an extra day to a month or of an extra month to the year. However, it might also designate the calculation methods of the Rabbanites, within which the intercalation of a month or a year is applied.³⁶ In a similar context, the tenth-century Karaite commentator Sahl ben Maṣliḥ explains that the calculation (*ḥisāb*) of the Rabbanites is commonly known as *‘ibbur*, although its literal sense (*fī al-ḥaḳīqa*) is the addition of an extra month to a leap year. Sahl notes the origin of the term: it is borrowed (*musta‘ār*) from the noun “pregnancy.”³⁷

The *‘ibbur* of the Rabbanites, namely their calendar calculation, is tied to the postponement rules (Heb. *dəḥiyyot*), which are meant to ensure that the Jewish holidays should not occur on certain days of the week. This connection is attested in earlier Karaite sources, such as al-Qirḳisānī’s *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqīb*. In the first article (*maqāla*), al-Qirḳisānī writes that the Rabbanites adopted the “*‘ibbur* based on the maxim: ‘Not on the second, fourth or sixth,’

32 For the EJP text, see Appendix, VII.

33 God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years.”

34 RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 9v:17–20: והמפזנין מאנג גודא כונא מיאן מאה ומאה פא די דאר אמדן או פא מערב ואין מועדים וקתיהא סרי מאה כי גודא המי בוד פא די דאר אשאן מיאן סרי מאה אשא ורנא (*wa-hamčunin māng judā kunā*)

for which there is no reason to make it obligatory” (Nemoy 1939–1945, 1:23; translation in Chiesa and Lockwood 1984, 116).³⁸

The author of MS D first addresses the issue of their meticulous astronomical calculations [38] (Shaked 2003, 203–4). He notes that God did not command the Rabbanites’ careful calculations in order to determine the beginning of the month. The Rabbanites, who may determine the beginning of the month at any hour of the day, disobey God’s command to fix it at the evening time, like His orders to eat unleavened bread and observe the Day of Atonement (Shaked 2003, 203–4).

The author continues his attack on the Rabbanites, focusing on Saadia Gaon. Thus, the [39] ‘*ibbur* was not passed on from Moses to the Israelites, as claimed by Saadia. All the required calendrical calculations are already stated in the Torah. If the calculation rules presented by Saadia and other Rabbanites had been given by Moses, the Torah would have included them (Shaked 2003, 203–4).

The author then refutes the view that the ‘*ibbur* was given by Moses. He moves on to the [40] post-biblical period, during which the Sages also practiced eye-witnessing of the new moon rather than calculations:

Furthermore, in the Mishna and in the Talmud there are arguments written concerning [41] the moon. It is a wonder of Fayyūmī that he presents the Sages and their utterances as deceitful. He is guilty of (the offence expressed by the words): “Anyone who transgresses against the words of the Sages is liable to the death penalty.”³⁹ How did he (dare) say that the ‘*ibbur* is a tradition from Moses? All the early Sages after Malachi observed (the month) according to the moon, as it is written in the Mishna, in the chapter of Rosh ha-Shana tractate. And (there is also mention of) those five mountains on which they would see the moon: Har ha-Mishḥa, Sarṭava, Agrifna, Ḥoron and Bet Biltay (cf. Mishna, Rosh ha-Shana 2:4).⁴⁰

In this passage, the author refers to the first chapters of Rosh ha-Shana tractate (up to 3:1) [42] indicating how the mishnaic Sages, i.e., those who lived after the time of the last biblical prophet Malachi, determined the time of the beginning of the month on the basis of the appearance of the new moon. He then adds that the new moon was sighted on top of the five

miyān-i māh wa-māh pa didār āmadan-i ū pa ma‘arab wa-in mō‘ādīm waqtihā-yi sar-i māh ki judā hamī buwad pa didār-i išān miyān-i sar-i māh-i āyā wa-rawā).

35 For a detailed discussion of Jewish groups and individuals advocating the theory of conjunction, see Vidro (2021b, 165–73).

36 I thank David Sklare for drawing my attention to this matter.

37 RNL Evr. Arab. I 1166, fols. 4r:25–4v:4: וקד צאר להדא אלחסאב אסם משהור בין אלעאמה וקאל לה עבור עלי אן (wa-qad ṣāra li-hādā al-ḥisāb ism mašhūr bayna al-‘amma wa-qāla lahu ‘ibbur ‘alā anna ‘ibbur fi al-ḥaqīqa innamā huwa ism li-šahr zā‘id alladhī fi al-sana al-kabīsa wa-huwa ism musta‘ār min ism al-ḥaml).

38 The same idea is reiterated in the seventh article of *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqib*. In the first chapter (*bāb*) of this article, al-Qirḳisānī introduces the different views in the nation (*umma*) regarding the determination of the new month. He notes that the Rabbanites turned from eye-witnessing of the crescent to the ‘*ibbur*, which is founded on the maxim: “Passover does not occur on Monday, Wednesday or Friday.” See Vidro (2021a, 18*, 21*, 32*–35*). The eleventh chapter, concerning the proponents of the ‘*ibbur* (*aṣḥāb al-‘ibbur*), elaborates on the Rabbanites’ calendrical principles and the refutations thereof. See Nemoy (1939–1945, 4:804–814).

39 Translation in Shaked (2003, 203–4) with further modifications by Shaul Shaked (personal communication).

40 My translation. For the EJP text, see Appendix, VIII.

mountains mentioned in the passage. However, the known versions of the Mishna clearly state that on the top of these mountains, bonfires were lighted in order to announce the appearance of the new moon (2:2–4).

The next argument against the Rabbanites deals with the rules of postponements (*dəḥiyyot*), [43] which prohibit the occurrence of certain Jewish holidays on certain days of the week. Here, too, the author demonstrates the Rabbanites' unfaithfulness to the sayings of their early rabbinic Sages by providing two mishnaic quotations contradicting these rules:

And (as for) these (rules of postponement, namely) Monday-Wednesday-Friday, [44] and Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday, and Sunday-Wednesday-Friday, and Sunday-Tuesday-Friday – then Yiṣḥaq Nappaḥa ruled (it), for it is written in the Mishna: *The bones and the tendons (and what is left over) must be burned on the sixteenth (of Nissan); If the sixteenth should come out on Shabbat, they must be burned on the seventeenth* (Mishna, Pesahim 7:10). In the section of the Passover (sacrifice), they said (that) *the bones and the tendons*, the bones and the veins shall be burned, (namely) those of the Passover (sacrifice), on the sixteenth day. If the sixteenth day occurs on the Sabbath, they shall be burned on the seventeenth day. So, when the sixteenth day occurs on the Sabbath, is the day of the time of the Passover (sacrifice) not Friday? So, (how) could the Sages of the Mishna say what he (i.e., Yiṣḥaq Nappaḥa) said: *The (first day) of Passover shall not occur on Monday, Wednesday or Friday*, (namely) on Monday, Wednesday (and) Friday, the (first day of) Passover does not occur?

And again, they said: *The (seventh) day of the willow falls on Shabbat* (Mishna, Sukka [45] 4:3), (namely) the day of the willow that occurs on the Sabbath. It is the seventh day of the Tabernacle (i.e., of the Feast of Tabernacles). Is the day of the beginning of the month of Tishrei not Sunday (when the day of the willow occurs on Sabbath)? How do you say: *The (first day) of Rosh ha-Shana shall not occur on Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday*, (namely) on Sunday, Wednesday (and) Friday, the beginning of the month of Tishrei does not occur?⁴¹

According to the Mishna, the sixteenth of the month of Nissan – the day when the leftovers [46] of the Passover sacrifice are burnt – could fall on Saturday. Therefore, during mishnaic times, the first day of Passover (the fifteenth of Nissan) could have occurred on Friday. This stands in clear contrast to the postponement rules (*dəḥiyyot*) set by the Talmudic sage Yiṣḥaq Nappaḥa, according to which Passover cannot occur on Monday, Wednesday or Friday. According to the second quotation in the passage, Hoshā'ana Rabba (“the Day of the Willow”) may occur on Saturday. This leads the author to the conclusion that Rosh ha-Shana could fall on Sunday, in contradiction to another postponement rule saying that Rosh ha-Shana cannot occur on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday.

The long discussion is concluded by returning to Saadiah. Based on the examples from the [47] Torah and the Mishna concerning the eye-witnessing of the new moon, he doubts Saadiah's claim that calendrical calculations begin with the First Man. The author presents the chain of transmission of the “secret of the *‘ibbur*” and concludes with a reference to the relevant chapters in his book of precepts:

So how did Fayyūmī say that this calculation is from the First Man, (by saying [48]

41 For the EJP text, see Appendix, IX.

that) *This is the record of Adam's line* (Gen. 5:1) concerns the (secret of the) *‘ibbur*? He said: Adam handed (the secret of the *‘ibbur*) to Enoch, and Enoch handed to Noah, and Noah to Shem, and Shem to Abraham, and Abraham to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob to the Tribes, and Kehath to Amram, and Amram to Moses, and Moses to Israel.⁴²

I cannot interpret at length here, for much confusion has been undergone regarding the words of Fayyūmī. And I explained about Fayyūmī in those twelve chapters that (are) in the book of precepts in favor of (eye-witnessing) the moon and against the *‘ibbur*.⁴³ This by itself is enough for all (concerning the words of the verse) *as signs and as set times* (Gen. 1:14).⁴⁴

[49]

It is worth noting that earlier in this passage, the author states that Saadiah regards the *‘ibbur* as a heritage from Moses. Interestingly, al-Qirqisānī notes that Saadiah changed his mind regarding the source of *‘ibbur*: At first, he asserted that the *‘ibbur* was a heritage from Adam, but later on, he said that it was a heritage from Moses (Nemoy 1939–1945, 1:117). As for the chain of transmission given by the author of MS D, I have not managed to find it in Saadiah's extant works.⁴⁵ However, it somewhat resembles the chain given in the eighth chapter of the midrashic treatise *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eli‘ezer*, which was probably composed in the early Islamic period (*Pirqe de-Rabbi Eli‘ezer* 8 (Luria 1852, 18a–20b)). According to the midrashic account, the “secret of the *‘ibbur*” was given to Moses and Aaron through divine revelation, and not through Kehath and Amram, as stated in MS D.

[50]

The author concludes this polemical discussion by referring the reader to his book of precepts, where he further opposes Saadiah's views on the calendar. Although this legal work was not preserved, it is plausible to assume that the author refutes other arguments made by the Rabbanites on an array of legal and doctrinal issues. At any rate, the reference to EJP legal works in MS D demonstrates the vast literary production of Karaite Jews who wrote in Judeo-Persian, and their view of themselves as part and parcel of the Karaite tradition.

[51]

Conclusion

To sum up, the EJP exegetical corpus is a valuable source for the intellectual history of Persian-speaking Jewry, which sheds light on the attitude of EJP Karaite authors towards Rabbanite

[52]

42 Although refuting the Rabbanites' view that the “secret of the *‘ibbur*” was passed on from the First Man onwards, the author of MS D asserts that God commanded the First Man to determine the new moon by observation: “And likewise, He informed him of the beginning of the months, (saying): ‘The new moon that you see, know that that month is completed and another month began’.” (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 10v:16–18: *והמצוניי* [ן] *אנה כרד אורא פא קיבל סרי מאהיהא כי מאנג נוג כי ניש* [ן] *בי דאן כי אן מאה המאם בוד*; *wa-hamčuni[n] āgah kard ū-rā pa qibal-i sar-i māhīhā ki māng-i nawg ki niš[i] bi-dān ki ān māh tamām būd wa-māh-i digar āmad*).

43 Lit., “concerning the support for (eye-witnessing) the moon and defeating/rejecting the *‘ibbur*.” It is worth noting that the EJP verb *שכסרן* (*šikastan*; “to break; defeat”) may be a loan translation of the Arabic verb *kasara* and the Hebrew verb *šabar*. When referring to a certain argument or opinion in polemical contexts, the Arabic verb may appear in the sense of “annul, refute.” See Blau (2006, 595; s.v. “*kasara*”).

44 For the EJP text, see Appendix, X.

45 According to David Sklare (personal communication), this chain of transmission does not seem to appear in the known fragments of Saadiah's *Kitāb al-tamyiz*, most of which remains unpublished. At the same time, Saadiah asserts that *‘ibbur* is a tradition from the prophets. In another place, he writes that Noah employed calendrical calculations while in the ark.

law and rabbinic literature. While early Karaites of Iranian origin, as exemplified by the writings of Daniel al-Qūmisī, held a staunch polemical stance against the Rabbanites, including the utter rejection of the rabbinic tradition, the eleventh-century authors of the EJP exegetical corpus criticized their Rabbanite opponents only when encountering themes and verses which stood at the heart of the dispute between the two groups. The polemical discourse in the EJP corpus is narrowed down to specific, mostly legal, subjects. This is particularly apparent in MS D, whose author dedicates an elaborate discussion to refuting the calculation-based calendar of the Rabbanites.

At the same time, the EJP authors were open to exegetical opinions, including those from rabbinic sources. Like their Judeo-Arabic counterparts, the EJP authors opposed the authority of the Oral Torah, not its content. This allowed them to select rabbinic materials that did not contradict their ideology and tradition. Consequently, they relied on rabbinic language to justify their interpretation of biblical words and phrases and grammatical analysis, as shown by the example from MS A. In addition, the author of MS B augmented his exegetical discussions by embedding aggadic midrashim. In some cases, he fashioned these midrashim according to his own needs. [53]

The limited criticism of specific Rabbanite views in the EJP corpus should be attributed to the authors' strong literary ties to Judeo-Arabic Karaite authors from Jerusalem. The EJP authors relied on the teachings of the Karaite center in Jerusalem, which is apparent in the astonishing resemblance between MS A and Ibn Nūḥ's *Diqduq*, and the arguments against the Rabbanite calendar in MS D. During the late tenth and eleventh centuries, al-Qūmisī's all-out attack against Rabbanite institutions and doctrines was toned down in Karaite exegesis hailing from the Karaite center in Jerusalem. [54]

Like the study of other aspects of the EJP exegetical corpus, the investigation of the attitude towards the Rabbanites shows how the corpus authors shared a similar worldview to the Jerusalem Karaites and regarded themselves as part and parcel of the Karaite exegetical tradition. [55]

APPENDIX: Excerpts from the EJP Exegetical Corpus

[56] (26) ... סרה קנאת אפרים ... (29) ... בי דאניד כי אז אן וקת כי ירבעם (30) [ב] נבט אבר כיזיד דושמנאדי אנדר אפתאד (31) [מ]יאן אין עשרה שבטים ויהודה והמישא חסד אן (32) רא בוד כי פא מרתבת יהודה בישתרין בודי עשרה (33) שבטים אבר אישאן חסד דאשתנדי אבר אישאן אן (34) [ר]א כי בוד ואניז אין חסד וכין כי הסת פא גלות מיאן (35) [קרא]ן ומיאן רבנן גודא בי בוד המא פא יכי אבא יהודה (36) [אב]אז גרדנד כי מולכת אז יהודה בוד צון שרה כרד יחוק[אל] (37) [פא] פצל קח לך עץ אחד

[57] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4610, fol. 2v:26–37)

(26) ... *sārā qin'at 'eprayim* ... (29) ... *bi-dānīd ki az ān waqt ki yarob'am* (30) [be] n nəbaṭ abar ḥizīd dušmanādī andar uftād (31) [m]iyān-i in 'ašara šəbaṭim wa-yəhuda wa-hamiša ḥasad ān (32) rā būd ki pa martabat yəhuda bištarin būdī 'ašara (33) šəbaṭim abar išān ḥasad dāštandī abar išān ān (34) [r]ā ki būd wa-aniz in ḥasad wa-kīn ki hast pa galut miyān-i (35) [qarrā'a]n wa-miyān-i rabbanān judā bi-buwad hama pa yak-ī abā yəhuda (36) [ab]āz gardand ki mulkat az yəhuda buwad čun šarḥ kard yeḥezq [el] (37) [pa] fašl-i qah ləkā 'eš 'ehād. [58]

[59] [III] וגופתן השפך נחשתך. מרדומאני נחשתך אבר שכבת זרע שרח כרדנד. ודיגראן גופתנד פֿאַברִינגֶן הסת: ואין גונא נא דידים כי נחשת כואנדה אמד: וגונאי דיגר גופתנד כי נחשת דָאֵת הסת. יעני תן אדפי תו בי אבגסתי תא אן גונא נא באייסת אבא תו בי כרדנד ומעני או עבדה זרה הסת. ואן מרדומאן כי נחשת אבר תן תפסיר המי כוננד המי גוינד כי פא לוגת רבנן תן צִיז נחשת המי כואננד צון גופתנד פא משְנָה. נגע השרץ בנחשתו של תנור ומעני או גופתנד כי תן תנור הסת יעני תן זמי אן תנור:

[60] (Gindin 2007, 1:107)

wa-guftan-i **hiššāpēk nəḥuštēk**. mardumān-i **nəḥuštēk** abar **šikəbat zera**‘ šarḥ kardand. wa-digarān guftand pāšarinḡān⁴⁶ hast: wa-īn gūna na dīdim ki **nəḥošet** ḥ^wānda āmad: wa-gūna-ī digar guftand ki **nəḥošet** dāt hast: ya‘nī tan-i tū bi-abgastī tā ān gūna na bāyast abā tu bi-kardand wa-ma‘ni-yi ū ‘**aboda zara** hast. wa-ān mardumān ki **nəḥošet** abar tan tafsir hamī kunand hamī guyand ki pa luḡat-i rabbanān tan-i čiz **nəḥošet** hamī ḥ^wānand čun guftand pa **mišna. naga**‘ **haš-šereš bi-nəḥošto šel tannur** wa-ma‘ni-yi ū guftand ki tan-i tannūr hast ya‘nī tan-i zamī-yi ān tannūr.

[61]

[62] [III] (23) ... יען השפך נחשתך. מן אלנאס מן פסר אנספאך קידך (24) יעני אנכשאף כִּלְכֵאלך והו תפסיר בעיד לאן לים מן ראם אלנאס (25) יעמלון כלאכילהם נחאס: וקד פסר נחשתך דאתך יעני בדנד (26) וקד אסתעמלו אהל אללגה פי כתבהם אדא אראדו יקולו דאת אלשי (1) יקולון נחשת פלוני כמא וגדנאהם יכתבון נחשת התנור:

[63] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 1756, fols. 78r:23–78v:1)

(23) ... **ya’an hiššāpēk nəḥuštēk**. min al-nās man fassara insifāk qaydiki (24) ya‘nī inkišāf ḡalḡāliki wa-huwa tafsir ba‘id li-anna laysa min rasm al-nās (25) ya‘malūn ḡalḡālahum nuḡas. wa-qad fassira **nəḥuštēk** dātiki ya‘nī badaniki (26) wa-qad ista‘malū ahl al-luḡa fī kutubihim idā arādū yaqūlū dāt al-šay’ (1) yaqūlūn **nəḥošet pəloni** kamā wajadnāhum yaktubūn **nəḥošet hat-tannur**.

[64]

[65] [IV] (13) ... וגרונך מצמאה. יעני גולו תורא אז תשנאי. יעני רון תשנה וגורסה וכס נוקאט (14) אב נא דהנד צון גופת לכן גלה עמי מבלי דעת וכבודו מתי רעב והמונו צחה צמא: דרבנן (15) המי גוינד כי כלקי עטים המי ברדנד טעאם סור כרדנד וניהאדנד פא ביאבאן גופתנד (16) אן ורדגאן ישראלן כי כוד אימא תשנא הים אין דושמנאן כיגיהא תיג רא בי דמיסתנד (17) ודור בי ניהאדנד גופתנד כי הָאֲנָפָה כִּינִיָּהָ אב. כורדנד אן סור. סוי כיגיהא רפתנד המא (18) תיג בודנד ואין רא גופת במדבר ארבו לנו. וישעיהו גופת בניך עולפו שכבו בראש כל חוצות כתוא וג

[66] (BL Or. 2460, fol. 16r:13–18)

(13) ... **ū-ḡərōnēk miš-šim**’ā. ya‘nī gulū-yi tu rā az tišnayī. ya‘nī rawī tišna wa-gursa wa-kas nuqāṭ-i (14) āb na dihand čun guft **lākēn gālā ‘ammī mib-bəli dā’at**

[67]

46 New Persian: *pāwaraṅgan/pā’awraṅgan/pā’āwraṅgan*. Since the second consonant is represented by the letter *bet* with an upper horizontal stroke, it should probably be pronounced as a voiced bilabial [β], or even labiodental [v].

ū-ḵəbōdō mətē rā‘āb wa-hāmōnō šihē šāmā: wa-rabbanān⁴⁷ (15) hamī gūyand ki ḥalq-ī ‘azīm hamī burdand ṭa‘ām sūr kardand wa-nihādand pa biyābān guftand (16) ān wardagān-i isrā‘ilān ki ḥ^wad imā tišna hīm in dušmanān ḥīgihā-yi tīg rā bi-damīstand (17) wa-dūr bi-nihādand guftand ki hānka ḥīgihā-yi āb. ḥ^wardand ān sūr. sūy-i ḥīgihā raftand hama (18) tīg budand wa-īn rā guft **bam-miḏbār ’ārəḇū lānū. wa-yiša’ayahu** guft **bānayik** ‘ulləpū šākəbū bə-rōš kol ḥūšōt kəṭō wa-g(omer).

[68] (19) [V] אני כאנה דויום אניז בד תר: (20) מיטום ואספסייאנוס כרדנד: בידאן כי בירון אברדנד כלקי בסיאר אז ישראלן (21) וגופתנד כי פא גאי המי ברים שומא רא יכי רוז ב רוז גורסא ותשנה. ואן ווקת פא (22) ביאבאן בודנד. כיגיהא דמיסתה תיג בראור ניהאדנד ומעמיהא סור כרדנד (23) גופתנד כי בי כורית. ישראלן גופתנד תשנה הים. תא גופתנד כי הא אב כיגיהא (24) פור ניהאדין. כורדנד מעאמיהא סור צון רפתנד פא בון כיגיהא דינדנד כיגיהא (25) תיג גרייסתנד ומורדנד בסיאר אז אישאן פא תשנאי:

[69] (BL Or. 2460, fol. 10r:19-25)

(19) ān-i ḥāna-yi duyum anīz bad tar: (20) **Titus va-Aspasiyanus** kardand: bi-dān ki bīrūn āwardand ḥalq-ī bisyār az isrā‘ilān (21) wa-guftand ki pa ḡā-ī hamī barīm šumā rā yakī rūz du rūz gursa⁴⁸ wa-tišna. wa-ān waqt pa (22) biyābān budand. ḥīgihā-yi damīsta-yi tīg barawar nihādand wa-ṭa‘miha sūr kardand (23) guftand ki bi-ḥ^warīt.⁴⁹ isrā‘ilān guftand tišna hīm. tā guftand ki hā āb ḥīgihā (24) purr nihāda-ē ḥ^wardand ṭa‘āmihā-yi sūr čun raftand pa bun ḥīgihā didand ḥīgihā-yi (25) tīg giryīstand wa-murdand bisyār az išān pa tišnayī.

[70]

[71] (39) [VI] ... דרבנן גופתנד כי למה נקרא (40) שמו ירמיה בשביל שבִּימיו היו עדת ישראל ממרים היו עם יי. דא ירמיו (41) ידם ביי:

[72] (BL Or. 2460, fol. 17r:39–41)

(39) ... wa-rabbanān⁵⁰ guftand ki **lama niqra** (40) **šəmo yirmiya bišəbil še-bə-yamav hayu** ‘adat yiśra’el mamrim hayu ‘im ’adonay. d(aḇar) a(ḥer) yarimu (41) **yadam ba-’adonay**:

[73]

[74] (23) [VII] ... ופיומי ראס אל מתיבה גופת (24) כי אן אור יום ראשון רא בכשד פא ג ואז אישאן אפתאב (25) ומאנג ואסתרגאן אפריד ועגב אמד אימא רא אז או כי צון (26) גודישת אבר קול המא חכמים כוישתן כי המא חכמים או (27) גופתנד כי אן אור פנהאן כרדי פא סוי צדיקים פא סוי עתיד (28) פא אן דרוסתרי כי אין מאורות אז נא ציו אפרידא אמדנד

[75] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 9r:23–28)

(23) ... wa-fayyūmī ra’s al-maṭība guft (24) ki ān ’or yom rišon rā baḥšīd pa sih

[76]

47 The word was deleted, possibly by a later reader of the text.

48 New Persian: *gurusna*.

49 On the second-plural ending *-yt*, see Paul (2013, sec. 142).

50 The word was deleted, possibly by a later reader of the text.

wa-az iṣān āftāb (25) wa-māng wa-astaragān āfrīd wa-‘ağab āmad imā rā az ū ki čun (26) guḏišt abar qawl-i hama ḥaḳamim-i ḥ^wištan ki hama ḥaḳamim-i ū (27) guftand ki ān ’or panhān kardī pa sūy-i ṣaddiqim pa sūy-i ‘atid (28) pa ān drustarī ki in mə’orot az nā-čiz āfrīda āmadand.

[77] [VIII] (14) ... ואניז כי פא משנה ופא תלמוד (15) חוגתיהא פא סוי מאנג ניבישתה הסת פס עגב אז פיומי כי (16) צון דרוזן כרד חכמים וקולי אישאן ואו אבר אן בוד כל העובר (17) על דברי חכמים חייב מיתה: צון גופת כי עיבור קבלה הסת אז (18) משה: והמא חכמים פיש פסי מלאכי פא מאנג דאשתנד צון (19) פא משנה ניבישתה הסת פא פרק מסכתא ראש השנה: ואן ה (20) כוהיהא כי אבר או דינדנדי מאנג הר המשחה וסרמבא ונאגריפנא (21) וחורון ובית בלתי:

[78] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 10r:14–21)

(14) ... wa-aniz ki pa mišna wa-talmud (15) ḥuğğatiha pa sūy-i māng nibišta hast pas ‘ağab az fayyūmī ki (16) čun drūzan kard ḥaḳamim wa-qawl-i iṣān wa-ū abar ān būd kol ha-‘ober (17) ‘al dibəre ḥaḳamim ḥayyab mita: čun guft ki ‘ibbur qabbala hast az (18) moshe: wa-hama ḥaḳamim-i piš pas-i mal’aki pa māng dāštand čun (19) pa mišna nibišta hast pa pereq masseḳta roš haš-šana: wa-ān panğ (20) kūhihā ki abar ū didandī māng har ham-mišha wə-sarṭaba wə-’agriṭna (21) wə-ḥoron u-bet biltay:

[79]

[80] [IX] (21) ... ואין בלתי וגהו ואלדו ואלגו פס ניהאד יצחק (22) נפחה כי פא משנה ניבישתי העצמות והגידים ישרפו בששה (23) עשר חל ששה עשר להיות בשבת ישראל שרפו בשבעה עשר: פא (24) קיצתי פסח גופתנד העצמות והגידים סתכואניהא ורגיהא (25) סוכתא אייד אני פסח פא רוזי יז אגר רוזי יז שבת בוד סוכתה (26) אייד פא רוזי יז פס כי רוזי יז שבת בוד הנא רוזי מועד פסח (27) רוזי ששי בוד: פס כודאונדאן משנה אין גופתנד צון המי (28) גויד לא בודו פסח. רוזי ב שבת ד שבת א שבת נא בוד פסח: (29) ואבאז גופתנד יום ערבקה שחל להיות בשבת רוזי ערבה כי רוזי (30) שבת בוד רוזי הפתום סוכה בוד הנא רוזי סרי מאהי תשרי (31) רוזי יך שבת בוד צון המי גויי כי לא אדד ראש השנה רוזי (32) יך שבת ד שבת א שבת נא בוד סרי מאהי תשרי:

[81] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fol. 10r:21–32)

(21) ... wa-in bd”w wa-gh”z wa-’d”w wa-’g”w pas nihād yiṣḥaq (22) nappaḥa ki pa mišna nibišta ha-‘ašamot wə-hag-gidim yišarəfu baš-šišša (23) ‘ašar ḥal šišša ‘ašar lihyot baš-šabbat yišarəfu baš-šib’a ‘ašar: pa (23) qišsat-i (24) pesaḥ guftand ha-‘ašamot wə-hag-gidim sutuḥ^wānihā wa-ragihā (25) sūḥta āyad ān-i pesaḥ pa rüz-i šānzdahum agar rüz-i šānzdahum šabbat būd sūḥta (26) āyad pa rüz-i hafdahum pas ki rüz-i šānzdahum šabbat būd ha-na rüz-i mo’ed pesaḥ (27) rüz-i šiši būd: pas ḥ^wadāwandān-i mišna in guftand čun hamī (28) gūyad lo bd”w pesaḥ. rüz-i du-šanba čahār-šanba ādīna na būd pesaḥ: (29) wa-abāz guftand yom ‘araba še-ḥal lihyot bə-šabbat rüz-i ‘araba ki rüz-i (30) šabbat būd rüz-i haftum-i sukka būd ha-na rüz-i sar-i mäh-i tišre (31) rüz-i yak-šanba būd čun hamī gūyī ki lo ’d”w roš haš-šana rüz-i (32) yak-šanba čahār-šanba ādīna na būd sar-i mäh-i tišre:

[82]

[83] (32) [X] ... פס צון (33) גופת פיומי כי אין חיסב אז אדם הראשון הסת זה ספר תולדות (34) אדם: עיבור הסת: גופת אדם מסר לחנוך. וחנוך מסר לנח. (35) ונח לשם. ושם לאברהם ואברהם ליצחק ויצחק ליעקב (36) ויעקב לשבטים וקהת לעמרם ועמרם למשה ומשה (37) לקהל ישראל. ואידר תפסיר דראז נא המי תואנום כ[רדן] (1) כי בסיאר סודע גודישת אבר אין סכון פיומי ופא אן יב פרקים (2) כי פא ספר מצות אבר קוית כרדן מאנג ושכסתן עיבור שרח (3) כרדום אבר פיומי: כוד המא רא בס הסת והיו לאותות ולמועדים

[84] (RNL Evr. Arab. I 4605, fols. 10r:32–10v:3)

(32) ... pas čun (33) guft fayyūmī ki in hisēb az **adam ha-rišon** hast ze **sēper tōlādōt** (34) 'ādām: 'ibbur hast: guft **adam masar la-ḥanok. wa-ḥanok masar la-noah** (35) **wə-noah la-šem. wə-šem la-'abraham wə-'abraham la-yiṣḥaq wə-yiṣḥaq la-ya'aqob** (36) **wə-ya'aqob laš-šəbatim u-qəhat la-'amram wə-'amram la-moše u-moše** (37) **li-qəhal yiśra'el.** wa-īdar tafsīr-i darāz na hamī tawānum k[ardan] (1) ki bisyār swd⁵¹ gudišt abar in saḥ^wan-i fayyūmī wa-pa ān duwāzdah **pəraqim** (2) ki pa **sefer mišvot** abar qawwiyat⁵² kardan-i māng wa-šikastan-i 'ibbur šarḥ (3) kardum abar fayyūmī: ḥ^wad hama rā bas hast **wə-hāyū la-'ōtōt ū-lə-mō'ādīm**

[85]

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51 The word may be related to Arabic *sad'a* (“calamity, misfortune”). Alternatively, the word may be a misspelling of Arabic *sawdā'* (“melancholy, sorrow”).

52 To my knowledge, the form, which is derived from the Arabic root *q-w-y*, is not attested in Persian lexicography.

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