Interconnected Traditions

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Cambridge University Library T-S NS 297.236, a Karaite version of the Hebrew Bible (Ezekiel 16.24–40); the Hebrew is written in Arabic script but with Tiberian vowels and cantillation signs (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library).
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THE ARABIC COUNTERPART
OF THE BYZANTINE KARAITE TREATISE
MARPE LA-'AṢEM[*]

Gregor Schwarb

This contribution introduces the primary Arabic model underlying *Sefer Marpe la-'Aṣem*, a well-known eleventh-century Byzantine Hebrew manual on the fundamentals of the Jewish Faith according to the doctrine of the Baṣran Mu'tazila, which at the time was a major strand of both Islamic and Jewish thought. It is part of a comprehensive study of Byzantine Karaite Hebrew translations from Arabic and adaptations of Arabic compositions, which has long been understood to be a major desideratum in the field. Measured against the significant amount of scholarship devoted to Arabic-into-Hebrew translations produced in a western European context,[1] the Hebrew translations of 'the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project' (Ankori 1957, 424–52) have not been accorded

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[1] See, for instance, the bibliographical survey of the PESHAT project at https://www.peshat.org/nav?path=left.bibliography; Leicht and Veltri (2019).

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commensurate attention in spite of their obvious historico-lin-
guistic and historico-cultural significance.[2]

    The conditions to undertake such a study have never been
more opportune than now. The ongoing reconstruction and crit-
ical edition of Arabic compositions produced by scholars associ-
ated with the Karaite Compound of Learning (*dār al-ʿilm*) in Je-
rusalem provide a necessary condition for study of the Byzantine
Hebrew translations alongside their Arabic source texts. Other
preliminary tasks of a comprehensive study include:

(1) A renewed thorough overview of the corpus of Byzantine
     Hebrew texts that were translated or adapted from Arabic
     source texts – Judging by the updated English translation
     (2013) of Steinschneider's *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen
     des Mittelalters* (1893), our current state of knowledge has
     been only marginally extended over the course of the last
     century (compare Steinschneider 1893, 449–61, §§263–
     73, with Steinschneider 2013, 183–200, §§263–73). The
     update of the section on Karaite Hebrew translations
     (§§263–73) is essentially limited to the listing of
     additional manuscripts harvested from the catalogue of
     the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the
     National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. Most of these
     manuscripts have by now been digitised and are
     conveniently accessible online.

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[2] Ankori (1957) remains the most exhaustive history of early Byzantine
Karaite Hebrew literature and Maman (1979) is still the most detailed
linguistic description of an early Byzantine Karaite Arabic-into-Hebrew
translation.

(2) The preparation of critical editions of the Hebrew translations and adaptations – At present, the majority of these texts are merely available as transcripts of single manuscripts and/or substandard uncritical editions (see Lasker et al. 2019, 11 fn. 38).[3] Only critically edited Hebrew translations can be used as indirect textual witnesses assisting the reconstruction and edition of the underlying Arabic source texts. They will also facilitate the analysis of the numerous Greek glosses inserted into the Hebrew translations which can now also benefit from significant advancements made in the realm of Byzantine Greek lexicography (Rodríguez Adrados 1980– ; Trapp 1994–2017; Lasker et al. 2019, 20, 708–41).

(3) At a rough estimate, the corpus of Karaite Hebrew translations and adaptations of Arabic texts comprises one and a half million words. About half of this corpus has thus far been reconstructed in synoptic draft editions.[4] They can be used to build aligned parallel

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[3] A substantial corpus of Byzantine Karaite Hebrew texts is included in the Historical Dictionary Project of the Academy of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem and freely accessible and searchable via the *Maʾagarim* database. The Karaite Hebrew translations published by Yosef al-Gamil (Ashdod: Tifʾeret Yosef Institute) are unfortunately riddled with typos, misreadings, and misinterpretations.

[4] Synoptic draft editions of the Arabic source text and their Byzantine Hebrew translations/adaptations have been completed for Yūsuf al-Baṣīr's *Al-Kitāb al-Muḥtawī, Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, and parts of *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*, Yeshuʿa ben Yehuda's *Risāla fī ʾl-Jawāb ʿan Masāʾil Mushkila fī ʾl-Tarkīb, Tafsīr ʿAśeret ha-Devarim al-Mashrūḥ, Tafsīr 'Bereshit Rabba'*, and large

corpora and create a parallel concordance, which will serve as the starting point for a comprehensive lexicon of Karaite Arabic-into-Hebrew translations and the interspersed Judaeo-Greek glosses.[5]

The present article is intended to make a small contribution to task no. (1). It will be followed by studies of similar scope examining the Arabic source texts of other major Byzantine Hebrew compositions, such as Tobias ben Moses's *Sefer Oṣar Neḥmad* or Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-ʿOsher*.

1.0. *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* in Research History

Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem (< 'Healing to the Bones' [Prov. 16.24])[6] is extant in at least seven manuscripts, which are described in the pertinent catalogues.[7] Among European orientalists, the treatise

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sections of Levi ben Yefet's *Sefer Miṣvot*. The exact relationship between Yeshuʿa ben Yehuda's *Long Commentary on Leviticus* and Tobias ben Moses's *Oṣar Neḥmad* is currently being examined. The studies of Gaash (2015b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018; 2023) and Vidro (2011; 2013) have laid the ground for a synoptic alignment of *Meʾor ʿAyyin* and *Kitāb al-ʿUqūd*.

[5] See, in this context, the desideratum of "a study of the lexical scope, the application of words, and other linguistic aspects of the literary creations of Tobias ben Moses and his colleagues" invoked by Ankori (1957, 423 fn. 189).

[6] As mentioned by Lasker et al. (2019, 11 fn. 36), it is possible that the author intended the title to be vocalised *Marpeʾ la-ʿEṣem*. In this article, we will use the Masoretic vocalisation of the pausal form, *Marpeʾ la-ʿAṣem*.

[7] To the six manuscripts listed in Steinschneider (2013, 198ff, §272), one may add MS St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, B 430

was first mentioned by J. C. Wolf (1714), who reproduced the book list from Alphabet 100 of Judah Hadassi's ʾ*Eshkol ha-Kofer* in his *Notitia Karaeorum.*

In scholarly literature, *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* has routinely been referred to from the 1860s onwards. S. Pinsker (1860, 173) briefly mentioned the treatise in the appendix of his *Liqquṭe Qadmoniyot*, and confidently ascribed it to Yeshuʿa ben Yehuda. J. Fürst (1865, 185–86) already took this attribution for granted. A. Neubauer (1866, 146, no. 686), who consulted MS St Petersburg, RNL, Yevr. I 686 shortly after its acquisition by the Imperial Library in 1862, presumed the treatise to be "a Byzantine product" on account of its frequent Greek glosses. M. Steinschneider admitted to the possibility that the treatise was translated from Arabic (Steinschneider 1893, 460, §272; 1902, 93ff, §51.7). In 1921, S. Poznański (1921, 185, ln. 30, no. 15, with commentary on 187ff) published a seventeenth-century book-list from MS London, British Library, Add. 22,911, fols 470r–473r, which attributes the treatise to Yūsuf al-Baṣīr.[8] According to J. Mann (1935, 290–1 fn. 10), the author

> evidently belonged to the group of Byzantine disciples who studied under the eminent Karaite scholars of Jerusalem in the eleventh century. Perhaps the author should be identified with Tobias b. Moses.... It reads not as a translation from the Arabic but as an original composition. Hence the

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(Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts [IMHM] F 53611), fols 103r–132r.

[8] For a description of MS London, British Library, Add. 22,911/III, see Margoliouth (1909, 436, no. 1062/III).

> Greek expressions therein prove that the author cannot be
> identical with Abūʾl Faraj Furḳān.

Z. Ankori (1959, 429 fn. 203; 1956, 52, with fn. 28) was non-committal about its authorship: "While it is obvious that this Byzantine Karaite once lived and studied in Jerusalem, that chapter in his life was closed by now. He… humbly remembered his past as a student of the Jerusalem masters."

In 1979, G. Vajda (1979, 103, 107, 109 fn. 27) made reference to *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* in a succinct study of two other Byzantine Hebrew treatises, *Meshivat Nefesh* and *Ṣidduq ha-Dīn*, of which he had prepared draft editions based on MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, héb. 670. He considered all three treatises to be original Hebrew compositions, even if he did not rule out the possibility that they were summaries or paraphrases of Arabic texts. In the appendix to an article on *kalām* definitions in Yūsuf al-Baṣīr's *Kitāb al-Tamyīz,* posthumously published by P. Fenton, Vajda (1991, 28–30, with fn. 39) cited the definitions of technical terms found in *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* based on the Paris manuscript and referred to a planned study on the structure of the treatise which evidently has yet to be completed.

In 2006, Y. Al-Gamil published a print version of *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* based on a single, late manuscript (Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College, MS 848). The Academy of the Hebrew Language in turn included a transcript of MS Paris, BnF, héb. 670, in its Historical Dictionary Project.[9]

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[9] See the *Maʾagarim* database at https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=657001.

In their thorough study and partial edition of Judah Hadassi's *ʾEshkol ha-Kofer*, D. Lasker, J. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, and D. Sklare (Lasker et al. 2019, 302–3, 706–7) classed *Marpe la-ʿAṣem*—which is mentioned twice in *ʾEshkol ha-Kofer*[10]—with "the original Byzantine Karaite theological treatises written in Hebrew." They tentatively ascribed it to Tobias ben Moses ("presumed author"), because "the author of *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* refers to himself as among 'the insignificant ones of Jerusalem' [ולא אני מקטני ירושלם אלא קטן שבקטנים], providing reason to assume that Tobias was the author" (Lasker et al. 2019, 11 fn. 37). It is also surmised that the two treatises *Matoq la-Nefesh* (not extant) and *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* might be two parts of a single project, given that both titles are derived from the same verse (Prov. 16.24) (Lasker et al. 2019, 11 fn. 38, 13). Since the definitions of terms in Alphabets 64–65 of *ʾEshkol ha-Kofer* draw heavily on the terminological chapters of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem*, the corresponding "Glossary of Greek Terms in *Eshkol ha-Kofer*" covers the full set of Greek glosses contained in *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* (Lasker et al. 2019, 731–33).

In a recent article, M. Firrouz and D. Lasker (2020, 12, 16) have placed special emphasis on the propaedeutic and didactic character of the treatise, which the author introduces as "a concise and elucidated book" aimed at a general readership. The book, he advises, should be studied repeatedly and in groups of two or three students.[11]

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[10] In Alphabet 33, letter ח and 100, letter ו.

[11] ...ספר מקוצר ומבואר יוכל כל אדם לו. ואם יבוא הקורא בו משער אל שעריו או אל פרק מן פרקיו ולא יהיה גלוי לו, ישוב אליו פעם ופעמים, וכל מי שיתפעם בו הוא יבין

2.0. The Arabic Model of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem*

At the end of his introduction, the author of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* briefly points out that his primer draws on the writings of his masters in Jerusalem: "What I found in their books, I revised and wrote it up."[12]

One of these books is an anonymous compendium on fundamental theological doctrines, which turns out to be the primary source and model of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem*. Thus far, I have identified three fragments of this treatise deriving from three distinct codices: MSS St Petersburg, RNL, Yevr.-Arab. I 3099, fols 1–28 [= MS ה];[13] Yevr.-Arab. II 915, fols 13–23 [= MS ג];[14] and Yevr.-Arab. II 1138, fols 1–4 [= MS ח].[15] None of these fragments has been catalogued so far.

The treatise is an early example of Jewish Bahshamī Muʿtazilī *uṣūl al-dīn*. Measured by word count and average chapter length, its full version was comparable in size to Yūsuf al-Baṣīr's *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*. Its structure shows conspicuous parallels to ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī's *Kitāb al-Muḥīṭ bi-ʾl-Taklīf*,

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הדבר. וכן יתחברו חברים שנים או שלשה יותר על הדבר, ואם יקשה עליהם והם יבינו (MS St Petersburg, IOM, C 103, fol. 69vb, lns 15–20).

[12] ומה שראיתי בספריהם חקקתי וכתבתי אותם (MS St Petersburg, IOM, C 103, fol. 69vb, lns 25–26).

[13] https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001549080205171.

[14] https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001601910205171.

[15] https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/he/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001603740205171.

which was written after his deposition as chief judge of Rayy in 385/995.[16] This book, which has survived exclusively in manuscripts of Karaite provenance, became a prevalent teaching manual of Muʿtazilī *uṣūl al-dīn* in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. It therefore stands to reason that our treatise was composed around this time period. At present, the available evidence is, however, insufficient to venture an identification with a known composition.[17]

The treatise targeted a readership similar to that of *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* as may be inferred from its closing statement (Yevr.-Arab. I 3099, fol. 28v, lns 36–39):

קד אגׄתהדנא פי תצׄמין הדׄא אלכתאב מא לאח אנה יחסן דׄכרה פי מתׄלה
מן אלמכׄתצראת וסלכנא פיה טריקא יאנס אלמבתדי בה אלי הדׄא
אלעלם. ומן אללה גׄל תׄנאוה ותקדסת אסמאוה נסל אלמעונה ואלתופיק
אלי מא ירצׄיה בעטים אחסאנה ועמום אמתנאנה ולה אלחמד כמא הו
אהלה ומסתחקה.

We strove to include in this book what is deemed to be fitting to be touched upon in suchlike compendia and pursued a method that is suitable for the beginner to acquire a liking for this science. We ask God, may His praise be exalted and His names sanctified, for support to achieve

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[16] A striking example is the position of the chapter *Bāb fī annahu taʿālā yaṣiḥḥu an yurīda wa-yakrah* (MS RNL, Yevr.-Arab. I 3104, fol. 18v) which was later criticised in Ibn Mattaway's *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ fī ʾl-Muḥīṭ bi-ʾl-Taklīf* (ed. Houben 1965, 147; ed. Al-Sayyid ʿAzmi 1965, 151).

[17] Our treatise is only one of several unidentified *uṣūl al-dīn* compositions of the same period. Possible authors include David ben Boʿaz, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, Yeshuʿa ben Yehuda, or one of the obscure eleventh-century authors of *kalām*-treatises mentioned by Ibn al-Hītī, namely ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf Samiyyah(?) and Ḥananya ben Yaʿqov.

what pleases Him through the magnitude of His benefaction and His all-encompassing benevolence. Praise be to Him in accordance with what He deserves and is entitled to.

The dependence of *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* on the Arabic compendium concerns both structure and content. The following table displays the parallel structure of the two treatises which is only compromised by the fact that neither one has come down to us in complete form.[18] Accordingly, it cannot be determined at present whether the Arabic treatise comprised an opening section with terminological definitions and whether the complete text of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* contained a section on divine speech. While all extant copies of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* render the same deficient and incomplete text version, the various copyists did not hesitate to change the wording and the hierarchy of the chapter headings, and to introduce new subchapters and a convenient numbering system.[19]

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[18] Most copies of *Marpe la-ʿAṣem* include a note concerning the incompleteness of their Vorlage (see, for instance, MS Paris, BnF. héb. 670, fol. 157v, as quoted in the table below), or left a gap at the location of a presumed lacuna.

[19] On this account, Steinschneider (2013, 199) noted that "this treatise is composed of twelve chapters in the Paris manuscript, but in the Firkovich manuscript, according to Pinsker, of three chapters and twenty-five gates, apart from the introduction." In the following table, [—] indicates a lacuna in the manuscripts. Chapter headings in square brackets are reconstructed from the beginning of the chapter.

Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem (MS SP, IOM, C 103, fols 69r–83r)	*Muḫtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn* (MSS ג, ה, ח)
הצעה למרפא לעצם [הקדמת הרב המחבר ע׳ה׳] (69ra)	
שאלה (69rb)	
שאלה (69va)	
"תחלת ספר הנקרא מרפא לעצם" תחלת הספר (70ra)	
חוב שנדע אותו מטרם שנאשרהו	[—]
פתרון מאמר בעלי הלשון (דבר, אנוש, חי, גוף) (70ra)	[—]
פתרון החלק (70rb)	[—]
גבול הטפל ואמתתו (70va)	[—]
פרק הנקבץ (70vb)	
שער – חוב החפוש בלב לדעת הבורא ית״ש (71ra)	[באב אלקול פי וגֹוב אלנטֹר] (ה 1א)
שאלה (71va)	
שאלה (71va)	פצל [פי אן לא יגֹוז אן יכון תעאלי מעלומא צֹרורה] (ה 1א)
שאלה (71vb)	
שאלה (72ra)	
פרק [לא נדע את הבורא מהתורה] (72ra)	פצל [פי אן לא ימכן אן יכון אלטריק אלי מערפתה תעאלי מן קול אלאנביא עליהם אלסלאם] (ה 1ב)
פרק (72va)	

שער דעת חדוש העולם (72vb)	באב אלקול פי חדת̇ אלאג̇סאם/אלג̇ואהר (ה 11א)
פרק – הראיה כי שמה טפלים (72vb)	אתֿבאת אלאכואן (ה 11א)
פרק – ראיה אחרת כי שמה טפלים (73rb)	דליל אכֿר פי אתֿבאת אלאכואן (ה 12א)
הראיה כי הטפלים חדשים (73rb)	פצל פי אן הד̇ה אלאכואן מחדתֿה (ה 12ב)
[—] [scribal note in MS Paris, BnF, héb. 670, fol. 157v] אמר המעתיק: בעוונותינו הרבים זה הפרק חסר מן ההעתק ועוד אחריו פרקים [שנים]. כמו כן חסרים מן ההעתק: הפרק הרביעי בביאור כי הטפלים לא יסורו מהגופים והפרק החמישי בביאור מי הוא לא יפרד מן החדש גם הוא חדש כמוהו, כפי מה שייעד הרב המחבר נ׳ע׳ בתחלת השער. ובביאור אלו השלושה דרושים בראיות ומופתים יתבאר באמת חדוש העולם ובריאתו במופת וראיה אמתית, כמבואר בס׳ נעימות ובס׳ מחכימת פתי. והשי״ת ימלא חסרוננו ונזכה למצוא אמרי חפץ של הרב המחבר ע׳ה״׳	פצל [פי אן אלג̇סם לא יסבקהא ולא יתקדמהא פי אלוג̇וד] (ה 13א) פצל [פי אן מא לא יכֿלו מן אלמחדתֿ מחדתֿ] (ה 13א)
שער – הראיה על המחדש אשר חדש את העולם ית״ש וית״ז (73vb)	באב פי אתֿבאת אלצאנע (ה 13ב)
ראיה אחרת (74ra)	פצל (ה 14א)
ראיה אחרת (74ra)	פצל (ה 14ב)

באב אלקול פי צפאתה תעאלי (ה 15א)	שער – היותו יכול לא בכח ולא יצא מהיותו יכול כי הוא יכול לנפשו (74ra)
	פרק (74rb)
	פרק – כי הוא יכול ולא בכח : כמו הא׳ ממנו יכול בכח אלא הוא יכול לנפשו (74rb)
פצל פי כונה עאלמא (ה 15ב)	שער – היותו יודע לנפשו ואינו יודע בדעת (74vb)
	פרק (74vb)
פצל פי כונה חיא (ה 15ב)	שער – היותו חי לא בחיים אלא חי לנפשו (75rb)
פצל פי כונה סמיעא בציראً (ה 16א)	שער – היותו שומע לא באזן ורואה לא בעין (75rb)
פצל פי אנה תעאלי מוגֹוד (ה 16ב)	שער – היותו נמצא (75va)
פצל פי אנה תעאלי יצח אן יריד ויכרה (ה 2א)	שער – היותו חופץ (75vb)
פצל פי אן לה תעאלי צפה קד אבֹתֹץ בהא גיר אלצפאת אלמקדם דֹכרהא (ה 2א)	שער – היותו יכול יודע חי ומצואי לנפשו הוא למען כי יש לו אשור חמישי למענו היו לו אלה האשורים (75vb)
פצל פי אנה תעאלי קאדר עאלם חי מוגֹוד לא בפאעל (ה 2ב)	שער – היותו אין לו ראשון (76ra)
פצל (ה 3א)	
פצל פי דֹלך (ה 3א)	
אלכלאם פי [מא לא יגֹוז עליה מן אלצפאת] ומא יתצל בה (ה 4א)	[There is no corresponding section in *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem*]
פצל [לא יגֹוז אן יכון תעאלי גֹאהלא׳ טֹאנא׳ נאטֹרא׳ מפכרא׳ מתאמלא] (ה 5א)	

הדבור על צדקו (76vb)	[אלכלאם פי אלעדל]
	פצל [לא יגׄז עלא אללה תעאלי אן יכון משתהיא ולא נאפרא] (ה 5ב)
	אלכלאם פי אלכלאם (ה 6א)
	פצל [פי כונה קאדרא עלי פעל אלכלאם] (ה 8א)
שער – היותו אינו נראה לעין (76ra)	פצל פי נפי אלרויה ען אלקדים תעאלי ואדראכה בשי [מן אלחואס] (ה 9א)
פרק (76rb)	דליל אכׄר (ה 9ב)
שער – כי בורא העולם אינו גוף (76va)	פצל (ה 10א) [—]
שער – היות הבורא אחד ואין שני לו (76va)	[באב אלקול פי אן אלקדים תעאלי ואחד לא תׄאני לה] (ג 21א)
ראיה אחרת (76vb)	פצל (ג 21ב)
ראיה אחרת (76vb)	פצל (ג 21ב) [—]
שער – כי אלהינו ית״ש לא יצטרך אל דבר יביאהו אל נפשו להועיל לו ולא יצטרך אל דבר ימנע בו רע יבוא עליו ונזק בו (77ra)	[—]
שער – מעשה האל כי הוא צדק ואין בו חמס ולא עול ותוך (77ra)	
פרק (77va)	
שער – כי הטפים והבהמות יתן להם תחת הכאב ההוא שיביא עליהם דבר טוב ויוסיף על הכאב כמה פעמים (77vb)	

שער – כי אלהינו לא צוה אותנו מצות עשה ומצות לא תעשה כי אם הורנו והשכילנו במה שצונו (78ra)	אלכלאם פי אלתכליף (ה 18א)
שער העשתונות, והם המעשים אשר העושה בם קרוב ממעשה הצדק ורחוק ממעשה הרשע (78va)	אלכלאם פי אלאלטאף (ה 22א)
פרק (78vb)	פצל (ה 22ב)
שער הנבואה (78rb)	אלכלאם פי אלנבוה (ה 24א)
פרק [המופת] (79vb)	פצל [פי אלמעג̇ז] (ה 19א)
שער הראיה על אמתת נבואת משה רבנו בן עמרם ז׳ל׳ ועל תורתו כי היא אמת ונכונה (80rb)	באב אלקול פי ד̇כר אלדלאלה עלי צחה נבוה סידנא מוסי בן עמראן עליה אלסלאם וצחה שרעה (ה 19ב)
שער כי התורה נתקיימה עלינו עד עולמי עולמים ועד דורי דורים (81ra)	פצל [פי אן הד̇א אלשרע מובד עלינא ועלי אג̇יאלנא אבדא אלדהר לא ינסך̇] (ה 27א)
שער – מה יהיה שכר במעשים מהלול וחלופו ונועם וכאב גהנום (81vb)	[—] [באב אלקול פי אלת̇ואב ואלעקאב] (ה 25א)
פרק [הלול עושה היפה הנדבה] (82ra)	פצל [מדח פאעל אלחסן אלנדב] (ה 25א)
פרק [האמת אשר להלול ולנעים] (82rb)	פצל פי חד אלמדח ואלת̇ואב ואלד̇ם ואלעקאב (ה 25ב)
שער (82rb)	פצל פי אן אלעבד יסתחק אלת̇ואב במא ד̇כרנאה (ה 25ב)
שער – כי יהיה לו מעשים טובים ויהיה לו מעשים רעים, איך יהיה חשבונו, ואם יהיו די לא יוסיף מעשה על מעשה (82va)	[—]
פרק (82vb)	פצל (ה 28א)
שער משפט התשובה ומה היא (83ra)	אלקול פי אלאעאדה (ה 28ב)

The correspondence in structure is complemented by the parallelism in the line of reasoning within each chapter. The correlation between the contents of the two texts is most striking in the second part on divine justice. The following text comparison, which due to editorial space restrictions will be confined to the first chapter of the section on divine incentives (ʾalṭāf; Heb. ʿeshtonot), could readily be extended to the subsequent sections on prophecy, abrogation, and eschatology.[20]

שער העשתונות	אלכלאם פי אלאלטאף
והם המעשים אשר העושה בם קרוב ממעשה הצדק ורחוק ממעשה הרשע.	אללטף הו מא ענדה יכתאר אלמכלף טאעה אלמכלף תעאלי מן פעל אלחסן ותרך אלקביח או מא כאן ענדה אקרב. ואלמפסדה הי מא ענדה יכתאר אלמכלף מעציה אלמכלף מן תרך אלחסן ופעל אלקביח או מא יכון ענדה אקרב אלי דלך. והדא מערוף פי אלשאהד אן בעץׄ אלאפעאל ידעו אלי בעץׄ ויבעד ען בעץׄ.
דע כי המעשה אשר יצוה יוי לאדם לעשותו חוב עליו יעשה בו יכולת לעשות הדבר שצוהו ולא יעשה לו דבר ימנע אותו מאשר צוהו וזה המעשה הוא חוב.	פנקול אן אלקדים תעאלי אדא כלף אלעבד טאעתה ועלם אן פי אלמקדור פעלא חסנא ממכנא אדא פעלה אכתאר אלעבד טאעתה או כאן ענדה אקרב אלי טאעתה פאנה יגב אן יפעל תעאלי דלך.

[20] The text version of *Sefer Marpe la-ʿAṣem* is based on its earliest manuscript, MS St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, C 103, fols 78va–79vb [= MS **C**], which was used as antigraph for MS SP, IOM, B 241, fols 149r–152r [= MS **B**]. The Arabic text is based on MS St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Yevr.-Arab. I 3099, fols 22r–24v [= MS ה] which has been collated with MS RNL, Yevr.-Arab. II 1138, fols 1r–4v [= MS ח].

וכדלך אן עלם אן פי אלמקדור פעלא
אדא פעלה אכתאר אלעבד מעצית או
כאן ענדה קריבא אלי דלך פאנה יקבח
מנה תעאלי אן יפעל דלך אלפעל.

וכדלך אלחאל פי אלשאהד אן מן אראד
מן גירה פעל(!) מא ועלם אנה לא
יכתארה אלא בחית יפעל הו פעלא
חסנא ממכנא סימא אן כאן ממא לא
צרר עליה פיה פאנה יגב אן יפעלה.

אלא תרי אן מן אראד מן ולדה מתלא
אלקראן ואלכתאבה ועלם מן חאלה אן
דפק בה וכאטבה בלין אכתאר פעל
מראדה מנה ואנה אן כאטבה באלגפא
לא יכתאר דלך פאנה יגב עליה לא
מחאלה פעל מא ענדה יכתאר ולדה
טאעתה ויקבח מנה מא ענדה יכתאר
מעצית כמא יגב עליה תמכינה מן
אלקלם ואלדואה לתצח מנה אלכתאבה
וכמא[21] יקבח מנה רבטה אצאבעה אלתי
לא תצח מע דלך אלכתאבה לאן מנע מא
לא יצח אלפעל אלא ענדה כמנע מא לא
יצח אלא בה והו ואן כאן אלעבד קד יצח
מנה פעל [ה 22ב] אלטאעה ואן מנע מא
לא יכתאר אלפעל אלא ענדה. וליס
כדלך חאלה אדא מנע ממא לא יצח
אלפעל אלא בה. פאנה למא עלם מן
חאלה אנה לא יכתאר פעל אלטאעה
אלא ענד פעל אלחסן ממכן(!) צאר דלך

הלא תראה אם יאמר איש לעבדו כתוב
ויאסור אצבעותיו בפתיל הלא יהיה
בעבור שצוהו לעשות דבר ולא נתן לו
דרך לעשותו. ועל כן היה כל שצוה זולתו
מצוה חוב עליו שיתן לו יכולת אם יהיה
יוכל יתן יכולת או לא ימנעהו מעשותו.
וזה הוא עומד בדעת מבואר.

ואמר כי יש שמה דבר אחר הוא חוב
עליו כראשון והוא כל מעשה יפול מן
המצוה יהיה המצווה בו קרוב ממעשה
הצדק ורחוק ממעשה הרשע יהיה על
המצוה לעשותו. וכן כל מעשה יעשה
אותו המצוה יהיה המצווה בו קרוב
ממעשה הרשע ורחוק ממעשה הצדק
חוב עליו לא יעשה אותו המצוה יהיה
בעבור שישלם חפצו. ואף אם יהיה לא
יקשה המעשה על המצווה ואם יניח
המעשה לא יהיה עליו רע ואם יעשה
אותו לא יהיה לו טוב. ויהיה יחפוץ ישלם
חפצו חוב עליו שיהיה כל דבר יהיה בו

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[21] כמה **ה**

האדם קרוב מעשות צוויו למען לא יהיה המעשה ההוא מכחיש שלום חפצו. אם אין עליו קשיון במעשה לא יפחד מרע ולא יבוא עליו טוב. הלא אם יקרא האדם את חברו לאכול לחמו והוא חפץ למאד יאכל לחמו וידע אם ידבר אתו דברים קשים לא יאכל ואם ידבר עמו דברים רכים יאכל הלא אם ידבר עמו הדברים הרעים היה מכחיש לחפצו ואף אם לא יקשה עליו מעשה ביאתו אליו לא דבר רע במעשה ולא דבר טוב. וכן מי יהיה חפץ ממנו יכתוב ויקרא וידע אם יגער בו לא יכתוב ולא יקרא ואם ידבר עמו דבר רך יכתוב ויקרא הלא יגעור לבנו יהיה מכחיש חפצו.	אלפעל במנזלה מא לא יצח אלפעל אלא בה. אלא תרי אנה יגב עלי מן קדמנא דכרה לה חאלה אן ידפק בולדה כמא יגב עליה תמכינה מן אלקלם ואלדואה ואמתאל דלך כתירה. וכמא יגב אן יפעל אללטף כדלך יקבח אן יפעל אלמפסדה ואלכלאם פי באבהא אבין ואוצֿח.
ועל זה אמר היה חוב עליו ית״ש יתעשת לאדם בכל דבר שידע כי יהיה בו קרוב ממעשה הצדק ורחוק ממעשה הרשע כמו היה הראשון חוב עליו בגלל שישלים חפצו. וכן אם יחפוץ מאדם מעשה נדבה בצום שאינו קבוע והוא ידע כי יש מעשה יהיה העושה בו קרוב מעשות הנדבה ורחוק מי שלא יניחה חוב עליו לעשותו לו כל זה למען זה אשר ישלים חפצו.	ואללטף פי גיר אלואגב ואגב אן יפעלה אלמכלף תעאלי כוגובה פי אלואגב מן חית אנהמא מראדין. וכדלך ואגב אן יפעל אללטף אלמסהל כוגוב אללטף אלדֿי ענדה יכתאר אלעבד טאעתה לאנהמא אזֿאחה עלה אלמכלף.

To further illustrate the relationship between the Arabic treatise and its Hebrew adaptation, the following table juxtaposes English translations of the beginning of the section on divine incentives/stimuli (Ar. ʾalṭāf; Heb. ʿeshtonot).

Section on the incentives (*ha-ʿeshtonot*)	Discourse on the incentives (*al-ʾalṭāf*)
[Incentives] are actions on account of which the person who performs them becomes more likely to do good deeds and to refrain from evil deeds.	An incentive is something on account of which the person, who is liable to an obligation, chooses to obey God, who imposes the obligation on him, by doing the good and refraining from the evil, or on account of which he is more likely to do so.
	A disincentive is something on account of which the person, who is liable to an obligation, chooses to disobey God, who imposes the obligation on him, by refraining from the good and doing the evil or on account of which he is more likely to do so.
	[We] know from our own experience that some actions induce [someone to do] other actions or deter [someone from doing] other actions.
Know that God is bound to give to the human being, upon whom He enjoins an action, the capacity to carry out the enjoined action and not to put obstacles in his way that prevent him from doing the enjoined action.	We thus say that when God enjoins on a servant to obey Him, and knows that He can perform a facilitating good action on account of which the servant will choose to obey Him or becomes more likely to do so, then God is bound to do so. Conversely, when He knows that He can perform an action on account of

which the servant will choose to disobey Him or becomes more likely to do so, it becomes evil on God's part to perform that action.

This is consistent with our own experience: if someone wants another person to carry out an action and knows that this person will only choose to carry it out, if he himself performs a facilitating good action, he is bound to do so, all the more if it does not entail any adverse consequences for him.

Do you not realise that if someone orders his servant to write, while tying his fingers together with a string, it is as if he asked him to do something while preventing him from doing so.

This is why whoever enjoins something on another person, must—whenever possible—provide him with the means that enable him to do so or must not prevent him from doing so. This is commonsensical.

What applies to this first scenario also applies to another one, namely that the person who imposes an obligation is bound to perform any action on account of

Do you not realise that someone who wants his son to read or write, for instance, and knows that he will choose to comply with his wish, if he dabs him and speaks to him gently, but will not choose to do so, if he speaks to him harshly, must by all means do what prompts his son to choose to obey him, whereas it would be inappropriate of him to do what prompts him to disobey him. Likewise, he must provide him with all necessary means, such as pen and inkwell, to enable him to write, whereas it would be inappropriate of him to tie his fingers together so that he will be unable

which the person who is asked to carry out the obligation is more likely to do a good deed and less likely to do an evil deed. Likewise, in order for his wish to be satisfied, the person who imposes an obligation is bound to abstain from any action on account of which the person who is asked to carry out the obligation is more likely to do an evil deed and less likely to do a good deed.

The same applies even to an action which comes easy to the person who is asked to carry it out, and which does neither entail adverse consequences for him, if he does not carry it out, nor positive consequences, if he carries it out. Given that [the one who imposes an action] wants his wish to be satisfied, he is bound to provide all means on account of which the person who is asked to carry it out is more likely to comply with his requests, for otherwise he would undermine the sincerity of his wish, [even] if the action comes easy to him and does neither entail the fear of adverse consequences for him nor the prospect of a favourable outcome.

to write. To deprive [someone] of the conditions that are indispensable to carry out an action is tantamount to withholding from him the tools which are essential for the action to be carried out.

However, while the servant has the ability to obey, even when he is deprived of the [incentive] on account of which he will choose to carry out the action, this is not the case if he is deprived of the tools which are essential for the action to be carried out. When it is known, however, that he will only choose to act in obedience by virtue of a good facilitating action, then this action becomes equivalent to the tools which are essential for the action to be carried out.

Do you not realise that in the aforementioned example the person [who wants his son to write] is bound to dab his son gently and to provide him with pen and inkwell? There are many other examples of this kind.

Just as [God] is bound to provide an incentive, it is inappropriate of Him to provide a disincentive. The case of the latter is even more obvious and compelling.

Is it not the case that if someone calls on his fellow man to eat his food and eagerly wants him to eat his food, and also knows that he will not eat his food, if he speaks to him harshly, but will eat it, if he speaks to him gently, he would undermine the sincerity of his wish, if he spoke to him harshly, even though providing him with the food would be easy for him and neither entail adverse nor favourable consequences.

Accordingly, if someone wants his son to write and read and knows that if he rants at him, he will neither write nor read, and that if he speaks to him gently, he will write and read, would it not undermine the sincerity of his wish, if he ranted at him?

On these grounds I say that God is bound to provide a human being with all incentives of which He knows that on account of it [the human being] will be more likely to do a good deed and less likely to do an evil deed. As in the first scenario, He is bound to do so in order to safeguard the sincerity of His wish.

Moreover, God, who imposes the obligation, is bound to provide an incentive even for actions which are not obligatory, as He does in the case of obligatory actions, since both are manifestations of His will.

Furthermore, just as He is bound to provide the incentive on account of which the servant will choose to obey Him, He is

The same even applies to a supererogatory act, such as a non-statutory fasting: if He wishes a human being to carry it out and knows that there is an action on account of which that human being will be more likely to perform the supererogatory act and less likely to refrain from it, He is bound to perform that action, all that in order to safeguard the sincerity of His wish.	bound to provide the incentive which facilitates the action [of the servant], for both [incentives] contribute to remedying the deficiencies which hinder the person who is subject to His imposition [from carrying out His will].

The comparison between the Arabic text and its Hebrew adaptation is insightful in several respects. It is a poignant example of a text form in Byzantine Hebrew literature that is neither a translation nor an abridgement, yet clearly depends on written Arabic source texts.

It demonstrates the adaptor's creative handling of his source material and its adaptation to suit the pedagogical requirements of the target group by adding explanatory notes and illustrative examples.

The availability of the Arabic text significantly eases the access to a Hebrew treatise that is not only unwieldy on account of its linguistic and semantic idiosyncrasies (Hopkins 1992; 2013; Maman 1978; 2013), but also because of its deficient transmission, whereby the oldest textual witnesses are removed from the original composition by several centuries.

Every additional identification of Arabic source texts processed within 'the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project' will help us to obtain a more nuanced picture of this large-scale enterprise

and to detect the fingerprints of additional agents whose contribution has been eclipsed by the main protagonists who are known by name.

In recent years, all these points have been explored in greater depth by Amir Gaash in a series of studies on the Byzantine grammatical treatise *Meʾor ʿAyin*, which depends on various Arabic source texts, above all on *Kitāb al-ʿUqūd fī Taṣārīf al-Lugha al-ʿIbrāniyya* (Gaash 2015b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018; 2023; Howard, 2017; *Kitāb al-ʿUqūd* has been studied and edited in Vidro 2011; 2013). Among many other things, Gaash has demonstrated the heuristic value of misunderstandings and misinterpretations by the Byzantine translators and recipients. He also established that these translators and adaptors were working with either manuscripts written in sparsely punctuated Arabic script or transcriptions into Hebrew script that contained mistakes issuing from a misread antigraph in Arabic script.

A thorough examination of these and other features will require comprehensive documentation and investigation of 'the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project', which will be undertaken by a research team bringing together the requisite diversity of skills and competences. The present study is but a small contribution towards realising such a project.

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