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Author(s): Ronald C. Kiener

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THE HEBREW PARAPHRASE
OF SAADIAH GAON'S
KITĀB AL-AMĀNĀT WA'L-I'TIQĀDĀT

by

RONALD C. KIENER

Saadiah Gaon (882–942) was a prolific and pioneering teacher, sage, and communal leader who pursued his wide-ranging studies with a single-minded commitment.¹ His was the first Rabbanite translation of the Hebrew Bible into Arabic; his was one of the first Hebrew dictionaries; his *Siddur* marked one of the first attempts to regularize the liturgy. His *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa'l-I'tiqādāt* (*Book of Beliefs and Opinions*) was the first major work of medieval Jewish philosophy.² Written during his renowned forced

1. See H. Malter, *Saadiah Gaon: His Life and Works* (Philadelphia, 1921); S. W. Baron, "Saadia's Communal Activities," in *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History*, ed. L. Feldman (New Brunswick, N.J., 1972), pp. 95–127; and J. Mann, "A Fihrist of Sa'adya's Works," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 11 (1920–21): 423–428.

2. The *Kitāb* was edited in Arabic characters by S. Landauer (Leiden, 1860); and again in Hebrew characters with a modern Hebrew translation by Y. Kafaḥ (Jerusalem, 1970), entitled *Sefer ha-Nivḥar be-Emunot u-ve-De'ot*. The Landauer edition abounds in errors, especially regarding biblical citations. By convention, the Arabic text of Landauer is the edition cited in

retirement in the year 932 C.E., the *Kitāb al-Amānāt* represents the beginning of a long and noble tradition of Judeo-Arabic philosophy.

The original *Kitāb al-Amānāt* consisted of ten separate treatises on matters pertaining to Jewish theology and ethics. Apparently Saadiah reedited these individual compositions into one long work, adding an introduction on epistemology.³ The revised work is a masterful presentation of normative rabbinic doctrine, constructed methodically from epistemological presuppositions and culminating in a tendentious treatise on ethics and human conduct. Throughout, Saadiah followed the philosophy and method of the Mu'tazilite *Kalām* theologians who became renowned for their five theological principles (*uṣūl*), the most prominent being *tawhīd* ("[God's] unity") and *'adl* ("[God's] justice").⁴ Saadiah may have deviated occasionally from the Mu'tazilite program (for example, he rejected the predominant Mu'tazilite atomism),⁵ but he ultimately remained faithful to the contemporary theology of Baghdad.

Saadiah's Arabic philosophical work was translated into Hebrew twice. Well known is the translation entitled *Sefer ha-Emunot ve-ha-De'ot* by Judah Ibn Tibbon, prepared in 1186.⁶ But at least a century earlier, in places presently unknown, a "poetical, enthusiastic and quasi-mystical"⁷ version of Saadiah's dry *Kitāb al-Amānāt* was prepared, known today simply as "the anonymous Paraphrase." As we will see, the Paraphrase was seized upon by European Jewish intellectuals as one of the few authoritative

this paper. An English translation of the Arabic was made by S. Rosenblatt, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (New Haven, 1948).

3. Evidence of this editing process can be uncovered by comparing the Oxford and Leningrad recensions of the Judeo-Arabic text, in which the seventh treatise of the *Kitāb* appears in two significantly different forms, and in Saadiah's rather cumbersome method of occasionally referring to other parts of the *Kitāb* by treatise titles rather than sequence numbers. Landauer published the seventh treatise according to the Oxford recension. W. Bacher published the Leningrad—then known as the "Petersburg"—recension of the seventh treatise in "Die zweite Version von Saadja's Abschnitt über die Wiederbelebung der Todten," in *Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstag Moritz Steinschneiders* (Leipzig, 1896), Hebrew sec., pp. 98–112. See H. Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, p. 194.

4. For a recent analysis of these five *uṣūl*, see W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 228–249.

5. See H. A. Wolfson, "Atomism in Saadia," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 37 (1946): 107–124.

6. Edited and annotated by I. Kitower (Josefow, 1885).

7. Such is the description by G. Scholem in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), p. 86.

expressions of Jewish theology in the Holy Tongue. That the Paraphrase was particularly dear to medieval Jewish mystics is a testimony to the rather strange twist that befell Saadianic thought as filtered through the words of the Paraphrase. The Paraphrase was an important and influential document in the evolution of Ashkenazi Ḥasidic theology, the Maimonidean controversy, and early Kabbalah. In the last century, scholarship has progressed significantly toward accounting for these movements in medieval Jewish intellectual life. But it has been nearly as long since the Paraphrase has been the focus of study. This paper seeks to consider the relevant data—both new and old—pertaining to the Paraphrase and to draw appropriate new conclusions.



There are three whole manuscripts of the Paraphrase and many fragmentary versions, epitomes, and one modern transcription.

MS Vatican 269 is a very battered manuscript, defective at the beginning. It contains 141 folios. It is written in a Spanish rabbinic script. There are indications that this manuscript is the oldest extant witness of the Paraphrase. First, it contains more correct Judeo-Arabic interpositions than any of the other witnesses. Second, and less conclusively, the colophon states that the work “was finished in the year 4855” (*nishlam bi-shnat dttn''h* = 1095 C.E.).⁸ It is likely that this is not the date of the copy, but rather that of the original work itself.⁹

The most legible manuscript is MS Vatican 266, in which the Paraphrase appears in the first 137 folios. Each folio, with the exception of folio 68, is in double columns, 32–34 lines to a column. Folio 68 is written in one wide column. It is of two hands, with the second scribe taking over at the beginning of the fifth treatise (69a:1). The first portion is written in a fine German rabbinic script of the fourteenth century, while the remainder is either German or French and is somewhat later.

8. Folio 140b. L. Dukes's emendation to *dtqn''h* is totally without justification, based on a need to place the date of the colophon within the life span of Berechiah ha-Nakdan. See H. Ewald and Dukes, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Aeltesten Auslegung und Sprachklärung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, 1844), 2:16, n. 6.

9. See Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, p. 361.

The third complete witness is MS Munich 42, which contains the Paraphrase in folios 301a–526a.¹⁰ It contains numerous dittographies, haplographies, and transpositions, and is extremely corrupt. In the midst of the third treatise (fol. 373a) the text abruptly breaks off and then begins a later portion of the treatise. The missing portion of the third treatise appears in the middle of the fourth. Thus, the order for the third and fourth treatises is:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Third Treatise | 368a–373a, 386b–399b, 373a–383b |
| Fourth Treatise | 384a–386b, 399b–412b |

The remaining manuscript witnesses are either epitomes,¹¹ fragments,¹² modern transcriptions,¹³ or so defective as to be useless.¹⁴

The Paraphrase had a limited publishing history of its own; only a few fragments—at most two of the eleven treatises—were ever brought to press.¹⁵ Surprisingly, it endured for some time in Europe, copied and epitomized at least ten times well into the modern era.¹⁶ It was quoted, cited, and otherwise plagiarized by numerous medievals who could have turned to the Ibn Tibbon translation. There must have been an allure to the Paraphrase that was abiding.

10. An initial treatment of this MS was made by P. Bloch, "Die zweite Uebersetzung des Saadiahnischen Buches *Emunoth wedeoth*," *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 19 (1870): 401–414, 449–456. See M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek* (Munich, 1895), pp. 27–28.

11. MS Paris 669, for example.

12. MS Parma de Rossi 769; MS Munich 65/1c (fols. 20b–39a); MS Munich 120 (fols. 66b–69a); and MS Breslau 183, identified by Poznanski as MS Heidenheim 1, about which M. Steinschneider asked in 1893 "wo jetzt?" See Steinschneider's *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin, 1893), p. 440.

13. MS Warsaw 687, prepared by S. Poznanski before 1912 from MS Munich 42.

14. MS Oxford Bodl. 1224 (opp. 599; old 1185). See A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1886), 1:432.

15. *Sefer ha-Tehiyyah ve-ha-Pedut* (Mantua, 1556) is a reworking of the seventh treatise. *Sefer ha-Pedut ve-ha-Purqan* (Mantua, 1556), containing a large portion of the eighth treatise, was reprinted as least nine times, once under the title *Sefer ha-Galut ve-ha-Pedut* (Venice, 1634).

16. See MS Paris 669, MS Oxford Bodl. 1224, MS Breslau 183, and numerous fragments listed by Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, p. 440. Berechiah b. Natronai ha-Nakdan's *Sefer ha-Hibbur*, in *The Ethical Treatises of Berakhya*, ed. H. Gollancz (London, 1902), Hebrew sec. pp. 1–115, is similarly an epitome.

The impulse for translating the *Kitāb al-Amānāt* from Arabic into Hebrew is hardly a mystery. Saadiah's stature as the leader of Islamicate Jewry and champion of Rabbanite Judaism made curiosity about his writings a natural preoccupation of non-Arabic-speaking Jews. Furthermore, those Jews of Europe who thirsted for accessible Jewish speculative theological documents had very few Hebrew texts to which they could turn. First and foremost, there was a number of rabbinic homilies and traditions which could be utilized in theological discussions. Then there was the cryptic *Sefer Yeẓirah*.¹⁷ An Italian contemporary of Saadiah, Shabbetai Donnolo, wrote a cosmological/astrological commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*.¹⁸ A bit later the Hebrew works of Abraham Bar Ḥiyya appeared,¹⁹ and another Hebrew commentary (containing a partial Hebrew translation of Saadiah's own Judeo-Arabic commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah*) was published by Bar Ḥiyya's antagonist Judah b. Barzilai.²⁰ But the Arabic works of Saadiah and his philosophico-linguistic successors in the Middle East and Spain were impenetrable. Not until the late twelfth century would these Judeo-Arabic works be rendered into Hebrew by the Tibbonides and the other professional translators who lived in Provence.²¹ Only then would Saadiah's *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Baḥya Ibn Paquda's *Hidāya ilā Farā'id al-Qulūb*, Judah Halevi's *Kitāb al-Radd wa'l-Dalīl fī al-Dīn al-Dhalīl*, and Maimonides' *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn* be available to non-Arabic-speaking Jews. The impact of these twelfth-century translations on European Jewish speculative thought has been chronicled and constitutes in and of itself a crucial chapter in the history of Jewish philosophy. But between the tenth and twelfth centuries there was a dearth of speculative material outside of Islamicate lands. Into this vacuum appeared the Paraphrase, the first translation of the first major work of Jewish philosophy.

17. The first references to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* appear in the sixth century C.E. Saadiah composed a Judeo-Arabic commentary to this work which was translated into Hebrew a number of times beginning in the eleventh century. See Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, pp. 443–448; Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, pp. 355–359; and G. Vajda, "Sa'adya Commentateur du *Livre de la Création*," in *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Paris, 1959/60), pp. 1–35.

18. *Sefer Ḥakhmoni*, ed. D. Castelli (Florence, 1880), written sometime between 946 and 982. See A. Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo* (New York, 1976), pp. 1–13.

19. A full bibliography is provided by G. Wigoder in his introduction to Bar Ḥiyya's *The Meditation of the Sad Soul* (New York, 1968), pp. 4–6.

20. *Perusch Sepher Jezira*, ed. S. J. Halberstam (Berlin, 1885), written sometime in the first half of the twelfth century.

21. I. Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," in *Jewish Society Through the Ages*, ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and Ettinger (New York, 1969), pp. 195–202.

The second translation of the *Kitāb al-Amānāt* is known to most students of Saadiah's philosophy: it is the translation of Judah Ibn Tibbon, professional translator for the Hebrew-speaking scholars of Provence.²² This Tibbonide translation quickly replaced the earlier effort, for the Paraphrase was a lavish, cacophonously expansive, and inaccurate rendering, while Ibn Tibbon's translation was terse and accurate, exceedingly faithful to the original Arabic. The value of Ibn Tibbon's translation was readily apparent, and it quickly became the vehicle by which Saadiah's philosophy became known to the Jews of Europe—at least until the *Wissenschaft* scholars rediscovered the Arabic original.

The playful language of the Paraphrase, derived from familiar liturgical styles, helps to account for its popularity. On the one hand, the Paraphrase rendered some of the more obscure philosophical passages into a fairly simple and straightforward rabbinic/paytanic idiom—a far cry from Ibn Tibbon's slavish quasi-Arabic syntax. On the other hand, the author of the Paraphrase possessed an almost mischievous creativity in coining new words for subtle concepts. And, as Gollancz once noted, the Paraphrase abounds in rabbinic citations and biblical allusions not found in either the *Kitāb al-Amānāt* or Ibn Tibbon's translation.²³ With this stylistic feature, the Paraphrase possessed a compelling air of traditionalism which the Ibn Tibbon translation never acquired. These two factors together—the sometimes simple, sometimes confounding Hebrew language and syntax; and secondly the constant rabbinic and biblical allusions—help to account for the Paraphrase's early popularity and widespread acceptance.

But the Paraphrase did not garner only praise for Saadiah; a third feature—its long-windedness—did not go over well with most of Saadiah's detractors and some of Saadiah's supporters.²⁴ Even in the original Arabic Saadiah displayed an annoying taste for repetitive lists and verbose turns of phrase. The Paraphrase freely stretched numerous passages with a metrical, rhyming expansion, and as a result the Paraphrase is some 50 percent longer than the original *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, already a substantial work. It is the very length of the Paraphrase that generated the numerous compendia and

22. See Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, p. 439; Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, pp. 370–373. Malter never published his promised critical edition. Whereas Ibn Tibbon followed the “Petersburg” recension, the Paraphrase is more faithful to the Oxford text. See *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, p. 441, and Landauer's introduction to the *Kitāb*, p. viii.

23. *Ethical Treatises of Berakhya*, editor's introduction, p. xli.

24. See Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, pp. 283–284, n. 607.

epitomes, and these in turn helped to make certain aspects of Saadiah's magnum opus, now distilled, popular in Europe.²⁵

The Paraphrase is both a rendering of Saadiah's *Kitāb al-Amānāt* into Hebrew and a creation of a new vocabulary and Hebrew philosophical prose style. As a translation, the Paraphrase is but a faint and faltering reproduction of the Arabic original, generally conveying little more than the gist and outward structure of the exceedingly complex and technical *Kitāb al-Amānāt*. As literary creation, the Paraphrase survives as a remarkable hermeneutical invention which, through linguistic and stylistic features, created a new Saadiah, a new Saadianic theology, and a new (though little-used) theological vocabulary.



Though we cannot identify the paraphrastist, we are certain of a few things regarding his abilities. He was not an accurate translator, nor was he as proficient an Arabist as the later Judah Ibn Tibbon. In this respect, the paraphrastist typifies many pre-Tibbonide translators, such as the eleventh-century Byzantine Karaite translators who undertook to translate the vast body of Judeo-Arabic Karaite literature and who have been found wanting in recent evaluations of their ability.²⁶ The problem was widespread: in the Rabbanite world of Provence, Judah Ibn Tibbon complained about the inaccuracies of the early translations.²⁷ The Paraphrase easily falls into the category of flawed translation, a malady the Tibbonides sought to rectify with their new round of translations.

As an example of the Paraphrase's inadequacies, I present here the text of a philosophically dense *Kalām* proof for the createdness of the world, one of the many examples of paraphrastic mistranslation.

25. In general, the epitomes tended to pass over the cosmological treatises of the original *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, concentrating instead on the more "ethical" treatises, such as chapters 4, 5, and 6. See, for example, how the epitomist of MS Paris 669 opens the first treatise with the phrase "A version selected from the second scroll" (*nusah me-inyyan megillah sheniyah*, fol. 8a), and then reduces more than thirty folio pages in MS Vatican 266 to one folio.

26. Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970–1100* (New York, 1959), pp. 191–193.

27. His complaints may have been specifically directed at the Paraphrase. See his introduction to the translation of Baḥya Ibn Paquda's *Hidāyah*, entitled *Sefer Hovot ha-Levavot* (Warsaw, 1875), p. 4.

Para., MS Vat. 266,
fol. 14b:1–2

Ibn Tibbon (Josefow
ed.): 56

Kitāb (ed. Landauer): 32

הראשון הם התכלית והקצב והשיעור והחקר הנמצאים בשמים ובארץ מפני שהם מוגבלים ונקצבים בשיעור ותכלית וחקר בעבו' כי הארץ תלויה בשמים כדור בתוך עוגה וכנקודה באמצע חוגה וכחלבון ביצה והשים סגלגלים ועגולים סובבים את הארץ מכל דפנותיה מתגלגלים בגלגל עליה ותחתיה וכל סביבותיה סובבים וחורין וסובבין אותה תדיר וכשם שנתדע לנו שהשמים והארץ מוגבלים ומוצררים

יש להם באמצע שיעור וקצב ותכלית כך התדע כי היכולת והכח שלהם נחקרים ונקצבים וכלים מפני שאי אפשר להיות קצובה גולם שאינו קצוב וגם לא איפשר להיות מידה נחקרה נצבת בגושם שאינו חקור ונתכל אלא כשם שיתלחם נחקרים כך ראוי שיהא גופם נקצב ונחקר. וכיון שיש ליכולתם וכחם השומרים לגופם והדביקים לעיקרם ראש וסוף מפני כי הדעת שופטת לכל יכולת וכוח ומפעל. וכיון אשר אין להם סוף וראש שהשיעור סואן אותם והקצב מפלס אותם והגבול מגביל צדיהם והשכל מורה ומברר כי כלל השיעורים אינם חלים ונקצבים אלא כגלמים קצובים וכגושמים נחקרים מפני כי הקצבון ושיעור הווים נעשים וניכרים לממשים ברואים ומצים חדשים

הראשונה מהם מן התכליות והוא שהשמים והארץ כיון שהתברר שיש להם תכלית בהיות הארץ באמצע וסבוב השמים סביבותיה התחייב שיהיה לכחם תכלית כי אי אפשר שיהיה לאין תכלית בגשם בעל תכלית דרוחה זה הידוע. וכאשר יכלה הכח השומר אותם התחייב שיהיה להם תחלה וסוף.

الأول منها من النهايات
وذلك ان السماء والأرض لا
صحّ أنّهما متناهيتان يكون
الأرض في الوسط ودوران السماء
حواليها وجب ان تكون قوتها
متناهية إذ لم يحز ان تكون قوة
لا نهاية لها في جسم له نهاية فيدفع
بذلك المعلم فاذا توافقت القوة
الحافظة لها وجب ان يكون لها
أول وآخر

The Paraphrase is in word count more than triple the length of either the *Kitāb al-Amānāt* or the Ibn Tibbon translation. This is partly due to the typical hendiadys and pleonasms of the Paraphrase, such as the Paraphrase's *mugbalim ve-niqzavim be-shi'ur ve-takhlit ve-ḥeker* for the single Arabic word *mutanāhiyān*. But there is also a horrendous mistranslation in this passage from which the paraphrasist never fully recovers.

The first of the four *Kalām* proofs for the createdness of the world, derived from Aristotelian tradition, can be stated succinctly in three propositions: first, the world is finite in magnitude; second, the force within the world, that “which preserves” the world, is finite; third, a finite force cannot produce infinite existence. Hence, the world must have a beginning and an end. The second proposition is defended by the statement “it is not possible that an infinite force exist within a finite body.”²⁸ The Tibbonide translation

28. For a treatment of this proof, see H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 374–382; and H. Davidson, “The Principle That a Finite Body

faithfully reproduces this statement. But the paraphrasist has clumsily reversed the sense of the argument and now employs the statement as a buttress for the first proposition, namely, that the world is finite in magnitude: “for it is impossible that [the power] be bounded in a mass that is not bounded; and also it is impossible that a determinate measure reside in a body that is neither determined nor limited [*nitkal*];²⁹ rather, just as their force is determinate so it is appropriate that their body be limited and determinate.” Thus, the buttressing statement no longer supports the second proposition, and in the Paraphrase it becomes a further demonstration of the world’s finitude. A crucial link in the argument is forever lost.

Not only is precision lost in the torrent of words, but accuracy is also tossed aside. In the hermeneutical process, the paraphrasist has so embellished the argument as to render it inaccurate, and the embellishment only serves to compound the problem.

Occasionally, and despite his indefatigable creativity, the paraphrasist was unable to translate an Arabic term into Hebrew. Sometimes he offered both his Hebrew approximation along with the Arabic original, as if to allow the reader to decide for himself. Once he even inserted into his translation an Arabic phrase not present in the *Kitāb al-Amānāt*.³⁰ Thus, numerous Arabisms and Arabic phrases appear in the text, particularly as preserved in MS Vatican 269. A preliminary list of some of these Arabisms is provided below:

MS Vatican 266, fol. 6b, col. 1: אל צרורה [עלם]. Ed. Landauer, p. 13: *‘ilm mā dafa’at al-ḍarūrah ilaihi*, “necessarily inferred knowledge.”

MS Vat. 266, 9a:1: אל מגרה. Ed. Landauer, p. 19: *al-majarrāh*, “the Milky Way.”

MS Vat. 269, fol. 13b, ll. 19–21: אמר ונהי [vocalized!]. Ed. Landauer, p. 29: *amran wa-nahiyān*, “command and prohibition.”

טאעה ומעציה. Ed. Landauer, p. 29: *al-tā’ah wa’l-ma’ṣiyah*, “obedience and rebellion.”

Can Contain Only Finite Power,” in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, ed. Stein and Loewe (University, Ala., 1979), pp. 75–92.

29. An unattested *nif’al* form of *TKL*, derived from *KLH* with a performative *tav*: *TaKhLīt*. Ben-Yehudah notes a paytanic *hif’il* form of *TKL*. See E. Ben-Yehudah, *Thesaurus Totius Hebraicitatis* (New York, 1959), p. 7747a–b.

30. Ibn Tibbon retains the Arabic only once. See *Sefer ha-Emunot*, pp. 59 f.

- חַסְנָא וְרַעִיא. Ed. Landauer, p. 29: *al-ḥasanāt wa'l-sayāt*, “good and evil deeds.”
- MS Vat. 266, 13b:1 צְדָרָא אֵל כְּאֵתְב (MS Vat. 269, fol. 13b reads צְדָרָא אֵל כְּאֵתְב). No parallel in Judeo-Arabic text. Probably from *ṣadr al-kitāb*, “title of the book.”
- MS Vat. 266, 18b:1 צְנוּבֵר. Ed. Landauer, p. 41: *sanawbariyan*, “cone-shaped.”
- MS Vat. 266, 27a:1 אַתְפָּאק . . . בִּיפּוֹק . . . בִּיפֵּק. Ed. Landauer, p. 61: *al-ittifāq . . . bi-ittifāq*, “chance occurrence.”
- MS Vat. 269, fol. 64b, l. 2: אֵל עֵדֵל וְאֵל גִּבֵּר [?]. Ed. Landauer, p. 145: *wa'l-jabr wa'l-'adl*, “predestination and divine justice.”
- MS Vat. 266, 85b:1 בְּנִימוּס אֵלְכֵר וּבְנִימוּד אֵלְחַסְוֹר. Ed. Landauer, p. 207–8: *bi'l-karr wa-yusammunhu al-tanāsukh*, “return or transmigration.”

Another distinguishing feature of the Paraphrase, in the first treatise in particular, are phrases constructed from the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, a work which has been variously dated sometime between the second and sixth centuries C.E.³¹ One such peculiar linguistic creation derived from the *Sefer Yeẓirah* reverberated into later theological literature. It is what ultimately became the standard Hebrew formula for “creation *ex nihilo*”: *yesh me-ayin* (MS Vat. 266, fols. 14a:1, 18a:2, 79a:1, 87a:1, 87b:2), used to translate the Arabic *lā min shay'*, “creation from nothing.”³² This is derived from *Sefer Yeẓirah* 2:6: *ve-'asah et eino yeshno*, “He [God] made that which was not into that which is.” Of the early medievals, Solomon Ibn Gabirol (1021–1057) made use of this passage in his sacred poetry, though in a way that avoided the formulaic construction and was far removed from the *ex nihilo* signification.³³ Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) used the formula in his short commentary to Genesis, but this usage is attributable to his knowledge of the Paraphrase, for the phrase was not widely in use in Hebrew until the late twelfth

31. On the *Sefer Yeẓirah*, see G. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 75–78; idem, *Reshit ha-Qabbalah ve-Sefer ha-Bahir* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 1–59.

32. On the terminology for “creation *ex nihilo*” in medieval Hebrew and Arabic philosophy, see H. A. Wolfson, “The Meaning of Ex Nihilo in the Church Fathers, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophy, and St. Thomas,” in *Medieval Studies in Honor of J. D. M. Ford* (Cambridge Mass., 1948), pp. 355–370; reprinted and cited from *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Twersky and Williams (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 1:207–221; and more recently *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, pp. 355–372.

33. In Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*: *li-mshokh meshekh ha-yesh min ha-ayin*, “to draw up the film of the existent from the nothing.” See *Ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit be-Sefarad u-ve-Provans*, ed. J. Schirmann (Jerusalem, 1959), vol. 1, sec. 1:262.

century.³⁴ Previous assumptions to the contrary, the Tibbonides eschewed the phrase *yesh me-ayin*, preferring instead the more literal *lo mi-davar*, "not from a thing."³⁵ Thus, we may regard the paraphrasist's coinage of the formula *yesh me-ayin* for "creation *ex nihilo*" as the first instance of this now famous Hebraism.³⁶

As a literary creation, the Paraphrase contains two distinct styles: a predominant narrative prose style (of which the passage cited above from the first treatise is a fine example), in which both neologisms and poetic parallelisms appear with moderate frequency; and a less frequent style composed of "poetic sequences" in which the parallelisms increase dramatically to a lilting crescendo, and creatively new derived forms and coinages abound. The Paraphrase wavers between a sporadically careful literalism and a wildly expansive concatenation of phrases which only vaguely reproduce the original Arabic. For example:

MS Vat. 266, fol. 61a:1–2

Kitāb (ed. Landauer): 147

ובזו החכמה וזכר את כל העוברות ושומר את החלופות
ונוצר את כל ההולכות ובה ידע הנהיות ומכיר את
הנפעלות הוא מחפש את הגולדות ובוחר את העתידות
ובה הוא משעבד את החיות ומכריחם על עבודתו לחרוש
חרישו ולשדד שדהו ולעזק אדמתו ולטעון טעונו ולישא
משאו ולהביא את מעותיו ממרחקים וגם עומס עליהם
כליו וטיפוליו על ממרחקים ורוכב על גביהם ובוזו החכמה
הוא מוציא המים ממעמקי הארץ ומושך אותם על פני
חבל ומשקה בהם את הגנות ואת הפרדסים ועושה להם
ריחים וטוחנות ובוזו (!) החכמה הוא עושה גלגלים
וריחיים וטחנה שהם טוחנים מעצמם בלי יגיע ועמל אדם

فهيها يحفظ كل شيء ماض من الافعال وبها ينظر
في كثرة من العواقب التي تاتي وبها يصل الى
تسخير الحيوان لينفعوا له الارض وينقلوا اليه غلاتها
وبها يصل الى استخراج الماء من عمق الارض حتى صار
على وجهها بل صنع كل النواعير التي تستغنى عنها
وبها يصل الى بناء المنازل السرية ولباس التياب
الفاخرة واصلاح الاطعمة اللذيذة وبها يصل الى غود
الجوس واليساكر وتديبر الملك والسلطان حتى انضبط
الناس وتسقموا وبها يصل الى علم كهيئة النلك ومسير
البحر ومقادير اجرامها وابطدافا وسائر اجوالها

ובזו החכמה הוא בונה עליות ומשכלל ארמנות ומייסד לשכות ומורנים וחדרים ובה הוא בוטח עד שמכוין מצעות
[וקתדראות] ומתקן מלבושים נאים ואורג בגדים ואיצלעות יפות ובה מתקן מטעמים דשאים ומכין מאכלות מתוקנות
ומעדנות ובחכמה הוא מצביא צבאים ועושה גדודים ומעמיד חיילים ומזרז חלוצים ובה הוא מצליח במלכותו ומנהג
ממשלתו וסובר את סדרתו ויעץ עצות בלבו ומתקן את כסאו ושופט את עמו ורוצה אותם ומייסרם ובזו החכמה הוא ידע
חכמת מדע מה [שבפעליונים] וחכמת מדעי הרקיעים ומהלך הכוכבים ושיעור קומתם וקצב מחיצותם ומדת צבאיהם וחקת
עלומותיהם ומיינין גסטריהם וטרקוניהם וליגוניהם וחייליהם ושיעור [מלותם] ומדע זריחתם ואורח נתיבתם ומסלול
מסעותם ועילות קדירתם ונהירתם ולקותם וחזורם ופירדם וכלל מנהגם.

34. See his comment to Genesis 1:1.

35. Judah al-Ḥarizi also used the literal *lo mi-davar* in his translation of Maimonides' *Guide*. See his translation, also entitled *Moreh Nevukhim*, ed. L. Schlossberg (London, 1851), vol. 2:20a, 21a.

36. The Paraphrase was quite popular among mystics of the twelfth and thirteenth cen-

This passage demonstrates a number of key features typical of the Paraphrase. First, it is highly expansive, more than double the length of the Arabic.³⁷ Second, it abounds in assonantal rhyming parallelisms of an occasional metric quality. The passage above is admittedly an extreme case, but it is not unique. Third, the passage contains a number of rare rabbinic words, such as *moranim*, “storehouse”;³⁸ *qetidra’ot*, “chair”;³⁹ *izla’ot* (or *iztallut*), “shoe-lining”;⁴⁰ *gastreihem*, “their military camps”;⁴¹ and *tarqoneihem*, “their castles.”⁴² Finally, even an air of esotericism is injected into the passage by the seemingly innocent phrase *u-mevin et ha-otiyot*, “[by this wisdom man] also comes to know the letters,” a phrase completely absent in the Arabic original. By invoking the verb *mevin* with the letters, the Paraphrase conveys a sense of “gnostic” legitimacy to Hebrew letter speculation and manipulation.

As previous students of the Paraphrase have already noted, the Paraphrase contains numerous words, phrases, and constructions which emulate the neologistic Hebrew of Eleazar ha-Kallir, the Palestinian paytan who lived and died sometime before Saadiah’s lifetime.⁴³ As one of the first Palestinian liturgical poets, Kallir’s unique treatment of the Hebrew language influenced subsequent Palestinian poets. Neo-Kallirism influenced Babylonian, Italian, German, and northern French styles well into the thirteenth century.⁴⁴ Even Saadiah’s own difficult poetic style exhibits Kallirian

turies. Thus, we may further surmise that the popularity of this phrase amongst medieval kabbalists is more properly attributable to the Paraphrase than the Tibbonide translation. On the popularity of the phrase *yesh me-ayin* amongst kabbalists, see Scholem, *Major Trends* p. 25; idem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York, 1969), pp. 101 f.; idem, “Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes,” in *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judenthums* (Frankfurt a. M., 1970), pp. 53–89.

37. Moses b. Ḥisdai (Taku), who had the Paraphrase before him, complained that Saadiah “could have written in five tracts what he writes in fifteen.” See MS Paris H711:14a, published by J. Dan in facsimile form as *KeTAV TAMIM* (Jerusalem, 1984).

38. B.T. *Bava Batra* 6a.

39. J.T. *Sukkah* 55a.

40. Tosefta *Bava Batra* 4:6.

41. From *gasra*, B.T. *Shabbat* 121a.

42. From *tarqa*, Targum Proverbs 25:24.

43. Saadiah mentions Kallir in his *Agron* (ed. N. Allony [Jerusalem, 1969], p. 154), which was composed in 902 (see Allony’s introduction, p. 23). He mentions Kallir again as an “ancient” poet in his commentary to the *Sefer Yeẓirah* entitled *Kitāb al-Mabādī* (ed. Kafah [Jerusalem, 1972], p. 49); which was written in 931 (*ibid.*, p. 86).

44. A. M. Habermann, *Toledot ha-Piyyuṣ ve-ha-Shirah* (Ramat Gan, 1972), 1:40–49; and 2:11, 23. On Kallirian style in Byzantine Italy, see J. Schirmann, *Studies in the History of Hebrew Poetry and Drama* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1979), 2:18–29.

forms.⁴⁵ The Kallirite style is best summarized by the Spanish scholar Abraham Ibn Ezra:

There are in R. Eleazar ha-Kallir's poetry four difficult features: the first is that most of his poems are riddles and parables . . . the second feature is that his poems are interspersed with talmudic phrases, and it is well known that a number of expressions appear in the Talmud that are not of the Holy Tongue . . . the third feature is that even when words are derived from the Holy Tongue, they contain many errors . . . the fourth feature is that all his poems are full of *midrashot* and *aggadot*.⁴⁶

These stylistic features are all amply evidenced in the Paraphrase. The two passages cited above each are representative of the two different narrative styles, but together they display the Kallirite proclivity for new and rare constructions and Hebraicized Aramaicisms. Many of these Hebrew coinages have already been treated by Zunz and Bloch.⁴⁷ Some of the most unique and recurring terms are *qenez*, "proof," and the *hif'il maqniḏ*, "to prove";⁴⁸ *sar'af* (or *shar'af*), "mind" or "to think" as a verb;⁴⁹ *da'deq* or *mitda'deq*, "contemplation" or "to contemplate";⁵⁰ *gimmuy*, "intention"; *qishyon*, "question";⁵¹ and *sa'an* (or *so'an*), "limit."⁵²

Very few of these peculiarities in style and language help in identifying the time or place of the composition of the Paraphrase, other than to say that the paraphrast participated in paytanic stylistics and drew from such Hebrew sources as the *Sefer Yeḏirah*. We must look to the external evidence provided by the manuscripts and other authors who cite the Paraphrase.

The earliest possible date for the Paraphrase is provided by the colophon to MS Vatican 269, which, as we have already stated, provides the date of 1095 C.E. This date in the colophon must serve as a *terminus ad quem* for the

45. But see M. Zulay, *Ha-Askolah ha-Payṭanit shel Rav Sa'adyah Ga'on* (Jerusalem, 1964).

46. Commentary to Ecclesiastes 5:1. See Zulay, *Ha-Askolah*, pp. 16–18; and L. Zunz's still valuable treatment in *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin, 1865), pp. 29–64.

47. L. Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1876), 3:234–237, and Bloch, "Die zweite Uebersetzung," pp. 412–414, 452f.

48. Ben-Yehudah, *Thesaurus*, p. 6038a–b.

49. From Ps. 94:19. See Ben-Yehudah, *Thesaurus*, pp. 7620b–7621a.

50. Literally, "to think subtly."

51. Ben-Yehudah, *Thesaurus*, p. 6250b. On the *-on* ending in Saadianic poetry, see Zulay, *Ha-Askolah*, pp. 38–39.

52. Ben-Yehudah, *Thesaurus*, p. 3898b.

Paraphrase, while the date of composition of the Arabic original (932 C.E.) is the *terminus a quo*. It is not imprudent to conclude that the Paraphrase was made during this 163-year period.

If we were to disregard the evidence of the colophon, we would next have to turn to the earliest citation of the Paraphrase in other datable works. In this case, we are led to no earlier than the last half of the twelfth century, when the Paraphrase is cited in both France and Spain. In France Berechiah b. Natronai ha-Nakdan both epitomized and quoted the Paraphrase extensively in his *Sefer ha-Hibbur* ("The Compendium") and his *Sefer ha-Mazref* ("The Book of the Refinery"), the latter written around 1170.⁵³ The former is largely, though not exclusively, an epitome of the Paraphrase. Other authors, notably Abraham Ibn Ezra, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and Baḥya Ibn Paquda, are cited. The second and chronologically later work contains no new Saadianic material over and above the *Hibbur*.

Berechiah flourished in the second half of the twelfth century. As his title implies, he was apparently a vocalizer of biblical manuscripts. His place of origin was France, though J. Jacobs attempted to identify him with a certain Benedictus le Puncteur of Oxford, making him an important English Jew.⁵⁴ Jacobs's theory is untenable, for Berechiah's own epitome of the Paraphrase is dedicated to "the patron R. Meshullam," none other than Meshullam b. Jacob of Lunel, the sponsor of the great Rabbanite translation project in southern France.⁵⁵ This dedication dates, locates, and identifies Berechiah as a member of Meshullam's immense translation factory in Lunel.

Many attempts have been made over the last century to identify Berechiah as the author of the Paraphrase. The identification of Berechiah as the paraphrasist was originally made by J. Fürst, though by implication L. Dukes first raised the connection.⁵⁶ And indeed, Berechiah produced an abbreviated version of the Paraphrase in his *Hibbur*. However, there is not the slightest evidence that Berechiah was conversant with Arabic, for his other known translation efforts constitute a *Lapidarium* and a version of

53. For the date of composition of these two works, see Gollancz's introduction, *Ethical Treatises of Berakhya*, p. 1.

54. See the exchange between Jacobs and A. Neubauer in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s. 1 (1889): 182–183, and 2 (1890): 322–333, 520–526.

55. See *Ethical Treatises of Berakhya*, p. 1. On Meshullam, see I. Twersky, *Rabad of Posquières* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 12–14.

56. Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica* (Leipzig, 1863), 2:210; Ewald and Dukes, *Beiträge*, 2:16, n. 6.

Adelard of Bath's *Questiones Naturales*.⁵⁷ Conceivably, this identification was based on the contents of MS Munich 42 (the MS most often cited in the nineteenth century), in which the Paraphrase appears immediately preceding Berechiah's translation of the *Questiones Naturales*.⁵⁸ Despite this very circumstantial association, it is now generally regarded that the once promising identification is fruitless.⁵⁹

In Spain the anti-Christian polemicist Jacob b. Reuben quoted extensively from the Paraphrase in the twelfth chapter of his *Milhamot ha-Shem* (composed 1170).⁶⁰ This book is cast in the form of a dialogue between a Christian (*ha-mekhaḥed*, "the denier") and a Jew (*ha-meyahed*, "the uniter"), and is a literary expansion of a private "disputation" that the young Jacob held with a friendly priest in Gascogne.⁶¹ In the final chapter of the book there appears a compilation of various philosophic demonstrations which seeks to prove that the Messiah had not yet arrived. In this chapter Jacob cites Isaac Israeli, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Abraham Bar Ḥiyya, and most prominently Saadiah Gaon. Jacob quotes at length numerous passages from the seventh and eighth treatises of the Paraphrase, devoted respectively to the doctrines of bodily resurrection and messianic redemption. These passages are typically introduced by the phrase *amar ha-ga'on*, "the gaon said," or *amar he-ḥakham ha-gadol be-sifro*, "the great sage said in his book."⁶² It is open to some doubt whether Jacob drew from a copy of the full text of the Paraphrase or from an epitome, such as Berechiah's *Hibbur* or MS Paris 669, for these epitomes delete but a small amount from the content of the seventh and eighth treatises. In either case, Malter's initial evaluation of the *Milhamot ha-Shem* as a valuable tool in determining the

57. On Berechiah's knowledge of Arabic, see Gollancz in *Ethical Treatises*, pp. xxxix–xl. An early and fairly accurate bibliography of Berechiah's works is provided by H. Gross, *Gallia Judaica* (Paris, 1897), 2:180–185. See Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, pp. 958–962. Berechiah also composed poetry; see I. Davidson, *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1933), vol. 4, s.v. "Berakhyah b. Natronay ha-Naqdan."

58. Steinschneider, *Hebraeische Bibliographie* 3 (1860): 44, n. 1; and *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, p. 440.

59. Zunz, Bloch (for his own reasons), Neubauer, Gollancz, Steinschneider, Malter, and Porges were all in agreement on this point.

60. For the date of composition of this work, see Y. Rosenthal's introduction in *Sefer Milhamot ha-Shem* (Jerusalem, 1963), p. viii.

61. See Rosenthal's introduction, *Milhamot ha-Shem*, p. ix.

62. *Milhamot ha-Shem*, pp. 157, 159, 161, et al.

text of the Paraphrase ought to be ignored, for the text is a derivative witness of little textual value.⁶³

A third witness to the Paraphrase from the twelfth century is more problematic: it is the *Shir ha-Yihud* (“Hymn of Unity”), an anonymous poem deriving from the earliest German pietist circles of the Rhine River valley.⁶⁴ Unlike the other witnesses, the *Shir ha-Yihud* does not cite Saadia by name, nor can it be dated with any precision. The poem, composed at least a generation before R. Judah he-Ḥasid (d. 1217), is essentially an ecstatic reworking set to rhyme and meter of the second treatise of the Paraphrase.

The first to recognize the link between Saadia and the *Shir* was R. Moses b. Ḥisdai (Taku), the bitter anti-Saadia polemicist who lived in the midst of the pietist Rhineland.⁶⁵ He attacked the *Shir ha-Yihud*—and by implication Saadia—for its confused and heretical theology.

There is a poem called “Song of Unity,” and I have heard that R. Bezalel composed it—but not all of it—from the *Book of Beliefs*, for from the verse “God Almighty” [*Shaddai; Shir ha-Yihud*, ed. Habermann, 33:97],⁶⁶ R. Samuel composed it. In it is written: “Everything is in You, and You are in everything” [25:39], “You surround all and fill all, and with the becoming of all, You are in all” [26:49], “Before the all, You were all; and with the beginning of all, You filled all” [27:65]. If this is the case, then why is it also written: “The Judge sits as an Ancient One, His hosts to the left and right” [29:18]? It is as if He were a created form! Thus, the Torah opinion is that anyone who recites [the poem] is a defiler.⁶⁷

63. *Saadia Gaon*, p. 368.

64. The poem was published with critical commentary by A. Habermann in *Shirei ha-Yihud ve-ha-Kavod* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 13–45. For a recent discussion of the poem’s position in German pietist tradition, see J. Dan, *The Esoteric Theology of Ashkenazi Ḥasidism* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1968), 47–48.

65. On this individual, see J. Epstein, “Moise Tako b. Hisdai et son *Ketav Tamim*,” *Revue des études juives* 61 (1911): 60–70; and more recently J. Dan’s introduction to the facsimile edition of the *Ketav Tamim* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. vii–xxvii.

66. This verse of the *Shir* contains the acrostic “Samuel.”

67. MS Paris H711: 54a.

Observant critic that he was, Moses b. Ḥisdai criticized the Hymn for its ecstatic panentheism and correctly identified the source for this deviant thought: the Paraphrase, identified by Moses b. Ḥisdai as the *Sefer ha-Emunot*. Moses b. Ḥisdai also objected to the notion that God is portrayed as a physical form, and here we touch upon a second motif shared by the *Shir ha-Yihud* and the Paraphrase: the existence of a created and resplendent *Kavod* (“Divine Glory”) which acts as God’s revelatory agent and immanent presence.⁶⁸ And indeed, there are a few paraphrastic deviations from Saadia’s highly transcendent theology of the *Kavod* which, when taken together, provide a visual pantheist coloring to Saadia’s work. The most important aspect of this theological shift is the *Kavod* doctrine as it appears in the Paraphrase.

Para. MS Vat. 266, fol. 41b:1

Kitāb (ed. Landauer): 99

... דע כי זו הצורה ברואה היא חודשה וכן הכסא הרקיע והנושאים אותו כולם ברואים והבורא ברא אותם מאור מובהק ונגה מובהק למען שיחברר אצל הנביאים הנשלחים כי הבורא יתרוםם זכרו והא המדבר עמו והוא המשלחהו כמו שאפרש במגילה השלישית. אבל זו הצורה היא צורה מופלאה ונמושאה בדמות המלאכים הנשאים והנפלאים והיא עצומה במראה מובהקה ומוצהרה ומונהרה זוהרת באורה כאור השכינה ולפיכך נקראת כבוד יי' ושכינתו ... והחכמים קראו אותו שכינה ופעמים הרבה תהיה אור מאיר בלי דמות וצורה. אבל היוצר יתעלה וזכרו נושא את עבדו הנביא ונשאו וגדלו וכבדו כאשר השמיעו את דיבורו מן צורה מובהקה

اجبتنا بان هذه الصورة مخلوقة وكذلك الكرسي
والعرش وحملته كلهم محدثون احدثهم الخالق من
نور ليصح عند نبيه انه هو الذي ارادى اليه بكلامه
كما سنبين في المقالة الثالثة وهي صورة شريفة
من الملائكة عظيمة الخلق بهيئة النور وهي تسمى
كבוד ... وعنما الذي وصف العلماء سכינה
وقد تكون نور بلا صورة شخص فشرقي
الله نبيه بان اسمه الرحي من صورة
عظيمة مخلوقة من نور نسى كבוד
على ما بيننا

ומונהרה מופלאה וברואה מאור מובהק ונגה מובהק וקרואה כבוד יי' כמו שפירשתי.

68. On the *Kavod* doctrine in the original Saadianic formulation, see A. Altmann, “Saadya’s Theory of Revelation: Its Origin and Background,” in *Saadya Studies*, ed. E. I. J. Rosenthal (Manchester, 1943), pp. 4–25.

Paraphrase: . . . Know that this form is created and brought new into existence, and so are the Throne of the firmament and those that carry it—all of them are created. And the Creator created them from a shining light and a shining splendor, so that it would become clear to the sent prophets that the Creator, may His mention be glorified, is the very one that speaks with him and the very one who sent him, as I shall explain in the third scroll. But this form is a wondrous and supernal form in the image of the lofty and marvelous angels; and it is awesome in its clear and bright and illuminated appearance, shining in its light like the light of the *Shekhinah*. And for this reason it is called the *Kavod* of the Lord and His *Shekhinah*. . . . And the sages called it *Shekhinah*, and many times the light shines forth with neither image nor form.

But the Maker, may His mention be raised, lifts up His servant the prophet and lifts him and brings him up and honors him when He causes him to hear His word from the shining and illuminated and wondrous and created form, from the shining light and glittering splendor. And it is called the *Kavod* of the Lord, as I have explained.

Kitāb: Our answer is that this form is something created, and that likewise the Throne, the firmament, and the carriers of the Throne are all created. God created them out of light in order to verify to His prophets that it was He who inspired them with His words, as we shall explain in the third chapter. This form is nobler than the angels, magnificent in character, resplendent with light, which is called the *Kavod* of the Lord. . . . It is this which the sages characterized as *Shekhinah*. Sometimes there appears a light without the form of a person. God confers distinction on His prophet by allowing him to hear a prophetic revelation from that majestic form created out of light and called the *Kavod* of the Lord, as we have explained.

The observant reader should note that through extensive use of parallelism, the Paraphrase accentuates a visual light motif, thereby stressing the resplendent and permeated nature of the ubiquitous *Kavod*. This glittering and resplendent *Kavod* establishes a divine immanence that easily lends itself to the creation of a visually startling cosmogony, such as is contained in the German pietists' *Kavod* doctrine.⁶⁹

69. See Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 84–103. See M. Idel, “The World of Angels in Human Form” [Hebrew], in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 3, *Studies in Mysticism Presented to Isaiah Tishby* (Jerusalem, 1983/84), pp. 15–19, in which Judah Halevi is regarded as a crucial ideational link between rationalists and the kabbalistic theory that the divine realm appears in human form. Quite possibly the Paraphrase may have served a similar purpose.

Another feature of the Paraphrase, left unmentioned by Moses b. Hisdai, is the infusion of an esotericism into Saadiah's theology of the Godhead. Typical expressions of this esotericist spirit appear throughout the second treatise of the Paraphrase, as in *she-hu daq mufla ve-ne'elam ve-hevyon ve-ganus ve-zafun mi-kol*, "for He is subtly wonderful and hidden and secreted and disguised and concealed from all." This statement is accompanied by a bold panentheist shift: *she-hu meqif et kol ha-'olam ve-hu meqayyem me-'amidat ha-kol*, "He encompasses all the universe and preserves [it] by the endurance of all."⁷⁰ Taken in their totality, these kinds of passages provided a firm foundation for pietist speculations regarding the nature and workings of the divinity.⁷¹

Of both doctrinal and lexicographical interest are the many passages from the *Shir ha-Yihud* which are drawn directly from the Paraphrase. These textual adaptations have been fully documented by A. Berliner.⁷² One of the most powerful and obvious adaptations appears in the hymn for the fifth day, establishing another strong esoteric theme.

Shir ha-Yihud, 36:48–37:60

MS Vat.266, fol. 33a:1

לאין דמיון נפלא אלהינו ואין חקר נשגב אדננו / סתור מכל
סתור ועמוס מכל עמוס ומכל כמוס / דק מכל דק וצפון
מכל צפון ויכול מכל יכול / נשגב מכל נשגב ונעלם מכל
נעלם ושמו לעולם / גבוה מכל גבוה ועליון מכל עליון ומכל
חביון / חבוי ועמוק מכל עמוק לב כל דעת עליו חמוק /
שאינ שכל ומדע וחכמה יכולים להשוות לו כל מאומה / לא
משיגים לו איך וכמה לא מוצאים לו דבר דומה / מקרה
וערער ושנוי וטפל וחבר ומסמך אור וגם אפל / לא
מוצאים לו מראה וצבע ולא כל טבע אשר שש ושבע / לכן
נבוכות כל עשתונות ונבהלות כל החשכונות / וכל שרעפים
וכל הרהורים נלאים לשום בו שעורים / מלשערהו
ומלהגבילהו מלתארהו ומלפרסמהו. . .

. . . אשר היא נפלא לאין כל דמיון ונשגב לאין חקר וסתור
מכל מסתור ועמוס מכל עמוק ומכל עמוק ונעלם מכל
נעלם ונשגב מכל נשגב וחבוי מכל חביון וגבוה מכל גבוה
ועליון מכל עליון שאין השכל יכול להשוותו בצורה וגם לא
לדמותו מפני שאין המדע משיג לו איך וכמה וגם לא מוצא
לו לא מקרה ולא עירע ולא טיפול ולא חיבור ולא מסמך.
ולכן כל העשתונות נבוכות וכל המחשבות נבהלות וכל
השרעפות נלאות מלשעריהו בשיעור ומלהגבילהו בגבול
ומלתארהו בתאר ומלפרסמהו במקרה ומלטכסיהו בטכס או
צורה או דמיון. . .

70. MS Vatican 266, 38a:2.

71. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 108–109.

Aside from the hymn for the fifth day, the hymns for the second, third, fourth, sixth, and Sabbath day contain phrases and unique words lifted from the Paraphrase. Of the particular interest are the terms for the ten Aristotelian categories (*eser ha-imriyyot*; Tibbonide *eser ma'amarot*), some of which appear in the passage above. These terms are interesting, for they represent one of the first attempts at rendering these technical philosophical terms into Hebrew.⁷³ Very few of these terms persisted into Tibbonide Hebrew, and some, such as *eresh* for “substance,” are unique to the Paraphrase and the *Shir*.⁷⁴

Finally, and most dubiously, we may infer that Abraham Ibn Ezra—not the most proficient Arabist—was familiar with the Paraphrase, if only for the fact that he severely criticized the Gaon for his verbosity.⁷⁵ At most, then, the Paraphrase was cited or otherwise utilized by scholars in Spain, France, and Germany in the latter half of the twelfth century.



72. *Ketavim Nivharim* (Jerusalem, 1945), 1:164–170.

73. The Paraphrase contains two accounts of the categories. In both instances the Arabic original merely mentions “the ten categories” without going into details or naming each of the categories. The two passages occur in MS Vatican 266, fols. 34b:1 and 39a:1. Below is a chart comparing the Paraphrase terms with the Tibbonide terms, derived from Judah Ibn Tibbon’s *Be’ur Millot Zarot* in the introduction to *Sefer ha-Emunot ve-ha-De’ot* (Josefow, 1885), pp. 11–12.

| | Paraphrase | Ibn Tibbon |
|---------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. substance | ממש, ניצב, עיקר, ארש | עצם |
| 1a. accident | מקרה, טפל, גרש | מקרה |
| 2. quantity | כמה | כמה |
| 3. quality | איך | איך |
| 4. time | זמן | מתי |
| 5. place | מכון | אנה |
| 6. relation | טפל, טפול | מצטרף |
| 7. position | מסמר, סמוך, סמכון | מצב |
| 8. possession | קניין, אחזה | לו, קניין |
| 9. action | פועל, עושה | שיפעול |
| 10. passion | פעול, עשוי | שיחפעל |

74. Ben-Yehuda’s *edesh* (*Thesaurus*, p. 78a) is based on Gollancz’s rendering of Berechiah’s text, and should be ignored.

75. See his *Yesod Mora* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 4, and Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, p. 283, n. 7.

In the course of the nineteenth century, three distinct theories were advanced as to the identity of the paraphrasist.

1. P. Bloch proposed that the paraphrasist was also the author of the anonymous *Shir ha-Yihud*.⁷⁶
2. A. Berliner suggested the possibility that the Paraphrase and one of the presently anonymous Hebrew translations of Saadiah's Judeo-Arabic commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* (not that of Moses b. Joseph of Lucena)⁷⁷ were made by the same individual.⁷⁸
3. J. Fürst proposed that the paraphrasist was none other than Berechiah ha-Nakdan. Many nineteenth-century scholars adopted this position, but it has now been properly discarded.

It should be noted that in the case of Bloch's and Berliner's proposals, we would still be unable to identify the paraphrasist. At best, a new series of linkages would be established that might help to create bibliographic relationships.

Bloch's theory is centered around the term *yihud*, "unity," and its recurring use and function in both the Paraphrase and the *Shir ha-Yihud*. The term *yihud* is indeed a new creation of the Paraphrase, and the *Shir ha-Yihud* does employ it prominently. But this is hardly an adequate basis upon which to draw the conclusions that Bloch did. Rather, as Berliner suggested in response to Bloch, it might be more appropriate to assume that the author of the *Shir* had the Paraphrase before him and drew from it in a variety of ways.

Berliner's theory deserves further consideration. Though both the Paraphrase and the *Sefer Yezirah* translation stand outside Tibbonide Hebrew syntax and vocabulary, no correlation can be established on this fact alone. The *Sefer Yezirah* translation does contain Arabisms and paytanic terms,⁷⁹ but at best this merely establishes a similar cultural and linguistic environment for the two works. It may be that the two works are from the same hand, but that brings us no closer to knowing the date or location of the translator.

76. Bloch, "Die zweite Uebersetzung," pp. 453–456.

77. Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, pp. 443–448.

78. *Ketavim*, 1:159 f.

79. Steinschneider, *Hebraeischen Uebersetzungen*, pp. 447–448.

Two scholars in the twentieth century made undocumented assertions as to the geographic origins of the Paraphrase. N. Porges suggested that the Paraphrase derived from Babylonia,⁸⁰ and Malter put forward the suggestion of Palestinian origins.⁸¹ There are good reasons for accepting their general inclination to ascribe an Eastern origin for the Paraphrase, though not as far east as they suggest.

The language and stylistic peculiarities of the Paraphrase uniformly point away from Spain/Provence and toward the East. The Kallirite terminology of the Paraphrase was unknown amongst Spanish theologians of the tenth and eleventh centuries, and Spanish paytanim completely avoided Eastern styles of rhyme, meter, and vocabulary. Spanish poetry may be described as “neoclassical,” tending toward biblical form and Arabic rhyming patterns while avoiding an undue amount of neologistic pyrotechnics.⁸² Abraham Bar Ḥiyya (d. after 1136), the great Hebrew-writing pre-Tibbonide Spanish philosopher, shares not a single vocabulary item with the Kallirian Hebrew of the Paraphrase.⁸³ Western Europe, soon to be the recipient of the Tibbonide undertaking, was not the home of the Paraphrase, though it would be used extensively by philosophers and their literary opponents in Spain and France during the first round of the Maimonidean controversy. In fact, though the Tibbonide translation was available by 1186, a full generation later the text of choice in Spain, Provence, and Germany remained the Paraphrase.⁸⁴

80. *Zeitschrift für hebraeische Bibliographie* 7 (1903): 38.

81. *Saadia Gaon*, p. 361.

82. See Schirmann’s introduction, *Ha-Shirah ha-Ivrit*, 1:23–55, especially 40–42.

83. Such a blanket statement is possible thanks to two studies by I. Efros: “Studies in Pre-Tibbonian Philosophical Terminology,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 17 (1926/27): 129–164, 323–368, and “More About Abraham b. Ḥiyya’s Philosophical Terminology,” *ibid.*, n.s. 20 (1929/30): 113–138.

84. The instigator of the controversy in Spain, Rabbi Meir b. Todros ha-Levi Abulafia (1170?–1244), cites Saadiah from the Paraphrase version. See *Kitāb al-Rasā’il*, ed. J. Brill (Paris, 1871), pp. 14, 36–37, 57. Brill was unaware of the existence of the Paraphrase; see *ibid.*, p. 137n. On Abulafia, see B. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); and on the controversy in general, see Y. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, 1961–66), 1:96–110. In Provence, both Aaron b. Meshullam (d. 1210) and the Tosafist Samson b. Abraham of Sens (ca. 1155–1225) quoted from the seventh treatise of the Paraphrase; see *Kitāb al-Rasā’il*:57, pp. 136–137. Interestingly, D. Silver claimed that a Saadianic interpretation of Maimonides which was current during the early controversy illustrated “the quick proliferation of ideas through [the Tibbonide] translation” (*Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy*

And however popular the Paraphrase was with rationalists, it was thoroughly embraced by Jewish mystics during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Echoes of the Paraphrase appear in an extremely disparate cross-section of this early Jewish mystical literature, and it would not be unfair to assume that further reverberations of the Paraphrase will be uncovered as the Paraphrase becomes better known amongst modern scholars of the early Kabbalah. The ecstatic panentheism, the visually resplendent *Kavod*, and the air of esotericism that was fostered by the Paraphrase made this unusual version of Saadiah a favorite of Jewish mystics. No wonder that the German pietists declared Saadiah to be “a master of secrets” (*ba'al sod*).⁸⁵ In general, it is not that the Paraphrase laid the theological foundation for pietism or early Kabbalah; rather, there are numerous passages in the Paraphrase which were thought to legitimate already-held beliefs. For the pietists and other medievals, the Paraphrase took on the stature of authority. For the Jewish mystics, the Paraphrase was not so much influential as it was legitimating. There was an enormous appeal in being able to cite the venerable Gaon as an authority, and Jewish mystics did not fail to do so when the opportunity arose.⁸⁶

[Leiden, 1965], pp. 119–120). Silver was thus also unaware of the existence of the Paraphrase. In Germany, there is Moses b. Ḥisdai in his *Ketav Tamim*, written sometime between 1210 and 1234. Also, see the comments by E. Urbach, “The Participation of German and French Scholars in the Controversy About Maimonides and His Works” [Hebrew], *Zion* 12 (1947/48): 150–154.

85. See Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, p. 23, n. 5; idem, *Studies in Ashkenazi-Hasidic Literature* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan, 1975), p. 32, n. 9; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 86; and I. Weinstock, “Ha-im Hayah Rav Sa'adyah Ga'on Ba'al Sod?” in *Be-Ma'agalei ha-Nigleh ve-ha-Nistar* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 81–106. It may be that Saadiah became known as a mystic in later times through a pseudo-Saadianic German pietist commentary to the *Sefer Yezirah* that was partially published in the Mantua 1562 edition of the *Sefer Yezirah*.

86. Aside from the *Shir ha-Yihud*, the oldest extant work that can be directly linked to the Ashkenazi Ḥasidim (see Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 47–48), the Paraphrase appears in at least two other German pietist works: Judah he-Hasid's *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. J. Wistinetzki (Frankfurt a. M., 1924), pp. 38–39, contains a portion of the fifth treatise (MS Vatican 266, fols. 74b: 1–75a:1 and 71a:2); see also Eleazar of Worms's *Sefer ha-Roqeah ha-Gadol* (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 33–36. Even the very penitential terminology of the *Roqeah* draws from the fifth treatise of the Paraphrase, which abounds with the terms *ḥasid* and *moreh*. See I. Marcus, *Piety and Society* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 109–129, 144–145. The pietist R. Abraham b. Azriel quotes a long passage from the ninth treatise of the Paraphrase in the midst of a discussion of Maimonidean issues. See Urbach, “Participation of German and French Scholars,” pp. 150–152. As Scholem has pointed out, the demanding pietist insistence upon strict and even legally excessive observance of the Law is also rooted in the Paraphrase's formulations on the topic. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 97, and MS Vatican 266, fol. 72b:2. The Paraphrase is also quoted in the

In only one part of Europe did Kallirian/Palestinian styles take root. In the ninth century, liturgical poetry of a Palestinian mold blossomed in Venosa and Oria, southern Italy.⁸⁷ Nowhere else in Byzantium were these Palestinian styles emulated.⁸⁸ In 1054, a descendant of the first Byzantine paytanim composed a narrative history of his family's exploits in rhymed *saj'*-like couplets. This "Chronicle of Aḥima'az (b. Paltiel)" contains numerous neologisms reminiscent of Kallirite creativity; however, none of the unique coinages of the Paraphrase appear in the Chronicle.⁸⁹

Even more interesting is the fact that eleventh-century Byzantium was witness to an amazing literary and social phenomenon which Z. Ankori termed "the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project." This project was a massive undertaking which had as its goal the translation into Hebrew of the entire Arabic Karaite library.⁹⁰ Unlike the later Tibbonide project sponsored by Meshullam b. Jacob of Lunel, the Byzantine effort was not brought about by an unfamiliarity with Arabic amongst Byzantine partisans. The desired audience was not internal, but external. Set in motion by Tobias b. Moses "the Translator," the Byzantine Karaite Literary Project "was a well-calculated and well-planned communal undertaking" designed to win the

literature ascribed to the so-called Iyyun circle; see G. Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbale* (Paris, 1966), pp. 327–367. In one of the Iyyun texts, the *Tefillah le-Rav Nehunya ben ha-Qanah*, the *sefirot* are described as *ḥalaqim she-einam mithalqim* ("indivisible particles"; see Scholem, *Origines de la Kabbale*, p. 274, n. 109); this is precisely the Paraphrase definition of the "eternal spiritual beings," or atoms, of Plato's theory of creation (MS Vatican 266, fol. 18a:2; Ibn Tibbon: *ha-ḥalakim asher lo yehalku*). In this way the *sefirot* were defined as eternal spiritual entities, a definition which remained valid for later generations. Zoharic meditations on the tenth *sefirah*, Kingdom (*malkhut*), also resort to visual imagery and pantheist notions, but no direct tie to the Paraphrase can yet be established. On the *Shekhinah* in the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, see I. Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 3d ed. (Jerusalem, 1971), 1:219–231. The fourteenth-century kabbalist Menahem Recanati quotes the Paraphrase in his Bible commentary in defense of the kabbalistic doctrine of *shemīṭot* ("cosmic cycles"); see *Perush Rabbenu Menahem me-Reqanati* (Lublin, 1605), sec. *Behar*: 31a–b, and cf. MS Vatican 266, fol. 14b:1–2.

87. A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (New York, 1971), pp. 171–172; and Schirmann, *Studies*, 2:9–16.

88. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, p. 174.

89. This Chronicle was first published as *Sefer ha-Yuḥasin* by A. Neubauer in *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, 2:111–132. Notice should be taken of the word *nimus* in the Chronicle, not as "school of thought" (Paraphrase) or "law" (Bar Ḥiyya; see H. Wolfson, "Additional Notes to the Article on the Classification of Sciences in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3 [1926]: 374–375), but as "road, way." See R. Mirkin, ed., *Megillat Aḥima'az Me'ubedet u-Mugeshet ke-Homer le-Milon* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 139.

90. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, pp. 354–452.

hearts and minds of Byzantine Rabbanite Jews.⁹¹ The project was a militant ideological effort of communal proportions, not the result of the curiosity of a scholarly elite.

Could it be that in the midst of this flurry of Karaite literary activity there arose a Rabbanite translator who sought to give the despised “Pithomite” enemy of the Karaites his own Hebrew voice? It would only be natural that Saadiyah, so much the focus of Karaite ire in the newly translated Hebrew literature, be made available to the same Byzantine audience that now had the Karaite castigations in hand. Kallirian styles were in vogue, as the Chronicle of Aḥima‘az and Italian poetry testify. And it should be recalled that the German pietists, the first to use the Paraphrase, attributed their esoterica to an Italian conduit.⁹²

Thus, the existence of a Byzantine Karaite Translation Project provides the heretofore missing link with regard to the origins of the Paraphrase: it provides the proper social and intellectual context for an eleventh-century translation of Saadiyah’s *Kitāb al-Amānāt*.

On the other hand, the Paraphrase exhibits none of the telltale indications of Byzantine composition, such as the appearance of Latin or Greek interpositions. Nor is there any indication of an early or prolonged use of the Paraphrase in Italy. Finally, we would be hard-pressed to find a Rabbanite Byzantine sufficiently familiar with Arabic.⁹³ Only an immigrant Rabbanite could have composed the Paraphrase, for in Byzantium Arabic was the exclusive possession of the Karaites: no Karaite could be responsible for a loving translation of the despised Saadiyah’s masterpiece!

Indications point to the East, though with no resolution. Whether Babylonian, Palestinian, or Byzantine/Italian, the Paraphrase must have answered a need. In the eleventh century, that need was created by Karaism, burdened with its antagonistic “Saadiyah complex.” The paraphrasist responded to that need.

Trinity College
Hartford, Conn.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

92. Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 14–20.

93. Tobias b. Eliezer, the most important Rabbanite homilist of Byzantine Jewry, is typical in his ignorance of Arabic. See Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, p. 290, n. 114.