

### **Arabic Poetry in the Cairo Genizah**

Mohamed Ahmed

The Cairo Genizah has shown its importance as a fruitful source for the study of both liturgical and secular Hebrew poetry. Yet, although the Cairo Genizah contains hundreds of poetry fragments written in the Arabic language, its Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic poetry has hitherto received inadequate attention in the research literature. The paper explores some of the Genizah's Arabic poems written in Hebrew script (Judaeo-Arabic), which are held at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collections of Cambridge University Library. The paper highlights the diversity of themes and genres of Arabic poetry read by Jews in medieval and early modern Egypt. It explores various poems by various Fatimid authors, such as Tamīm al-Fātīmī (948–984) and Ibn Abī Ḥuṣayna (998–1064), that can be found alongside older poems composed by famous Abbasid poets, like Abū Firās al-Ḥamadānī (932–967), al-Khubzaruzzī (d. 939) and Khālid al-Kātīb (d. 876). The paper concludes with a discussion about the importance of the Cairo Genizah to the study of Arabic literature and poetry in general, as well as the importance of the Genizah to the dissemination of knowledge within medieval Muslim and Jewish elites.

### ***From Generation to Generation – Enrolling Judeo-Arabic Texts within the Curriculum of Secondary Education in Israel , Perspectives and Prospects.***

Shlomo Alon

The Curriculum of Arabic as an Official Second Language in Jewish Highschools in Israel includes, as an elective unit, Medieval Judeo-Arabic texts of Rabbi Saadia Gaon, Yehuda Halevi's *al-Kuzari* and Maimonides *Dalalat al-Hairin*. This breakthrough, unique in itself, was introduced by the late Zahava Kister and by the current presenter, more than fifty years ago. It served as an option for religious secondary schools and opened a window to the rich world of Medieval Judeo-Arabic texts and manuscripts at the pre-university level. The paper will explore the initiative and put light on the JA place in teaching Arabic and Jewish texts in the education system in Israel, concluding new perspectives and prospects for the future.

### ***Adab al-Qādi Jurisprudential Genre – Beginnings of a Comparative Case Study***

Neri Y. Ariel

The geonic age spanned the seventh to eleventh centuries in Babylonia. If the early geonic corpus was composed of collective oral traditions, the successors of Se'adya Gaon (882–

942) specialized in the composition of individual legal–halakhic codices. Known as “late monographic works,” the *judges’ duties* genre is the legal–jurisprudential climax of this monographic genre. In my talk, I would like to comparatively reflect on my recently submitted PhD dissertation, “Manuals for Judges (ادب القضاة) in *Geniza*: A Study of *Geniza* Fragments of a Judeo-Arabic Monographic Genre” (Hebrew University, 1.1.2019).

In previous talks at the SJAS conferences, I shared with my honored colleagues the basis and justification for the discovery of Rav Hai Gaon’s (Pumbedita, 998–1038) כתאב אדב אלקצ’א (*Kitāb adab alqaḏā* / Book of Judges’ Duties). Other remnants stemming from different works of this jurisprudential genre survived and are included in my completed research (e.g., *Kitāb lawāzim al-ḥukkām* by Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon; Ibn Akinin’s *Faṣl fī ādāb al-dayyanin* (“Chapter on the judges’ good manners”) from *Tibb al-Nufūs* (טב אלנפוס, “Hygiene of the Souls”). These works were entirely written in an intellectual milieu essentially corresponded with its Muslim environment.

The talk will supply several examples of content-related parallels and structural equivalents between *Geniza* remnants of this newly discovered Judaeo–Arabic sub-genre and already known works of their Muslim contemporaries in a well-based genre. Examining textual proximities and the possible ideological juxtaposition of the legal, philosophical and literary contexts, I would like to ponder several issues characteristic for the distinguished *Adab al-Qādi*, or the judges’ duties genre (חובות הדיינין), concerning questions such as the ethical character of the judge, the perception of the adjudicational process and the comprehension of civil procedure.

### **New Geonic responsa from the Cairo Geniza**

Amir Ashur and Zvi Stampfer

In this paper, we will present our ongoing research project - New Geonic responsa from the Cairo Geniza.

We have identified so far about 300 unknown or unpublished Geonic responsa - in Judeo-Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic. Among them some ancient quires of Saadia Gaon responsa written on vellum, unknown responsa and original Judeo Arabic responsa only known to us in its medieval Hebrew translation. Our aim is to publish a new edition, which contains the original JA with annotated translation and introduction.

In this talk, we will present some highlights of the most interesting documents.

## **Stabilizing and destabilizing factors in the leadership of the Maimonidean dynasty (1140-1410)**

Menahem Ben-Sasson

The fathers and sons of Maimonidean dynasty were the leaders of the Jewish communities of Egypt and its subordinated regions from the 1160s until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Members of the family bore the title “head of the Jews,” “Nagid,” which meant at that time the person officially responsible for the affairs of the Jewish community, vis-à-vis the government and the general public alike. All seem to be signs of stable leadership that could make stable public life. However, the period in which the Maimonidean dynasty was active was a troubled and unstable time for the Jewish communities of the Middle East. The paper will deal with three topics and their influence on the stability of the dynasty and the communities: The Dynasty and its time – factors of instability; Stabilizing factory in making the dynasty; stabilizing and destabilizing factors in the dynasty’s common activities.

### **Rabbi Jonah Ibn Janāḥ as Textual Critic**

Elnatan Chen

Rabbi Jonah Ibn Janāḥ (Cordoba, first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century) is well known as the greatest linguist of the Middle Ages. Upon the pioneering work of Rabbi Yehuda Ḥayyūj, Ibn Janāḥ built the complete structure of the language, writing the first comprehensive grammar book of Biblical Hebrew (*Kitāb al-Taḥqīḥ*), which includes a grammar section (*Kitāb al-Luma’*) and a dictionary section (*Kitāb al-Uṣūl*).

One less known aspect of his linguistic work is his expertise as textual critic. Throughout his work, especially in his early writings dealing with the teachings of Ḥayyūj, Ibn Janāḥ is seen to be extraordinarily sensitive to the text with which he deals. From the many instances where Ibn Janāḥ expresses his philological considerations, we perceive a highly developed ability for analysis and textual criticism, which is based upon strong philological rules that can serve as an example even for modern scholars, such as: analysis of the manner in which anomalous versions were created in Ḥayyūj’s books, disruptions and misrepresentations of copyists, the persistence of a single individual letter in all versions as evidence of the correctness of the text, the authentication of the original version for the purpose of deriving proofs, awareness of differing versions resulting from secondary editing, and more.

In the lecture, this unique phenomenon of the usage of text criticism by Ibn Janāḥ, along with its scientific and polemical implications, will be presented.

## **Abraham Ibn Ezra's application of the Judeo-Arabic notion of the *mudawwin* in his Bible commentary**

Mordechai Z. Cohen

The notion of the *mudawwin*, a term used to connote the biblical narrator-editor in Judeo-Arabic commentaries, has received much attention in recent scholarship. Haggai Ben-Shammai and Marzena Zawadowska have shown that Yefet ben Eli refers to Moses as the *mudawwin* of the Torah when speaking of his literary agency in formulating the Pentateuch based on revelation from God. Later Hebrew writing authors—both Karaite and Rabbanite—expressed the Judeo-Arabic notion of the *mudawwin* using terms like *ha-sofer*, *ha-sadran*, *ha-mesadder*. As Richard Steiner has noted, Abraham Ibn Ezra avoided such terminology, even though he was familiar with commentaries that used it—both in Judeo-Arabic and in Hebrew. Steiner attributes Ibn Ezra's avoidance of this topic to a fear that it would lend credence to the Muslim claim of *tahrīf*, i.e., that the Jews altered (“forged”) the text of the Torah. In my opinion, however, it is possible to discern Yefet ben Eli's influence on Ibn Ezra in this matter, as he does speak at times of Moses' role in formulating the Pentateuch. In this paper we will explore these examples in comparison with Yefet. We will also address the question of how Ibn Ezra reconciled this position with the traditional doctrine that “the Torah is from Heaven,” i.e., the word of God Himself, especially in light of the talmudic declaration that it is heretical to believe that “the entire Torah is from the Almighty except for a particular verse which was written by Moses on his own” (b.*Sanhedrin* 99b).

## **Some Notes on a Unique Pentateuch Translation into Judaeo-Arabic from the Fourteenth Century and its Printed Edition by Thomas Erpenius**

David Doron

Among the Hebrew manuscripts in the library of Leiden University is a manuscript bearing the title תּוֹרָה אֶל תַּפְסִיר , which is an Arabic translation of the Pentateuch, written by an unknown Jewish author from North Africa, presumably from the fourteenth century. Its microfilmed copy in The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in The National Library in Jerusalem attracted my attention about thirty years ago, and served me in research and comparison of different features in Maghrebi *Šurūḥ*. The discussed manuscript is unique since, unlike most of the texts written in Judaeo-Arabic including translations of the Bible, it has full Tiberian vocalization which reveals phenomena that are unknown in phonology and morphology, as well as some interesting features in vocabulary. It enables the scholar to trace, to some extent, linguistic phenomena and traditions in translation and commentary (such as the vestiges and the degree of influence of R. Sa'adia Gaon's *Tafsīr*)

among Jews of the Maghreb prior to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the possible influence on their traditions.

In 1622, Thomas Erpenius (van Erpe), a professor of Semitic languages at Leiden University and also a publisher and owner of a publishing house, published the aforementioned translation. He copied the manuscript in Arabic letters without vocalization, and published it under the title *السَّلَامُ عَلَيْهِ يَ النَّبِّ مُوسَى ثَوْرَاهُ* *id est PENTATEUCHUS MOSIS Arabicè*. The edition, opened with an introduction in Latin, is written as a letter of gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Johannes Boreel, a noted orientalist, to whom the edition was dedicated. In this "letter", Erpenius states his opinion on translations of the Bible into other languages, including Arabic translations in general and those translated by Jews in particular. On separate pages, the editor enumerates some typical linguistic characteristics of this translation. It is worthwhile pointing out that Ronny Vollandt has reviewed Erpenius' work in his comprehensive studies, published in 2015 and 2018.

The lecture will present a concise survey of a selection of phenomena in different fields of the language of the original codex (several of them evidently common in the Maghreb prior to the expulsion from Spain). Several verses from the original manuscript will be presented for the first time in comparison with the parallel verses in Erpenius' edition. These will be preceded by a survey of a few points in the editor's introduction.

### **The impact of Avicenna's concept of prophecy on Maimonides' perception of Intellectual prophecy**

Amira Eran

In my talk, I intend to show the analogy between Avicenna and Maimonides' theories of prophecy regarding three main issues:

1. The relation between the traditional concept of prophecy and the philosophical ideal of intellectual happiness (self-realization) in contemplative life.
2. The explanation of miraculous intervention as only an apparently unpredictable event, "breaking" natural causality.
3. The conflict between the individual ideal of the prophet's intellectual perfection and his moral mission within society.

I will point to the textual link between Avicenna's perception of the prophet's intellectual superiority and his role in social and religious legislation, together with Maimonides' description of prophecy as a natural phenomenon within the limits of human ken.

## **The Karaites on Commandments that Begin with Human Initiative in Light of their Discussion of the Sinew of the Hip (Genesis 32:33)**

Yoram Erder

According to the story in Genesis 32, following Jacob's encounter with the angel, the Israelites were forbidden to eat the sinew of the hip. This commandment is the only one mentioned in the Book of Genesis that is not repeated again in the Torah in the framework of the positive and negative commandments.

The Talmudic Sages debated whether this commandment was fulfilled prior to the giving of the Torah (Mishnah Hulin, 7: 6). Josephus (Antiquities 1: 20: 2) indicates that Jacob initiated the prohibition, whereas a document from the Qumran scrolls (4Q 158 1) includes a version of the text that was rewritten in order for it to be clear that this prohibition is a commandment from God.

The Karaite sages accepted the validity of this commandment, but all of the above questions were debated. Most of their interpretations were devoted to the question of whether this prohibition was a commandment that began with an act of human initiative, whether by Jacob or his sons. Similarly, the narrative nature of the text raised the question of whether a commandment can be learned from this and other narrative passages.

Most Karaites accepted the principle that commandments can begin as a result of human initiative. The commandments that were given by Yehonadav, the son of Rekhav, to his sons (Jeremiah 35) were considered to be a model of such commandments. In addition, the oath of Joseph's brothers to him (Genesis 50), the fasts mentioned in the Book of Zechariah (Zechariah 8:19) and the holiday of Purim were considered to be commandments which began as a result of human initiative.

### **The early reception of Averroes' commentaries in Hebrew: the case of the *Midrash ha-Hokhmah***

Resianne Fontaine

The thirteenth-century Hebrew encyclopaedia *Midrash ha-Hokhmah* is the first Hebrew text to manifest a large-scale use of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle in Hebrew. The work was originally written in Toledo in the 1230s in Arabic. This version is no longer extant, but the author, Judah ben Solomon ha-Cohen translated his own work into Hebrew c. 1247 when he resided at the court of Frederick II in Italy.

According to the author, one of the purposes underlying his compilation was to disseminate non-Jewish science among Jews. To this end he composed surveys of Euclid's geometry, Ptolemy's astronomy and astrology, and Aristotle's philosophy, that is logic, natural

philosophy and metaphysics. The part on philosophy consists primarily of extracts of Averroes' commentaries, either in abridged partial literal translations or paraphrases and summaries of Averroes' words. The extensive use of the commentaries is remarkable, for in the author's day Averroes was not yet widely studied neither among Jews, nor among Christians.

It is obvious that Judah ha-Cohen regards Averroes as *the* authoritative source for studying Aristotle. Yet, his presentation of Averroes' commentaries in the *Midrash ha-Hokhmah*, reveals an ambivalent attitude towards the study of philosophy. In my talk I will explain how the Hebrew author uses the commentaries and discuss his critical stance towards Averroes. Moreover, I will try to answer the question how the early large-scale reception of the commentaries in this text can be explained.

### **David ben Joshua Maimuni's Commentary on the Prayers: Between Pietism and Rationalism**

Arnold E. Franklin

The proposed paper deals with the unpublished Judeo-Arabic commentary on the prayers by David ben Joshua Maimuni (d. ca. 1415), the last member of Maimonides' illustrious family to occupy the office of *nagid* in Egypt. A prolific writer with wide-ranging interests, Maimuni was an original thinker whose literary output provides an opportunity for reassessing intellectual life in the east during the late Middle Ages, a period often dismissed as a time of stagnation and cultural decline for the Jews.

Recent scholarship has emphasized two principal facets of Maimuni's scholarly career: his participation in the movement of Sufi-inspired Jewish pietists that flourished in Egypt during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and his great devotion to the intellectual legacy of his Maimonidean ancestors, in particular the writings of Moses Maimonides. The proposed paper will attempt to situate Maimuni's prayer commentary in relation to these two foci. Taking into consideration the overall goal of the commentary, the specific interpretations it offers of liturgical formulae and its exclusive focus on the statutory prayer ritual, I will argue that Maimuni's text exhibits an orientation that is primarily Maimonidean in nature with limited pietistic elements. This conclusion is noteworthy in light of the important place that prayer occupied in the pietists' regimen of unique practices and insofar as it offers a contrast to the only substantial work by Maimuni to have been published thus far, his *Murshid ila al-tafarrud*.

## **Abraham Maimonides in Praise of Islam - A New Source**

Mordechai A. Friedman

In his writings, Abraham Maimonides repeatedly depicted Islam as having preserved authentic rites of divine worship and pietism that had been forgotten in Judaism. A fresh analysis of a Judeo-Arabic text in his *Kifāyā* discloses an additional source.

## **State Discipline in the Medieval Near East: The View from Egypt's Incarcerated Jews**

Brendan Goldman

In the half century following the publication of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (*Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*), scholars have written dozens of works on practices of incarceration in premodern states, detailing how these institutions projected monarchical power and preserved social order. Yet almost no research has been done on the penal system in the premodern Islamic Near East.

This paper turns to dozens of (mostly Judeo-Arabic) petitions from Jewish prisoners that survive in the Cairo Geniza and asks: To what extent do these documents comprise a literary genre? How do the norms of petitions shape the ways they convey information? What can these documents tell us about medieval peoples' lived experience of incarceration? How are these prisoners' experiences inflected by their "Jewishness"? Finally, what might their "Jewishness" tell us about *dhimmī*-state relations in the medieval Islamic Eastern Mediterranean?

## **Judaeo-Arabic Magical Texts Composed by Medieval Kabbalists**

Amos Goldreich

Most works of Jewish thought in the Middle Ages were written in Judaeo-Arabic. It is not the case when Jewish Mysticism is concerned. As the main literary activity of the so-called 'theosophic' (sefirotic) kabbalah in medieval times took place in Christian Europe (Provence, Catalunya, Castile, Italy), kabbalistic works were written in Hebrew (or sometimes in pseudo-epigraphic Aramaic). Some kabbalists were interested in, or even practiced, magic; in certain manuscripts kabbalah material and *Kabbalah Ma'asit* are interwoven. It is in manuscripts of this sort that we encounter passages concerning magical practices and 'recepies', composed by kabbalists, sometimes even displaying sefirotic terminology, written in Judaeo-Arabic (samples will be produced in the hand-out). The paper discusses the



following points: Eastern or North African origins of the authors; Elements of folk medicine; the problem of pagan and explicit Muslim elements in magical texts authored by Jewish rabbinic figures. An attempt will be made to trace the medieval Arabic sources of the material.

### **On Early Jewish-Christian Polemic in Arabic and the Origins of Toledot Yeshu**

Miriam Goldstein

At some point in the early history of the separation between Judaism and Christianity, an anonymous Jewish author or group of authors composed a text that purported to be an account of Jesus' trial and execution. This account was written in Aramaic and was likely titled *Gezar Dina de-Yeshu*. It circulated in the Near East among Jewish communities and is attested in a number of copies in the Cairo Genizah. This text was the first free-standing polemical work that Jews authored against Christianity.

Over the next few centuries, this minimalist narrative was expanded into an account covering the history of Christianity from Jesus' birth until his death, as well as the later history of the spread of Christianity. This parodical narrative, quite humorous for a reader or listener familiar with Christian narratives of Jesus' life, became popular among Arabic-speaking Jews and circulated in a number of versions during the medieval period. It became known as *Toledot Yeshu* or *Khabar Yeshu*. Numerous versions of this longer text circulated in Hebrew in Europe as well, and became notorious due to the exposés written by Christian polemicists who were shocked at its content.

My lecture will focus on the origins of this "long" version of the narrative, and will explain why it can likely be situated in the Near East during the early Islamic period. If this explanation is tenable, it means that the earliest versions of the long version of *Toledot Yeshu*, known as the Helene version, are to be sought in Judeo-Arabic texts, and indeed, are reflected in the numerous texts preserved in the Cairo Genizah and the Firkovich collection.

### **Jews in Seljuq Iraq? Evidence from the Cairo Geniza**

Jennifer Grayson

Although the Cairo Geniza corpus reveals a prolific correspondence between rabbinic authorities in Baghdad and Egypt before the middle of the eleventh century, there is almost no Iraqi material in the geniza corpus dating to the mid-11<sup>th</sup> through the mid-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, even though a yeshiva continued to operate during this time. This "dark period" coincides

with the Seljuq era in Baghdad (c. 1055-1157). In this paper, I consider what fragmentary evidence from the Cairo Geniza, coupled with evidence from Arabic chronicle sources, can tell us about Jewish life in Seljuq Iraq.

First, I will consider possible explanations for the lacuna in our source material. I argue that the lack of Iraqi material in the geniza corpus is due to geopolitical and administrative transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the eleventh century that reduced long-standing connections between Iraq, Egypt, and the wider Mediterranean.

Then, I will present an analysis of two Judeo-Arabic letters (T-S 12.780 and ENA NS 9.15) written by a man from Ramla who spent twenty years in Baghdad before finding himself in need of assistance from Jewish communal leaders in Egypt around 1094. These letters represent some of the only first-hand geniza accounts of Jewish life in Iraq from the Seljuq period, and they shed light on changes in the relationship between rabbinic elites in Egypt and Iraq during this period.

### **Accents, Vocalisation, and *Qere/Ketiv* in Medieval Judaeo-Arabic Bible Commentaries**

Joseph Habib

The consonantal text, vocalisation, and accentuation of the Hebrew Bible as preserved in the Tiberian Masoretic tradition seem to represent an attempt to signify three separate reading traditions. This is demonstrated by the fact that, within a given verse, they may reflect different interpretations of that verse. There are two ways in which these layers are significant for interpretation. First, are differences in syntactic division. These divisions are reflected by the accents as well as the pausal forms in the *qere*. The consonantal text can in many cases be read with divisions that differ from those reflected by the accents. Second, are differences in lexical or grammatical meaning between the consonantal text and the *qere*. This is reflected by the use of a lexeme in the *qere* that differs from that of the consonantal text (*ketiv*) or a grammatical form that deviates from that of the *ketiv* that may have consequences for interpretation.

One of the effects of the rise of Islam in the Middle Ages was the increased development of biblical exegesis and grammar among Jews. This was primarily brought to fruition by Saadya Gaon and the Karaites. It is surprising, therefore, that scholarship on Saadya and the Karaites contains only a handful of references to the accents, vocalisation, and *qere/ketiv*. I intend to demonstrate that the diversity between these 'layers' of the Masoretic text is reflected in the Bible translations and commentaries of Saadya and the Karaites.

## **Maimonides's Circumvention of Qaraite Scriptural Interpretation**

Marc Herman

Moses Maimonides engaged Qaraites and Qaraism in philosophic, legal, and communal matters, and his lengthy programmatic statements about the Oral Torah, the touchstone of the Qaraite-Rabbanite debate, were at least partially written with Qaraism in mind. Nevertheless, other than explicitly polemical passages, scholars have identified few examples of Maimonides's direct engagement with Qaraite scriptural interpretations. This paper suggests that, out of a desire to sidestep Qaraite legal reasoning, *Sefer ha-Miṣvot* develops the claim that four "obvious" prohibitions that lack scriptural basis are really of biblical status. Analysis of these four cases indicates that Maimonides probably first applied this line of argumentation to two paradigmatic examples: the prohibition against mixing milk and meat and the prohibition against father-daughter incest. In the first case, Qaraite jurists almost unanimously rejected the law in question, and in the second, they based their ruling on an *a fortiori* argument. Maimonides obviously had trouble with the first claim, and the second did not correspond to his position that laws produced by human reasoning are rabbinic, not biblical, in status. In this instance, Maimonides needed to "think around" Qaraite jurists. Moreover, tracing Maimonides's deliberation about these laws throughout his legal oeuvre underscores that his writings testify to the ways that he rethought his own earlier legal positions.

## **Şufi Characteristics in Jacob's Visions in Abraham Maimuni's Commentary on Genesis**

Nahem Ilan

In his commentary on Genesis, Rabbi Abraham Maimuni, son of Maimonides, interpreted even Jacob's dream (Gen 28) and the revelations he experienced throughout his life. In his commentary Maimuni used some idioms that are typical in a Şufi context. This finding is not surprising, taking into consideration that this was his known spiritual world. Analyzing these expressions adds yet another touch to the Şufi nature of his well-known commentary, and helps classifying these revelations by their quality.

## ***Galut and Ghurba* – Existential and Historical Exile in the Thought of Baḥya ibn Paqūda and Judah Halevi**

Ehud Krinis

Baḥya ibn Paqūda's main aim in his *Duties of the Heart* is the internalization and spiritualization of Jewish religious life. As part of this mission he strives to shift the focus of Jewish religious experience from the collective-historical track to a personal-existential one. One of the expressions of this effort is the re-formulation of the Exile experience not as a

historical experience but as a personal-existential one, whose dimensions of loneliness and alienation are formulated with the help of the terms *ghurba* and *gharīb*. In Bahya's thought the individual's acknowledgement of his status before God as the one meaningful axis of his existence entails his inner acknowledgment of himself as *gharīb*, estranged and alienated, in his inner deeper level, from other matters of his earthly existence in general, and from matters concerning his social existence and national affiliation in particular.

In contradistinction, Judah Halevi perceives Judaism as lying along the axis between God and the people of Israel. In his poetic and theological work Halevi sought to revive and highlight the centrality of the national-historical dimensions of Jewish existence. Prominent in this context is the emphasis Halevi places on the understanding and the experiencing of *galut* as a manifestation of a crisis of drastic weakening of the theurgic ties that bonds the people of Israel with the God of Israel. For Halevi, the acknowledgment and experiencing of the *galut* as this kind of acute crisis are crucial to the arousal of the desire and the plea for redemption by the people of Israel.

In my lecture I will discuss several passages from the *Kuzari*, in which Halevi utilizes the dialogical form of his book to highlight, in a non-explicit manner, the deep disagreements between Bahya and himself regarding the issues of *galut* and *grurba*.

### **Individual and Community in Rabbi Judah Halevi's Reasons for the Commandments**

Daniel J. Lasker

Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* contains two major discussions of the reasons for the commandments. The first one, in Book 2, revolves around the special effects which the collective People of Israel obtain as a result of observing the commandments. The second one, in Book 3, describes the efficacy of the commandments in forming the superior or the virtuous individual (*al-khayr* or *al-fāḍil*). The first explanation assigns to the commandments theurgic powers in the context of the special people (the Jews) in the special land (the Land of Israel). The second explanation connects specific commandments with human personality traits in a naturalistic manner.

These two separate accounts of the commandments are not contradictory but complementary. The People of Israel consists of individuals who benefit from the theurgic nature of the commandments, and the persons who become superior or virtuous individuals by way of observing the commandments are specifically Jews. The relationship between Judah Halevi's two explanations of the commandments will be the subject of the lecture.

## **The Letters Sent by Women in the Cairo Genizah Project**

Renée Levine-Melammed

Joel Kraemer began to research women's letters in the Cairo Geniza after reading the letter sent to Maimonides by his sister Miriam. Between 1991 and 2002 he published three articles on the subject, but was unable to devote himself to the book he planned to publish, *More Precious than Rubies*.

He passed this project on to me along with all of his material: what he had managed to transcribe, translate, photocopy or simply include in numerous lists. I would like to present an assessment of what Kraemer accomplished and describe the direction this project has gone in the past years. Which documents stand out and why? Is there more than one way to classify them? Where are there problems and what are they? What is the best way to organize and publish this material?

## **The Hebrew University Punishment and Legal Violence in Islamic Law: Points of Contact with Jewish Law**

Gideon Libson

In the general area of punishment we can find parallels between Jewish law and Islamic law. In this paper I wish to confine myself to one particular topic: How does Maimonides relate to this topic. Although for the most part he follows rabbinic tradition, tellingly, there are several departures which can be understood and explained only against the background of the Islamic Legal system.

## **An unknown Work of Abū I-Faraj Harūn**

Aharon Maman

In this lecture, I will present an unknown essay by Abū I-Faraj Harūn on Biblical exegesis, discovered recently by Ephraim Ben-Porat and myself in the Firkowitch collections preserved in the Russian National Library. This is probably the last essay Abū I-Faraj wrote before his passing. The work also updates the known chronology of his life. If until now the last known mention of Abū I-Faraj Harūn is the letter by the Karaite translator Tovia ben Moshe written in 1048, we now read in the colophon of one manuscript that the mentioned commentary was completed in the year 1049, which 'prolongs' the life of Abū I-Faraj at least by one year. General properties of the work will be described.

## Profession looking for identity in the Cairo Geniza documents

Ora Molad-Vaza

One of the best examples of the medieval Arabic poetry, using the different motifs and contrasts creating humor and trope, is the encounter of artisans with a level-up figure, sometimes the ruler, listening to them, and often answers to them. In these poems, each of the artisans demonstrates his literary talent with a rich vocabulary of tools and materials belonging to his profession. The main goal was to create a literary beauty, but it was probably also a matter of calling the high-class people to take a look at the lower classes

The Cairo Geniza documents also mention some work tools, materials and clothing which can imply the person's profession. In this lecture, we will present number of items belonging to the field of the person's profession, and we will mainly deal with handicrafts, medicine and learning. More than tools and materials we will concentrate on clothing. The description will refer to the types of fabric and garment, the condition of the garment, its color and appearance. This information of the variety of crafts and professions of Jews in the period under discussion is first and foremost an additional information about the Jewish community in general, and the economic life in particular. Assuming that profession was among the standards that set the social stratification, it is possible that by means of this information, we will throw light on the structure and components of the Jewish society. This fact coincides with Anthropology studies which emphasize the ability of the garment to declare the owner's professional occupation and social status.

## The thin line between a believer and a sinner— ancient Muatazila trails in Yefets ben Eli's writing

Meirav Nadler-Akirav

The issue of faith (*Imān*)- i.e., who is considered a believer and who is an unbeliever or a sinner - was the first dispute between Muslims, a dispute that its ideas can be found in Yefet ben Eli's writing.

Some of the Muslim, as the *ḥawārij*, believed that a believer is a person who does not make grave sins, while other like the *Murāja'a* Believed that faith is a constant value and does not depend on one's actions. However, the Muatazila held that whoever commits a grave sin is not called a believer or an unbeliever, but a sinner or *fāsik*, meaning a sinner who deviated from the straight path, but was not an unbeliever. If he repents until his death, he will again become a believer and be judged as a believer, and if not, he will remain forever in Hell.

Reading Yefet commentary to the Book of Malachi, we find the use of the Muatazila term *fāsik*, alongside a discussion on the issue of what is the difference between wrongdoers, sinners and believers, a discussion that may remind the dispute between the *ḥawārij* and the *Murāja'a*, and the intermediate position of the Muatazila.

## **Judah ha-Levi's Implicit Theological Message and Ibn Gabirol's Philosophical Questioning: The Role of the King in *Kitāb al-Khazarī* and that of the Student in *Fons Vitae***

Aviram Ravitsky

The literary framework of the *Kuzari* is conversations that allegedly took place between the king of the Khazars and the Jewish scholar (*ḥaver*). Analysis of the king's responses to the *ḥaver* shows that the king did not fully understand the *ḥaver's* lessons, in which the deep meaning of Judaism is taught. In the lecture the king's responses will be analyzed and likewise the question what was the author's (Judah ha-Levi) intention in using this literary sophistication.

Judah ha-Levi's practice will be compared in the lecture to that of Solomon Ibn Gabirol. The literary framework of Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae* (in the Latin version that survived) is a conversation between a teacher and a student. In this case it seems that the student fully comprehended the neo-platonic messages of his teacher. In my lecture the nature of the student's questions will be analyzed in order to explain the advantages of the dialogical process in Ibn Gabirol's thought.

## **Philosophical Themes in Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah's *Long Commentary on the Ten Commandments***

Gregor Schwarb

The paper will lay out the structure and the goals of Yeshu'ah's fully reconstructed *Long Commentary on the Ten Commandments* (*Tafsīr 'ašeret had-devārīm al-mašrūḥ*) and give an overview of the major philosophico-theological themes contained in it. By way of example, I shall focus on a detailed typology of how acts are assigned to agents in the commentary on Ex 20:10 and consider its context, objectives and sources.

## **Hasdai ibn Shaprut, Ibn Hawqal, Rabī' ibn Zaid, and Others**

Dan Shapira

It was probably Ibn Hawqal who had arrived in al-Andalus in 944 that Hasdai Ibn Shaprut learned from about the Jewish Khazaria. Remains of Hasdai's archive from the Cairo *Genizah* were identified by J. Mann, N. Golb, and others. In his letter to the Khazar King Joseph, Hasdai tells how he tried for several times and on the span of almost fifteen years to create contact with the Khazars. One of the attempts was made through Constantinople in 946.

John of Gorze, the ambassador of the German King Otto I, was in Cordoba in 953-956 and met there a Jew *cui nomen Hasdeu*, whose wisdom he praised. Rabī' ibn Zaid / Recemundus, the future Bishop of Elvira, was sent from Cordoba to Otto I in 955/6, where he met Luitdprand of Cremona who told him, *i.a.*, about the Rus' attack on Constantinople in 941. Recemundus convinced Luitdprand to write his memories, and the book of Luitdprand about his embassy to Constantinople was dedicated to Recemundus.

The letter to the Khazar King Joseph, as we have it now, was written between 956 and 961, definitely prior to 15 October 961, the date of death of 'Abd al-Rahman III who is mentioned as the ruler of Muslim Spain. In his letter, Hasdai expressed his desire to go to Khazaria.

In 960, Recemundus was sent from Cordoba to Constantinople and Jerusalem on a diplomatic mission. It is possible that it was Recemundus who helped Hasdai to deliver his letter to Joseph via Jerusalem (this route was mentioned in Hasdai's letter, itself, as a possibility).

Consequently, King Joseph's Reply was written between 958 and 961; in his reply, Joseph invited Hasdai to visit him, or even to stay in Khazaria.

Hasdai's letter to the Mighty Lady, Anastasia-Theophano, asking for a portable ship (*rafsodah*) to Khazaria was written in 963-964; apparently, Hasdai wanted to go to Khazaria in person.

We have no documents in Hasdai's archive of any date later than his letter to King Joseph.

We know that Hasdai was thought by Ibn Hawqal as lately as in 970 (?) to have visited Khazaria and met her "kings and men of importance" (*'akābir mulūkihā wa rijālihā*), or, at least, adjacent areas in the Caucasus.

So it appears that almost all of our great sources knew each other.

### **Islamic Motives in Narboni's Commentary on "Hayy Ibn Yakdhan"**

Yair Shiffman

Ibn Tufail, in order to show his negative attitude towards Sufism, supplies anti-nomistic quotations of three famous Sufis without mentioning them by name: "I am the truth", "There is within this robe nothing but god" and the like. Ibn Tufail indicates their negative influence on the public since they deceived themselves thinking that they reached human perfection and described their ecstatic experience in material words which are not compatible with the divine world. It was not only self-deception but they also deluded their audience that everyone can reach this sublime world without being based on philosophical investigation. Philosophy has to be a vital platform for communion.



On the other hand Ibn Tufail uses Sufi terms: *dhikr*, *fana*, *mushahada* and the like. Hayy's methods of reaching the Necessary Existent in the secluded island remind us of the Sufis.

Ibn Tufail, with Narboni's commentary, uses Koranic verses, implicitly and explicitly: Hayy's mother put him as a baby in the ark like Moses. Hayy lived parentless like Muhammad who lost his parents in his early childhood. Hayy buried the doe imitating the raven as Cain buried Abel in the Koran.

Hayy, secluded in his island, is a model of an autodidactic philosopher who rose from the physical world to the metaphysical and then to the communion with the Necessary Existent. When Hayy reached the communion with the Necessary Existent he used paraphrastically Koranic verses describing the Day of Judgement: Everything disappeared from his mind, dissolved and scattered into dust.

Then he met Asal who came from the adjacent island who persuaded him to come to his island in order to be the mentor of its people. However, Hayy did not succeed. Disappointed from his failure he quoted verses from the Koran describing the people of that island as people stuck in worldly concrete life in order to multiply their riches. These verses characterized the Meccan people from the time of Muhammad so that Ibn Tufail implicitly criticized the Islamic world of his time comparing him to the Jahili world.

When Hayy landed in Asal's island and became acquainted with the religion of the people living there Ibn Tufail uses Islamic terms about the Day of Judgement like *الحشر والنشر والميزان* , *والصراط* , the gathering, reckoning, the scales and the strait way, as well as obligations like prayer, fasting and pilgrimage which are the *Arkān* of Islam.

So, Hayy did not find any difference between the religion of the inhabitants of the island, his own experience and Islamic terms. It takes us to the Islamic idea of *Fitra* which claims that Islam is the ultimate true religion which is impressed in every human being from his birth.

### **Rabbi Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi as a Pedagogical Figure**

Avi Tal

In his monumental project, "A Mediterranean Society", vol. II which referred to education within the Jewish communities, the synagogue was a central place in which knowledge was disseminated and people were educated. The Rabbis, especially those who were leaders of communities, played a significant role in this field. In addition to their public duties such as speeches and lessons which were transmitted in the synagogue and the *Yeshiva* or the *beit midrash* especially during Saturdays, these spiritual leaders also wrote works such as Biblical commentaries for communities of readers. In some occasions it seems that the author acted from a personal agenda, trying to influence his audience or to shape their minds.

I would like to focus on Rabbi Tanchum ha-Yerūšalmī, one of the most prominent Biblical exegetes and lexicographers of the High Middle Ages (Egypt, 1219-1291), who also served as head of a community. As an avid Maimonidean, Tanchum adopted a position which sided with the legacy of Maimonides in the controversy that evolved in his time regarding the works of "The Great Eagle" (in particular "The Guide of the Perplexed"). It can be stated that Tanchum's commentaries regarding philosophy were a tool used to implant Maimonides' teaching in the hearts of his readers.

Moreover, it seems that Tanchum's son, Joseph (1262-?), also sided with the descendants of Maimonides, since he wrote Lamentations and songs of praise in their family events – a fact that could indicate that Joseph, following in the footsteps of his father, was loyal and committed to them. To conclude, I hope to shed some light on the fact that a father and his son had acted for the cause of the Maimonidean dynasty.

### **Qirqisani's commentary on Chapter eleven of Genesis**

Mariam Touma

My MA thesis sheds light on the commentary of Abu Yusuf Ya 'qub al-Qirqisani on chapter eleven of Genesis. Qirqisani was a central and innovative Karaite commentator who lived in the tenth century in Baghdad which was at that time a central city of learning and culture. The commentary that I worked on is taken from his book *Kitab al-riyad wa-l-hada'iq* which exists only in manuscript form and has never been published before. Therefore, as part of my thesis I presented an edition of Qirqisani's commentary on chapter eleven of Genesis with an analysis.

I showed in my thesis that his commentary on chapter eleven of the Book of Genesis is one example of the way in which al-Qirqisani incorporates contemporaneous doctrines into his works and uses them in order to buttress his own beliefs. He lived in Baghdad which was at that time a central city of learning and culture, so he was surrounded by scholars of all religions. He himself was quite familiar with the tenets of Rabbinic Judaism. He was also quite familiar with Islam, Christianity, the Samaritan religion and that of the Manichaeans. He was particularly influenced by the theology of the *Mu'tazila*.

In his commentary on Genesis chapter eleven he engages with the question of the origin of languages. This question is very ancient one, which was first dealt with in Classical Greek literature. Following the translation of many important Greek works into Arabic at that time, this question came to the fore in the Arabic-speaking world. In the Arab world there developed two main doctrines surrounding this issue. The first doctrine is called التوقيف *tawqīf*, divine instruction. According to this doctrine, language came into being through God's instruction. Those who subscribed to this doctrine were primarily Sunnis. The other doctrine is called اصطلاح *iṣṭilāḥ*, convention. In this view, language was produced as a result

of conventional agreement among human beings. Those who belonged to this doctrine were largely holders of *Mu'tazili* tenets.

I will speak about Qirqisani's adoption of the approach of *tawqif* because it augmented his argument regarding the existence of Divine prophecy.

### **Firkowicz and Imam Shamil at the Caucasus**

Daria Vasyutinski

In my presentation I would like to talk about Firkowicz's trips to the Caucasus in 1840-41 and 1848-50 when he was acquiring manuscripts and other materials for his would-be First Collection. Firkowicz's travels to the Caucasus were motivated by an idea with which he had become familiar in his intellectual milieu: the existence of ancient Jewish (or Khazar or Karaite – nothing was yet certain) communities on the shores of the Caspian Sea, in the territory of Greater Iran. The Northern Caucasus, which was still in the process of being conquered by the Russian Empire, was at that time a terra incognita and Firkowicz believed that he could locate Jewish manuscripts and artifacts there. This motivation was strong enough to make him travel twice to those very unsafe territories, indeed, to a veritable war zone. Firkowicz did not find the Jewish manuscripts that he was seeking, but he made many important discoveries. In Firkowicz's private archive there are numerous documents in Arabic that originate from those trips and that were not, for different reasons, incorporated into his First Collection. Among those documents there is a very interesting draft letter, in Arabic, from Imam Shamil (1797-1871), famous head of the anti-Russian resistance in the Caucasian War. I would like to discuss how and why this Arabic text ended up in Firkowicz's private archive, and the importance of Imam Shamil's letter.

### **Judaeo-Arabic Studies and the Digital Humanities**

Ronny Vollandt

The scholarly landscape is changing before our eyes. Different sciences are becoming more and more intertwined with one another, and this sometimes creates quite unexpected combinations, such as the digital humanities. If one only considers the way in which primary sources, such as Genizah fragments for example, and their cataloguing data are made available today, it becomes clear that the Digital Humanities have already revolutionized the field of Judaeo-Arabic Studies in many respects. In my presentation, I shall present current projects that operate on the intersection of Judaeo-Arabic Studies and Digital Humanities and close with some thoughts on how a digital infrastructure could benefit the field overall.

**Another Arabic Translation of "שירת המוזיקה" = Song of Moses" (Deut. 32), by Nafīs al-Dīn Abū I-Faraj  
Ibn al-Kathār (13<sup>th</sup> century)**

Dr. Ali Watad

Nafīs al-Dīn Abū I-Faraj Ibn al-Kathār (13<sup>th</sup> century), known as "Shams al-ḥukamā'" ("Sun of the scholars") composed the commentary *Sharḥ Im Be-Ḥuqotay*. This commentary is written in Middle Arabic, in Arabic script, but the biblical verses and the Samaritan poems quoted in it are written in Samaritan Hebrew characters. The composition has been preserved in a number of Samaritan manuscripts found in several libraries, in Israel and abroad.

Although the title is *Im Be-Ḥuqotay*, the treatise deals with numerous topics taken from a variety of domains, including linguistics, biblical exegesis and religious law. In the field of linguistics there are discussions of issues involving phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The exegesis includes a commentary on a part of the "Song of Moses" (Deut. 32); the author also translated part of the poem into Arabic.

We know that the Samaritan Pentateuch was translated into Arabic before the thirteenth century. According to H. Shehadeh, there exist a number of versions of the Arabic translation, the earliest, ascribed to Ab Ḥasda (in Arabic: Abū I-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī), dating from the eleventh century. Another translation is a text edited by the thirteenth-century scholar Abū Sa'īd. A third translation is based on R. Saadia Gaon's *Tafsīr*. And there are others as well.

In my lecture I shall examine Ibn Kathār's translation and compare it to preceding and contemporary translations. I will also compare it to the Samaritan lexicon published by Z. Ben-Haim, *Hamelīṣ ha-Tlat-Leshoni: 'Ivri-'Aravi-Arami ('Ivrit ve-Aramit nushakh Shomron*, vol. B, pp. 440-622). I will highlight Ibn al-Kathār's innovations with respect to preceding translations and attempt to show the influences that shaped his proposed translation.

**The Judeo-Arabic Glossary to Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Hebrew Homonymic  
Poems**

Dr. Joachim Yeshaya & Dr. Uri Melammed

Joseph ben Tanḥum Yerushalmi, who lived in Egypt during the early Mamluk era (second half, 13th century to first half, 14th century), is considered the paradigmatic Egyptian Jewish poet of the Mamluk period. His oeuvre is preserved in two books: a seven-part *dīwān* or collection of poetry which is still far from fully available for research, and *Sefer arugot ha-besamim* (*The book of fragrant flower beds*), a volume of Hebrew homonymic epigrams edited by Judith Dishon (2005) which is followed in MS Russian National Library Evr. II A 100.1 by an unpublished Judeo-Arabic glossary on these poems (Dishon does include select Hebrew paraphrases of glosses in her edition). The proposed paper examines this latter text,

which the poet himself seems to have written to comment on any detail that a reader might misunderstand. This paper considers both the introduction to the glossary and a selection of glosses, and is informed by a number of contextualizing questions related to our current understanding of Yerushalmi's use of lexicographical sources: e.g., was he inspired by similar works like Eleazar ben Ḥalfon's glossary for Moses Ibn Ezra's collection of homonymic poems (published by Basal and Dotan in 2011)? And, what is his relation to the work of his father, Tanḥum ben Joseph Yerushalmi (ca. 1220-1291), who was a famous Bible exegete, grammarian and lexicographer who wrote in Judeo-Arabic?

### **The Art of Ambiguity as Purposeful Strategy: The Karaites and Rabbanites as portrayed in Judah Halevi's Kitāb al-Khazarī (The Book of Kuzari)**

Marzena Zawanowska

One of the most influential books of Jewish religious thought ever written is Judah Halevi's *Kitab al-radd wa al-dalil fi al-din al-dhalil*, or *Kitab al-chujja wa al-dalil fi nusr al-din al-dhalil* [The Book of Refutation and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion], better known under its shorten Hebrew title *Sefer ha-Kuzari*. On the basis of a letter preserved in the Cairo Genizah, it is assumed to have originally been composed as a polemical response to a Karaite convert. And yet, scholars observe that the Karaites are neither perceived, nor described by Halevi as heretics. In fact, his depiction of this alternative to Rabbanite form of Judaism – its adherents and origins – appeared so appealing to the Karaites that made some of them believe that the author had been a (crypto)Karaite himself, while his reconstructions of the movement's history with time became appropriated as the founding myth of Karaism. It has been observed, moreover, that the author exhibited certain sympathy for Karaism. Therefore the questions may rightly be asked, what was the real attitude of Halevi towards the Karaites? And what was, in his view, their main fault, as well as their position vis-à-vis the Rabbanites within the Jewish world of the time?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I will explore a number of puzzling parables included in *The Book of Kuzari*, and claim that they were purposefully formulated in an ambiguous fashion. I will argue that Halevi deliberately used ambiguity as an effective literary tool to convey more and deeper meanings – to better reflect both the sinuously complex and multifaceted reality, as well as his own intrinsically complicated feelings and internal debates. It also enabled him to address different (Rabbanite and Karaite) audiences without offending anyone. At last, I will revisit the question of Halevi's purpose in writing his treatises.

**Early Genizah Fragments of Saadya Gaon's Bible Translation**  
**Copied by Samuel b. Shechaniah b. Amram**

Tamar Zewi

The paper will discuss 17 early Genizah fragments of Saadya's Bible translation made of parchment, 15 from the Pentateuch and two from the book of Daniel, copied by the scribe Samuel b. Shechaniah b. Amram. Sixteen of them are long narrow pieces of parchment of uneven size, and some are two or more pieces sewn together. These fragments were bound in the form of a rotulus, that is, the pages are attached across their upper and lower margins to form a roll that is read vertically. The fragments are undated; nevertheless, codicological considerations, including their form and method of binding, the material onto which they were copied, and the type of handwriting allow us to assume that they were copied already in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, or at least no later than the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Yefet's Commentary on Nehemia 9**

Yair Zoran

The following paper presents issues from an annotated chapter which I wish to prepare for Yefet's commentary to the books Ezra, Nehemia and Chronical. Yefet's commentary scans the Bible as his words are "poor at site, but rich elsewhere". Marzena Zawanowska points to the cross-referential character with distinct avoidance of repetition.

It seems as if Yefet valued this chapter since it deals with Exodus and Settlement, a subject admired by Karaites, Yefet included. We do not know of a Classical Commentator who holds such a perception of the Biblical text. Yefet is well-versed in Islamic affairs and terminology, uses rich Arabic language and is keen to Hebrew grammar. Finally, Yefet is well-known for his historical world view.

**David's Character in Yefet b. 'Eli's Commentary on Psalms: Jewish – Christian Polemics**

Arye Zoref

The book of Psalms is called by many mediaeval authors "Psalms of David". Many psalms contain a heading attached to them: "To David". It begs the question: what role did David's personality and life experience play in the process of writing these psalms?

Judeo - Arabic authors of the tenth century have answered this question in different ways. Sa'adya Gaon claimed that the Psalms are the words of God, not David's words, and

therefore David's personality has almost no bearing on the content of the psalms. Salmon b. Yeroham, the Karaite author, claimed that some of the psalms do reflect David's personal life, but others deal with the destiny of the people of Israel and have no bearing on David's life. Yefet b. 'Eli, also a Karaite author, claimed that almost all the psalms reflect David's life, including psalms that seem to describe events that aren't mentioned in David's life story in the book of Samuel.

It is my suggestion that Yefet supported this notion in order to refute Syriac Christian interpretation of the psalms. Syriac commentators (notably Daniel of Salah, sixth century) claimed that the events described in the psalms didn't occur in David's lifetime, and therefore these psalms should be interpreted as referring to Jesus. Yefet wanted to stress that the psalms can't be a reference to Jesus, and therefore he insisted that the events mentioned in the psalms did in fact occur in David's life.