

## Theological Encounters at a Crossroads

# Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval

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# Theological Encounters at a Crossroads

*An Edition and Translation of Judah Hadassi's Eshkol  
ha-kofer, First Commandment, and Studies of the  
Book's Judaeo-Arabic and Byzantine Contexts*

*By*

Daniel J. Lasker  
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Sandra Görgen and Saskia Dönitz



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*In Honor of Judith Naomi Lasker  
In Memory of Joseph Ralph Lasker*

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*In Memory of Allen and Mitzi Sklare*

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## Preface

The volume presented here is the product of academic cooperation between students of medieval Karaism and students of medieval Byzantium. It presents a partial Hebrew edition and English translation of Judah Hadassi's majestic *Eshkol ha-kofer* (Cluster of Henna Blossoms), an incomparable summa of theology, law, exegesis, polemic, linguistics, and much more. Its author, a twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite, was conversant with both the Karaite heritage, as developed in the Land of Israel in the Golden Age of the tenth and eleventh centuries, and as mediated by his Byzantine Karaite predecessors; and the Greek philosophical/theological heritage, as mediated by his Byzantine Christian teachers and neighbors. *Eshkol ha-kofer* is informed by both traditions to which Hadassi was heir. In the realm of theology, the major topic of this volume, his thought is mainly a continuation of the Karaite version of Islamic *Kalām*, yet it also reflects strands in Greek philosophy that were unknown to his Karaite predecessors. Linguistically, too, *Eshkol ha-kofer* operates within two contexts. The text, with its idiosyncratic style of rhymed prose in alphabetic acrostics, shows Hadassi's artistic mastery of the Hebrew language; its use of Greek terms, which appear as Judaeo-Greek in Hebrew script, most of which are found in the context of theology, rhetoric, science, or *realia*, indicates that Hadassi was able to access Greek philosophy in the original language.

This duality is unique in the history of medieval Jewish thought. Other medieval Jewish philosophers, Karaite and Rabbanite alike, were familiar with Greek philosophy only at second or third hand via Arabic or Hebrew translations. In order to appreciate Hadassi's thought fully, then, it is important to analyze Hadassi's philosophical and educational background as reflected in his use of Greek terminology. It is necessary to keep in mind that although Judah Hadassi was a Karaite, he was fully a Jewish thinker, intimately familiar with rabbinic traditions as well as his own Karaite heritage. Despite Hadassi's use of contemporary Greek, his theology is still generally a continuation of classical Jewish *Kalām* as found in both Karaite and Rabbinic Geonic thought. Thus, attention has to be paid as well to the Karaite theological traditions that circulated in Byzantium when he wrote his work.

In addition to their importance for understanding Hadassi's education and thought, his Judaeo-Greek transcriptions are also an important witness to a poorly documented phase of the Greek language. Since the Greek material represents a stage in the development of this language for which we have but few and quite problematic contemporary sources, this requires deciphering his Judaeo-Greek terms. This task is quite difficult because Hadassi's Judaeo-Greek

can be understood only against a background of more than a thousand years of linguistic development. Furthermore, the Judaeo-Greek orthography is open to diverse interpretations since there was no standard orthography for vernacular Greek at that time.

It is clear, then, that the explication of *Eshkol ha-kofer* requires an editorial team whose members are conversant with poetical Hebrew, Karaite law and lore, Rabbinic Judaism, Greek philosophy, and Byzantine Greek. We were able to put together such a team thanks to a generous grant provided by the German-Israel Fund (GIF Grant No: 1179–212.4/2011). Daniel J. Lasker and Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis were the principal investigators on this project. Lasker took overall responsibility for the entire project, writing most of the general introduction and providing the English translation of the text, as well as being involved in all other aspects of the production of the book. Niehoff-Panagiotidis was responsible for investigating Hadassi's Byzantine education, as presented in the general introduction, and for analyzing the linguistic aspects of Hadassi's Greek, transcribing the Judaeo-Greek words into Greek letters, and explaining their meanings. David Sklare, Lasker's research assistant, produced the Hebrew edition along with an introduction describing the manuscripts and editorial conventions. Sandra Görgen and Saskia Dönitz, Niehoff-Panagiotidis's research assistants, did much of the initial work of identifying and transcribing the Judaeo-Greek words. Despite this division of labor, all members of the research group contributed to each other's work.

We are pleased to thank the German-Israel Fund (Tali Rosenbaum, director), which provided the financial means to pursue this project, as well as our academic homes, the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; and the Center for Byzantine Studies, Freie Universität, Berlin. The research authorities of the two home universities administered the grant and took care of all the bureaucratic tasks associated with it. Lasker also conducted part of the research as the Horace W. Goldsmith Visiting Professor of Judaic Studies at Yale University. Meira Polliack and Michael G. Wechsler were kind enough to accept this book into the Karaite Texts and Studies series of Brill's *Études sur Judaïsme Médiéval*, and we would like to thank the Brill production staff for their hard work on this volume. The Binah Nemoj Memorial Fund administered by Yale University, under the direction of Steven D. Fraade, provided funding for editorial work that was done by Tali Hochstein, who gave invaluable assistance with the translation and the checking of sources. Adrian Pirtea checked the Greek references and transcriptions. The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (the I-CORE Program of the Planning and Budgeting Committee and The Israel Science Foundation; grant

No. 1754/12) helped support the copy editing of this book which was done by Gene McGarry. We would like to thank those libraries whose manuscripts were used in the preparation of this edition: the University of Leiden Library, the Moscow Russian State Library, the Oxford-Bodleian Library, and the British Library. In addition, we acknowledge the assistance of the following friends and colleagues who contributed to this book by lending us their expertise: Haggai Ben-Shammai, Moshe Firrouz, Daniel Frank, Yuval Harari, Elisabeth Hollender, Adiel Kadari, Martin I. Lockshin, Aharon Maman, Dan Shapira, Sacha Stern, and Joachim Yeshaya. Identification of sources was aided by a new computerized tool for automatic identification of biblical references, provided by Dicta: The Israel Center for Text Analysis, directed by Prof. Moshe Koppel. The tool was developed by Avi and Shaltiel Shmidman.

In the present volume, we have limited ourselves to the first part of the book, up till Alphabet 100, since that is the section with the most theological content and the majority of the Judaeo-Greek glosses. We begin with a general introduction outlining the book and its contexts, as well as a summary of Hadassi's theology. We then provide an edition of the Hebrew text based on the best manuscripts and an English translation of that text (which may not always render Hadassi's difficult Hebrew with total accuracy). Finally, the Judaeo-Greek glosses from the entire work were deciphered and transcribed into Greek letters, preceded by a short history of Greek and an explanation of the importance of *Eshkol ha-kofer* for Byzantine Greek studies. It is to be hoped that a full edition of the Hebrew text will be offered in the future. In the meanwhile, we present this work as a case study of "theological encounters at a crossroads."

*Daniel J. Lasker*

*Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis*

*David Sklare*

September, 2017

# General Introduction

## The Book *Eshkol ha-kofer*

Judah ben Elijah Hadassi was a mid-twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite sage who wrote a summa of Karaite thought and legal practice that he entitled *Eshkol ha-kofer* (Cluster of Henna Blossoms). The book contains judicial decisions in matters of law; theological discussions, including a pioneering list of ten principles of Judaism;<sup>1</sup> biblical exegesis; hopes for the messianic future; excursuses on diverse topics, such as Hebrew grammar; polemics against Rabbanite Jews, Christians, Muslims, and other theological schools; multiple references to fables and folklore; and much, much more.

Hadassi's theology was primarily grounded in traditional Karaite thought as it had developed in the Golden Age in the Land of Israel (tenth-eleventh centuries) under the influence of Islamic theology, entitled *Kalām* in its Mu'tazilite version. Hadassi did not, however, simply echo his Karaite predecessors' theological views. He had unmediated access to Greek culture in Constantinople, his city of residence, and the impact of classical Greek thought on his work is evident as well. Hadassi was a conservative legalist who advocated the ascetic practices that had been maintained by the Golden Age Karaite Mourners of Zion (as his cognomen *ha-avel*, the Mourner, indicates), despite the decline of this movement following the dissolution of the Karaite community in the Land of Israel at the end of the eleventh century. His book is the most prominent Karaite composition of the twelfth century and serves as a compendium of the entire corpus of Karaite law and lore that preceded it.<sup>2</sup>

The plan of *Eshkol ha-kofer* is quite unusual. It is divided into ten sections, organized around the Ten Commandments, and whereas each subject

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- 1 Although Hadassi was not the first Jew to present principles of the religion, his list is a systematic and detailed enumeration, preceding, e.g., Maimonides's thirteen principles. According to Hadassi, these principles are as follows: (1) the existence of a Creator; (2) the Creator's eternity and unity; (3) the creation of the world; (4) the ministry of Moses and other prophets; (5) the truth of the Torah; (6) an obligation to know Hebrew; (7) the Temple as the residence of God's indwelling; (8) resurrection; (9) accountability; and (10) reward and punishment. See Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 42–43.
  - 2 The book's name is derived from Cant. 1:14; Hadassi also calls it *Sefer ha-peles* (The Book of the Scales; see 24:⚡ [references will be made here according to Alphabet and letter; on the reference system, see below, note 12]). Hadassi records that he was working on the book in 1148–1149, the only dates we have associated with him. He does not indicate when the work was completed.

discussed is presumably connected somehow to its commandment, often the connections appear to be random or arbitrary.<sup>3</sup> Thus, laws governing vows are generally discussed in the section devoted to the Third Commandment (the prohibition of taking God's name in vain), and forbidden sexual relations are treated in the section on the Seventh Commandment (the prohibition of adultery), yet, other topics are found in these sections as well. Often the transition from one subject to another is merely associative. Thus, the section devoted to the Fourth Commandment (the Sabbath) is generally the venue for the laws of the Sabbath and holidays. Hadassi, however, interrupts the legal discussions of the differences between Rabbanite and Karaite Sabbath laws to introduce a long excursus describing three different lists of Rabbinic exegetical rules (of 32, 13 and 7 rules each). Before he enumerates his own list of 80 Karaite exegetical rules, many of which overlap with the Rabbanite rules, he illustrates the importance of understanding the Hebrew language with a long discussion of the vowels. Then, after the enumeration of the Karaite rules, he turns to 35 Hebrew morphological patterns and a few examples of the application of the exegetical rules. These exegetical and grammatical discussions have no intrinsic relation to the laws of the Sabbath and could easily have been placed in another section of the book.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Hadassi often repeats himself, dealing with the same subject in different sections of the book and adducing the same verses and proof texts over and over again. It is clear, therefore, that the tenfold division is somewhat artificial and we have not been able to discern a comprehensive organizing principle that would satisfactorily explain the location in which each specific topic is discussed.

The artificiality of the book is seen as well in its style: *Eshkol ha-kofer* is composed of rhymed acrostics, in which each stanza of the acrostic has its own internal rhyme and then concludes with the syllable *-kha*. Some stanzas are marked by internal rhythms as well, but this is not consistent, since the individual lines vary greatly in length. The vast majority of the book's multiple acrostics are alphabetic, commencing alternately at the beginning (*aleph*) or the end (*tav*) of the alphabet, and are sequentially numbered. In Alphabets 1–22, the acrostic is generally maintained not only for the first letter of the whole stanza

3 The use of the Ten Commandments as an organizing principle of all the commandments in the Torah may have its origin in Philo of Alexandria's *On the Decalogue*; see Philo, "Decalogue." It is possible that Hadassi was familiar with some of Philo's works that circulated in Constantinople (see below). Possible Karaite precedents are Yeshua ben Judah's *Tafsir 'aseret ha-devarim* (Commentary on the Ten Commandments), of which there exists an as yet unpublished Byzantine Hebrew translation (found, e.g., in Leiden Or. Ms. 4764), and Nissi ben Noah's quasi-commentary on the Decalogue (see Nemoy, "Nissi").

4 These excursuses are found in Alphabets 155–175; see Lasker, "Interplay," p. 200.

but also for the first letter of each line in the stanza, perhaps as an adornment to the opening of the book. At Alphabet 23 Hadassi abandons this practice and reserves the use of the acrostic solely for the first letter of each stanza.<sup>5</sup> Some acrostics are not alphabetic but spell out names and words, and some acrostics do not have separate numeration. For instance, at the very beginning of the book appear two unnumbered alphabetic acrostics, both running from *aleph* to *tav*, which are followed by a long acrostic containing the name of the author and a series of self-deprecating phrases (“The insignificant Judah, son of Elijah, known as Hadassi, young and despised, a worm not a man, a disgrace of men and reviled among people”<sup>6</sup>). The standard pattern of alternating forward and reverse alphabetic acrostics begins with what in actuality is the fourth acrostic, Alphabet 1. The sequence of numbered acrostics is occasionally interrupted by nonalphabetic acrostics; thus, between Alphabets 364 and 365 occurs an additional, extensive acrostic containing the author’s name, his confessions of his inadequacies, and his hope to be forgiven, followed by a number of biblical verses (“Judah the Karaite ben Elijah Hadassi, the insignificant, stubborn and rebellious, offender, treacherous, sinner, transgressor, from my youth, the days of my vanity, until this very day; my God, my Rock, forgive my sins, my iniquities, and my trespasses .... *And You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel*”<sup>7</sup>). There are alphabetic acrostics that omit some letters while others double or triple them.<sup>8</sup> The book concludes with an unnumbered non-acrostic poetical section in which the first word of each stanza forms a panegyric for the author (“Judah the Mourner son of Elijah Hadassi, may his soul rest in pleasure, and may his progeny inherit the land, Amen, the Lord is my God”).<sup>9</sup> Thus, although the last enumerated Alphabet is 379, there are decidedly more than 379 acrostics in *Eshkol ha-kofer*.

In some aspects, Hadassi’s rhymed prose is reminiscent of the Arabic *sajf* style found in the Quran and other Arabic writings. In the Jewish world, there

5 It is possible that the singular style of Alphabets 1–22 was chosen specifically to represent the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. After this prefatory section, Hadassi turned to the main content of the book and no longer used the same letter to begin each line of the stanza. The three preliminary acrostics before the first numbered acrostic are also marked by the use of the acrostic letter at the beginning of each line of the stanza.

6 יהודה הקטן בן אליהו הנודע הדסי צעיר ונבוזה תולעת ולא איש חרפת אדם ובזוי עם.

7 יהודה הקראי בן אליהו הדסי הקטן סורר ומורה עובר ומועל וחוטא ופושע מנעורי ימי הבלי ועד היום הזה אלהי צורי סלח פשעי ועוני ומעלני ... ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל.

The concluding verse is Ps. 22:4.

8 It is possible that the missing letters were in the original but were lost over time. The earliest extant manuscript was written in 1483.

9 יהודה האבל בן אליהו הדסי נפשו בטוב תלין וזרעו יירש ארץ אמן ה' אלהי.

may be an affinity to the rhymed prose style of *Megillat Ahima'az*, written in eleventh-century Byzantine Italy, and to some genres of *piyyut* (Hebrew religious hymns), many of which were produced in the Byzantine Empire or adjacent areas. Acrostics were also the chief structural principle of Byzantine Christian liturgical poetry throughout that time and even earlier.<sup>10</sup> Hadassi himself was capable of composing standard poetry, such as the twenty anti-Rabbanite polemical poems included in *Eshkol ha-kofer* and at least one penitential poem.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the unwavering devotion to form displayed in the hundreds of alphabetic acrostics, with their consistent, unrelenting rhyme of *-kha*, is unprecedented in Hebrew literature, and there is no way of knowing Hadassi's motivation in adopting it. Although the unique style of the work is part of its charm, it often causes difficulties when attempting to decipher Hadassi's meaning. The system of enumerated alphabetic acrostics does, however, make it easy to refer to specific passages.<sup>12</sup>

The first edition of *Eshkol ha-kofer* was edited by David Kukizow and published in 1836, by Mordecai Tirishkan in Gözleve (Eupatoria) in the Crimea, as part of a larger project of publishing the Karaite classics.<sup>13</sup> Other editions have merely been reprints of the first one.<sup>14</sup> This first edition is severely lacking, as Kukizow censored all anti-Christian passages and references, omitted almost

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- 10 For Arabic poetry, see, e.g., Stewart, "Saj"; for Hebrew, Bonfil, *Ahima'az*; for Byzantine Greek, Onasch, *Liturgie*, p. 22 (s.v. Akrostichis); Jeffreys, "Acrostic." Latin poetry in late antiquity is discussed in Roberts, *Jeweled Style*. For Byzantine Jewish poetry see Weinberger, *Hymnography*, chap. 4.
- 11 Davidson, *Ošar*, records the poems at the beginning and end of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, the twenty anti-Rabbanite poems in Alphabets 105–124, and one poem from the Karaite prayer book; see the index, vol. 4, 392. For discussions of Hadassi's poetry and an edition of the penitential poem, which is not recorded by Davidson, see Scheiber, "Homer," pp. 126–129 (30–33, in reprinted version); Lasker, "Interplay."
- 12 In this book, references will generally be to Alphabets and stanzas, e.g., 75:λ indicates the stanza beginning with the letter λ in the Alphabet numbered 75. When there is more than one stanza with the same letter, the reference specifies which stanza is meant, e.g., 28:second λ; 377:both letters 7. Unnumbered acrostics are cited according to their position with respect to the nearest numbered Alphabet.
- 13 The explosion of Karaite printing beginning in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century is usually associated with the Karaite bibliophile, collector, and entrepreneur Abraham Firkowicz (1787–1874), but Firkowicz's name appears nowhere in the edition. According to the colophon at the end of the printed edition (Hadassi, *Eshkol*, p. 155b), the person responsible for preparing the text was Kukizow (1777–1855), and presumably he was also responsible for the censorship of the text; on Karaite printing, see Walfish, "Karaite Press."
- 14 The Gözleve edition has been reprinted a number of times, most notably by Gregg International Publishers (Westmead, England, 1971), with an introduction by Leon Nemoy and reprints of two articles: Scheiber, "Homer," and Bacher, "Chapters."



all the Judaeo-Greek of the original, and occasionally misread the manuscript that served as his base (which was not the oldest manuscript available).<sup>15</sup> This edition has been cited extensively by researchers, most of whom culled it for references to specific issues or citations of Rabbinic literature. Other scholars have published some of the censored passages and have attempted to decipher the Greek words that were omitted from the edition. Few researchers have dealt with the book as a whole or attempted to place Hadassi in his Karaite and Byzantine contexts.<sup>16</sup> This lack of scholarly interest is likely a result of the difficulty of the text as exacerbated by the poor and incomplete edition.<sup>17</sup>

It is clearly time for a new edition of Judah Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer*, based on the best manuscripts and taking advantage of the information that has accrued concerning the Karaite and Byzantine contexts in which Hadassi worked, including a more accurate knowledge of Hadassi's vernacular language, Modern Greek. In addition to a scientific edition of the text, it is important to provide studies that present the book in terms of its intellectual and geographical background. Once this is done, it will be possible to proceed to an analysis of important subjects such as Hadassi's legal decisions, biblical exegesis, use of Rabbinic material,<sup>18</sup> view of the Hebrew language, poetical style, and theology, along with numerous other subjects that arise in the book.

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- 15 We assume that the manuscript that served as the basis of the Gözleve edition was Moscow, Russian State Library, Fond 182 no. 171 (Schneerson Coll. MS. Yevr. 133; Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, National Library of Israel [IMHM], F 52181; available online: <http://dlib.rsl.ru/01006556592>), copied in 1622–1623. Firkowicz also owned another copy of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, what is now Oxford—Bodleian Library MS. Mich. 362–363 (Neubauer, *Catalogue*, nos. 855–856; IMHM, F 21616–21617), which he sold to the Rabbanite playwright and translator Joel Berish Falkowicz. Barthélemy, “Tradition,” provides an overview of the manuscripts of *Eshkol ha-kofer* and discusses the relationship among them, but he does not mention the Moscow manuscript. For a discussion of the manuscripts used for the current edition, see Description of Manuscripts and Editing Principles below.
- 16 Ankori, “Studies,” reconstructs Hadassi's enumeration of the signs of the Messiah, which were also censored for their anti-Christian aspects. Scheiber, “Eléments,” examines the fabulous elements of the book. Frankl, “Studien,” offers transcriptions of many of the omitted Greek words. Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 41–59, summarizes Hadassi's philosophy.
- 17 A few sections of the work have been edited and published separately. Bacher, “Chapters,” edits the central anti-Christian passages of *Eshkol ha-kofer*; Ehrlich, “Laws,” publishes the sections of the book dealing with Sabbath laws; and Botwinick, *Fifth Commandment*, edits the laws of honoring one's father and mother in Alphabets 249–253.
- 18 Some of Hadassi's references to Rabbinic literature seem to be inaccurate; for instance, he occasionally ascribes a passage to one talmudic tractate when it is found in a different one or in a Midrash collection. It is possible that Hadassi preserves some lost traditions,

The present volume is merely a first step toward the fulfillment of these desiderata. We offer here an edition and an annotated English translation of *Eshkol ha-kofer* through Alphabet 100, which is approximately one-quarter of the full text and includes the introductory sections, the complete First Commandment, and the first five Alphabets of the Second Commandment. In addition, we provide preliminary discussions of Hadassi's Karaite and Byzantine sources, as well as transcriptions and linguistic analyses of all the Judaeo-Greek glosses found throughout the entire book. A full edition of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, which runs in most manuscripts to over four hundred folios, must remain a future goal.

We have chosen the first part of *Eshkol ha-kofer* to edit and translate not only because it is the beginning of the book, but also because it includes most of Hadassi's theological discussions and the majority of his Judaeo-Greek glosses. The introductory material, up through Alphabet 34, and the treatment of the First Commandment, "I am the Lord your God," which begins at Alphabet 35, form the venue for many of Hadassi's discussions of God. The first Alphabets of the Second Commandment, "You shall have no other Gods before Me," which begins in the middle of Alphabet 95, contain polemics against other religions, most notably Christianity. Hence, this book presents those sections of *Eshkol ha-kofer* that demonstrate most clearly what we have called "theological encounters at a crossroads."<sup>19</sup>

Hadassi's theology emerged from a combination of two factors: the Karaite tradition from the Golden Age in the Land of Israel, which was originally written in Judaeo-Arabic<sup>20</sup> and accessed by Hadassi in Hebrew translation; and Greek philosophy as propounded in twelfth-century Byzantium, with which Hadassi was familiar in the original language. As we shall discuss, Hadassi received from his Karaite predecessors a form of theology that had developed under Islamic influence and was known as *Kalām*. In contrast, he was familiar with ancient Greek philosophy through contact with his Greek-speaking Christian neighbors. In order to understand this combination, it will be necessary first to outline Hadassi's Karaite background and then to discuss the Greek-Byzantine context in which he worked.

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as did other Karaites; see Lieberman, *Shkiin*. Or it is possible that he simply misidentified the source, as he occasionally did even with biblical verses.

19 It should be remembered that some of these subjects are discussed in parts of *Eshkol ha-kofer* that have not been edited or translated in the present volume. Cross-references to these topics are provided.

20 Judaeo-Arabic is not merely Arabic written in Hebrew characters; it also reflects the spoken Arabic language of the Jews, including Hebrew elements and certain deviations from classical Arabic. See Blau, *Emergence*.

## Hadassi's Karaite Tradition

The origin of Karaism is a matter of dispute. In the eighth century, an Iraqi Jew named Anan ben David wrote a *Book of Commandments* that includes many interpretations and practices that diverge from the standard Judaism of the Rabbis as promulgated in the Talmud. Anan's followers were known as Ananites and eventually lost their independent identity, but Anan himself later came to be viewed as the founding figure of Karaism. By the mid-ninth century, in what was probably a parallel development, a non-Rabbinic Persian Jew, Benjamin al-Nahawendi, was referring to his own group as Scripturalists, *ba'alei miqra'*, a term that became synonymous with *qara'im*, Karaites. By the end of the ninth century, a number of non-Rabbinic groups seem to have been in competition, each one with slightly different practices and perhaps theology.<sup>21</sup> Eventually these groups coalesced into what we know now as Karaism (or disappeared) and more or less worked out their differences, even though some disagreements persisted for hundreds of years. They identified Anan as a *nasi'* (an exilarch or patriarch) who served as a sort of *pater ecclesiae*, developed an independent legal system, and posed a formidable intellectual challenge to Rabbinic Judaism which, in the context of Karaism, is called Rabbanism.<sup>22</sup> In response, the Rabbanites, led by Karaism's major nemesis, Rav Saadia Gaon (882–942), considered the Karaite denial of a divine Oral Law, revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai and embodied in the Talmud, to be a divergent heresy. They attributed the schism to Anan's thwarted desire to become the Babylonian exilarch, the political head of the Jewish community of Iraq, even though, as noted, Anan himself and his followers were not Karaites.<sup>23</sup>

Although the original impulses behind Karaism seem to have originated in Iraq and Persia, the formative period of Karaism took place in the Land of Israel

21 Cf. Chiesa and Lockwood, *Qirqisānī*, for a heresiology reflecting the state of sectarianism in the early tenth century.

22 There is no evidence for the widespread belief that Karaism attracted a large percentage of the Jewish people in the ninth and tenth centuries and thus became a demographic threat to Rabbanism; see Nemoy, "Early Karaism." See also Mas'ūdi, *Tanbīh*, p. 112, who refers to the Rabbanites as the masses (*al-jumhūr*).

23 Much useful information about Karaism is found in Polliack, *Karaite Judaism*. For Karaite origins and proofs of the distinction between Ananites and Karaites, see Gil, "Origins"; Ben-Shammai, "Ananites and Karaites." Despite mutual accusations of heresy and fierce polemics, Rabbanites and Karaites generally considered themselves part of one polity and relations were mostly cordial. See Rustow, *Heresy* (but cf. Erder, "Split"). The situation may have been different in Constantinople, where, according to the testimony of the twelfth-century Iberian Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela, Rabbanites and Karaites lived in separate districts divided by a wall. See Ankori, *Karaites*, pp. 143–148.

in the ninth to eleventh centuries. The late ninth-century Daniel al-Qūmisī was the first prominent leader of the Jerusalem community of Karaite Mourners of Zion who believed that they could bring about the coming of the Messiah by gathering in the Land of Israel and engaging in lamentations and ascetic practices, such as eschewing meat and wine. Al-Qūmisī's followers regularized Karaite observance and produced an innovative corpus of literature that ran the gamut of law codes, biblical commentaries, works of grammar, and theological treatises.<sup>24</sup> The literary accomplishments of this so-called Golden Age of Karaism provided a strong intellectual challenge to Rabbinic Judaism, while at the same time setting the stage for all future developments, especially among Byzantine Karaites, a community that goes back probably to the late tenth century. It is thus useful to discuss some of the sages of the Golden Age who influenced Hadassi.

Judah Hadassi mentions the following Karaite authorities of the Golden Age in his *Eshkol ha-kofer*:<sup>25</sup>

Daniel al-Qūmisī (late ninth century). The founder of the Karaite community in the Land of Israel came originally from Dāmghān in the Qūmis province of Tabaristān. He wrote commentaries on some books of the Bible, as well as a famous epistle/sermon inviting Karaites to move to Jerusalem and polemicizing against his Karaite and Rabbanite opponents.<sup>26</sup>

Sahl ben Mazliḥ (Abulsari, second half of the tenth century). Sahl is best known for his calls to Rabbanites to repent for their mistaken interpretation of the Torah, embodied in his polemical epistle directed to the Egyptian Rabbanite Jacob ben Samuel.<sup>27</sup> He also wrote commentaries on the Bible, legal codes, a polemic against Saadia Gaon, and a book of grammar.

Joseph ibn Nūḥ (Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf; late tenth–early eleventh century). Ibn Nūḥ was an exegete and grammarian.<sup>28</sup>

24 On Golden Age Karaism and the Mourners of Zion, see, e.g., Erder, *Mourners*; Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends"; idem, "Poetic Works."

25 This list is in approximate chronological order. Quite a number of the works mentioned are no longer extant, most likely because they were not translated into Hebrew as the Karaite center moved away from the Arabic-speaking areas.

26 See Nemoy, "Sermon"; Ben-Shammai, "Fragments." Although Nemoy questions the attribution of the sermon to al-Qūmisī, the ideas expressed seem to be from someone of al-Qūmisī's time and background.

27 See Nemoy, "Epistle."

28 See Khan, *Tradition*; Goldstein, *Exegesis*.

Yefet ben Eli (Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan, late tenth–early eleventh century). Yefet was the most important Karaite biblical commentator, the first author whose exegesis covered the entire Bible. He expressed many theological ideas in his commentaries and made a great impact on subsequent Karaite and Rabbanite exegetes (such as Abraham ibn Ezra). He also wrote a Book of Commandments.<sup>29</sup>

Yosef ha-Ro’eh (Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, late tenth–early eleventh century). Al-Baṣīr was the leading Karaite scholar of his generation, and he attracted many Karaite students, among them Tobias ben Moses, who transmitted Karaite learning to Byzantium. He wrote two major theological works, the longer *Kitāb al-Muḥtawī* (General Treatise) and the shorter *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* or *al-Manṣūrī* (Book of Distinction or Book of Manṣūr), as well as some minor treatises. Al-Baṣīr’s theology was greatly influenced by Islamic *Kalām* and has little specific Karaite content. In addition, he wrote books of law, responsa, and polemics.<sup>30</sup>

Levi ben Yefet (Abū Sa’īd; early eleventh century). Levi was the son of Yefet ben Eli and was known mostly for his encyclopedic *Book of Commandments*. He was also the author of a theological compendium, *Kitāb al-ni’ma* (The Book of Grace), extant in a large number of manuscripts but mostly ignored.<sup>31</sup>

Yeshua ben Judah (Abū ‘l-Faraj Furqān ibn Asad, latter half of the eleventh century). Yeshua was a student of al-Baṣīr who wrote biblical commentaries and a book concerning the laws of incest. This latter work reformed Karaite practice which, because of a stringent definition of consanguinity, had made it difficult for Karaites to find suitable marriage partners. He was also a follower of the *Kalām*.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to these Karaite authorities, Hadassi mentioned other pre-Byzantine sages, including Anan ben David, Benjamin al-Nahawendi, Ya’qūb

29 See Frank, *Scripture*; idem, “Ibn Ezra”; Ben-Shammai, “Doctrines”; Zawanowska, “Review.”

30 See Vajda, *Muḥtawī*; Sklare, *Manuscripts*; idem, “Aspects.” On Islamic *Kalām*, see below.

31 See Sklare, “Levi”; Ben-Shammai, “Levi.”

32 See Schreiner, *Jeschu’a*; Ben-Shammai, “Yeshuah.” Reference is made as well (173:⊕) to “the Tiberian grammarian” who wrote *Me’or ‘einayim*; if this book is the same as the book *Me’or ‘ayin* (see Zislin, *Me’or ‘ayin*; Vidro, *Morphology*, p. 27), it would be a Byzantine Karaite work and not from the Golden Age; but cf. Gaash, “*Me’or Ayin*”; Gaash, “Relationship.” Hadassi also mentions a Judah ben ‘Alan the Tiberian (257:Ⓜ).

al-Qirqisānī (early tenth century, Baghdad), and Ḥasan (Ḥusayn) ben Mashiah (tenth century, Baghdad?).<sup>33</sup>

### The Transition to Byzantium

With the decline of the Karaite community in the Land of Israel, the center of Karaite creativity moved to Byzantium and was located mostly in the capital, Constantinople. Karaites had apparently arrived in Byzantium already in the tenth century, and in the early eleventh century some Byzantine Karaites traveled to the Land of Israel in order to pursue their studies in the academies there. The most notable of these was Tobias ben Moses, a student of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr and contemporary of Yeshua ben Judah. Upon Tobias's return to Constantinople, he initiated a literary project that included rendering the Judaeo-Arabic classics of the Golden Age into Hebrew as well as authoring his own Hebrew compositions. This enabled Byzantine Karaites to learn the classical Karaite tradition and to produce original compositions based on that tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Some Karaite Judaeo-Arabic treatises were translated in their entirety, such as those of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr: *al-Muḥṭawī* became *Sefer ne'imot* (Book of Pleasures), and *Tamyiz* was entitled *Mahkimat peti* (Making Wise the Simple; cf. Ps. 19:8). Other compositions were anthologized, such as the biblical commentaries of Yefet and other Karaites, which were represented in Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-oshet* (Book of Wealth), a commentary on multiple books of the Bible; or Tobias's *Ozar nehmad* (Precious Treasure; cf. Prov. 21:20), a lengthy commentary on Leviticus 1–10. Likewise, Yeshua ben Judah's treatise on incestuous relations and Levi ben Yefet's legal works were also rendered into Hebrew. Since Hadassi gives no evidence of knowledge of Arabic, when he cites the classic Golden Age authors he presumably refers to the Hebrew versions.<sup>35</sup>

33 This last sage is apparently the Ben Mashiah mentioned by Ibn Ezra in his commentaries. A review of Qirqisānī's thought is provided by Ben-Shammai, "Doctrines"; see also Chiesa and Lockwood, *Qirqisānī*. It is of interest that Hadassi never cites two extremely prominent Golden Age Karaites: the mid-tenth-century Salmon ben Yeruḥim, author of Judaeo-Arabic biblical commentaries and a Hebrew polemic against Saadia Gaon, *Milḥamot ha-shem* (Wars of the Lord); and the eleventh-century grammarian, 'Abū al-Faraj Hārūn ibn Faraj.

34 For the early history of the Byzantine Karaite community, see Ankori, *Karaites*. The literary project is discussed on pp. 415–452.

35 Not all of the Byzantine Karaite translations are cited by Hadassi explicitly, but they provide the context of his work. Ankori, *Karaites*, pp. 431–433, suggests that *Ozar nehmad* was a multivolume work, most of which is not extant.

In addition to translations and abridgments, Byzantine Karaism produced a number of original compositions that are mentioned by Hadassi. These include the short theological treatises *Meshivat nafesh* (Restores the Soul; cf. Ps. 19:8) of Tobias ben Moses, and *Marpe' la-'azem* (Healing to the Bones; cf. Prov. 16:24),<sup>36</sup> probably also by Tobias, which both deal mainly with theodicy.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Hadassi mentions some works that have not been identified: *Sefer ha-datot* (The Book of Religions), *Me'irat 'einayyim* (Enlightening the Eyes; cf. Ps. 19:9), *Sefer gevulim* (Book of Definitions), and *Matoq la-nefesh* (Sweet to the Soul; cf. Prov. 16:24).<sup>38</sup>

Hadassi's Jewish literary milieu was not restricted to Karaite treatises. He was very familiar with Rabbinic texts, as were his Karaite predecessors, and he used those sources for purposes of polemic and for contrast with Karaite exegesis. Hadassi cites Rabbinic passages at length, often in the original Aramaic, and provides an early attestation of many of these texts (including the formula for the annulment of vows on Yom Kippur, *Kol nidre*<sup>39</sup>). In addition, he knew works that are not specifically identified with either Karaism or Rabbanism, such as

36 It is possible the author intended the titles to be vocalized *Meshivat nefesh* and *Marpe' le-'ezem*, but we will use the original Masoretic vocalization of the pausal forms of these biblical phrases.

37 Tobias refers to *Meshivat nafesh* as his composition in his translation of al-Baṣīr's *Ne'imot*; the author of *Marpe' la-'azem* refers to himself as among "the insignificant ones of Jerusalem," providing reason to assume that Tobias was the author.

38 Cf. the list of works cited in 33:7; 100:7–7. It is reasonable to assume that *Sefer gevulim* is the same as the Byzantine Hebrew work *Zidduq ha-din* (Theodicy), which is presented as a series of definitions. *Matoq la-nefesh* is possibly connected to *Marpe' la-'azem*, since both titles come from the same verse. *Me'irat 'einayyim* could be the same as *Me'or 'einayyim*, which might be the same as *Me'or 'ayin* (although the latter two deal with Hebrew grammar while *Me'irat 'einayyim* seems to be theological). Another anonymous Byzantine short theological work that Hadassi may have known is entitled *She'elot u-teshuvot* (Questions and Answers), which has been preserved in a number of manuscripts and is generally attributed incorrectly to Yūsuf al-Baṣīr. None of the Byzantine translations or original theological treatises has appeared in usable editions, although the Historical Dictionary Project of the Hebrew Language of the Israel Academy of the Hebrew Language has transcribed some of these works from manuscripts. The Byzantine treatises are contained in a number of manuscripts, including St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, the Russian Academy of Sciences, C103 (IMHM, F 69335), and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 670 (IMHM, F 11549). Another original Byzantine treatise, *Sefer ha-mor* (Book of Myrrh), postdates Hadassi, as can be seen in its citation of Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*. For a preliminary discussion of five of these Byzantine theological treatises, including chronology and authorship, see Firrouz and Lasker, "Theological Treatises."

39 140:10–2.

*Yosippon*, the medieval reworking of Flavius Josephus's books, and the story of Eldad the Danite.<sup>40</sup>

In sum, Judah Hadassi was familiar with a wide range of Jewish literature. Thanks to the preservation of pre-Byzantine Karaite literature in Hebrew (such as the writings of Benjamin al-Nahawendi and Daniel al-Qūmisī), the translation work of Tobias and his school, and the composition of original works by Byzantine Karaites, many of whose names are unknown, his knowledge of the Karaite tradition was encyclopedic. The stage was thus set for Judah Hadassi's summa of the Karaite tradition as found in *Eshkol ha-kofer*.

### Karaite Theology before Hadassi

Since this book is devoted to "theological encounters at a crossroads," we will restrict ourselves to a discussion of Hadassi's religious doctrines and not analyze the many other central issues of the book, such as his legal methodology and rulings.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it is important to review the theological discussions of those Karaites who preceded him. The first Karaites were content to introduce their thought into compositions that were primarily dedicated to other matters (similarly to Hadassi's own procedure in *Eshkol ha-kofer*, which is mainly a legal work).<sup>42</sup> Thus, when Hadassi described the opinions of his Karaite predecessors as to when the angels were created, citing Sahl ben Mazliah, Yefet ben Eli, and Benjamin al-Nahawendi, he was not adducing their views from theological treatises but from other genres.<sup>43</sup>

40 Yosippon is mentioned in 43:7–7; 377:second ¶. The story of Eldad is recorded in 59:7–60:3; see Dönitz, *Überlieferung*, p. 82; Perry, *Tradition*, pp. 49–113. Extensive Karaite familiarity with Rabbinic texts in the Golden Age is documented in Tirosh-Becker, *Excerpts*. Hadassi cites other Rabbanite authors as well, such as the Byzantine Shabbatai Donnolo, a tenth-century Byzantine Jewish savant who lived in what is now Southern Italy; see 63:7–D. He seems to have been familiar in addition with the slightly older Byzantine Rabbanite work *Midrash lekaḥ tov (Pesiqta Zutarta)*, by Tobias ben Eliezer of Castoria, Bulgaria.

41 On Hadassi's religious doctrines, see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 29–38; Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends."

42 Karaites believe that the ninth-century Jewish philosopher Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammaṣ, who did write discrete philosophical treatises, was a Karaite. The evidence on the question of al-Muqammaṣ's possible sectarianism is evaluated by Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, pp. 16–19. Two prominent Karaite authors who introduced philosophical discussions into works devoted primarily to other topics are al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben 'Eli; see Ben-Shammai, "Doctrines."

43 *Eshkol* 47:7.



The late tenth-century Levi ben Yefet was the first Karaite to write a treatise dedicated exclusively to philosophical and theological matters, but his work was surpassed by his younger contemporary Yūsuf al-Baṣīr.<sup>44</sup> Al-Baṣīr, and his student Yeshua ben Judah, adopted wholeheartedly the Muʿtazilite *Kalām* of the Basrian school, most notably that of Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār (c. 935–1025). The original Byzantine Karaite theological treatises written in Hebrew maintained this allegiance to *Kalām* and dealt with its main concerns, divine unity (*tawḥīd*) and justice (*ʿadl*). The major characteristics of a *Kalām* work are as follows: (1) an epistemological introduction justifying the need for rational investigation as a prerequisite for religious belief and a list of definitions of terms; (2) proofs for creation of the world in order to demonstrate the existence of a Creator; (3) discussions of the Creator's unity, including issues related to divine attributes; and (4) theodicy in the form of a validation of divine justice as characterized by divine wisdom. In the following discussion, reference will generally be made to the works of al-Baṣīr, since he presented the most systematic and complete theological system, but other Karaite writings will be considered as well, especially those mentioned by Hadassi.

Karaites justified the necessity of rational investigation on the basis of King David's charge to his son Solomon, *Know the God of your fathers and serve Him* (1 Chr. 28:9), understanding the verse as a mandate to investigate (*know*) religion before accepting (*worship*) it.<sup>45</sup> Thus, if a person makes a claim to prophecy, one must first judge this claim by means of rational investigation. Miracles performed by a claimant to prophecy would not be sufficient to verify this claim if the putative prophet's message did not meet rational criteria.

This does not mean that Karaites were radical freethinkers; they obviously did maintain their religious observances and beliefs before commencing their philosophical investigations. Nevertheless, they gave epistemological priority to rationalist proofs of their beliefs.<sup>46</sup> One important element of these investigations was a definition of the terms that would be used in their proofs, most of which reflect the *Kalām* understanding of the world as composed of indivisible atoms which have characteristics only when they are combined with other atoms (aggregation). Otherwise, they are in a state of separation from other atoms (segregation) and are without characteristics.<sup>47</sup>

44 See Sklare, "Levi."

45 Judah Halevi considered Karaite use of this verse as typical of their thought, and criticized them for it; see *Kuzari* 5:21.

46 See Vajda, *Muḥtawī*, pp. 3–31; Tobias, *Meshivat*, f. 85<sup>b</sup>; Tobias, *Marpe*, ff. 71<sup>a</sup>–72<sup>b</sup>.

47 See Vajda, *Muḥtawī*, pp. 32–38; Vajda and Fenton, "Definitions"; Tobias, *Marpe*, ff. 70<sup>a</sup>–71<sup>a</sup>; Ben-Shammai, "Atomism," pp. 254–273.

As *Mutakallimūn* (followers of the *Kalām*), Karaites attempted to demonstrate the existence of God on the basis of proofs that the world is created, proofs derived from the *Kalām*'s understanding of the physical world.<sup>48</sup> The proof of creation depends upon four theses: (1) aggregation and segregation are actual qualities of bodies; (2) aggregation and segregation are created: their existence follows upon nonexistence; (3) all bodies are affected by either aggregation or segregation; and (4) that which is never without a noneternal quality is also noneternal. It follows, therefore, that atoms, whose most basic attributes are aggregation and segregation, cannot be eternal, since their attributes, without which they can never exist, are noneternal. Likewise, the physical world, composed of atoms, is noneternal; hence, it was created.<sup>49</sup> The assumption, "that which is never without a noneternal quality is also noneternal," is the basis of what is known as the standard *Kalām* proof of creation.<sup>50</sup>

Divine unity can mean either numerical, external unity, namely that there is one God and not more than one God; or internal unity, namely that God is indivisible and simple. The denial of God's external unity was not a major intellectual challenge in the tenth and eleventh centuries, so neither Muslims nor Jews devoted much effort to its refutation. Thus, followers of the *Kalām* were satisfied to employ arguments based on the concept of "mutual hindering," namely that if there were two gods, neither could be fully God. For instance, if a divine operation needed both gods, then neither one is God; but if one god is sufficient, why are there two gods? If one god wanted a particular action and the second god the opposite, what would happen?<sup>51</sup>

The question of God's internal unity, which was debated against the background of the Christian belief in a triune God, was of greater interest to the *Mutakallimūn*. They discussed at length the problem of divine attributes, or which words can legitimately be used to describe God and how these words are to be used. If God has essential attributes, namely, qualities that inhere in

48 A major part of Maimonides' criticism of the *Kalām*, and its Jewish followers, the Geonim and the Karaites, was the methodological assertion that one should first demonstrate the existence of God on the assumption of eternity of the world, and then turn to the question of eternity or creation. Hence, if a demonstration that the world is eternal and not created should be found, then the proofs for God's existence would still be valid; see Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:71, pp. 179–184.

49 Vajda, *Muhtawī*, pp. 38–58; Tobias, *Marpe*, ff. 72<sup>b</sup>–73<sup>a</sup>. These arguments are found as well in a Byzantine Hebrew translation of a Golden Age Judaeo-Arabic treatise entitled *Bereishit rabba*, which has generally been attributed to Yeshua ben Judah; see Schreiner, *Jeschu'a*, pp. 26–38. Ben-Shammai, "Yeshuah," pp. 16–17, has questioned this attribution.

50 For this argument in *Kalām*, see Wolfson, *Kalam*, pp. 392–409; Davidson, "Philoponus"; idem, *Proofs*, pp. 134–143. For a modern defense of this argument, see Craig, *Kalam*.

51 Vajda, *Muhtawī*, pp. 123–134; Tobias, *Meshivat*, ff. 85<sup>a-b</sup>. Most arguments for God's

His essence, does that mean that God's internal unity is not absolute, making possible the Christian belief in a God with one substance and three hypostases? If, however, God does not have essential attributes, does that mean that God is not wise, powerful, or merciful, or that other scriptural and traditional divine descriptions are false?<sup>52</sup>

The Mu'tazilites generally rejected essential divine attributes but accepted the use of positive terms to describe God, as long as these terms were not understood as distinct divine entities. Thus, God is not powerful through power or wise through wisdom (i.e., separate entities), but is powerful and wise only through His own essence (and, thus, absolute unity and simplicity are maintained). Al-Baṣīr follows this line of reasoning, arguing that since God is the Creator, He must have five basic attributes: powerful, wise, living, existent, and eternal. This conclusion is predicated upon a comparison with human activity that presupposes that certain activities are possible only if the person doing them has the requisite attributes. These attributes are "in virtue of His self" or "in virtue of His essence."<sup>53</sup>

Other subjects of interest to the Karaite *Mutakallimūn* that concern the nature of God were the questions of divine perception and will. Al-Baṣīr writes that God is able to perceive, but not through organs of perception; and to will through discrete acts of will that are added to God's essence, since they are neither God, nor eternal, nor inherent in a substrate.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to Christians and some Muslims, al-Baṣīr denies the eternity of God's word, arguing that it is created.<sup>55</sup> God cannot be seen, even in the afterlife, despite the view held by certain Muslims.<sup>56</sup>

Mu'tazilites posited a theodicy based upon the assumption that everything that happens in the world is a function of divine wisdom. According to this view, the canons of good and evil are universal and not relative, applying to

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numerical unity are presented in the context of the dualistic views of the Manicheans or the Zoroastrians (see Saadia, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 2:2, pp. 96–99); al-Baṣīr mentions such groups as well (see Vajda, *Muḥṭawī*, p. 134). Still, it is difficult to see these beliefs as actual possible alternatives to monotheism in the eleventh century. Maimonides deals with the *Kalām* proofs from mutual hindering in *Guide* 1:75, pp. 223–226.

52 Harry A. Wolfson has discussed in a number of forums the various *Kalām* theories of attributes and the polemical stimuli behind their development; see, e.g., *Kalam*, pp. 112–234; *Repercussions*, pp. 1–74.

53 Vajda, *Muḥṭawī*, pp. 65–102; Tobias, *Marpe'*, ff. 73<sup>b</sup>–76<sup>b</sup>; Wolfson, *Repercussions*, pp. 20–25, 51–52.

54 Vajda, *Muḥṭawī*, pp. 72–78, 169–180.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 151–168.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 103–119. Karaite *Mutakallimūn* also denied divine corporeality and interpreted biblical anthropomorphisms in an allegorical manner.

both the Creator and the creatures. Furthermore, evil actually exists and is not just a lack of the good. Theoretically, God is not bound by outside constraints of universal morality and is free to do evil; nevertheless, God does only the good and is never the agent of evil. Since God lacks nothing, and is absolutely just, He will not choose to do evil, since evil doing implies both a lack and injustice on the part of its agent. In consequence, the suffering of the righteous and the success of the wicked are not indicators of an absent God; they ultimately have a good purpose.<sup>57</sup>

A test case for Mu'tazilite theodicy is the problem of evil in the form of unwarranted pain. Al-Baṣīr offers four reasons why pain might be inflicted: (1) for the benefit of the person who suffers pain; (2) to prevent greater pain; (3) to satisfy a debt (i.e., as punishment); or (4) because the inflictors of pain are not capable of attaining their goal without pain (such as a physician performing a painful medical procedure). Pain administered to adults by God, however, cannot be intended in order to prevent greater pain (reason 2), nor can it be a result of divine impotence, as in the case of the physician (reason 4), since neither explanation is fitting for God. This pain, hence, must be either a form of benefit for the person who suffers (reason 1)—namely, it results in an increased reward in the future, usually in the hereafter—or a deserved punishment (reason 3). Children, however, have no previous sin and thus cannot deserve pain as a punishment. Hence, God's infliction of pain on children can be explained only in terms of a future benefit to which they are entitled. Al-Baṣīr uses the same logic to argue that animals also receive some sort of compensation for undeserved pain. God's justice is perfect.<sup>58</sup>

Another feature of Mu'tazilite *Kalām* was the positing of both divine foreknowledge and human free will. This contrasts with Ash'arite *Kalām*, which maintained that human actions are determined by God. Al-Baṣīr asserts that without freedom of will, there is no moral justification for imposing the obligation of belief upon nonbelievers. Once nonbelievers have the freedom to believe, however, they must suffer the consequences if they persist in their unbelief. An analysis of human activity indicates that an agent is one who holds

57 Ibid., pp. 236–332; Schreiner, *Jeschu'a*, pp. 61–68.

58 Al-Baṣīr's views, as well as those of his Muslim contemporaries and his Byzantine Karaite successors, are presented in Vajda, *Muḥtawī*, pp. 333–386; see also, Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 203–216. Some *Mutakallimūn* argued that the suffering of children can be explained by adopting a theory of reincarnation, but al-Baṣīr, like Saadia Gaon before him (*Beliefs and Opinions*, 6:8, pp. 259–263), rejects the possibility that one soul can be reborn in another body and maintains that the theory of compensation is a better solution to the problem of this suffering. See Vajda, *Muḥtawī*, pp. 387–396.

the power to act and who is not compelled by some outside force. Furthermore, the power to act must precede the action itself, and two agents cannot be responsible for the same act. Thus, it is the human actor who is responsible for the act. As a result, the imposition of obligations on humans is not an injustice on God's part, even when they are imposed on those people who God knows will disobey Him. God's foreknowledge does not influence how people will freely choose their actions.<sup>59</sup>

Divine law is a benefit for worshippers since it provides them with benevolent assistance in behaving in a manner consistent with reason. God has knowledge of freely chosen human actions and, therefore, can impose a law upon humans and then reward those who obey Him with eternal remuneration, which is superior in quantity and quality to possibly undeserved grants of compensation, and He can punish those who disobey Him with eternal punishment. Sinners, however, can escape their fate by returning to God through acts of repentance.<sup>60</sup>

Although he asserts the truth of prophecy as part of his discussion of theodicy, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr does not discuss the phenomenon of prophecy in detail. His predecessor Yefet ben Eli does, however, posit six levels of prophecy: (1) mouth-to-mouth prophecy, the level attained by Moses alone; (2) prophecy by the holy spirit, experienced, for instance, by Moses and David with the other composers of the book of Psalms;<sup>61</sup> (3) direct audition from a glory, without a vision (the level of Samuel); (4) beholding a vision during which the prophet is encircled by a glory while awake (Aaron, Miriam, Isaiah, Ezekiel and most of the other prophets); (5) seeing an angel directly while awake and hearing the angel convey the speech of God (Daniel); and (6) dreams (Zechariah and Daniel).<sup>62</sup>

As noted, Hadassi was familiar with standard Karaite *Kalām* theology through Hebrew translations of Judaeo-Arabic works as well as the few short original Hebrew theological treatises composed in Byzantium. As Hadassi developed his own theological system, the ideas outlined above found their expression in *Eshkol ha-kofer* as well.

59 Ibid., pp. 397–501.

60 Ibid., pp. 502–632.

61 The Karaite attitude toward the book of Psalms and the level of prophecy it represents is discussed by Uriel Simon, *Approaches*, pp. 59–111.

62 See Frank, *Scripture*, p. 101; Ben-Shammai, "Doctrines," vol. 1, pp. 268–278; vol. 2, pp. 173–174.

## Judah Hadassi and His Byzantine Environment

It has been rather easy to reconstruct Judah Hadassi's Jewish library, especially the Karaite component, since he not only borrows Karaite ideas but also mentions authors and book titles explicitly. Yet, his theological training was not restricted to Karaite sources. As his frequent use of Greek philosophical terminology in the original language indicates, he must have been well acquainted with contemporary Greek Byzantine Christian thought. In the following, we will examine how he achieved his familiarity with contemporary ideas.

The Greek language used by Judah Hadassi demonstrates a broad range of terms and expressions. This array of knowledge is interesting because it illuminates his integration into Byzantine society on various levels. First of all, Hadassi regularly uses words and phrases from the vernacular, following the pattern, common among Jewish communities in the Diaspora, of employing the language of the surrounding society. These terms can be found in many sections of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, even if most Alphabets lack such vernacular terms. In addition, however, there are certain Alphabets in which Greek terms are clustered in great quantity, demonstrating a close familiarity with philosophical, theological, and scientific terminology derived from the classical Greek tradition. These groupings are found in the following Alphabets: 24, on the structure of books (reappearing in 338); 28, on the division of nature and divine attributes; 31, a description of marvelous animals; 63, on the stars, constellations, and planets; 64–66, on definitions of the physical world; 99, on Christian terms; 233, on the parts of the body; 284, on botanical terms; 337–338, on levels of human intelligence and the correct methods of interpretation; and 376, a series of descriptions of marvels of the world.

It is unclear whether there is a particular significance to these clusters of terms. Is Hadassi's use of Greek dependent solely on the topic under discussion, a possibility whose likelihood is reinforced by the predominance of philosophical and scientific terminology in *Eshkol ha-kofer*'s Greek lexicon? And, thus, did Hadassi compose separate units on discrete themes, some with much Greek and many without any Greek, and then integrate them into the larger work? Or does the disparity in the use of Greek reflect not only differences in subject but also differences in the date of composition among the various units? Unfortunately, it would appear that just as it is impossible to understand Hadassi's choice of style, his ordering of topics, and his many repetitions, it is also impossible to reconstruct the manner in which he worked.

Whatever the Greek words found in *Eshkol ha-kofer* might tell us about the composition of the book, it is clear that they reflect the Modern Greek language as it was spoken in twelfth-century Constantinople. In Hadassi's transcriptions

we find (1) Classical philosophical terminology in Modern Greek pronunciation; (2) grammatical forms and vocabulary that are assigned today to Modern Greek dialects; and (3) forms and vocabulary found today in contemporary Standard Modern Greek.<sup>63</sup>

The Greek terms cited by Hadassi and the variety of their contexts raise the question of how one should evaluate and analyze Hadassi's use of Greek. What were his sources? Can Hadassi's use of Greek teach us something about the wider context of Jewish-Christian contacts in Byzantium? How well were Byzantine (Karaite) Jews integrated into the surrounding Christian society?

Hadassi's Greek philosophical terminology is of especial interest, for we have no documentation of the use of these expressions among Jews since the first century CE, in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Most medieval Jewish authors of philosophical compositions prior to *Eshkol ha-kofer* wrote in Arabic, including Saadia and Hadassi's Karaite predecessors, whose works were later translated into Hebrew. Hadassi's appropriation of Greek for use in Hebrew theological discussions was undoubtedly a product of his Byzantine environment and not of a direct knowledge of Philo.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Hadassi's descriptions of God's attributes and his Greek glosses of scientific and philosophical terms hint at the possibility that he took them from a Byzantine philosophical work, e.g., an introduction to Aristotelian philosophy. Since Hadassi restricts himself to individual Greek words or phrases, rather than extended sentences, it is not possible to determine his sources with certainty. There are two passages containing Greek terms, however, that can be traced to popular works used throughout the Byzantine millennium for basic training in philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see below, the first passage derives from one of the many commentaries on the *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius, such as that of Ioannis Doxapatris. The second passage clearly includes citations from a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*. Although Hadassi gives sufficient evidence that he cites two commentaries, on rhetorical and philosophical texts

63 For a description and analysis of Hadassi's Greek, a glossary of transcriptions and translations of all Judaeo-Greek terms in *Eshkol ha-kofer*, and the meaning of the terms Classical/Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, and Standard Modern Greek, see Judah Hadassi and the Greek Language below.

64 Philo's works, however, were popular among Byzantine Greeks, who read him almost like a Christian theologian. The patriarch Photios praised his style, and as late as the fourteenth century, Theodoros Metochitis, the prime minister, wrote an essay on him; see Bowman, "Philo."

65 These two passages are 24:10–11 (repeated with differences in 338:2), describing the various parts of a book; and 28:12–18, a cluster of terms describing the physical world; see below. Not all of Hadassi's possible sources have survived or are available to us in usable editions.

respectively, he does not provide enough material to determine exactly which ones he used and how he acquired access to them. Whatever Hadassi's precise sources were, the close similarities between his Greek terminology and contemporary Byzantine Greek texts prove that a Karaite Jew living in Constantinople in the twelfth century had access to Greek philosophical literature and thought in the original language.

Before examining Hadassi's possible sources, it should be stressed that in earlier generations of Byzantine Karaite Jews, the writers who translated most of the Karaite writings from Arabic into Hebrew or composed original Hebrew treatises also used Greek glosses. This is true, for instance, of Tobias ben Moses's translations of the works of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr and other Golden Age Karaites. Since, however, there has been no comprehensive study of Karaite usage of Greek before Hadassi, it cannot be determined how much he was indebted to his Karaite predecessors for his knowledge of Greek.

A tentative investigation indicates that the earliest Karaite texts featuring Greek glosses include mostly single words, while Hadassi employs whole phrases, among them many definitions.<sup>66</sup> Therefore it can be assumed that not only did Hadassi have access to Karaite sources, but also he must have learned Aristotelian philosophy in Byzantine garb, at least to a certain degree. In our attempt to reconstruct Hadassi's education and the diverse ways in which he could have accessed Byzantine literature, we will turn first to a description of the places and institutions where Hadassi could have studied Byzantine philosophical and rhetorical works. We will then look more closely at the two examples of borrowed Greek terminology in *Eshkol ha-kofer* mentioned above and try to determine Hadassi's Byzantine Greek sources.

Insofar as Hadassi did not take his material from his Karaite predecessors, he must have gained access, in one way or another, to the learned Christian elite, possibly via the educational system. Nonetheless, it is not clear how he did so and to what extent. At least three possible scenarios may be suggested:

- (1) Hadassi could have acquired his knowledge from his own personal study. A Jew was not forbidden from buying books on the streets of Constantinople and studying them, using his knowledge of the Greek language. One would still have to ask how and from whom did he learn Ancient Greek;

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66 There are resemblances between Judah Hadassi's Greek and that of his Karaite Byzantine predecessors. For instance, both use the common philosophical term for "without beginning" (ἀναρχος); see *Eshkol ha-kofer*, 28:second ¶, and Tobias, *Marpe*, f. 70<sup>a</sup>. This needs further investigation. Even if Hadassi derived his Greek terminology solely from his Karaite predecessors, the question would still arise as to how they themselves learned Greek.



perhaps elementary training in that language was provided by a private teacher. It was not impossible for a Jew to pay for private instruction in Classical Greek.

- (2) Hadassi could have hired a private teacher to teach him rhetoric and philosophy. Any educated monk in one of the many monasteries could have done so in his leisure time, if he were willing to accept a Jew as a student.
- (3) Hadassi could have attended classes at one of the institutions of higher education in Byzantium. Perhaps he learned philosophy by attending a private study circle or a philosophy class, e.g., in the University of Constantinople. Hence, it is necessary to sketch briefly the Byzantine educational system, and then to examine what access a Jew could have had to this system, especially in twelfth-century Constantinople.

There is no sharp line between the Byzantine and the ancient systems of education.<sup>67</sup> The most evident continuity between the two is that Byzantine education remained predominantly secular, in stark contrast to the Latin West (where the Ashkenazi Jews lived). Therefore, unlike the West, where laymen were usually unable to receive a systematic education because the monasteries were closed to them, in Byzantium there was no such retreat of learning and education into the monasteries. Laymen could also study the Bible or patristic writings and their interpretation, which comprised such an important part of Byzantine intellectual life, either through private instruction by a monastic teacher or by attending an ecclesiastical training institution, usually the Patriarchal School in Constantinople. It does not seem very likely, however, that they ever admitted Jews to such an institution.

The usual educational system in Constantinople had three stages.<sup>68</sup> It started with an elementary phase in which pupils learned how to read, write, and calculate. At this level, the Psalter in the Septuagint version was the chief text in the curriculum. Pupils normally started by learning the older, majuscule Greek script.<sup>69</sup> This stage was supervised by the *γραμματιστής* (*grammatistis*), a teacher who was a private entrepreneur.<sup>70</sup>

67 The Byzantine system of education is treated in most general overviews of Byzantine civilization; see, e.g., Marrou, *History*, pp. 452–455. For higher education, see Fuchs, *Höhere Schulen*; Lemerle, *Humanisme*; Speck, *Kaiserliche Universität*; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, “Système éducatif.”

68 Unfortunately, we are not well informed about cities and regions outside of Constantinople at the time in question.

69 Jews, who normally did not receive Greek higher instruction from Christians, continued to use the old script in the documents found in the Cairo Geniza (cf. De Lange, *Greek Jewish*, pp. 98, 102).

70 The financial and social situation of these teachers was often precarious. We know

The next stage was led by the γραμματικός (*grammatikos*) or grammarian. This educator began reading literature with the pupils, starting with the classics, mostly Homer and tragedies; in Byzantium the dramatic curriculum was limited to three tragedies apiece by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Then pupils read rhetoric, including exemplary speeches by Demosthenes, Lysias, and others. This stage mirrors the reduced curriculum that was current in *gymnasia* all over the ancient world (including the Latin-speaking part). It included as well two categories of auxiliary literature: lexica, including etymological dictionaries, and commentaries, mostly consisting of brief notes called *scholia*. Because the scholarly tradition went right back to Hellenistic times (e.g., the Homeric commentaries by Zenodotus [third century BCE] and Aristophanes of Byzantium [second century BCE]), it comprised an enormous bulk of literature, and it is almost impossible to assess when a certain commentary was actually written. This is one more reason why it is difficult to identify Hadassi's sources with confidence.

The third stage of education, provided by the rhetorician (ῥήτωρ, *rhetor*),<sup>71</sup> was intended for students who wanted to enter the civil service. Here, the knowledge acquired during the second stage was put into practice. The most important training at this point consisted in writing compositions. Again, pupils followed ancient models, starting from simple pieces (fables similar to those of Aesop) and concluding with imagined competitions (e.g., between Alexander and Caesar). The *terminus technicus* for these models was προγυμνάσματα (*progymnasmata*), and the Byzantines used Aphthonius's and Hermogenes's manuals of rhetoric from late antiquity until the end of their empire in 1453, and even beyond. Already in the fifth–sixth century, a corpus consisting of five books had been established: Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* and the four works by Hermogenes, the most important of which was the treatise Περὶ στάσεων (*Peri staseon*, on issues presented at court). The goal of this education was a secular career at court, in finance, or in composing official documents and the like. The best pupils would become speechwriters in the imperial service (βασιλικὸς λόγος, *basilikos logos*). Such a career was, of course, not possible for a Jew.

The optional sequel to these three stages of education was the university. Although the first state-run university was founded in the fifth century CE, it did not enjoy a continuous existence in Byzantium. Most important for our

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something about their life from a corpus of letters written by one such master during the tenth century, who described competitive schools run by others and pupils who did not pay. See Lemerle, *Humanism*, pp. 286–296.

<sup>71</sup> Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, 63–74.

subject was the founding anew of the University of Constantinople by the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (“the gladiator”) in 1045.<sup>72</sup> It appears that two private teachers, Ioannis Xiphilinos (ca. 1010–1075) and Michael Psellos (ca. 1017–1076), and their surrounding teaching staff were in such stark competition that the emperor established for them two state-funded schools or chairs within the university, one for law and one for philosophy. Unfortunately, the charter for the chair of philosophy is lost; this went, of course, to Michael Psellos, one of the most important Byzantine intellectuals ever. The document for the other chair, held by the future patriarch Ioannis Xiphilinos, a fellow student of Psellos, is preserved among the works of their common teacher, Ioannis Mavropous, bishop of Euchaita (Avkat in Turkey today).<sup>73</sup> This chair of philosophy existed until the Fourth Crusade (1204), at least intermittently. At both the philosophy and law schools, philosophy and rhetoric were part of the curriculum.<sup>74</sup>

Higher education was also provided by the Patriarchal School in Constantinople.<sup>75</sup> In the framework of the ecclesiastical education offered there, philosophy and rhetoric were taught as well as medicine and other sciences. But it seems quite impossible that a teaching staff that consisted partially of clerics (professors teaching any of the three theological subjects were required to be deacons), housed in a building that formed part of the complex of Hagia Sophia (i.e., the Patriarch’s see), would have admitted a Jew among its students. It is more likely, therefore, that Hadassi participated in learned discussions in another venue. In fact, the same Patriarchate also ran a more open establishment at the Church of the Holy Apostles. Instead of adhering to a prescribed syllabus, this institution provided a space for wide-ranging debates.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, if Hadassi did not acquire his knowledge of Greek philosophy through a private teacher, it still may have been possible for him to attend lectures in philosophy at the University of Constantinople, e.g., at the School of Philosophy. Michael Psellos states several times that Muslims attended his lessons;<sup>77</sup> he even mentions a pupil of his from Baghdad (“somebody came from Babylon to drink with irresistible eagerness from my springs”).<sup>78</sup> This statement

72 It is quite unusual that we have the documentary evidence for this event; see Fuchs, *Höhere Schulen*, pp. 24–35; Wolska-Conus, “Les écoles”; Niehoff-Panagiotidis, “Système éducatif.”

73 This situation is well analyzed and described by Wolska-Conus, “Les écoles.”

74 Fuchs, *Höhere Schulen*, pp. 26–28, 31.

75 Browning, *The Patriarchal School*.

76 Fuchs, *Höhere Schulen*, pp. 52–53.

77 Littlewood, *Pselli Oratoria*, no. 19, lines 30 ff.

78 In his letter to the patriarch Michael Kerularius; see Sathas, *Μεσσαϊωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, p. 508; and Criscuolo, *Epistola*, pp. 24–25, 36–37.

by Psellos should be taken more seriously, as it opens up the possibility that Hadassi himself was also able to attend lectures at the School of Philosophy. In these lectures, classical and late antique philosophy, originally written in Classical Greek, was explained in a language whose phonology and morphology were highly influenced by Modern Greek (just as in many Arabic countries, teachers used the spoken language for explaining classical texts, even in the nineteenth century). Hadassi's vernacular idiom, unattested elsewhere, is the one used in his glosses.

To arrive at a more specific conclusion as to where Hadassi acquired his knowledge of Greek philosophy, it is necessary to look at two derivative passages that contain some of the Greek phrases integrated into *Eshkol ha-kofer*. The longer passage, in 24:7–9 and repeated (with differences) in 338:3, consists of eight questions concerning the structure of a book: its aim, its benefit, its genuineness, the order in which it is to be read, the reason why it was written,<sup>79</sup> the division of the chapters, its way of teaching, and its references to parts of a speech.<sup>80</sup> At first glance this seems to be a direct citation from Ioannis Doxapatris's *Rhetorical Homilies to the Progymnasmata by Aphthonius*.<sup>81</sup> The author is by no means unknown: Doxapatris was a teacher of rhetoric in the eleventh century, a time when this art began to bloom again in Byzantium.<sup>82</sup> He commented on the whole corpus of late ancient materials used for teaching rhetoric: Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* and four works by Hermogenes, the most important of which was the aforementioned treatise *Περὶ στάσεων*.<sup>83</sup> Hadassi's direct citation of a passage appearing in an almost contemporary Byzantine commentary on rhetoric is an important point, since it demonstrates that he participated in the intellectual trends of his time.

Nevertheless, there is a slight problem with attributing the quoted passage to Doxapatris: it is in fact a set piece that could serve as an introduction to any philosophical or rhetorical work and was reproduced in a number of

79 24:9: τὸν σκοπὸν τὸ χρήσιμον τὸ ἐγνήσιον [sic] τὴν τάξιν τῆς ἀναγνώσεως τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ἀπογραφῆς (with varr.).

80 24:7: τὴν εἰς τὸ κεφάλαιον διαίρεσιν τὸ διδασκαλικὸν τρόπον [sic] καὶ ἐπὶ (ὑπὸ) τί μερῶν ἀναφορά.

81 Rabe, *Prolegomenon*, no. 9, 127, lines 24–26.

82 Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, pp. 83–84. Since Doxapatris cites verses engraved on the walls of the Great Church that praise Emperor Romanos III (1028–1034), he must have been active around the middle of the eleventh century. A good description of Doxapatris was given already by Rabe, *Rhetorenhandschriften*, pp. 580–581.

83 Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, p. 85, mentions a certain Ioannis, “Diakon und Logothetes,” at Hagia Sophia. The possibility that this individual should be identified with Doxapatris is worth considering.

introductions to commentaries on the corpus of rhetoric.<sup>84</sup> It is clear that this kind of introduction, known as a *προθεωρία* (*protheoria*), was not restricted to rhetoric but was typical of academic teaching since late antiquity and throughout Byzantine times. It owed its existence to the combination of philosophical and rhetorical analysis of a given text.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, although Hadassi's choice of words points toward Doxapatris's introduction, a direct dependence is by no means certain. Since Doxapatris took his material from predecessors who also commented on Aphthonius's work, Hadassi's teacher could have used a much older source as well.<sup>86</sup> In a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, the Neoplatonic philosopher Simplicius of Cilicia, who lived in the second half of the sixth century, follows his introduction to Aristotelian philosophy with instructions on how to classify it and in which order it ought to be read: "The tenth point in question is: how many chapters and which of Aristotle's treatises (*πραγματεῖαι*, *pragmateiai*) should be discussed first?"<sup>87</sup> Then Simplicius reproduces the list familiar from the rhetorical introductions. Now, should we assume that Hadassi took the passage from Simplicius's commentary or from Doxapatris?

Since neither philosophy nor rhetoric was taught *sola scriptura* in Byzantium, the most plausible source for Hadassi was one—or more—of the many commentaries on classical philosophy. Because philosophy and rhetoric were closely interlinked in the Byzantine tradition (Porphyry's *Eisagoge* is, for instance, cited by Doxapatris<sup>88</sup>), Hadassi could very well have heard this piece on how to understand a text during a lesson in philosophy. If so, it probably happened at the University of Constantinople's school of philosophy, where rhetoric was taught as well. The teacher may not have been the professor who held the chair but an auxiliary teacher who presented the introduction to the works of Aphthonius or Hermogenes.

Thus, it is most improbable that Hadassi employed a late antique Byzantine commentary directly, since in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium, beginning with Psellos, there was a new and very strong interest in mainly Aristotelian philosophy. The *Organon* of the Master, mainly the *Categories*, was

84 Rabe, *Prolegomenon*, no. 8, p. 73, lines 9–14; no. 11, p. 166, lines 23–30; no. 13, p. 202, lines 9–12; no. 15, p. 244, lines 9–13; no. 17, p. 287, lines 28–31; no. 20, p. 304, lines 9–13; no. 28, p. 384, lines 11–13.

85 Rabe, *Prolegomenon*, pp. vi–vii, with further parallels.

86 "Sie [the theoreticians] übernahmen mehr oder weniger autoritätsgläubig den Grossteil ihres Textes aus einer oder mehreren Vorlagen"; Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, p. 84; cf. also p. 78, n. 12.

87 Simplicius, *Categories*, pp. 1–3; see also Hadot, "Introductions."

88 Doxapatres, *Homilia*, p. 106. The "Homilies" are full of Aristotelian definitions.

used as an introduction to philosophy by Platonists as well, and Michael Psellos was a Platonist. Therefore, the best candidates for the source of Hadassi's material are to be sought among the teachers of philosophy at Psellos's school. Possible candidates are Evstratios of Nikaia (condemned as a heretic; ca. 1050–1120), Michael of Anchialos (appointed to the chair by Emperor Manuel between 1165 and 1167, and later the Patriarch of Constantinople), Michael Italikos (a contemporary of Hadassi and teacher of philosophy in Constantinople, ca. 1090–1157), and, perhaps the most successful Byzantine commentator on Aristotle, Michael of Ephesus (twelfth century).<sup>89</sup> Finally, Ioannis Tzetzes (ca. 1110–1180), a Byzantine scholar of Hellenistic literature in Constantinople and a contemporary of Hadassi, also wrote commentaries on Aphthonius, as did Doxapatris. In his commentary on his own letters Tzetzes gives an overview of the five treatises by Aphthonius and Hermogenes, in Byzantine political verse.<sup>90</sup> Tzetzes might be an interesting personality to consider alongside Hadassi, since they both lived at the same time and shared the same interests.<sup>91</sup>

To sum up, Hadassi's source for this passage concerning the structure of a book cannot be identified with certainty. But it is clear that Hadassi must have had access to contemporary commentary literature either directly or by means of the educational system in which this literature was taught.

The second derivative passage consists of a whole range of philosophical terms typical of classical Greek metaphysics. In Alphabet 28:2–8 one meets a cluster of such terms, including “without beginning” (ἀναρχος), “indivisible” (ἄτομον), and “the being” (ὄν). Elsewhere, in Alphabets 65:7–7 and 338:2, he uses συνηβεβετικόν (συμβεβηκόν), the Modern Greek rendering of τὸ συμβεβηκός, pl. τὰ συμβεβηκότα, “the accident(s).” This is, of course, a very Aristotelian notion,<sup>92</sup> but beginning with Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor, it became very common in later philosophy. We find also in *Eshkol ha-kofer* the term used by Origen for the very word of God, i.e., Christ (αὐτολόγος).<sup>93</sup> All of these terms attest Hadassi's adoption of Byzantine and Modern Greek usage. Their rendering in Hebrew script, almost uncorrupted by the scribes, shows clear evidence of medieval vernacular Greek phonology or morphology; Hadassi's transcriptions appear perfectly at home in the linguistic system of a

89 His commentary on the *Metaphysics* was used as a replacement for the lost books of the commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias (ca. 200 CE). Unfortunately, Michael's commentary on the *Organon* is lost; see Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, pp. 34–35.

90 Tzetzae, *Chiliades*, 11, 109–135. Tzetzes criticized Doxapatris in an aggressive manner.

91 See Judah Hadassi and the Greek Language below.

92 E.g., *Phys.* 2, 1, 192b; *Metaph.* 6, 11, 1027a; 10, 1, 1052a 18.

93 See Lampe, *Lexicon*, pp. 264, 271. Hadassi uses the term in 28:7.

less educated speaker of Modern Greek in the twelfth century. Many of these terms appear in Philo of Alexandria as well.

The field of Byzantine philosophical literature (i.e., after the commentary movement of late antiquity) has not been well studied. Many texts are still unpublished, though the situation has changed in the last decades, thanks, for instance, to the efforts of L. Benakis. It was also known already to Hunger<sup>94</sup> that a great many Neoplatonic writings, mostly commentaries, that were still available to Psellos are now lost; this makes the task of identification more difficult. Byzantine philosophy centered on the classical corpora (mostly Aristotle and the Platonic-Neoplatonic literature, including the late antique commentaries on these writings). Its terminology is very much unified, and if Hadassi used, e.g., a commentary by Michael of Ephesus on the *Organon*, it is most likely that in an introductory lesson the professor used Classical terminology (pronounced in a recent manner) and commented on it in the vernacular for beginners. For example, in 28:ג and 65:ה Hadassi uses the word *αὐθόπαρ-κτον* (self-sufficient), with the typical Modern Greek distortions. The word is attested in patristic literature since the sixth century.<sup>95</sup>

In sum, we have seen that in using Greek philosophical terminology, Hadassi followed Byzantine Karaite predecessors. An adequate treatment of Hadassi's Greek actually necessitates a study of the use of Greek by the earlier Karaites. Unfortunately, inasmuch as these previous Karaite texts are unavailable in reliable editions, a study of the Greek material they contain is not possible at present. Therefore, the conclusions drawn here can only be preliminary and will need further examination. A comprehensive study of Hadassi's Greek terminology, which is not possible here, would also be worthwhile.

*Eshkol ha-kofer* reflects two intellectual trends of twelfth-century Constantinople, namely rhetoric and philosophy. It is highly probable that Hadassi visited an elementary course in philosophy, where he most likely heard an introduction to Aristotle. The Greek philosophy he encountered was already clothed in patristic garb. He may have studied philosophy with a private teacher as well. It is also possible that Hadassi attended a private debating circle. A bitter satire

94 Hunger, *Profane Literatur*, pp. 20–22.

95 Lampe, *Lexicon*, p. 264. It is used by (pseudo-)Anastasios of Antioch and John of Damascus. In fact, the passage cited by Hadassi in 28:ג looks almost like a literal citation from (pseudo-)Anastasios, *Compendiana*, col. 1401A. Concerning this author, see Döpp and Geerlings, *Lexikon*, s. v., p. 31. The short treatise, in dialogical form, is not genuine. The accuracy of the citation is suggestive, but it is difficult to reconstruct a chain of transmission from Anastasios (d. 598/599 CE) to Hadassi. Significantly, the adjective is used in a definition of *οὐσία*.

against John Kamateros, the friend of Emperor Manuel I, by the *litteratus* Nikitas Evgenianos mentions a Jew, whom he calls Mardochaios, who was a close friend of John's. According to Nikitas, Mardochaios was also responsible for John's marriage (which Nikitas viewed as a *mésalliance*). After the ceremony, Pharisees and Sadducees were both said to be waiting for the couple; perhaps this is an allusion to the split between Rabbanites and Karaites. This Jew also had access to John's conspiratorial meetings (at least, Nikitas portrays them in that way).<sup>96</sup> Though distorted by bitter polemics, this passage gives an insight into a milieu Hadassi could have frequented in twelfth-century Constantinople.

Finally, although the exact channels of communication remain obscure, it is clear that Hadassi is the first documented Jew, after Philo of Alexandria, to cite a secular piece of Greek literature in the original language. The question remains, however, as to whether he integrated his knowledge of Greek philosophy into his own theological system. Did Hadassi remain loyal to Karaite *Kalām* and restrict his debt to Byzantine philosophical erudition to the Greek terms interspersed in his *magnum opus*? Or can one see some sort of syncretism between the theology of the Karaites and the philosophy of the Byzantine Greeks?

### Hadassi's Theology

In evaluating possible Byzantine Greek influence on Hadassi's theology, it is important to keep in mind that Hadassi was a committed Karaite whereas his non-Jewish contemporaries mentioned above were believing Christians.<sup>97</sup> Thus, if there was any impact on Hadassi's thought from his Byzantine environment, it was likely to be only on the margins, and not on central doctrines, such as the belief in the unity of God. Hadassi himself refers to his Christian contemporaries as "the sages of knowledge and the Greek sages in our kingdom," who agreed with Benjamin al-Nahawendi that the angels were created on the first day. He even cited their words in Greek: ἀρχὴν πᾶν χιζιμάτων ἀγγελικῆ τάξεῃ ("at the beginning of the creation there was the order of the angels"). This is also Hadassi's opinion, but he mentions the Greek sages only as

96 Chrēstidēs, *Markiana anekdota*, lines 979–984, p. 261; lines 1029–1034, p. 264.

97 For a more general discussion of Hadassi's theology, see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 41–59. Although we shall attempt to present Hadassi's theology in a coherent manner, more or less according to the order of discussion in Yūsuf al-Bašīr's theological works, there is no such arrangement in *Eshkol ha-kofer*. Hadassi does not move from one issue to the next in any logical or sequential direction.



additional support, not as the reason for adopting this view.<sup>98</sup> To what extent, then, did Hadassi's Byzantine environment have an impact on his thought? We will attempt to answer that question in the following analysis of Hadassi's theology as presented in *Eshkol ha-kofer*.

Hadassi agreed with his Karaite predecessors that one is obligated to demonstrate one's religious doctrines rationally rather than relying on tradition. Thus, he says: "One must first know one's Creator who sent him to His world, for He is the Creator of everything; He is living, subsisting, pre-existent, existing, powerful, wise; the Lord is His name .... He also knows His messenger, His trusted one, and His message which is His Torah. He did not command and warn in vain but to increase the reward for His worship." This knowledge, however, is a result of one's own examination:

[The servant] understands in his knowledge the nature of His unity and the justice of His testimony; he does not rely on the knowledge of others since each person is rewarded according to his thought and action. *Know the God of your father and serve Him with a single heart and a fervent soul, for the Lord searches all hearts and the design of every thought is discerned* (1 Chron. 28:9) by your Maker.

Hadassi is aware that those who are capable of such examination will be a small minority, just as Noah, Lot, Caleb, Joshua, and others were minorities in their generations and among their contemporaries. Although not all are qualified, the person who is capable of making an intellectual investigation must do so.<sup>99</sup>

How does one go about this investigation? Again, like his Karaite predecessors, Hadassi defines the terms that are needed for understanding the world: the nonexistent, the absent, the existent, the pre-existent, the originated,

98 See 47:1: *חכמי הדעת וחכמי היוונים במלכותנו*. Hadassi repeats this phrase (without "in our kingdom") in the context of another discussion of the creation of angels in 168:5. A. Altman thought that the Greek sages were ancient philosophers, but H.A. Wolfson assumed that Hadassi intended his fellow residents of Constantinople, "who must have acquainted him with the view of those Greek Church Fathers who held that angels were created on the first day" (citing specifically Pseudo-Athanasius and Basil of Seleucia, and identifying Col. 1:16 as possibly the ultimate source of this idea). We see from the discussion here that Wolfson undoubtedly held the correct opinion; see Wolfson, *Repercussions*, p. 119; Lasker, *Studies*, p. 55, n. 74 (the last statement in that footnote should be modified in light of the findings of the present book). Hadassi mentions "the Greek sages" in 338:8 in the context of Aristotle's ten categories, and there are also a few references in the book to Gentile sages without specification.

99 25:ב-ק. Cf. also 130:second ב, and 171:ת, where the same verse is used as a proof text demonstrating that one must not rely upon the opinions of others.

bodies, accidents, aggregated and segregated atoms, resting, moving, and coming into existence. Many of the definitions here have exact parallels in the philosophical works of al-Baṣīr.<sup>100</sup> What is new, however, is Hadassi's explanation of these concepts using Greek words.<sup>101</sup> "Thing" is εἶδος (literally, "form," the common Platonic term for "idea"); the "absent" or "nonexistent" is μὴ ὄν τὸ μὴ ἔμμενον (literally: not being, never existed); the "existent" is ὄν, namely that which has existed, τὸ εἴμμενον; "body" is σῶμα, and so forth.<sup>102</sup> Of special interest here are Hadassi's definitions of atoms and accidents:

The thing that cannot be divided or cut into two is called an atom (*ḥatikhah*) or a particle (*heleq*), and this thing is very, very thin (*ha-davar ha-daqdaq*) before your eyes. It is possible the eye cannot see it, like the thinness of dust, dirt, or flour that is ground until it changes its nature. This is called in the Greek language ἄτομον (indivisible), that which cannot be cut before you, like τὸ μὴ τομνόμενον (the one that is not cut into pieces). This atom cannot be divided or cut because of its thinness, and it is called ἄτομον τὸ μὴ τομνόμενον (indivisible, the one that is not cut into pieces) whatsoever before your eyes.<sup>103</sup>

Concerning the term accident (*efa'*), Hadassi states, "everything that abides in, happens to, or rests upon a body but cannot exist in itself is called an accident, such as colors and flavors that are attached to bodies, τὰ πλείω (most of them), an accident in your knowledge. The thing called an accident is called in the Greek language συνηβεβητικόν (accidental), namely, ὄν γίνεται καὶ ἀπογίνεται (the being that comes into being and dissolves), which rests upon a body and will then become nonexistent, meaning συνεβεβητικόν (accidentally), before you."<sup>104</sup> Hadassi then offers explanations of the accidents of sounds, colors, and flavors.

If we look at these definitions, we see that they combine traditional Karaite terminology (*ḥatikhah*, *daq*, *efa'*) with definitions that depart slightly from their models. Thus, unlike the atoms of *Kalām*, which acquire properties only

100 See Vajda, "Definitions." Vajda did not examine the Greek terms, partially because of manuscript problems and his own limitations; see p. 28.

101 As noted previously, this is not entirely a novelty since Greek philosophical terms are used as glosses in some of the Byzantine Karaite literature that predated Hadassi, such as *Marpe' la-'azem*. No text uses Greek glosses to the extent found in *Eshkol ha-kofer*.

102 See 64:7–66:π. The method of transcription into the Greek language is presented in Judah Hadassi and the Greek Language below.

103 65:ב–ו; cf. Tobias, *Marpe'*, f. 70<sup>a</sup>.

104 65:7–λ.

in aggregation, Hadassi's atoms, called specifically in Greek *ἄτομον* (indivisible), do have certain properties and are more like dust, dirt, and flour. The Greek gloss of "accidental" is *συνεβεβετικόν*, a vernacular variant of the Classical Greek *συνβεβηκός*, which, as noted, is the standard Aristotelian term for "accident".<sup>105</sup> Thus, even though the examples of accidents—sounds, colors, and flavors—are from the *Kalām*,<sup>106</sup> the characteristics of these accidents are Aristotelian, subsisting in a substratum, and not those of the *Kalām*, which are present only in aggregated atoms. This leads to the possibility that, despite his enumeration of the definitions of *Kalām* physics, Hadassi does not actually accept that physics. Indeed, if we look at another reference in *Eshkol ha-kofer* to atoms (28:ϑ), we see Hadassi rejects atomism in favor of the Aristotelian view of four natures (elements).<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Hadassi enumerates, using their Greek names, the ten Aristotelian categories, which are a major feature of the Stagirite's view concerning form and matter.<sup>108</sup> It would seem, then, that although Hadassi repeats Karaite definitions of the nature of the physical world, derived from *Kalām* thought, ultimately he rejects the keystone to their understanding of that world, namely atomism.<sup>109</sup> This certainly may be a consequence of his Greek philosophical training. Yet, he does not fully present Aristotelian physics, with its understanding of body as an infinitely divisible combination of matter and form, as an alternative to atomism. He merely offers his readers basic information about physics, drawing upon both his Karaite and Greek sources, but does not do so systematically or in a clear-cut manner.<sup>110</sup>

In light of Hadassi's rejection of Karaite atomism, it is not surprising that he does not present his readers with the aforementioned standard *Kalām* proof of creation, which is based on the assumption that the world is composed of atoms.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, he does maintain that the world was created from

105 Hadassi also ignores the correct form, as he uses the term *συνεβεβεκός* in 338:2; see the glossary in Judah Hadassi and the Greek Language below.

106 See, e.g., Schreiner, *Jeschu'a*, pp. 37, 45–50; and compare Tobias, *Marpe'*, f. 70<sup>b</sup>.

107 For the natures as elements, see, e.g., 46:7; 57:1.

108 Alphabet 338, mentioning specifically *κετηγορές* [*sic*].

109 In 95:1, Hadassi mentions atoms that have no real existence until joined together. This is more like the classical Karaite atomic theory.

110 See Wolfson, *Repercussions*, pp. 170–171; Ben-Shammai, "Atomism," pp. 273–280. Ben-Shammai points out the apparent discrepancy between Hadassi's statements in Alphabet 28, which criticize atomism, and those in Alphabets 64–66, which seem to indicate a belief in atoms. He comes to the conclusion that Hadassi adopts a "corpuscular" view of atoms, with origins in the works of other Karaite thinkers, such as Yefet. Although he mentions the Greek glosses, Ben-Shammai does not reproduce or discuss them and ignores the Byzantine context of Hadassi's thought.

111 Namely, "that which is never without a noneternal quality is also noneternal." It is of inter-

nothing, and he lists belief in God as Creator as the first of his principles of Judaism, and creation of the world as the third. Hadassi employs a range of arguments to substantiate these principles, some of which do have their inspiration in the other assumptions of the *Kalām*, such as the impossibility of an infinite regress of causes: “An innovated thing needs an innovator, and an innovator needs an innovator. Therefore, there is no end to the innovated being innovated from an innovator.”<sup>112</sup>

Unlike the created world, God is eternal: “His way is not innovated from an innovator, for the rule is that every innovation must have an innovator, and one innovator comes from a previous innovator. There is no beginning or end for those innovated anew from an innovator, as the generations of the world from Innovator God.”<sup>113</sup> “His pre-existence is not from another innovator, since then we would need an innovator from an innovator and an innovator from another innovator, *ad infinitum*.”<sup>114</sup>

Despite Hadassi’s argument from the impossibility of infinite regress, most of his justifications for creation are derived from an examination of the physical world. What evidence does the world give that it was created? First of all, one examines oneself, as in the verse “*From my flesh I see God*” (Job 19:26), and discovers that the human body is composed of various elements and undergoes different experiences: “You know you did not create yourself, and furthermore you are incapable of creating anyone other than yourself; nor did you make the likeness of your body with the life of your soul, or repair your inadequacies and your deformities. Understand from this that you have a Creator who made you.”<sup>115</sup> Human activities, such as writing and construction, demonstrate the need for an intelligent agent; the world too must have proceeded from God.

Hadassi indicates that there are many wonders of the universe that point to a Creator God, such as the planets and their movements, meteorological phenomena, and geographical and botanical diversity. Many of his examples come from the animal world and the great variety of living creatures on land, in the seas, and in the air, such as the parrot, which mimics human language, various types of apes, and the like. Some of the presentations border on the

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est that the Karaite Aaron ben Elijah (c. 1300–1369) was able to integrate the standard proof with Aristotelian hylomorphism; see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 73–82, where evidence is presented that Aaron also rejected Karaite atomism. Of course, before al-Baṣīr, Saadia Gaon had employed *Kalām* proofs of creation while rejecting atomism (see *Beliefs and Opinions*, 1:1, pp. 41–45; 1:3, pp. 51–52).

112 27:ד.

113 26:ז.

114 38:ק.

115 26:ד–ז.

whimsical, such as his explanation of how one captures an elephant by sawing through the trees on which it leans and causing it to fall over.<sup>116</sup> Other examples are quite fanciful: the salamander, which provides protection against fire; the griffin, with tail and breasts like a lion and a head and mouth like a bird; the sea calf, that has breasts like an animal and eats humans; the deer, which produces the gallnut with its medicinal properties; the waqwaq tree, which calls out “waqwaq” if someone tries to take its fruit; the mandrake, which can be harvested only by a stratagem since it makes a fatal, loud noise when pulled from the ground; barnacle geese; trees that can imitate human sounds; witches; and many, many more.<sup>117</sup> Hadassi summarizes:

The mention of all of these that we have recounted and will recount—we have not recounted them in vain, but rather to announce God’s might to His multitude, so that they can recount how He created everything, each one dissimilar, each one different in shape and appearance in all your world, and in description, impression, dress, length, width, and height; in taste, activity, touching, walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, and waking up; in continued existence, reproduction, life, death, accident, and stagnation; in feeling, hearing, whispering, concealment, obstruction, speaking, language, and eloquence in your ears.<sup>118</sup>

These wonders of the world were created with everything else in the universe in the six days of creation.<sup>119</sup> Even if people wished to deny the miracles performed by the prophets, they would not be able to deny these wonders, and hence they would have to admit that the world was created.<sup>120</sup> Undoubtedly, in his descriptions of the wonders of creation, Hadassi draws upon contemporary literature, such as bestiaries, and the scientific knowledge available to him, both naturalistic and mythical.<sup>121</sup>

116 This description can be found as well in the eleventh-century bestiary of Theobald, *Physiologus*, pp. 89–90.

117 These wonders are recounted in two separate lists, 38:7–46:1 and 373:7–376:7; see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 44–46.

118 46:1–1. There are intriguing parallels between a number of the wonders mentioned by Hadassi and similar phenomena adduced one hundred years later in the literature of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, perhaps mediated by a work of Petahya of Regensburg; see Shyovitz, *Remembrance*, pp. 61–71.

119 46:7.

120 377: first  $\Psi$ .

121 For instance, the story of the war between the migrating cranes and the pygmies (607–8) has its source in Homer, Strabo, and Pliny; see Scheiber, “Eléments,” pp. 49–51. It should be

Hadassi argues not only that the world was created, but that it was created “*ex nihilo*”<sup>122</sup> by His word and without tools,” for if not, the creation would not have been so wondrous. Against those who would argue that creation from nothing is impossible, Hadassi contends that just as there are things that pass from existence to nonexistence (for instance, the disappearance of water that has boiled, or of fire), so, too, can God produce the world from nothing.<sup>123</sup> Hadassi adds: If the world had not been created *ex nihilo*, it would follow that there is something that is eternal; no one, however, has ever seen something like that. Even if we assume that there is something that is eternal, which was not derived from something else, then we have already demonstrated that something from nothing is possible. If the denier will agree that there is nothing that is eternal, but still everything comes from something else, then he already admits that there was creation, since the first thing from which all other things were created must have had a Creator, since the denier has already admitted that there is nothing that is eternal. It is, therefore, known that “this world and everything in it did not exist, and afterwards, it was produced. Everything that is produced and came into being and will be cannot exist and be without an agent. Thus you know that there is a God who does all of this from absolute nothing.”<sup>124</sup>

Having established that the world is created, and therefore God exists, Hadassi deals with the issue of divine unity. The second of Hadassi’s principles is that “He is eternal and one and there is no other; He is powerful, knowing, existent, living in virtue of His essence to make me wise. There is none like Him as there are things similar to me.”<sup>125</sup> The first part of this statement refers to God’s external unity, which is not treated at length. Hadassi merely reflects the proof from mutual hindering when he writes in respect to the third of God’s essential attributes, His unity, that “He is one and He has no second to Him to advise and to help Him understand. Any two people disagree with each other’s insights. And it is known that all His creatures stand together in one

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noted that the sections describing the wonders of the world includes many Greek terms for the various animals, most likely indicating that Hadassi was using a bestiary written in Greek, like that of Theobald.

122 Hadassi uses two terms for *ex nihilo*: *mi-lo davar/min lo davar* (e.g., 377: both letters ך) and *lo min davar* (e.g., 377:״). For the differences between these formulations, see Wolfson, *Kalam*, pp. 356–372.

123 377: both letters ך—both letters ך.

124 377:״–״. Hadassi also argues that creation *ex nihilo* solves the conundrums of what came first, the chicken or the egg, the plant or the seed. In an eternal world, there is no way of determining which came first (377:״–״).

125 33:״.

path.<sup>126</sup> Hadassi also criticizes the Manicheans, and a Gnostic subgroup, the Daysanites, for believing in two powers, light and darkness.<sup>127</sup>

In another passage, Hadassi records some of the wonders of God's unity:

There is none other than He and none compared to Him and none like Him. He has no form .... There is no comparison to Him, no limit, no measure, no quality, no length, no width, no depth, no thickness, no body, no figure, no height; no head, no hair, no ear, no eye, no eyelashes, no eyebrows .... He has no lip, no mouth, no nose, no forehead, no face, no tooth, and no tongue. No palate and no throat, no chest, no right or left hand, no arm and no legs, no knees and no thighs, no fingers, no palms, and no fingernails or any limbs .... He has no soul or spirit; no heart and no breath, no bowels and no innards; no shoulder and no body; no front and no back; no front of neck or back of neck; no vocal chords and no cheeks; no beard and no clothing and no jacket and no coat, nor any clothing like your clothing. He has no measure of age, no childhood and no old age; no masculinity and no femininity, no sitting and no standing and no rising; no exiting and no coming, no descending and no ascending; no sadness and no mocking and no laughter and no consolation and no enmity .... No jealousy, no rage, no ire; no quiet, no tiredness, no weakness, no travail, no slipping, no illness, no accident, no spreading of hands, no springing up, no wrath, no sleep, no deep sleep .... He has no anger, no worry, no grief, no insult; no lying down, no getting up, no walking and no running and no growling of the intestines or parching of the intestines; no noise, no start, no beginning, no end, and no limit.<sup>128</sup>

In light of this absolute unity and uniqueness, it follows that anthropomorphic language in the Bible is metaphorical.<sup>129</sup>

In his discussion of divine attributes, Hadassi provides two lists of ten descriptions (*ishurim*).<sup>130</sup> The first list posits the following: (1) God has unity; (2)

126 26:1. The unity of creation indicates that there are not two Gods who are responsible for the world.

127 95: both letters ז. Bardaisan (154–222) was a Gnostic, but Hadassi seems to portray the Daysanites as exponents of a form of Manicheanism, as they are portrayed in Arabic sources; see Böhlig and Marksches, *Gnosis*; Vajda, “Témoignage.”

128 66:ב–ג.

129 66:ז–ח. This general statement is followed by many, many examples of the Bible's metaphorical language (*derekh ma'avar*) in Alphabets 67–78; cf. also 89:ד–94:ז.

130 Hadassi uses the term *ishurim* in many different ways; see Ben-Shammai, “Atomism,” pp. 290–292. In 130:ח–132:ז, Hadassi refers to ten *ishurim* that are public witnesses to

He is first and there is none other than He; (3) He is one and has no second; (4) He is wise of heart, knowing, and cognizing; (5) He is strong; (6) He lives forever; (7) He exists forever; (8) He is first among firsts and last among all lasts; (9) He is incorporeal; and (10) He is righteous in all His ways.<sup>131</sup> These descriptions are taken from earlier Karaite literature, and not one Greek term appears in this context.

The second list of ten descriptions is actually an expansion of the first description in the previous list, namely, the statement of God's unity. These sub-descriptions, with their Greek terms, are as follows: (1) God is without beginning (*ἀναρκος*), i.e., He has no first and no last in His unity; (2) He is unrestricted (*ἀχώρητος*), meaning that He has no restriction in His dimensions; (3a) He is The One (*ὄν*), namely, He is the essentially existent and powerful,<sup>132</sup> since He does not need for His existence something that brings Him into existence; (3b)<sup>133</sup> He is incomprehensible (*ἀκατάληπτος*); (4) He is without nature (*μὴ λόγος*); (5) He is without characteristics of form (*ἀσουςοῦμιαστος*) and has no likeness or image, and consequently has no comparison—He is the one who has no image (*ὁ μὴ ἔχων μορφὴ εἰκόνα*) that can be compared; (6) He is intelligent (*λογικός*), namely, He is essentially knowing and his knowledge is not like human wisdom; (7) He is indivisible (*ἀδιάρητος*), namely one who is not divisible; (8) He is invisible (*ἀνείδεος*), He does not have form (*εἶδος*); and (9) He is supernatural (*ἀπερούσιος*), self-subsistent (*αὐθύπραχτον*), and self-sufficient (*ἀνευδεής*).<sup>134</sup>

After borrowing Greek philosophical terms to describe God's unity, terms that he must have learned from Christian teachers, Hadassi proclaims:

All these ten divine descriptions that we have mentioned refute the religion of Jesus of Nazareth and the like, since he is not God; he is merely nothing. Since they have attributed to him the opposite of these and similar descriptions, his worshippers and believers have clothed themselves in disgrace to the end of days. But our God, may His name be blessed, has no measure and no extent, or anything which was true of Jesus of

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the truth of Jewish tradition, compared to the claims of other religionists, whom he calls *hizonim* (censored in the printed edition). This passage is reminiscent of Judah Halevi's argument for the truth of Judaism in the *Kuzari*.

131 26:1–28:2.

132 Hebrew: *on* (apparently a play on the Greek, unless both words are Greek).

133 Both descriptions are called the third description, but there is no number 10.

134 28:1–8; for the full usage of Greek terms, only some of which are cited above, see the Hebrew text, the English translation, and the glossary of Greek terms.



Nazareth, may his name and remembrance be blotted out, and the like, who are nothing. God, may His name be blessed, is hidden from every eye.<sup>135</sup>

Hadassi's Christian teachers might proclaim God's unity by means of a large number of Greek philosophical terms, but ultimately they undermine that very same divine unity by believing that Jesus was God. The two doctrines, according to Hadassi, are incompatible.

Hadassi also connects divine attributes with the Trinity in the part of *Eshkol ha-kofer* devoted to anti-Christian polemic.<sup>136</sup> He identifies the Christians with the Muslim Attributionists (*Ṣifāṭiyya*) who "said that the Lord does not have descriptions, namely the four eternal properties according to their sayings: His knowledge, His power, His existence, and His life are not in virtue of his essence, but are innovated like you." In other words, Hadassi believes that the attributes do not have independent existence, as is the case of the persons of the Christian Trinity. One of the reasons he gives for this recalls the argument from mutual hindering: "Since every created, changing, and mutable thing has events and mutable properties, if there were two or three [attributes/persons] they would have mutable advice, will, and opinions. They would twist and turn this way once and then that way. They could not have one content, measure, and decision among their possessions and property without being misled and misleading."<sup>137</sup> What, then, is the status of the divine attributes?

135 29:Ⓝ. This passage is, of course, censored in the printed edition. The fact that God is hidden from every eye, namely, He cannot be seen, is repeated a number of times in *Eshkol ha-kofer* (e.g., 37:Ⓜ, 48:Ⓜ). It is in line with Mu'tazilite views that God cannot be seen, even after death; see Vajda, *Muḥṭawī*, pp. 103–119. Philo stresses that God cannot be seen as long as the human soul is inside a human body; see Philo, "On Dreams," pp. 419–422 (sections 231–237).

136 98:second Ⓜ–100. It is of interest that in contrast to the previous statement concerning the divine attributes and Jesus, Hadassi's criticism of Christianity in this section consists mostly of arguments that were promulgated in the Islamic realm and give little or no indication that he had any personal knowledge of Christianity. Nevertheless, he ended the discussion of the doctrine of incarnation by invoking three Greek words that describe God, ἀχώρητος, ἀπερίδραχτος, and ἀκετανόητος (unrestricted, incomprehensible, and inconceivable), to exclude the possibility that Jesus was God (100:Ⓜ–Ⓞ).

137 Hadassi refers to the persons of the Trinity with the term אִיקְנִים or אִיקְנִים. The first is apparently a transcription of εἰκόνας, which means icons. The second may be derived from the Arabic *uqnūm/aqānīm*, which is the standard Arabic term for persons of the Trinity, derived from Syriac and used by Karaite authors such as Qirqisānī and al-Baṣīr. For the problematics of Hadassi's terminology and his explanation of the Trinity, see Wolfson, *Repercussions*, pp. 27–29; for Jewish difficulty in devising equivalents for Christian theological terms, see Lasker, "Concepts."

They are in virtue of God's self or essence (*le-nafsho*), a standard *Kalām* Karaite term concerning the attributes.<sup>138</sup> One may use terms to describe attributes that are connected to God's essence, but these attributes are not separate entities.<sup>139</sup>

When Hadassi lays out his theory of divine attributes, he uses Greek philosophical terms and concepts to adorn his discussions, but ultimately he reverts back to the Karaite tradition. Undoubtedly, Hadassi's Byzantine teachers, who introduced him to their Greek philosophical language, used the same language to justify their Trinitarian beliefs. But Hadassi turns their language against them in his rejection of Christian doctrine.<sup>140</sup>

There is, however, one aspect of theology in which Hadassi does come closer to his Christian contemporaries than to his Karaite predecessors, and that is the status of the divine voice. The earlier Karaites agreed with the Mu'tazila, in opposition to the Ash'ariyya, that God's voice is created and not eternal. Indeed, Hadassi writes, God does not have a normal human voice: "His voice is not through organs like your speech. His power and the nature of His holiness are known to the sages from His deeds. We do not know that the nature of His greatness and holiness includes speaking and making an [oral] impression."<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, "If His voice were created from the Lord your God, how could it proclaim and say: *I am the Lord your God?* (Exod. 20:2). It is not possible that His voice was created to say: I am the Creator, and to declare: *I am the Lord your God*. Therefore, His voice is not created; it is His wisdom and from it is the wisdom of knowledge. What is made from His voice and decree is created."<sup>142</sup>

Hadassi attributes the view that God's voice is His eternal wisdom to his Karaite predecessors, despite their opposition to such a view. As noted above, it is closer to the view of the 'Asharites, which is connected to their belief in the Quran as the eternal word of God. Yet it also bears a resemblance to the Christian view of God's wisdom as the eternal Logos and Son. Perhaps here Hadassi was unconsciously influenced by his Christian teachers, since it is unlikely that

138 28:ʔ–second 1, and other places.

139 Hadassi includes other descriptions of God in his book; see, e.g., 86:ʔ, where God is compared to the creatures: "He is powerful, *ruling the world in might* (Ps. 66:7). He formed the earth and made it. *He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea* (Job 9:8). He lives forever, first, existing, and last, knowing the end of matters from their beginning, creating all and their descendants, until there are enough. Can it happen to Him, the happenings of your creatures?"

140 The use of Greek philosophical terms in the context of Trinitarian theology goes back to the Church Fathers; see Wolfson, *Church Fathers*, pp. 305–363.

141 27:ʔ.

142 27:ʔ; see also 48:2; 94:second 5–7.

he would knowingly adopt such a patently Christian doctrine connected to the belief in the Trinity, which he of course rejected.<sup>143</sup>

Just as Hadassi's beliefs concerning God and divine attributes are derived mostly from his Karaite predecessors, so too is his doctrine of theodicy and problem of evil dependent upon them. As might be expected, Hadassi states that all of God's actions are just, because He has no needs. Why then is there evil? It cannot be for the same reason that humans do evil. "The reasons for evil are these: perhaps the one who does it knows [it is evil] but does evil anyway because of his needs and poverty; or he knows [it is evil] but he is malicious and is an evildoer constantly; or he does not know it is evil and therefore he does acts of iniquity and evil. *The wonderful counselor and mighty God* (Isa. 9:5), before Whom nothing is hidden or missing, has no desire to do evil."<sup>144</sup>

Hadassi offers an extended discussion of ten biblical stories and events in the world that might cause one to doubt God's absolute justice. These ten examples are presented as sub-descriptions of the last divine description, which states that God is just and righteous in all his ways.<sup>145</sup> The outlines of Hadassi's theodicy can be discerned in these descriptions of justice, which are case studies on the problem of evil: (1) Why does God let some people sin but prevents others from sinning (like Avimelekh, Gen. 20)? Because people who refrain from sin do so of their own volition. (2) Why did God let Absalom sleep with his father David's wives? Because David deserved to be punished, and in any event Absalom chose to do as he did. (3) Why did God tempt Adam and Eve? Because He wanted to see if they could withstand the temptation. Similarly, Cain was punished since his intellect did not understand the prohibition of killing Abel. (4) Why did He harden Pharaoh's heart? Because Pharaoh had planned to destroy Israel. Israel suffered because God was disciplining them. (5) Why does God allow us to sin? In order to reward those who do not sin. (6) How do the murderer, adulterer, and thief get away with their crimes without apparently being punished? This is because God allows people free will.<sup>146</sup> As for natural disasters, they occur in order to reward those who suffer. (7) Why are some people punished double what they deserve? In order to educate them or to give them

143 See Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 56–57, for the difficulties of Hadassi's attribution of this view to earlier Karaites.

144 28:second ב; cf. 26:ו–ז.

145 28:ז. Hadassi's first ten descriptions are those enumerated above: (1) God has unity; (2) He is first and there is none other than He; (3) He is one and has no second ... (10) He is righteous in all His ways. He then offers ten sub-descriptions of (1), God's unity; now he describes ten sub-descriptions of (10), He is righteous. All the descriptions and sub-descriptions are called *ishurim*.

146 Cf. 89:ז–ח.

greater reward. The pain of circumcision is in order to perfect the person who undergoes it. (8) Why are there people who have defects, such as the blind and the lame, the hunchback, the deaf and the dumb, the fool, the orphan, the poor, and the impoverished?<sup>147</sup> Either to discipline them or to give them greater reward. The suffering of children and animals can be explained in the same way, to discipline humans who see this suffering and to give reward to those who suffer, including animals who have a place in the Garden of Eden.<sup>148</sup> (9) Why does it sometimes happen that someone who does only one good deed in this world is rewarded while someone who commits only one sin is punished? This occurs to make it possible to give greater reward to the righteous and greater punishment to the wicked in the World to Come. (10) How can the sinner's lifetime of sin be forgotten if the sinner repents right before death? It is only correct that God should forgive those who repent (or, alternatively, punish someone who regrets a lifetime of good deeds).<sup>149</sup>

Hadassi mentions aspects of divine justice throughout *Eshkol ha-kofer*. Thus, sickness and death come upon people because of divine wisdom, and if sin did not cause their afflictions, they must be suffering in order that God might reward them for their pain.<sup>150</sup> Hadassi states that there are righteous who receive [the punishment] of the deeds of the evildoers; and there are evildoers who receive [the reward] of the deeds of the righteous, "in this world, as His justice requires. All this occurs because there is another world in which to pay your reward."<sup>151</sup> These afflictions are a test that one should bear with love in order to receive a double reward.<sup>152</sup>

Hadassi follows his Karaite predecessors' Mu'tazilite rationalist approach to the problem of reward and punishment in his explanation of the death of the wife of the prophet Ezekiel. According to the Bible (Ezek. 24:15–27), the death of Ezekiel's wife served as a sign to be used by the prophet. Yet, how was it possible for God to put an innocent woman to death in order to exemplify the words of the prophet? Hadassi gives three possible answers: (1) the woman was about to die at that exact time in any event, and God, therefore, used her death as a

147 The issue of physical afflictions of the blind and lame is discussed by al-Baṣīr; see Vajda, *Muḥtawī*, pp. 69–70; Tobias, *Marpe*, f. 75<sup>a</sup>; idem, *Meshivat*, f. 85<sup>a</sup>.

148 Karaites generally believed in compensation for the suffering of animals and children, including for the pain of circumcision. In light of Maimonides's criticism of this view (*Guide*, 3:17, pp. 471–474), most Karaite thinkers after Hadassi abandoned the belief in compensation for animals; see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 203–216.

149 29:ד–31ד. Hadassi follows this up with ten descriptions (*ishurim*) of repentance; 31:י–32:ח.

150 26:ב–1.

151 59:ב.

152 263:ד–1.

sign; (2) her death did not occur at the correct time, and, therefore, God will increase her reward in the World to Come; (3) her death was for her own benefit, so that she would not suffer from the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the prophets.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the fact that humans suffer, they are the pick of creation; they alone among all the animals worship God. Humans are also the creatures closest to the angels, but among humans, the choice people<sup>154</sup> are Jews, who are the descendants of Abraham.<sup>155</sup> The commandments were given in order that one can achieve the World to Come, if they are observed in the correct manner.<sup>156</sup>

Hadassi deals with the mechanics of the revelation of the commandments in a number of places in *Eshkol ha-kofer*. First, he accepts the sixfold division of the levels of prophecy as theorized by Yefet ben Eli: (1) mouth to mouth; (2) holy spirit; (3) a glory; (4) vision; (5) angel; (6) dream.<sup>157</sup> In Hadassi's own day, only the lowest level, dream, still existed.<sup>158</sup> Second, Hadassi employs the concept of glory (*kavod*) as the means of revelation, drawing a distinction between the highest Glory of God and the lesser glories or angels, which become manifest at different times.<sup>159</sup> Hadassi maintains that these glories are a permanent feature of the world, created on the first day of creation, a view he attributes to Benjamin al-Nahawendi and to the Greek sages of Constantinople; they are not temporary entities that are brought into existence in order to fulfill a role and then cease to exist.<sup>160</sup>

153 265:ק-צ.

154 Heb.: *segulah*. The idea that Israel is the choice part of humanity is central to Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*, which was completed by 1140. Although Halevi does not use the Hebrew term *segulah*, it is prominent in the 1167 Hebrew translation of Judah ibn Tibbon.

155 313:ל.

156 314:כ-ע.

157 53:י-54:ק; 375:ה. The Hebrew terms for these levels produce the abbreviation פ"ר"ך מ"מ"ח (פה, רוח, כבוד, מראה, מלאך, חלום).

158 375:ה.

159 See Alphabets 48–51. Hadassi states that many of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God actually refer to the Glory or the angels, thus maintaining God's absolute unity and incorporeality.

160 This is the view of Saadia. See *Beliefs and Opinions*, 2:12; p. 130; Altmann, "Revelation." Judah Halevi (*Kuzari*, 4:3) offers both views, namely angels as permanent existents and as transient creations, as possible alternatives. See Wolfson, "Merkavah"; Lasker, *Studies*, p. 145. Benjamin's view that the angels were created on the first day of creation is connected to his view of a creator angel, to which all the biblical anthropomorphisms apply; see Wolfson, "Angel" (who dismisses Philo as a source of the doctrine of the creator angel, despite certain similarities to his doctrine of the Logos). Hadassi rejects the view of the creator angel in 98:ק.

Our discussion of Judah Hadassi's theology concludes with his expectations for the future. His views of the eschaton and the afterlife are not exceptional. The Messiah will come and with him there will be seventy-seven wonders.<sup>161</sup> Among these wonders, resurrection is recorded twice, once for all humanity from Adam until the time of the exile and once again for the people of the exile alone.<sup>162</sup> Until these resurrections, the souls of the departed do not function, since they have no limbs with which to act.<sup>163</sup> After resurrection, the righteous will be transferred to the Garden of Eden, "and then all people will be at rest, each person in his own rest."<sup>164</sup>

The sections of *Eshkol ha-kofer* that summarize what the Mu'tazilites called the "gate of justice," namely theodicy, contain almost no Greek words and demonstrate no significant break with the earlier Karaite tradition. This would seem to indicate that Hadassi's borrowing from his Christian Byzantine teachers was limited to only a few aspects of their rhetoric, philosophy, and science, namely some details of the descriptions of divine unity, the denial of atomism, and, perhaps, the eternity of divine speech as understood as divine wisdom. Conceivably he thought that his Greek philosophical and scientific training was more relevant for these subjects, or that his audience would understand those texts better if he added the explanatory Greek glosses. Unfortunately, we cannot reconstruct the motivation behind the interspersing of Greek terms into the Hebrew composition.

Despite his training and his familiarity with the Byzantine legacy of Greek thought, Hadassi remained a Karaite and rejected those theological doctrines that were specific to Christianity. He was, thus, typical of Byzantine Karaites, a tiny subset within a small minority, who were able to flourish intellectually among the majority population but still maintain their unique identity.

### The Impact of Judah Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer*

Judah Hadassi is the only twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite whose name we know with certainty,<sup>165</sup> and he was the last Karaite to demonstrate close

161 377:both letters 1–3788. Some of the wonders that were directed against Christianity were omitted in the printed edition. See Ankori, "Studies."

162 378:7–9.

163 86:second 2–89:2. Hadassi discusses at length the raising of the spirit of Samuel by the medium of Endor (1Sam. 28) and argues that Saul was fooled by the medium; no human spirits are accessible after death.

164 379:1.

165 It is possible that Nissi ben Noah was Byzantine, and it is also possible that he lived in the

familiarity with Greek philosophical terms.<sup>166</sup> Nearly one hundred and fifty years passed before the next identifiable Byzantine Karaite savant arose and left a literary legacy. That sage was Aaron ben Joseph, the Elder (fl. 1294), who lived for a time in Sulchat in the Crimea but was active mainly in Constantinople. His major work, *Sefer ha-mivhar* (The Choice Book), is a commentary on most of the Bible. Aaron's theology is notable for its eschewing of most features of Karaite *Kalām* in favor of Maimonidean Aristotelianism. He gives little evidence of familiarity with Judah Hadassi's work.<sup>167</sup>

The next important Byzantine Karaite was Aaron ben Elijah, the Younger (d. 1369), who wrote three major works: *ʿEz ḥayyim* (Tree of Life), a philosophical book; *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden), a law code; and *Keter Torah* (Crown of Torah), a commentary on the Pentateuch. The Younger Aaron was more conservative than the Elder Aaron, and he defended the intellectual integrity of his Karaite predecessors. Yet, he did not fully accept their *Kalām* traditions even as he explained why they adopted them. Scientific and philosophical progress, in the garb of Aristotelianism, and Maimonidean criticism of the *Kalām*, could not be ignored. Aaron the Younger does mention Hadassi in *ʿEz ḥayyim*, but only three times, and he uses two of those citations to defend his own philosophical views. Thus, in the context of the discussion of atomism, Aaron states that Hadassi rejected this theory, undoubtedly in order to argue that a Karaite is not necessarily enjoined to adopt an atomic understanding of the physical world. In a second citation, Aaron defends his allegorical reading of biblical anthropomorphisms after the manner of Maimonides, by saying that in light of the works of previous Karaite sages, such as Hadassi, this is not to be considered an illegitimate innovation for a Karaite. Indeed, he argues, Hadassi preceded Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah* by twenty-nine years; certainly Aaron's own borrowings from Maimonides were acceptable.<sup>168</sup> Except for a third reference to

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twelfth century. Ankori, *Karaites*, p. 241, n. 80, dates his activity between the mid-twelfth and the late thirteenth century. Nemoy, "Nissi," p. 313, suggests that Nissi lived anywhere between the end of the tenth and the end of the eleventh century. We have slightly more information concerning Rabbanites in twelfth-century Byzantium; see De Lange, "Jewish Education."

166 Subsequent Byzantine Karaite authors used Greek words only sporadically and demonstrated none of the close familiarity with Byzantine Greek thought as is found in Hadassi's work.

167 See Lasker, *Studies*, 60–68. Aaron was dubbed "the Elder" to distinguish him from Aaron ben Elijah. In the Gözleve edition of his work (1834), we have found only one reference to Hadassi (Exodus 16b; concerning Passover when it occurs on the Sabbath). Hadassi is cited a number of times in the nineteenth-century supercommentary by Joseph Solomon Lutski, *Tirat kesef*; see, e.g., Leviticus, pp. 6a, 28b; Numbers 19b.

168 Abraham Firkowicz, *Massah u-merivah*, p. 134b, makes a similar point and says that

Hadassi, concerning his understanding of the Hebrew term *nefesh*, Aaron otherwise ignores *Eshkol ha-kofer* in his philosophical work.<sup>169</sup>

Byzantine Karaism flourished in a fifteenth-century post-Byzantine space, especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Part of the reason for Karaite intellectual accomplishments was contact with Iberian Jews who emigrated to the Ottoman Empire even before the expulsion from Spain in 1492 and influenced Karaite thought. It was a period of religious liberalism and rapprochement with Rabbanism, as exemplified by reforms in the Karaite prohibition of the use of Sabbath lamps and in the order of the Pentateuchal lectionary cycle. The major Karaite personality was Elijah Bashyatchi (c. 1420–1490), author of *Adderet Eliyyahu* (The Cloak of Elijah), the last authoritative Karaite law code, which is still used today. Bashyatchi provides a list of ten principles of faith that is similar to Hadassi's list, not only in the number of principles but also in their content, e.g., the obligation to know Hebrew as a principle of Judaism.<sup>170</sup> In addition, Bashyatchi cites a number of Hadassi's opinions in the legal sections of his book.<sup>171</sup>

We know more about the status of Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer* in late fifteenth-century Byzantium from the testimony of Shabbetai ben Elijah, the scribe of the manuscript, now found in Leiden, that serves as the basis of most of the edition in this volume. Writing in 1483, Shabbetai records that he was able to find only one copy of *Eshkol ha-kofer* in all of Constantinople, and that one copy was mildewed and missing large sections. Although the extant exemplar began in the middle of Alphabet 19 (at letter *yod*), Shabbetai decided that it did not make sense to begin his own copy before Alphabet 23, because of the illegible condition of the manuscript and the contents of Alphabets 19–22. Those Alphabets deal with prayer and blessings, subjects that are covered in more accessible Karaite sources. Thus, he began his copying work at

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Hadassi preceded Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* by thirty-five years. Firkowicz also relied on Hadassi as his source for the belief that the Rabbanites killed Jesus (Alphabet 99: first  $\beth$ ). See Lasker, "Karaism and Christianity," p. 485.

169 On Aaron in general, see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 69–95 (and especially p. 80, n. 55, for Ben-Shammai's different understanding of Aaron's attitude towards atomism and his reference to Hadassi). The three citations of Hadassi are in Aaron ben Elijah, *Ez hayyim*, pp. 17, 46, 54. Aaron also cites Hadassi in his legal work; see *Gan 'eden*, pp. 79c, 145a, and 154c.

170 The lists are not the same; see Lasker, *Studies*, p. 43, n. 12. One difference is the principle of the centrality of the Temple and Jerusalem, a belief that reflects Hadassi's status as a Mourner of Zion; see Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 237–243.

171 Bashyatchi, *Adderet*, pp. 122, 319, 334, 353, 405, 412, 447. At least the last reference was added by Caleb Afendopolo, who completed the book after Bashyatchi's death. Hadassi is also cited in Bashyatchi's *Iggeret gid ha-nasheh*, found in the Gözleve edition (1835) of *Adderet Eliyyahu*.



Alphabet 23. He also left blank folios in the middle of the book when he saw that there were sections missing.<sup>172</sup>

Elijah Bashyatchi's brother-in-law and student, Caleb Afendopolo, a remarkable polymath with a deep interest in science, philosophy, and law (he completed Bashyatchi's *Adderet Eliyyahu* after the latter's death), was interested as well in *Eshkol ha-kofer*, even composing a precis of the book, *Naḥal eshkol* (The Stream of the Cluster). Writing in 1497, he reports that he was familiar with the one damaged manuscript, as well as the copy made by Shabbetai, whom he credited with saving the book for prosperity. Caleb began his summary of the book beginning at Alphabet 19:<sup>7</sup>, where the one mildewed manuscript commenced. In his account of this manuscript, he expressed the hope that the full book would soon be available, since his brother Judah Baly had found a complete manuscript in Crimea in 1496. Eventually, these missing Alphabets were copied into some of the manuscripts, but not in Shabbetai's original.<sup>173</sup>

It is impossible to know whether Hadassi's work made so little impression upon Byzantine Karaites because it was not easily available to them, or simply because they were not interested in his conservative, traditional approach. Shabbetai's manuscript, with the supplements presumably from the Crimean manuscript, became the basis of many other manuscripts copied in most corners of the Karaite world in the succeeding centuries. Yet, it is hard to detect much influence of Hadassi's thought and legal decisions on the early modern Karaite communities that copied his work. Some remnants of Karaite mourning for Zion remained, such as prohibitions of meat and wine in Jerusalem, but it would be difficult to determine whether these practices took their cue from Hadassi or from earlier Golden Age authors. The Gözleve edition of 1836 was published at a time when Karaite learning was in decline, and perhaps the many publications produced in Gözleve were intended to spread classical Karaite learning. The editor, David Kukizow, displayed great erudition in his efforts not only to censor troublesome passages but also to conceal his interventions in Hadassi's acrostics. Whatever the intentions of the publisher and editor, it is hard to detect much influence of *Eshkol ha-kofer* on Eastern European Karaite communities.

172 Shabbetai's testimony can be found in several manuscripts, e.g., British Library Or. 1100, ff. 40<sup>b</sup>–42<sup>a</sup> (IMHM F 5946), and is edited below in Appendix 1 in the Description of Manuscripts and Editing Principles of *Eshkol ha-kofer*. There are a number of places in the Leiden ms. that were filled in by later copyists; see the Description of Manuscripts below, and Barthélemy, "Tradition."

173 For Afendopolo's comments, see his *Naḥal eshkol* in the Gözleve edition, p. 1c–d; and cf. the introduction to the Hebrew edition below.

One Karaite who was impressed by Hadassi's work was Simḥah Isaac Lutski (1716–1760), the most scholarly Eastern European Karaite of the eighteenth century. Lutski had access to a manuscript of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, which he copied in the hope of selling his exemplar to the Karaite community of Halicz. He was unsuccessful in that endeavor and had to pawn the copied manuscript, which was redeemed only after his death. In addition, his first documented composition (among the twenty-four he wrote) was entitled *Halikhot 'olam* (The Ways of the World), which mimicked the style of *Eshkol ha-kofer*, since it was composed of twenty alternating alphabetic acrostics containing rhymed prose stanzas all ending with the syllable *-kha*. He even employed some of the same unusual words that appear in *Eshkol ha-kofer* to maintain the acrostic. Yet, although the topic of the book is the creation of the world, and the style is Hadassi's, Lutski does not employ Hadassi's arguments for creation. Instead, he presents an eclectic mix of proofs and assumptions derived from both *Kalām* and Aristotelianism. Lutski also referred to Hadassi in his commentary to Judah Gibbor's *Minḥat Yehudah* and his commentary to Aaron ben Elijah's *Ez ḥayyim*.<sup>174</sup>

Hadassi did not make much of an impression on the Rabbanite world either. Although in Iberia, Abraham ibn Daud may have been familiar with Hadassi's book a decade after its completion, he does not mention it by name.<sup>175</sup> Maimonides, who wrote a list of principles of Judaism less than twenty years after Hadassi's own list, also may have had exposure to the book, which could have informed his knowledge of Karaism.<sup>176</sup> Again, however, there is no proof of that. Byzantine Rabbanite thinkers also do not cite Hadassi, and their intellectual outlook was generally influenced by developments in the Sephardi-Provençal world.<sup>177</sup> In general, Rabbanite authors did not cite Karaites by name,

174 On Lutski and his compositions, see Lasker, *Lutski*; idem, "Lutski Profile." Lutski's copied manuscript is now catalogued as Vienna, Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod hebr.23 (Schwartz cat. #130; IMHM F 1302); a notation concerning the pawning and redeeming of the manuscript is found on the final folio. The attempt to sell the manuscript to the Karaites of Halicz is documented in Shapira, "New Collection," p. 156. An inferior edition of *Halikhot 'olam* is available in Lutski, *Halikhot 'olam*. For Lutski's commentary on *Minḥat Yehudah*, entitled *Be'er Yizḥaq*, see Lutski, *Be'er Yizḥaq*, e.g., vol. 1, p. 99; for his commentary on *Ez ḥayyim*, entitled *Orah ḥayyim*, see the Gözleve edition of *Ez ḥayyim*, e.g., pp. 22b, 109a. Lutski also mentions and praises Hadassi in his bibliographical works: *Me'irat 'einayyim*, p. 124; *Orah zaddiqim*, pp. 91, 101. Another Eastern European Karaite to cite Hadassi was Mordecai ben Nisan of Kukizów (late seventeenth century), who made use of Hadassi's heresiology, Alphabets 95–100; see his *Dod Mordechai*, pp. 23, 36–37.

175 Gerson D. Cohen points to similarities between *Eshkol ha-kofer* and the anti-Karaite *Sefer ha-qabbalah* of Abraham ibn Daud written in 1160; see Cohen, *Tradition*, pp. 160–161.

176 See, e.g., Lasker, *Studies*, pp. 164–169.

177 Dov Schwartz has written a series of articles about Byzantine Rabbanite thought;

even if they were familiar with their works. There was a renewed interest in Hadassi in the nineteenth century among the first academic students of Karaism, since *Eshkol ha-kofer*, unlike other Karaite texts, was both available and written in Hebrew. Other than its use as a source of Karaite practices and beliefs or attestations for Rabbinic citations, there has been very little serious research on this treatise.

Karaite philosophy changed over the years from a strong commitment to *Kalām* to moderate Maimonidean Aristotelianism.<sup>178</sup> Did Judah Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer* play a role in that development as it introduced very select aspects of Byzantine philosophy into Karaism? Or was this a process that was destined to come about as Karaites became exposed to Rabbanite philosophical works and *Kalām* was no longer intellectually respectable? As noted, the documentation of Hadassi's influence is extremely weak, and thus it is unlikely that *Eshkol ha-kofer* played a major role in the transition of Karaite thought. Yet, despite its relative lack of impact on the Karaite world, Judah Hadassi's *magnum opus* remains a classic of Hebrew literature: it is a reflection of Golden Age Karaism and its reception in Byzantium; a window onto twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite thought and law; an important source for Rabbinic texts; an intellectual and literary challenge to the reader; and an excellent example of a "theological encounter at a crossroads."

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generally, it is the Karaites who were influenced by the Rabbanites and not the other way around. See now his *Byzantium*.

178 The process is described in Lasker, *Studies*; see also Lasker, "Thought."