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designation of the land, its Jewish inhabitants, or its Jewish culture' (p. 275 n. 18) brings to mind numerous counter-examples: 'Palestine' and 'Palestine, Holiness of' are entries in the 1901–1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia*; 'Palestine' was the term used by Herzl, the *Palestine Post* was the newspaper of the Zionist Yishuv from 1932–1950, and the Palestine Symphony Orchestra was its name from 1936–1948; a quick glance at the Index in standard historical surveys by Jewish historians such as Salo W. Baron (*A Social and Religion History of the Jews*, Index to

vols I–VIII, pp. 110–11), Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson (*A History of the Jews*, 1976, p. 1156), Paul Mendes-Flohr and Yehuda Reinharz (*The Jew in the Modern World*, 1995, p. 735); Howard Sachar (*A History of the Jews in the Modern World*, 2005, pp. 813–14) reveals that there was little reluctance to use this term.

But these details are extraneous to Langer's achievement: a monumental bibliographical study of a component of Jewish liturgy that reveals both internal and external tensions over the span of two millennia.

MARC SAPERSTEIN
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
AND LEO BAECK COLLEGE

Miriam Goldstein, *Karaite Exegesis in Medieval Jerusalem: The Judeo-Arabic Pentateuch Commentary of Yūsuf ibn Nūh and Abū al-Faraj Hārūn* (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 26). Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2011. xi, 228 pp. €99.00. ISBN 978 3 16 150972 8.

Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg, *Yefet ben 'Eli's Commentary on Hosea: Annotated Edition, Hebrew Translation and Introduction*. Bar-Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 2009. 508, iv pp. (Hebrew). 115.00 NIS. ISBN 978 965 226 343 8.

Nadia Vidro, *Verbal Morphology in the Karaite Treatise on Hebrew Grammar Kitāb al-'uqūd fī taṣārīf al-luġa al-'ibrāniyya* (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 51, Cambridge Genizah Studies Series 2). Brill, Leiden, 2011. xviii, 201 pp. €94.00. ISBN 978 90 04 21424 8.

Barry Dov Walfish with Mikhail Kizilov, *Bibliographia Karaitica: An Annotated Bibliography of Karaites and Karaism* (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 43, Karaite Texts and Studies 2). Brill, Leiden, 2011. lxxxii, 810 pp. €230.00. ISBN 978 90 04 18927 0.

Joachim J.M.S. Yeshaya, *Medieval Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Egypt: The Secular Poetry of the Karaite Poet Moses ben Abraham Dar'ī* (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 44, Karaite Texts and Studies 3). Brill, Leiden, 2011. xviii, 345 pp. €126.00. ISBN 978 90 04 19130 3.

Marzena Zawanowska, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben 'Eli the Karaite on the Abraham Narratives (Genesis 11:10–25:18)* (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 46, Karaite Texts and Studies 4). Brill, Leiden, 2012. xviii, 576 pp. €152.00. ISBN 978 90 04 19131 0.

Karaite studies have had a long history of ups and downs. The first non-Karaite scholars to show an interest in this long

lasting dissident form of Judaism were early modern Christian Hebraists who were looking for the authentic Judaism

of Jesus before it was corrupted by the Rabbis. Many of these Hebraists were Protestants who considered Karaite scripturalism as akin to their own Biblicism. In the nineteenth century, Rabbanite *Wissenschaft* scholars began to investigate Karaism, but they were stymied by a lack of resources and by their own prejudices. The last major Karaite savant, Abraham Firkowicz (1787–1874), collected many Karaite manuscripts which became available to scholars when they were sold to the Imperial Library of St Petersburg, but his literary and epigraphic forgeries were the cause of much ongoing confusion regarding Karaite identity, history and intellectual accomplishments. Nevertheless, the Firkowicz collections formed the basis of important research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most notably by Simhah Pinsker, Abraham Harkavy, Samuel Poznański, and Jacob Mann. This progress was halted when the collections in what was then called Leningrad became almost inaccessible to western scholars. The major scholars in the middle of the twentieth century, Leon Nemoy and George Vajda, both of whom had some access to the Leningrad collections, contributed important studies and texts, but they were unable to garner much enthusiasm for their Karaite research. As Jewish studies blossomed in the West, partially financed by Jewish communities whose major concern was continuity and identity, Karaite studies played little role in this development and did not have many proponents.

This all changed with the fall of the Soviet Union. Suddenly, there was a new, exciting frontier in Judaic studies propelled by relatively free access (still with some limitations) not only to the

Firkowicz collections in St Petersburg, but also to Karaite sources in other libraries, to Firkowicz's personal archives (with his very revealing notes and correspondence), and to the remnants of once flourishing, even if tiny, Karaite communities. In the last twenty years these new materials have led to a major expansion in Karaite studies, a reflection of which can be seen in the six volumes under review here (as well as quite a number of other studies which have appeared recently or are in the pipeline). Perhaps it would be too early to talk of a flowering of Karaite studies, but numerous seeds have been planted and the first buds can be distinguished.

Pride of place of this new research goes to Barry Dov Walfish's *Bibliography* (compiled with the cooperation of Mikhail Kizilov), which provides a major catalyst for the future growth of Karaite Studies. A monumental work, it was many years in the making, as older publications were discovered and newer ones began appearing. The bibliography covers the period from the origins of print to the end of 2009 and contains 8,063 entries, in an almost uncountable number of languages, none of which appears more than once despite the division of the book into numerous categories organized into four major sections: generalia, history, religion and culture (this editorial decision can cause confusion for the reader and makes the many indices indispensable for proper use of the bibliography). The fact that a comprehensive Karaite bibliography can fit into one, albeit large, volume (with many entries which have only tangential relationship to Karaism) demonstrates, on the one hand, that Karaite studies is quite constricted compared to Jewish studies as a whole, a bibliography of which could

never be confined to one volume. The need for such a bibliography is a sign, on the other hand, that Karaite studies also lags behind Rabbinic Judaic studies with its multiple online data bases and texts, as well as many other bibliographical resources.

The bibliography covers the entire gamut of the Karaite experience, which can be roughly divided into the classical period in the Islamic Middle East (eighth to twelfth centuries, with a large Egyptian community which survived until the modern exodus from Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s); medieval Byzantine Karaism (and the Greek-speaking community which persevered under Ottoman rule); and pre-modern and modern Eastern European Karaism (in Crimea, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine). Study of the latter group of Karaites has been held back not only by the inaccessibility of sources, but also by the tendentious scholarship in the past century which has supported the new Karaite narrative of a non-Jewish central Asian origin. In an attempt to be even-handed and non-judgemental, the editors have included many works about Eastern European Karaism which can only be regarded as pseudo-scholarship (but even these citations are useful because the study of pseudo-scholarship is scholarship).

The other five books under review represent three categories of Karaite intellectual accomplishments in the classical period: exegesis, grammar and poetry. They all make ample use of manuscripts from the Firkowicz collection, and four of them are based on doctoral dissertations. As an aggregate, they offer evidence that the study of the Karaite aspects

of Judaeo-Arabic society has progressed greatly in the past few years.

Although Karaism is far from being the scripturalist religion that is sometimes portrayed by the Karaites themselves, by their Christian Protestant Hebraist proponents and by their Rabbanite opponents, it is still obvious that exegesis is a major feature which distinguishes Karaism from Rabbanism. The Karaite exegete *par excellence* was Yefet ben 'Eli (Abū 'Ali al-Ḥasan b. 'Ali al-Lāwī al-Baṣrī), who lived in the Land of Israel in the second half of the tenth century. Yefet's running commentaries, including his own Judaeo-Arabic translations of the biblical text, encompass the entire Bible and influenced all subsequent Karaite exegesis, as well as Rabbanite exegesis most notably by means of citations by Abraham ibn Ezra. Yefet studies began in the nineteenth century with editions and translations (into Latin and modern western languages), but it has been the opening of the Firkowicz collections, and the cataloguing work done at the Center for the Study of Judaeo-Arabic Culture and Literature of the Ben-Zvi Institute, which have been a major stimulus for current attempts to make the entire Yefet corpus available.

Marzena Zawadowska's contribution to this trend is a scientific edition and analysis of Yefet's Judaeo-Arabic commentary on the Abraham narratives (Gen. 11:10-25:18 – notice that these fifteen chapters require 576 pages for just the text and an analysis without a translation; one can only imagine how many large volumes will be necessary for complete editions, translations, and annotations of Yefet's work!). Based upon her Tel-Aviv University dissertation, Zawadowska's book, in addition to the text, provides an introduction

with useful information about Yefet's methods of translation and exegesis, as well as discussions of the context of the commentary and the manuscripts used in the edition (but, surprisingly, very little about the actual content of the commentary on the Abraham narratives).

So far most of the editions of Yefet's commentaries have been on relatively short books of the Bible, such as the Five Scrolls and the Minor Prophets, presumably since Yefet's commentaries on these books can be produced in a single volume. Such an example is the Hosea commentary presented by Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg (whose 14 chapters required a book of 508 pages!). In addition to an annotated edition of the Judaeo-Arabic text, the editors have provided a lengthy introduction covering many aspects of Yefet's *oeuvre* in general and the Hosea Commentary in particular: context, style, purpose, prognostication, method of translation and the like (as could be expected, there is a certain amount of overlap with Zawanowska's introduction). Although this is not the first edition of the Hosea commentary, it is the first one to use all the manuscript sources and to include a major analysis of the text and a Hebrew translation of it. Thus, Yefet's Hosea is now accessible to Hebrew-speaking students of the Bible who will no longer have an excuse for ignoring this seminal Karaite exegete.

One of Yefet's contemporaries in the Karaite Golden Age was Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ, a grammarian and exegete, the founder of the Karaite house of study in Jerusalem. His Pentateuch commentary is lost, but an abridgement and reworking of it called *Talkhīs* ('Epitome') was produced by the early eleventh-century grammarian Abū al-Faraj Hārūn. One

can only imagine the extent of the original in light of the incomplete version of the abridgement which has survived in 797 folios (although it should be noted that Karaite epitomes are rarely just abridgements). Miriam Goldstein provides an overview of Abū al-Faraj's work, placing it in the context of contemporary Karaite exegesis (such as Yefet's) and the larger Islamic milieu in which it was composed (such as the decisive influence of *kalām* and Muslim Qur'anic commentaries). She also adds an appendix of the Judaeo-Arabic texts which were discussed in the book and attempts to determine how much of the composition is Abū al-Faraj's and how much is by his teacher, Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ.

When read in conjunction with Zawanowska's book (who used Goldstein's Hebrew University dissertation upon which *Karaite Exegesis* is based), some of the unique aspects of classical Karaite exegesis on the Torah can be clearly discerned. One of these is the assumption of a *mudawwin* (recorder/compiler/editor) who was responsible for the final version of the biblical text. Zawanowska and Goldstein disagree as to how the Karaite exegetes identified the *mudawwin* of the Torah: the former believes that for Yefet, at least, he was a post-Mosaic figure, whereas the latter says the Karaite exegetes, including Yefet, identified him with Moses himself. Undoubtedly this and other aspects of Karaite exegesis will have to be addressed as more texts become available.

Until Goldstein's work, Abū al-Faraj Hārūn was much better known for his grammatical works, the most important of which was *al-Kitāb al-Mushtamil*. Just as Abū al-Faraj reworked Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ, epitomes of his own major composition were produced, most notably by Abū al-

Faraj himself in his *al-Kitāb al-Kāfi*. This latter composition was then abridged by two anonymous authors, one of whom wrote *Kitāb al-'uqūd fī taṣārīf al-luġa al-'ibrāniyya* ('Book of Rules regarding the Grammatical Inflections of the Hebrew Language'). Nadia Vidro's book, based on her Cambridge University dissertation written under the direction of the doyen of Karaite grammatical studies, Geoffrey Khan, is an analysis of this epitome in anticipation of a separate edition of it, which requires a painstaking reconstruction of the text using manuscripts from different sources. Major attention in Vidro's introduction is paid to the author's theory of verbs.

A reader familiar with standard Hebrew grammar, with its emphasis on the trilateral verbal roots and seven verbal structures, will be amazed at the alternate morphology of the Hebrew verb developed by Karaite grammarians and presented in detail by Vidro. All Hebrew verbs are classified by mnemonic symbols based on the vowels of the past and imperative forms, leading to a plenitude of categories. Vidro stresses the pedagogical aspects of *Kitāb al-'uqūd*, indicative of its status as a summary of past Karaite grammatical innovations rather than as an original work in its own right.

Despite its idiosyncrasies and its uniquely Karaite provenance, it is hard to discern a connection between Karaite grammar and the Karaite form of Judaism. The same can be said for much of Karaite poetry, the main exemplar of which is the work of Moses Dar'ī, a twelfth-century Egyptian Karaite poet. Although there are occasional references in his poetry to the Rabbanite-Karaite dispute, most of his poetry, both secular

and liturgical, is very similar to that of his Rabbanite Andalusian models. Joachim Yeshaya provides an edition of the secular poems (the first 152 items in Dar'ī's *diwan*), including the Arabic headings which had previously been ignored by other editors (in fact, a large part of Yeshaya's task is compensation for the deficiencies of his predecessors in this field). His work, based on his University of Groningen dissertation, is a major contribution to the study of this poet who has been a double outlier, both as a Karaite and as a non-Iberian Easterner. Joachim goes to great lengths to refute earlier scholars who saw Dar'ī's work as simply derivative and of little aesthetic value. Perhaps the relative clarity of Dar'ī's Hebrew and the absence of the linguistic gymnastics, which so often characterizes medieval Hebrew poetry, have contributed to this negative assessment. Since it would seem that there are no objective criteria for determining the aesthetic value of literature, readers will have to determine for themselves whose evaluation of Dar'ī's poetry is more accurate. Yeshaya makes this easier by his excellent edition (including English translations of the Arabic headings), commentary, and extended introduction, in which the context of Dar'ī's poetry is discussed and translations of some of the poems are provided.

Although the books reviewed here give merely a taste of past Karaite intellectual achievements, they raise many ideological and methodological issues concerning the nature of Karaite studies and the relation between this research and the larger Jewish studies. Until now, research into Karaism has too often been relegated to an isolated and segregated part of Judaic research. Only when scholars of Judaism recognize the

treasures which await them in hitherto ignored or hidden Karaite texts will it be possible to mainstream Karaite studies into their larger Jewish context.

A final word should be devoted to the venue of these new publications. Four of them have been published by Brill, which is now the major publisher of serious Karaite textual scholarship, offering a service not provided by the major western university presses (a perusal of Brill's website in July 2012 indicates 15 books with Karaite content as well as their microfiche reproductions of early Karaite imprints through the subsidiary IDC Publishers; for purposes of full disclosure, my book *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy* was also published by Brill). A fifth volume was published by Mohr

Siebeck, another European publisher of scholarly Judaica. This service, however, comes with a heavy price; a reader who wishes to purchase all six books would spend over \$1,000 (Bar-Ilan University Press is to be congratulated both for publishing a book containing what some of its patrons might regard as 'heretical' exegesis, and in the original Judaeo-Arabic, which will have a limited readership; and for keeping the cost accessible to the average reader). Given the economics of high quality text-based scholarship, most readers will have to be content with finding these books in university libraries (and perhaps with violating copyright laws concerning photographic reproductions). One can only wish that there were some way of lowering the costs of purchasing the fine books which are discussed in this review.

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Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu* (Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 48). Brill, Leiden, 2011. xxviii, 556 pp. €177.00. ISBN 978 90 04 18932 4.

This is in every way an excellent book. The author notes that Maimonides is not usually linked to the exoteric interpretation of religious literature – far more attention is paid to his supposedly esoteric approach to the text and to devising the ways in which we can work out what he really believed. But this is to ignore the fact that his hermeneutic approach generally is to favour the *peshat* or *zāhir al-naṣṣ*, the evident meaning of the text. Cohen argues that Saadia is of crucial importance here, because Maimonides had in his mind Saadia's attempt to interpret the Bible using reason as a significant method. It led

Maimonides to produce a system of interpretation of great complexity, intended to balance literary, legal, scientific and philosophical theories, all of which he accepted. The difficulty is to work out what methodology precisely Maimonides uses, since there appears to be limited consistency in the different approaches he employs, although I am not sure that Cohen himself often draws this conclusion. One very valuable point he makes is about the importance of understanding how Maimonides used concepts from *tafsīr*, Islamic commentary, since within Islamic culture of the time a highly developed system of interpretation