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978-1-108-06244-2 - A Commentary on the Book of Daniel: By Jepheth ibn Ali the Karaite

Edited and Translated by D. S. Margoliouth

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A Commentary on the Book of Daniel

This translation of an Arabic commentary by Jepheth ibn Ali (*fl.* late tenth century) was first published in 1889. Based on ten manuscripts, the text was carefully edited and rendered into English by David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940), Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford. Jepheth was a leading Karaite scholar who wrote a number of biblical commentaries in his native Arabic. This was one of his mature works and perhaps the best example of his critical and exegetical powers. On the basis of the historical allusions in the commentary, Margoliouth estimated that it was composed between 990 and 1010. The work includes the Arabic text, with critical apparatus and a useful glossary of key words. Fiercely polemical against Islam, Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, the commentary has greatly contributed to our understanding of tenth-century religious controversies. It remains an important work of Karaite literature.

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A COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF DANIEL

BY

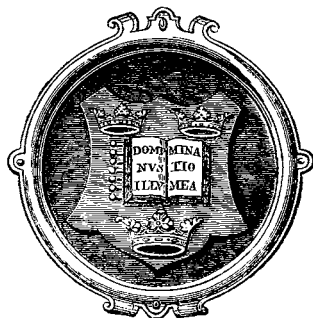
JEPHETH IBN ALI THE KARAITE

EDITED AND TRANSLATED

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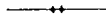
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PREFACE.



THE life of Abu 'Ali Jephth¹ has been narrated by the authorities cited by M. BARGÈS in the Preface to his edition of the Commentary on the Canticles², at greatest length by J. FÜRST in his *Geschichte des Karäerthums*³, whose account is to be supplemented from the notice of Jephth in A. NEUBAUER'S *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*⁴. The Commentary on Daniel was one of the latest of his writings⁵; and that it cannot have been written before 990 A. D. has been shewn by PINSKER⁶ from the statement in the Appendix⁷ that 'the date 2300 after the Exodus is passed years ago;' now 2448 A. M. (the date of the Exodus) + 2300 gives 4748 A. M. = 988 A. D., to which at least two years must be added to justify the expression in the text. On the other hand, the Commentator speaks of the Mohammadan religion as 'about 400 years old⁸,' a statement which gives us perhaps as terminus ad quem the year 1010 A. D.

¹ His names and titles are given in full on the Arabic-Hebrew title-page.

² Paris, 1884, pp. i, ii.

³ Vol. ii. 124-130.

⁴ Pp. 15-18.

⁵ The phrase on p. 138. 2 does not necessarily imply, as FÜRST thinks, that he had already commented on all the books of the תנ"ך.

⁶ נספחים, ל'ק, p. 88.

⁷ P. 102. 3. FÜRST'S suggestion that we should read منذ ائنتان سنين is not likely to find acceptance.

⁸ P. 137. 4. The prophecy that the end is to come in the year 400 A. H. is not Jephth's, but a false inference of the scribe from this passage.—R. Saadia Gaon's date was 350 A. H. (Bodleian MS. Opp. Add. fol. 64, p. 75^b).

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The other historical allusions do not contradict this result. Jepheth knows of the taking of Antioch, Tarsus, and 'Ainzarbah by the Greeks¹; these events happened in 359, 354, and 351 respectively. The pillaging of the Ka'bah by the Carmathians under Abu Tāhir in 317 (929) is made much of², although the Black Stone was restored in 338, and the Temple itself repaired, of which Jepheth, who has some strange opinions about the nature of the Ka'bah, does not seem to have heard; however, their prohibition of the Pilgrimage, in which he finds the fulfilment of the 'taking away of the continual,' lasted as late as 403 (1012)³; and although their power was on the decline after Abu Tāhir's death, they continued long to make themselves felt in Syria and Egypt. In 360 they take Damascus, Ramleh, and Jaffa⁴; in 375 (985) they capture Cufa⁵; the prophecy therefore that 'they will certainly take Baghdad⁶' was quite likely to be realised, and indeed had already been partly realised in 330⁷. We cannot therefore wonder at the important place assigned them by Jepheth in the history of the Arabian empire. Further, the reference to 'the non-Abbasid lord of Islām, established at Baghdad⁸,' points to a date after 334 (945), when the title of Sultan was conferred on the Buyid conqueror⁹.

¹ P. 133. 16.

² P. 137. Just as the Carmathians are called here by Jepheth קשרים, so in 2 Kings התקשר is rendered by تقمرط.—For the derivation of قمرط see DE GOEJE, *Mémoire sur les Carmathes*, p. iii of Appendix.

³ DE GOEJE, l. c. p. 85; *Chron. Mecc.* ed. WÜSTENFELD, ii. 249.

⁴ Ibnu 'l Athīr viii. 485.

⁵ Ibnu 'l Athīr ix. 29. In this year, however, زال ناموسهم.

⁶ P. 134. 21.

⁷ Abu 'l Mahāsin ii. 297; DE GOEJE, p. 50. In 375 they have a 'representative' (نائب) in Baghdad (Ibnu 'l Athīr, l. c. p. 30).

⁸ P. 134 *ut supra*.

⁹ WEIL, *Geschichte der Khalifen*, ii. 696.—The statement that 'they were originally unbelievers' will agree with the account of their origin given *ibid.* ii. 652; but their identification with the 'king of the north' is stranger and given hesitatingly.

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The matter of the Commentary—with the exception of the violent polemics against the Christians¹, Rabbanites, and Muslims²—is probably for the most part traditional, derived from the ‘Doctors of the Captivity’³, some of whose names are specified in the Appendix. The Commentary of R. Saadia Gaon (El-Fayyūmī), the object of Jepheth’s most bitter polemics, has been discovered by Dr. NEUBAUER, in a fragmentary MS. of the Bodleian⁴. This MS. is unfortunately deficient in those parts of the book where Jepheth’s attacks are most violent⁵; in general the agree-

¹ See especially the notes on xi. 14 (p. 119. 14–16). Some further information on the Christian religion is to be found in the note on Obadiah 1: *وقال فيه زدون : لأنك لأنه اتقح بديا على رب العالمين وادعى بالثالوث وجعل لله ولدا كما يقولو انكنا وبننا وروح القدس جل الخالق عن صفات المخلوقين ثم انه ادعى برسالة وكتاب (!) وادعى ان شريعة الله بطلت وان كتابه هو الثابت وعليه المحصول وهذا في غاية ما يكون من الفحة وعند ما اعتقد في يسوع ان هو ولده على ما يزعمون وكانوا بني اسرائيل قد صلبوه في زمان بيت سني اعتقدوا ان اسرائيل كلهم مستحقين للابادة وللهلاك الخ.*

² The number of ‘Spotnamen’ employed is quite considerable: *פסול* for رسول, *קלון* for قران, *מכות* for مكّة; *איש הרוח* is a frequent designation of the Prophet. The MSS. vary between *ישוע* and *ישו*.

³ Some of these, perhaps, he imperfectly understood. The Commentator who derived *מהחצפה* (p. 19. 13) from the Chaldee may have spoken of the latter as the language of the Pharisees=Rabbanites; Jepheth’s *الفارسية* would naturally mean *Persian*. His compiler in the *ספר העשר* renders *רבנים* *לשון רבנים*.

⁴ Opp. Add. fol. 64. NEUBAUER’s Catalogue, no. 2486.

⁵ Yet see note on x. 3 (MS. p. 134^b): *وقوله لآدم اكلتني وبشر ويين : يكشف لنا ان يسراقيم في الجالوت ليس يحرم عليهم اكل اللحم ولا شرب الخمر ولا الملاذ لللال من اجل خراب القدس (ولو كانت اليهودية احرمت ذلك) عليهم لكان دانيال ونظراؤه اول من يمثلها فلما وجدناه فرد 21 يوما لم يأكل فيها من هذه الاشياء علمنا انه كان يأكلها قبل 21 يوماً* Jepheth’s observation that the Temple was then standing is answered by anticipation.—‘The marvellous inventions’ (p. 102. 2) of El-Fayyūmī concerning the ‘end’ are probably the calculations

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ment¹ of the Gaon's² opinions with those of the Karaite are more striking than their divergence.

The opinion of Jepheth's powers as a commentator held by M. BARGÈS (who has done more than any one to make them accessible) is perhaps too high. His knowledge of both Hebrew³ and Chaldee⁴ is inaccurate, although he speaks contemptuously of those 'who do not know our language.' The grammatical observations, which have won praise from NEUBAUER⁵ and others, fail almost entirely in this book⁶. His acquaintance with contemporary events⁷, by the light of which he occasionally interprets prophecy, is as hazy as his knowledge of earlier history

on p. 75 sqq. of the Bodleian Commentary; in which it is shewn that there are four possible explanations of the 'time, times and a half,' which all alike produce the result 350 A. H. for the time of the end.

¹ E. g. on the division of the four kingdoms see especially the note on ii. 33 (MS. p. 15^b): *פּרזל די שקודי די פּרזל*: *מפּרדא נים תּשארקּהּ [לאדום] המלכה האחרת*. Some 'marvellous inventions' follow, by which the 'end' is fixed for 350 A. H.—Compare with Jepheth's explanation of Daniel's exemption from bowing down to the statue the following passage (p. 26^b): *אן יסל ען דאניאל הל טולב אבּשא בּאלסגוד אמ לא . . . פּנכול אן דאניאל קאן ענד נבוכדנצר מעבּודא מן המעבּודא אד לייס מןקרא ענד הכפּאר אן יעבּודוּ אלהּ כּתירה*.

² Perhaps the Arabic Commentary may in a few cases be supplemented from the spurious work printed in Buxtorf's Bible under the Gaon's name; e. g. the opinion refuted on p. 1. 8, 9 is held by this author. See MATHEWS, *Saadia's Comm. on Ezra*, p. xvi.

³ See especially ix. 25 *בצוק העתים*. So in Is. liii. 5 *חברתו* is rendered *משתרכת*, in Ps. xxii. 25 *אגבּת ענות*, etc.

⁴ See especially ver. 12.

⁵ *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, p. 15.

⁶ Some of these are decidedly striking; see BARGÈS' *Cant.* p. xvii; *ibid.* p. 70; *Comm. on Exodus* (MS. 2467), p. 126^a: *מסדר מן מאחוז מן מוסדר*: *ומשל אבּלתי קמנתי ינרתי ולוקאן מאחוז מן אמר קאן תּחת הכּאפּ פּתּחַ מּשל שמעוּת*. *פּאלקמסּתּהּ לחיקּתּהּ מּקאם אד*.

⁷ E. g. the history of the Carmathians, *v. supra*.

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is shallow¹. On the other hand, the present Commentary is not written *currente calamo*, for the theory which it expresses may be traced even in points of detail in his earlier writings. Thus the argument of p. 118 is anticipated in the Commentary on Exodus²; that of p. 120. 1 sqq. in the Commentary on Leviticus³; while the curious combination of the prophecies of Isaiah, Joel, and Daniel worked out especially in the notes on the twelfth chapter is to be found already stated in the Commentaries on the first two Prophets, and in part in that on the Canticles.

In the appended Translation brevity especially has been studied, and with the same end the Arabic version of the Hebrew text as well as the table of contents has been left untranslated. Where, however, Jepheth's interpretation differs seriously from the Revised Version, account is taken of the difference either in the lemmata or in notes. These differences are of course never worth a moment's consideration; the idea of elucidating the Hebrew vocabulary from his native Arabic was not familiar to Jepheth⁴.

With the list of curious words occurring in this volume contained in the Glossary, the Editor has incorporated some occurring in the printed works of the same author, as well as in works of his existing in MS. in Oxford, London, and Paris. Of course this collection does not aim at completeness, but in some respects perhaps it may be found of interest. Most of these words are not explained in the Lexicons of FREYTAG and DOZY, although their existence will be found to be sufficiently certified; the source of several is Syriac or Persian, while a few are Hebrew words in an Arabic dress. That Jepheth should think it proper to attack in this rustic dialect the classical writings of R. Saadia Gaon agrees with the

¹ So he makes Alexander come from Alexandria.—In the Comm. on Kings he mentions Kalilah wa-Dimnah.

² MS. 2467, p. 167^b.

³ MS. 2472, pp. 80^b, 81^a.

⁴ I have noted the following cases: Lev. xiii. 25, where פחותת is connected with فحنتة as against the derivation from פחותת; לוית, 1 Kings vii. 29, لانها تلوا; Prov. iii. 13, where יפיק is rendered وفق.

* a

[II. 3.]

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contempt which he frequently expresses for the learning of the Gentiles. Many of the words recur in the Lexicon of the Karaite David b. Abraham¹.

Matter has been drawn from the following printed books: BARGÈS' *Specimen* ('Spec.'), containing the Preface to the Commentary on the Psalms, with version and explanation of Pss. i and ii; BARGÈS' edition of the complete version of the Psalms, and his edition of the Commentary on the Canticles; HOFFMANN'S edition of the Commentary on Ps. xxii; AUERBACH'S of that on Prov. xxx; NEUBAUER'S of that on Isaiah liii². A MS. of the complete Commentary on Isaiah was kindly lent to the Editor by Canon DRIVER. He has further excerpted the fragmentary Commentary on the Minor Prophets in the Bodleian Library; that on the Proverbs in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and a portion of the rich Schapira Collection in the British Museum, quoted by their number in the Oriental Catalogue³.

My best thanks are due to the Delegates of the Press for undertaking this work, which I wish I could have accomplished in a more satisfactory manner; to Dr. NEUBAUER, for multifarious help and kindness; and to Mr. J. C. PEMBREY, to whose care and skill any degree of accuracy which may have been attained is to be ascribed.

¹ MS. Bodl. 1451.

² In *The Jewish Interpreters on Isaiah liii* by NEUBAUER and DRIVER.

³ To the literature on Jepheth must now be added Dr. HOERNING'S accurate and valuable account of the *British Museum Karaite MSS.*, which appeared too late for the Editor to use.

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LIST OF MSS. OF THE COMMENTARY ON DANIEL.

M = Or. 2557 of British Museum.

M² = Or. 2556 of British Museum.

Both these fragments are in the Arabic character, containing the Hebrew text (also in Arabic characters) with vowel-points and accents. The portions of the text which are found in these fragments are marked by the letters M and M² on the margin.

B = Opp. Add. 4^o. 166 of Bodleian Library. (See NEUBAUER, Catalogue, no. 2494.)

P = 2nd Firkovich Collection, 420 of Imperial Library, St. Petersburg.

X = Firkovich Collection, 580 of Imperial Library, St. Petersburg.

All these are in the Hebrew character and (except P) complete. Where M and M² fail, the printed text follows X, unless the contrary is stated in the note.

D = 2nd Firkovich Collection, 314.

Fragments covering about half the work; some of the leaves have been misplaced by the binder.

K = 2nd Firkovich Collection, 315.

Commences with Hebrew of i. 6. Wants a whole sheet (ten leaves) from vii. 1 to vii. 25. Also defective from p. 130. 15 to p. 131. 8. Terminates at Comm. on xii. 11.

Q = 2nd Firkovich Collection, 313. Large fragments.

Kit. = Last part of كتان العتيدات, containing Commentary on chap. xii. (ending at p. 101. 17).

C = Or. 2520 of British Museum, containing six short fragments.

All these are in the Hebrew character.

The MSS. in the Hebrew character (Heb.) were all copied from one archetype, as is shewn e. g. by their common omission of the translation of chap. viii. vers. 23 and 25, preserved in M; the occasion of that omission is obvious. That archetype was in the Arabic character, as is shewn by the nature of the mistakes; see p. 1, n. 1. It contained moreover the Hebrew text written in Arabic characters, for from the nature of the transliteration many of the constant errors of the Karaitic punctuation can be explained: e. g. Qameṣ and Segol are both regularly represented by the Elif of lengthening, and Pathaḥ is occasionally represented by the same; now it is in the confusion of these three signs that the Hebrew texts in these MSS. err most¹. To the same source may be attributed such orthographies as כשדים for כסדים. That archetype cannot

¹ BARGÈS, in his edition of the Canticles, reproduces the Karaitic pointing. See his observations, p. xv. The MS. copied by him is now no longer 'unicum,' since the introduction of the Schapira Collection into the British Museum.

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have been either of the MSS. of which M and M² are fragments, but it may have been not earlier than these MSS., which date probably from the eleventh century, whereas it is not probable that any of Heb. are earlier than the fourteenth (C K ?), while some (B X ?) probably belong to the sixteenth. The text offered by D P Q X is practically the same ; while all have many errors in common, they supplement each other in single cases. B and K exhibit a rather different recension, in some cases agreeing with M against the others; both however are interpolated, B notably so, e.g. in the translation of ix. 25, where Jepheth rendered *وعجيبين الأوقات والنصائح* *والبصائر*, connecting *بصائر* with *بصائر*, but the editor of B rightly corrected *ونصائح*, making the comment disagree with the text. See too the note on p. 99. The scribe who copied B can have known very little Arabic (see note on p. v), and this MS. is so defaced by omissions, occasioned ordinarily by homoeoteleuton, repetitions, and other errors that the Editor found it impossible to publish the text from it. By the kindness of the Imperial Russian Government and the English Foreign Office the six St. Petersburg MSS. were placed in the Bodleian for a period of four months ; during which the Editor had time to collate K and X twice, and the rest once with the exception of Q, which he occasionally consulted. The British Museum fragments, when identified, helped him to correct a number of difficult passages, but many remain with which he has been unable to grapple successfully. The various readings are quoted fully in the first few pages, afterwards only when the text of M, M², and X is deserted, or when they seemed to the Editor to possess some interest.

In the matter of *orthography* the MSS. exhibit no regularity (e.g. *ملا* and *ملا* are sometimes to be found in the same line). The Editor has endeavoured in transliterating to introduce the ordinary orthography, but where the text existed in Arabic characters he has rarely departed from the MSS.

In the treatment of the vulgar forms¹ the editors have taken different lines : NEUBAUER prints the vulgar forms without alteration; BARGÈS prints the correct forms in

¹ A peculiar form is the 3rd person plur. perf. masc. in *ن*, p. 140. 9, n. 2 ; compare Ex. xix. 8 *الذين يقون في بلدانهم* *فصارون*. LAGARDE, *Materialien zur Kritik u. sw. des Pentateuchs*, i. v, notices forms like *استكننت* Ps. xxxi. 1 for *استكننت* (for *لم يزلا*) MS. 2473 (Numbers), p. 16^b, unless it be a mistake of the copyist, is curious. *أفيل* (for *يزالوا*) MS. 2475, p. 25^a; comp. *شئتم* for *اشيتم* MS. 2478, p. 12^b. Forms like *يقبوا* (for *قبوا*) are common : MS. 2478, p. 12^b *ونسبوا*, p. 18^b *وقوبوا*. Prov. ix. 15 (15) *لتدعيين* is strangely faulty. Prov. xiii. 18 *فيطلبوه دوية الجاه* (for *ذوو*) is probably a copyist's error.

Letters regularly interchanged are *ض* and *ظ*; both were pronounced as *z*, which, as in *فريزة*, is sometimes written for them. *س* and *ص* are occasionally confused; *لعب الصطرنج* Prov. xiii. 11 (*ص* for *ش*) is unusual.—The *ا* of forms of *جاه* is often omitted; *جا* is commonly written for *جاوا*, *جا* for *جاهت* Comm. on Ex. xvi. 20.

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the text, placing the vulgar forms in the notes¹; AUERBACH prints the vulgar forms in the text, followed by the correct forms in brackets. The first of these seems clearly the right method, since these vulgar forms never create any difficulty, and it is no part of the editor's duty to correct the author's language. On the advice of friends, however, the present Editor has in the earlier sheets given in foot-notes what he believes to be the correct substitutes for the more glaring errors in the text².

This Commentary is excerpted (in Hebrew) in the ספר העשר, a specimen of which is given by PINSKER, l. c. p. 88. Jepheth is frequently quoted by Ibn Ezra, but, as elsewhere, the quotations do not correspond with the Arabic originals. On the other hand, an opinion attributed to חכמי צדוקים 'Sadducean Doctors,' i. e. Karaites, on chap. xi, will be found stated in full in the accompanying text: יש לתמוה מוחכמי צדוקים שפירשו זה לעתיד ואמרו כי המקדש היא מיכה (Mekka) שיחוגו עליה הישמעלים;

¹ Not, however, consistently; e. g. he allows the Comm. on Canticles to commence *אן לשלמה* *علمين* for *علمان*.

² The following signs have been employed in the text:

< > denote insertions by the Editor.

[] denote interpolations.

() denote alternative renderings.

References to the Old Testament are given on the margin; the quotations have been abridged as much as possible.

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