

MU‘TAZİLİ TRENDS IN JEWISH THEOLOGY - A BRIEF SURVEY

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Abstract

This article presents a brief survey of Jewish Mu‘tazilism, from its beginnings in the late eighth or early ninth century through the seventeenth century. Short descriptions of known Jewish Mu‘tazili authors and their works are provided. We can divide the development of Jewish Mu‘tazilism into three periods: 1) the early period characterized by eclecticism and doctrinal variety; 2) the “classic” period in which the Basran Bahshamiyya school was adopted by both Rabbanites and Karaites; 3) the late period in which epitomes of Mu‘tazili thought were produced. The article concludes with a brief consideration of Mu‘tazilism in al-Andalus.

Keywords: Mu‘tazila, Jewish Theology, Jewish Mu‘tazilism, Basra, Karaites.

YAHUDİ TEOLOJİSİNDE MU‘TEZİLİ EĞİLİMLER-KISA BİR TARAMA

Öz

Bu çalışma, 8.-9. yüzyıllardaki başlangıcından 17. yüzyıla kadar Yahudi Mu‘tezililiği üzerine kısa bir inceleme sunmaktadır. Tanınmış Yahudi Mu‘tezili yazarlar ve onlara ait eserler de çalışmada kısaca tanıtılmıştır. Yahudi Mu‘tezililiğinin gelişimini 3 devreye ayırabiliriz: 1) Eklektizm ve doktrin çeşitliliğiyle karakterize edilebilecek olan erken dönem; 2) Basra Bahşamiyye ekolünün Rabbinikler ve Karaylar tarafından benimsendiği “klasik” dönem; 3) Mu‘tezile düşüncesinin somut örneklerinin üretildiği geç dönem. Çalışmanın sonunda Yahudi Mu‘tezililiğinin Endülüs’teki serüveni ile ilgili de kısaca bilgi verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yahudilik, Mu‘tezile, Basra, Karaylar.

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The teachings of the Mu‘tazila had a long career within substantial segments of Arabic-speaking Jewry.¹ Contact between Jews and a rationalistic, systematic *kalâm* began in the early ninth century, if not before. Some of these early beginnings remain obscure, known only through hints, while others are quite full and clear, such as the writings of Dâwûd al-Muqammas al-Raqqî, whose central work, *‘Ishrûn Maqâla*, is the earliest known surviv-

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1 Jewish *kalâm* was only Mu‘tazilite in nature. Christian *kalâm* had an important impact on Jewish rationalist theology in its early stages. By the middle of the tenth century, however, Jewish theologians had adopted the Muslim Mu‘tazila almost to the point of imitation. Furthermore, there appear to have been no Jewish adherents of the Ash‘ariyya, certainly not among authors of theological works. I have therefore used the term “Jewish Mu‘tazila” in this article to refer to Jewish rationalist *kalâm*.

ing Arabic *summa* of systematic theology. We can trace the history of Jewish Mu'tazilism through a flourishing of literary activity in the tenth and eleventh centuries. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Mu'tazilî *kalâm* remained the "official" theology of the Egyptian Karaite community until at least the middle of the seventeenth century.

The early adoption of Mu'tazilî teachings among parts of Middle Eastern Jewry should not surprise us. Jews were an ancient and integral part of the populations of Iraq, Persia, al-Shâm, and Egypt. Together with Christians, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and others, the Jews experienced the cultural and political developments of the Middle East after the upheavals of the Muslim Arab invasion and the consequent creation of a universal, Arabic culture. When Jews began to be exposed to philosophical literature (from various sources: Christian, Indian, Muslim), some were intrigued and attracted by the possibility of rational, analytic reflection on the world around them: the physical world, the inner world of the soul and the intellect, and the phenomena of religious experience. The teachings of the emergent Mu'tazila resonated with traditional Jewish doctrines that asserted divine unity and justice, embraced human free will and rejected divine anthropomorphism. In this regard, it is prudent to bear in mind the observation of Harry Wolfson concerning such influence: "Beliefs and ideas are indeed contagious and the history of beliefs and ideas is often a history of imitation by contagion. But for the contagiousness of a belief or an idea to take effect, there must be a predisposition and susceptibility on the part of those who are to be affected by it."² Jews first encountered rationalistic philosophy in the context of pagan Hellenism that had little impact on Judaism. Philo of Alexandria's synthesis of Judaism and Greek thought made no lasting impression on Judaism.³ Nine centuries or so later, the Christian and Muslim project of integrating Scripture and analytical, rationalistic thought into a systematic theology proved to be attractive to Jews and became a major trend in medieval Jewish culture in Arab lands.

Our description of Jewish Mu'tazilism will be roughly divided into three sections:⁴ 1) The early period – ninth century and the first half of the tenth century. This is a period of beginnings, eclecticism and clear influence from Christian *kalâm*. 2) The "classical" period - latter half of the tenth century and the eleventh. In this period, Jewish authors are highly influenced by the Mu'tazilî School of Basra, to the point that some participate in the school's internal disputes. 3) The late period - twelfth century and onwards. Literary

2 Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976, p. 70.

3 Philo's writings survived within the Christian church.

4 The periodization suggested here is roughly parallel to that used by D. Gimaret in his article "Mu'tazila" *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Second Edition), Leiden, 2010.

activity in this period is largely restricted to producing summaries of Mu'tazili doctrines, along the lines of catechisms. At the end, I will also touch on the presence of Mu'tazilism in Andalusian Jewish thought.

While the impact of Muslim Mu'tazili thought on Jewish writers is clear, both in its doctrines and its technical terminology, we have very little specific information that would enable us to delineate the proximate trajectories of this interaction. Few historical facts have been preserved concerning actual contacts between Jewish and Muslim *mutakallimūn* or the Muslim books Jewish authors may have read. It is only for the "classical" period that we do have some bits of information of this sort. We can only but assume that mutual intellectual interests and certainly polemical encounters encouraged scholarly exchanges between members of different religious groups.⁵ Formal and informal *majālis* discussions provided opportunities for Jews to be exposed to Muslim theological doctrines and argumentation.⁶

In its doctrines, Jewish Mu'tazilism generally followed the contours of Muslim thought; for example, when discussing epistemology, divine attributes, the createdness of Scripture,⁷ good and evil and divine justice or free will. Particularly Jewish polemical concerns are expressed concerning prophetology, the idea of Scriptural abrogation (*naskh*) and soteriology. The early period of the Muslim Mu'tazila was characterized by a high degree of doctrinal diversity. Muslim *mutakallimūn* had opposing teachings on important tenets such as atomism, the origin of human voluntary actions and *tawallud*, and the idea of the *al-aslāh* which God provides to mankind.⁸ Jewish Mu'tazili thought in this period is similarly eclectic and diverse. And just as in the classic period of the Muslim Mu'tazila (latter part of the ninth century through the eleventh) coherent, systematic schools of thought are established, so also the Jewish Mu'tazilites adopt a well-defined doctrinal system.

- 5 There is a fair amount of information concerning cultural interactions of this sort around the translation and study of the Aristotelian corpus, beginning in the ninth century and particularly in tenth-century Baghdad. See Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society* (2nd-4th / 8th-10th centuries), London and New York, 1998. For a wider perspective on these cultural developments, see Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, Leiden, 1986.
- 6 On the cultural phenomenon of the *majlis*, see the articles in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh, S. H. Griffith, eds., *The Majlis: Religious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Wiesbaden, 2000.
- 7 See Harry Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, Chap. 4: "The Pre-existent Koran and the Pre-existent Law."
- 8 A brief survey of this diversity may be found in Daniel Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Second Edition), Leiden, 2010. In-depth and extensive exploration of the range of early Mu'tazili doctrines is found in Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976.

Before continuing with our description of the development of the Jewish Mu'tazila, we need to take two short parenthetical detours. I have already mentioned the Karaites above who are to be distinguished from the Rabbanite Jews. The Rabbanites were the mainstream of Judaism (called by Muslim authors the *jumhūr*, the masses)⁹ whose religious practice was founded on the rabbinic traditions recorded in the Mishnah and the Talmud. The religious leaders of the Rabbanites were called Gaonim who served as the heads of the Talmudic Academies (*yeshivot*) in the towns of Sura and Pumbedita in lower Mesopotamia in Iraq, beginning towards the end of the sixth century and lasting through the middle of the eleventh. In their own self-perception, and probably mostly historically true, the gaonic academies were the direct continuation of the ancient Talmudic academies which had been established in Iraq in the third century. Even though by the tenth century these institutions were no longer mainly places of Talmudic instruction, having adopted an important role of administering a wide-spread network of courts, the heads of the academies saw it as their responsibility and authority to maintain the authenticity and accuracy of Talmudic traditions and to propagate knowledge of the Talmud within the widespread Jewish world, from Khurasan to Spain. Both of the gaonic yeshivot were moved to Baghdad at the end of the ninth century or beginning of the tenth, a change that had important implications for their intellectual world.¹⁰

The Karaites were a Jewish sect that rejected the authority of rabbinic traditions and developed a scripturalist ideology, creating a system of religious law based on the Bible and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*). Karaite origins are not clear and are the subject of a fair amount of academic controversy. Karaite Judaism as a movement with a clearly enunciated scripturalism seems to have coalesced towards the end of the ninth century. Daniel al-Qūmisī (fl. 870-910, who will be discussed in more detail below) seems to have played an important role in this development. Al-Qūmisī encouraged his co-religionists to leave the Exile and go up to Jerusalem in order to mourn its destruction. The movement of the Mourners of Zion was quite successful and by the middle of the tenth century, Jerusalem had become the major center of an extraordinary Golden Age of fertile Karaite intellectual and literary activity, an enterprise that continued until the year 1096 when the Jewish community of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Crusaders.¹¹

9 See Abū l-Hasan 'Alī b. al-Husayn al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wal-ishrāf*, M.J. de Goeje, ed., Leiden, 1894, pp. 112-114.

10 For a detailed description of the Gaonim, their writings and institutions, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, New Haven, 1998.

11 A good, thorough survey of Karaite history and doctrines, although a bit outdated, may be found in the entry "Karaites" in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1972, Vol. 10, cols. 761-785 (written mostly by Leon Nemoy). Fuller and more up-to-date information can be

Our second short detour concerns our sources, or lack of them, for reconstructing Judeo-Arabic intellectual history. Very little Jewish literature from the sixth through the ninth centuries has survived. Furthermore, other than the high "peaks" of Jewish thought written in Arabic, such as the works of Sa'adya Gaon, Bahya ibn Paqûda, Judah Halevi and Maimonides, most of the Judeo-Arabic literature available to us has survived in the *genizahs* of Cairo. A *genizah* is a storeroom, usually in a synagogue, where the remnants of worn-out books are placed, instead of being dishonorably thrown out. Two such *genizahs* that were in use over a period of nearly a thousand years survived in Cairo. One of these was the famous *genizah* of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in al-Fustât whose manuscript fragments are now preserved in libraries around the world, with the majority held by the Cambridge University Library. The second was the *genizah* of the Karaite synagogue in Cairo where it served as a storeroom for worn-out books from the synagogue's library. Almost all of the manuscripts of this *genizah* were removed by the Karaite scholar and adventurer Abraham Firkovitch and were sold in 1876 to the Imperial Library (now the Russian National Library) in St. Petersburg.

Both of these immense stores of manuscripts have provided us with incomparable information about the cultural, social and political life of Jews in the medieval Middle East.¹² The Ben Ezra *genizah* contained mostly very small manuscript fragments. While it has been possible, with great effort, to reconstruct a number of literary works from these scraps of old books, the reconstructed text is often quite fragmentary and missing important sections. The Firkovitch collections, on the other hand, contain many quite large manuscripts, giving scholars the possibility of reconstituting texts almost in their entirety.

The *genizahs* of Cairo have indeed provided us with much information concerning Judeo-Arabic literature and the societies in which it was created. It is important, however, to keep in mind that the Cairo *genizahs* preserved only materials that came to Fustât and Cairo; those books that interested the local scholars, those books that they collected or copied. Taking into account the fact that unlike Baghdad, Cordoba, or Qayrawan, Cairo (until the arrival of Maimonides) was not an important center of Jewish cultural creativity, we must assume that we do not have information for much of the Judeo-Arabic literature that may have been produced in Iraq, Syria or elsewhere. This, of

found in the various chapters of *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Meira Polliack, ed., Leiden, 2003. See also Daniel Lasker, et al, "Karaites," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, second edition, Vol. 11, 2007, pp. 785-802.

12 For example, the massive, five-volume study of Jewish communities in the Arab world by S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967-1988) draws almost entirely from *genizah* documents.

course, has serious implications concerning limitations on what we can say about Jewish Mu'tazilism, particularly in its early stages.

Early Period – Ninth Century and First Half of the Tenth Century

Nevertheless, we can determine that significant elements of the Jewish population assimilated Mu'tazilī thought quite early, perhaps beginning by the onset of the ninth century or even the end of the eighth, early enough so that by the middle of the tenth century these ideas had been integrated into Jewish thought and were understood to be original, authentic views of Judaism. We can see this tendency, for example, in the biblical commentaries of the Karaite Yefet ben 'Eli (active in the second half of the tenth century, see below). On the one hand, Yefet is quite the Mu'tazilī in what he has to say about epistemology and logic, proofs for the creation of the world (making use of the "classic" Mu'tazilī proof based on accidents), and so on. On the other hand, Yefet fights against the study of foreign books (*kutub barrāniyya*) and even criticizes the Mu'tazila for their intellectual pride when, as he says, they are actually not the wisest.¹³ It is thus unlikely that he derived his knowledge of kalām from works of Muslim Mu'tazilīs and he evidently believed that his philosophical information derived solely from genuine Jewish sources.

We find these same tendencies in a fragment of a Rabbanite text, apparently written in the middle of the tenth century.¹⁴ This is an anonymous work, written in Hebrew. The author, however, was deeply immersed in Arabic culture, as disclosed by the Arabicisms in his Hebrew and by his quotations from the Qur'ān, which he saw as deriving from Jewish sources and which he planned to translate into Hebrew. The surviving fragments of the work contain part of the introduction, part of the first chapter on divine unity, and part of the second chapter on prayer.

The author's stated audience includes Rabbanites who wish to know more about the topic of divine unity. He also sought to reassure Rabbanite school-teachers who feared to expose the Torah that they taught by rote to the rigors of rational examination. The surviving section of his introduction is devoted to a demonstration that the Torah is universal in its obligation and applies

13 On studying foreign books, see Georges Vajda, *Deux Commentaires Karaïtes sur L'Écclésiaste*, Leiden, 1971, pp. 118-121; and Haggai Ben-Shammai, *The Doctrines of Religious Thought of Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Qirṣānī and Yefet ben 'Eli*, Ph.D. dissertation [Hebrew], The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977, Vol. 1, pp. 105-107. For Yefet's critique of the Mu'tazila in his comments on Psalms 94:8, see Ben-Shammai, *op. cit.*, p. 106, n. 29.

14 The text was published by Jacob Mann, "An Early Theological-Polemical Work," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12-13 (1937-1938), pp. 411-459. A more detailed discussion of this text may be found in David Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofnī Gaon and his Cultural World: Texts and Studies*, Leiden:Brill, 1996, pp. 130-138.

to all rational individuals, a position which he derives from divine unity and the universality of reason.¹⁵ As a more specific example of his absorption of Mu'tazili ideas, I can mention his assertion that prayer is a universal obligation, a position he bases on the rational duty to thank a benefactor. Thanking a benefactor is one of the classic examples found in Mu'tazili literature for the rational laws.

In his introduction, the author criticizes the Samaritans, Christians and Muslims for having deviated from the Torah, the universal religion. He directs his true animus, however, at a group of rationalists he characterizes as "Jewish Mu'tazilis" (in Hebrew: *muwdalei b'nei yisra'el*, a calque translation) whom he accuses of religious relativism and laxity in religious ritual. He says about them:

Because of their great folly and stupidity, they have abandoned the ways of the righteous in order to keep the ways of the world trod by evil men. And they angered (He who is) a shelter for his flock, they sought refuge in the shade of a leaning wall, a tottering fence¹⁶ ...¹⁷ Abû Hâshim, al-Jubbâ'i, and their colleagues who do not know reason and whose words make no sense.¹⁸

I would tend to doubt that this person actually read the books of the founders of the Basran school of the Mu'tazila. Despite our author's moderate Mu'tazilism, Abû Hâshim was for him a symbol of dangerous foreign influence that could lead to a damaging rational extremism.¹⁹ Again, we see an author expressing Mu'tazili ideas and attitudes as being authentic Judaism to such a degree that he places them in opposition to the Mu'tazilis themselves! This would indicate quite a long incubation period for these ideas within Jewish culture.

In this early, inchoate period, Jews interested in rationalistic thought evidently were able to draw from diverse sources. The Ben-Ezra genizah has preserved a small manuscript fragment (Ms. Antonin B72) of a very early theological work. The manuscript itself may be dated paleographically to the end of the ninth century or early tenth century.²⁰ The composition itself may

15 The universality of the Torah was widely discussed by Jewish authors in this period. See David Sklare, "Are the Gentiles Obligated to Observe the Torah? The Discussion Concerning the Universality of the Torah in the East in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in Jay Harris ed., *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, Cambridge, Mass., 2005, pp. 311-346.

16 Psalms 62:4.

17 About a line of text here is damaged and difficult to read.

18 Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

19 This author's attitude towards the Mu'tazilites also mirrors the critique of the Mu'tazila amongst "orthodox" Islam.

20 I would like to express my gratitude to Tamar Leiter of the Hebrew Paleography Project for her help in dating the manuscript.

therefore date to the beginning of the ninth century or even the latter part of the eighth. The non-standard, phonetic orthography of the Judeo-Arabic also supports this early date.²¹ This fragment consists of two folios that contain the beginning of a book on “the nature of the intellect, the principles of nature and other matters as derived from books of the Indians (*al-Hind*) and the Byzantines (*al-Rûm*).” The surviving remnant of the body of the book has the beginning of what appears to be a rather primitive discussion of intellect and the primacy of knowledge. While this is not the place to discuss the origins of the Mu’tazila and early influences on it, the sources mentioned by this author are quite interesting to us and should be noted. The reference to Indian books probably refers to Buddhist literature.²² The term *al-Rûm* may refer specifically to Greek literature from Christian Byzantium, or it may refer to Christian sources in general. While Jewish contact with Buddhist thought remains rather obscure, Christian influence in this early period is clear.²³

The earliest Jewish *mutakallim* known to us by name was Dâwûd al-Muqammas, born in al-Raqqâ and active in the early part of the ninth century. Al-Muqammas converted to Christianity and studied with the Jacobite Archdeacon Nonnus in Nisibis. At some point, and for unknown reasons, Al-Muqammas returned to Judaism. After this, he presumably wrote his two polemical works against Christianity.²⁴ His *‘Ishrûn Maqâla*, a systematic theo-

- 21 An edition of this fragment is due to appear in the second volume of Joshua Blau and Simon Hopkins, *Early Judaeo-Arabic in Phonetic Spelling: Texts from the End of the First Millennium* [Hebrew]. (The first volume appeared in Jerusalem, 2017.) On the phenomenon of phonetic Judeo-Arabic orthography, see Blau and Hopkins, “On Early Judaeo-Arabic Orthography,” *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 12 (1984), pp. 9–27 and eadem, “Judaeo-Arabic Papyri – Collected, Edited, Translated and Analyzed,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), pp. 87–160.
- 22 Mu’tazilite literature refers occasionally to Indian groups, particularly the *Barâhima*. See S. Pines, “A Study of the Impact of Indian, Mainly Buddhist, Thought on Some Aspects of Kalâm Doctrines,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994), pp. 182–203; Sarah Stroumsa, “The Barâhima in Early Kalâm,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985), pp. 229–241. In a forthcoming article “The Presence of Buddhist thought in Kalâm Literature,” to appear in *Philosophy East and West*, Dong Xiuyuan discusses the textual sources for contact between Buddhist thought and the early Mu’tazila. He suggests Balkh as a likely locus for this contact. Dâwûd al-Muqammas wrote a *Refutation of the Buddhists*. See Sarah Stroumsa, *Dâwûd ibn Marwân al-Muqammas: Twenty Chapters*, Provo, Utah, 2016, pp. xxvi–xxvii.
- 23 Much of the discussion concerning the influence of Christian kalâm on the Mu’tazila focuses on the use of a dialectical style of argumentation. See the recent summary by Alexander Treiger, “Origins of Kalâm,” in Sabine Schmidtke ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, New York, 2016. See also the sources referred to in Sarah Stroumsa, op. cit., p. xxxiii, n. 95.
- 24 Sarah Stroumsa, *Dâwûd ibn Marwân al-Muqammas*, pp. xxv–xxvi. He also translated/adapted from Syriac sources a commentary on the six days of creation (the *hexaemeron*) entitled *Kitâb al-Khalîqa*, of which only one small fragment has been identified. See Sarah Stroumsa, “From the Earliest Known Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on Genesis,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), pp. 375–395. He also wrote a commentary on Ecclesiastes based on similar sources, but no manuscripts of this work have been found.

logical book written for a Jewish readership, is our earliest extant theological *summa* in Arabic.²⁵ It thus provides important testimony for this early period in the development of theological thought in the Arabic-speaking world, a time when school traditions were in the process of formation. The work's overall structure is similar to that found in later kalâm compendia, such as Mâturîdî's *Tawhîd* or Juwaynî's *Irshâd*, although it was probably following the model of earlier Christian works no longer extant.²⁶ *Ishrûn Maqâla* treats a few basic topics: epistemology, the nature of the world, divinity, humanity and revelation, and the description and refutation of other religions.

Al-Muqammas was well-grounded in the Aristotelian tradition, which is clearly evident in the opening discussion of logic in which he refers to Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*. His Aristotelian background also appears in the way he makes use of Aristotle's four noetic questions as a means of organizing many of his discussions. The overall kalâm nature of the work, however, is clear in his method of argumentation, making use of the kalâm dialectical techniques of *ilzâm*, *taqsîm*, and *mu'ârada*, as well as in the content of the doctrines he develops. For example, in his understanding of the world, it is made up of substances (*jawâhir*) and accidents (*a'râd*) and not the Aristotelian matter and form. His approach, however, is non-atomistic (unlike the later Mu'tazila) which again exposes his training in Aristotelian-grounded Christian Kalâm, as does his peculiar use of the standard kalâm proof for the createdness of the world which also has its roots in Christian thought.²⁷ Al-Muqammas's presentation of divine justice and the need for revelations is similar to that of the Mu'tazila. Good and evil are absolute values that obligate both God and man. God is aware of human weakness and His justice therefore requires that He provide man with guidance by way of divinely revealed commands and prohibitions.²⁸ His treatment of command and prohibition in Chapter Fifteen anticipates the discussion of the topic found in later Mu'tazilî literature. His position on free will is also Mu'tazilî.²⁹

Al-Muqammas's biography demonstrates the importance of the Syriac Christian intellectual tradition in the development of rational theological

25 In the first edition of the book (Sarah Stroumsa, *Dâwûd ibn Marwân al-Muqammas's Twenty Chapters (Ishrûn Maqâla)*, Leiden, 1989), the Arabic text is presented in Hebrew characters. In the second edition (Sarah Stroumsa, *Dâwûd ibn Marwân al-Muqammas: Twenty Chapters*, Provo, Utah, 2016), the Arabic text is presented in Arabic characters. The second edition also has an enlarged introduction and improved English translation.

26 Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, second edition, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

27 Stroumsa. op. cit., pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

28 Stroumsa. op. cit., p. 326.

29 Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Kalâm in medieval Jewish philosophy," in Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds., *History of Jewish Philosophy*, London and New York, 1997, pp. 99-100.

speculation in the Islamic orbit.³⁰ We may assume that other Jews had similar contact with the Christian tradition and literature, although not necessarily undergoing actual conversion, and who, like al-Muqammas, also drew from their Muslim cultural context. *'Ishrûn Maqâla* was originally written in Arabic characters and the Biblical quotations are presented only in Arabic translation.³¹ This would indicate that al-Muqammas wrote his book for an audience of educated, highly Arabicized Jews who had the background necessary for understanding its technical vocabulary and argumentation. We have no way of knowing how large this audience was, but it was clearly significant.

Al-Muqammas's work was pioneering, representing the beginnings of Jewish systematic theological thinking, and it had some lasting impact on Jewish thought.³² Sa'adya ben Joseph al-Fayyûmî (882-942), Gaon of the Academy of Sura, however brought rationalistic, systematic theology into the mainstream of Jewish culture. Sa'adya Gaon was one of the most prominent intellectual and cultural leaders of Jewry in Arabic-speaking lands. His theological works have influenced Jewish thought through the ages. In addition to his theological works (see below), Sa'adya Gaon composed a large number of groundbreaking books in the fields of biblical exegesis (including translations into Arabic), Jewish law, Hebrew philology, polemics with the Karaites and heretics, and poetry. His most important achievement in the area of theology was to integrate rational kalâm views with Jewish sources and values. He did this not only in his systematic theological writings, but perhaps even more significantly, in his biblical exegesis. He took upon himself the task of re-formulating the Rabbinic interpretation of Scripture in light of contemporary scientific and rationalistic thought. His biblical commentaries, and particularly their introductions, are therefore also important sources for limning his thought. To a large extent, he was addressing an audience similar to that for whom al-Muqammas had written: Jews deeply immersed in the general culture who sought a way of understanding their own cultural sources from which they may have distanced themselves.

30 This article is not the place for discussing the importance of Christian theology for the origins of Islamic kalâm. In addition to the references in note 19 above, see the references in Sarah Stroumsa, *op. cit.*, p. 1, n. 164.

31 Stroumsa, *op. cit.*, pp. xxii, li-lii. It is also important to point out that he appears not to have been educated in Rabbinic traditions, which may have also been true for parts of his readership.

32 See Stroumsa, *op. cit.*, pp. xlvii-li. Writing in Spain in the latter part of the eleventh century, Bahya ibn Paqûda recommended "al-Muqammas's book" together with Sa'adya Gaon's *Kitâb al-Amânât wal-I'tiqâdât* and Samuel ben Hofni's *Kitâb Usûl al-Dîn* as the books which deal with the "spiritual" aspect of the study of the commandments. See Bahya ibn Paqûda, *Kitâb al-Hidayâ ilâ Faraâid al-Qulûb*, A.S. Yahuda, ed., Leiden, 1912, p. 7.

Sa'adya was born in Egypt, in the town of Dilatz in the district of Fayyûm. He left Egypt in his late twenties and traveled through al-Shâm and Iraq. We have evidence that he spent time in Tiberius and Aleppo. He was appointed the head of the Academy of Sura in 928, despite the fact that he did not come from the gaonic aristocracy. At some point, Sa'adya Gaon came into conflict with the Exilarch David ben Zakkai who sought to depose him.³³ The Jewish community was split between his supporters and his opponents for six or seven years until Sa'adya Gaon was recognized again as head of the Academy. While it is not clear to what degree he was able to function as Gaon during this interregnum, it was at this time that Sa'adya wrote his major theological works.³⁴

Sa'adya Gaon wrote two large systematic theological works: his commentary on the highly enigmatic *Sefer Yezirah* (*Book of Creation*),³⁵ entitled *Kitâb al-mabâdî* (written 931) and his theological *summa*, *Kitâb al-amânât wal-i'tiqâdât* (*Book of Beliefs and Convictions*, written 933). Sa'adya Gaon evidently wrote his rationalistic and scientific *Commentary to Sefer Yezirah* as a means of counter-acting strong mystical and Neo-Platonic trends in both Jewish and Muslim society, as typified by the *Ikhwân al-Ḍafâ*, in which letter-mysticism played an important role.³⁶

- 33 The historian Abû al-Hasan al-Mas'ûdî, who was Sa'adya's contemporary had met him and was clearly impressed by him. In his book *al-Tanbih wal-ishrâf* (ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1894, pp. 112-113), al-Mas'ûdî describes Sa'adya's dispute with the Exilarch and the ensuing division in the community. He also mentions Sa'adya's attendance at the *majlis* of the vizier 'Alî ibn 'Isâ and he relates that Sa'adya had studied with Abû Kathîr in Tiberius with whom al-Mas'ûdî had debated concerning abrogation of the law (*naskh*) and the distinction between *naskh* and *badâ'*.
- 34 Much has been written about Sa'adya Gaon's biography and his literary production. The classic study is H. Malter, *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works*, Philadelphia, 1921. A recent and accessible treatment of him is Robert Brody, *Sa'adya Gaon*, Oxford, 2013. A short description of his life and intellectual career is found in L.E. Goodman, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah ben Joseph al-Fayyûmî*, New Haven, 1988, pp. 3-27. For guidance on the secondary literature concerning his theological *oeuvre*, see C. Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 417-418. Important recent discussions of his theological activity are in Sarah Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalam," in D.H. Frank and O. Leaman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 71-90; eadem, *Saadia Gaon: A Jewish Thinker in a Mediterranean Society* [Hebrew], Tel Aviv, 2002; Haggai Ben-Shammai, *A Leader's Project: Studies in the Philosophical and Exegetical Works of Saadya Gaon* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 2015.
- 35 *Sefer Yezirah* describes in rather obscure language how the world was created through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the first ten numerals. There is no agreement as to when it was composed, with suggestions from the second through the ninth centuries.
- 36 An accessible edition of the commentary is by Joseph Qâfîh, *Sefer Yezirah [Kitâb al-Mabâdî] 'im perush ha-Ga'on*, Jerusalem, 1972. An edition was also published by Meyer Lambert, Paris, 1891. On the commentary, see Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Goal in his Commentary on Sefer Yezira," in R. Link-Salinger, ed., *A Straight Path: Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, Washington, D.C., 1988, pp. 1-9; Sarah Stroumsa, "Wondrous Paths': The Ismâ'îlî Context of Saadya's 'Commentary on Sefer Yesira,'" in M. Baumbach, et al, eds. *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter*, vol. 18, 2015, pp. 74-90.

Sa'adya Gaon's main theological work is his *Kitâb al-amânât wal-i'tiqâdât*.³⁷ Its ten discourses are structured in the usual order of kalâm compendia: the necessity for rational investigation and epistemology (introduction); on the createdness of the world and proof of a Creator (*Maqâla* 1); on God's unity, His incorporeality and divine attributes (*Maqâla* 2); law, revelation and prophecy (*Maqâla* 3); on free will and divine justice, good and bad actions, and reward and punishment (*Maqâla* 4-5, as well as 9). The sixth *Maqâla* on the nature of soul serves as an introduction to a particularly Jewish-oriented examination of resurrection and redemption (*Maqâla* 7-8). The book concludes with a discussion of man's optimal behavior in this world.

While this is not the place to provide a full summary of Sa'adya Gaon's thought, it should be stated that the early Mu'tazila was clearly a major source for him, as reflected in his logical argumentation, his technical terminology and conceptual vocabulary. One small example is the typical Mu'tazili phrase he uses when he states that the absolute categories of good and evil have been "planted by God in our intellects" (*gharasa fi 'uqûlnâ*). As typical of this first eclectic period, however, Sa'adya also absorbed information and ideas from a variety of sources, including the *falsafa*, Neo-Platonism,³⁸ and Christian Kalâm.³⁹ Like his predecessor, al-Muqammas, Sa'adya did not accept the doctrine of atomism, perhaps due to the influence of Christian sources and maintained that the world is made up of substance and accidents, rejecting the Aristotelian matter and form.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Sa'adya argues against the Christians (again like al-Muqammas and the Muslim Mu'tazila) that the divine attributes have no ontological status and that the apparent multiplicity of divine attributes is due to the limitations of human language. Therefore in Scripture, it is basically an exegetical issue. Sa'adya introduced into Jewish thought the central Mu'tazili distinction between laws known rationally (*'aqliyyât*) and those known through revelation (*sam'iyât*, *shar'iyât*), a distinction adopted by many Jewish thinkers.

37 An accessible edition of the commentary is by Joseph Qâfih, Jerusalem, 1970. The book was translated into English by Samuel Rosenblatt, *Saadia Gaon: The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, New Haven, 1948.

38 In his youth in Egypt, Sa'adya had corresponded with the Jewish physician and Neo-Platonist thinker Isaac Israeli.

39 Sarah Stroumsa suggests that Sa'adya's eclecticism was due to the fact that as a Jew, he was not committed to any particular philosophical school doctrine, Christian or Muslim. See S. Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalam," p. 80. It was, however, only during his lifetime, or shortly before, that Muslim Mu'tazilite schools began to truly crystallize.

40 Sa'adya was aware of the anti-atomism position of the Mu'tazilite al-Nazzâm and his theory of the "leap," although he does not mention him by name. See Harry A. Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, pp. 165-166.

After Sa'adya Gaon, Mu'tazili Kalâm was the commonly-held philosophical school among Eastern Jewry.⁴¹ Early authors such as al-Muqammas and unknown, anonymous writers undoubtedly played an important role in this development. Sa'adya Gaon's authoritative position, however, together with his towering intellectual influence and vital role in shaping Judeo-Arabic culture clearly promoted and strengthened the widespread absorption of Mu'tazili ideas among Jews.

Sa'adya Gaon's Karaite contemporaries also expressed Mu'tazili ideas in their writings. We should first mention Daniel ben Moses al-Qûmisî (c. 900), the first Karaite ideologue who played an important role in consolidating the Karaites into a movement with a clear credo. As far as we know, he did not compose a specifically theological work.⁴² The impact of the Mu'tazila in a general way, however, is reflected in his biblical exegesis (particularly in his commentary on the Minor Prophets) and in a sermon or circular letter ascribed to him, addressed to his fellow Karaites, all written in Hebrew.⁴³ In this text, al-Qûmisî sets forth articles of faith that revolve around the two Mu'tazili foci of *tawhîd* (God's unity) and *'adl* (divine justice). This is evidently the first attempt in Judaism to formulate normative theological doctrines.⁴⁴ Al-Qûmisî stresses repeatedly the importance of independent rational investigation based on the biblical text, as opposed to accepting religious tenets and laws simply on the basis of tradition and authority (as he accuses the Rabbanites of doing). Al-Qûmisî's expression of Mu'tazili concepts together with his strong opposition to "foreign" books and ideas again points to the early Jewish assimilation of kalâm ideas.⁴⁵

As with al-Qûmisî, the theological teachings of many of the Karaites in the tenth century are found in their biblical exegesis. In this context, we will treat

41 Jewish proponents of other philosophical or religious schools, such as Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism or Sufism, were of course also to be found.

42 A genizah fragment containing the beginning of a *Kitâb tafsîr al-tawhîd* attributed to Daniel ben Moses (al-Qûmisî) was published by Moshe Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah: Exegesis, Halakha, and Polemics in R. Saadya's Translation of the Pentateuch* [Hebrew], New York, 1959, pp. 481-485. It is possible, however, that an early scribe confused Daniel al-Qûmisî with the Dâwûd al-Qûmisî mentioned by al-Mas'ûdî (see note 29 above) as a *mutakallim* who lived in Jerusalem and died in 945.

43 The letter was published with English translation by Leon Nemoy, "The Pseudo-Qumisian Sermon to the Karaites," *PAAJR* 43 (1976), pp. 49-105. Nemoy expressed doubts that al-Qûmisî was the actual author of this text, but he did admit that it came from his circle. The theological sections of the letter are found in pp. 55-60, 88-90.

44 The theological content of al-Qûmisî's writings is analyzed by Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in Meira Polliack, ed., *Karaite Judaism: a Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 341-344. On this topic, see also Moshe Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, pp. 172-175.

45 On his objection to foreign books, see David Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and his Cultural World: Texts and Studies*, Leiden, 1996, p. 139, n. 124.

briefly two Karaite authors who were deeply influenced by Mu'tazili teachings, Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben 'Eli.⁴⁶ Al-Qirqisānī was Sa'adya's younger contemporary, active in the 920's and 930's in Iraq. He was a very erudite scholar, well acquainted with rabbinic traditions, the philosophical and scientific works of his time, as well as with Christian and Muslim Scriptures and traditions. Three major compositions of his have been preserved and serve us as sources for reconstructing his thought.⁴⁷ Al-Qirqisānī's compendium of Karaite law, *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqib* (completed 927), contains also a number of non-legal discussions, such as a history of Jewish sects, polemics with Islam and Christianity, theological topics, and an extensive treatment of the epistemological basis of law (*usūl al-fiqh*), among others.⁴⁸ Before writing his *Kitāb al-Anwār*, al-Qirqisānī wrote *Tafsīr Bereshit*, an extensive philosophical and scientific commentary on the story of the creation of the world in six days as found in the first chapter of Genesis. His model was the Christian *Hexaemeron* literature and his major sources were al-Muqammas and Sa'adya Gaon. This book is a very important source for tracing a fuller picture al-Qirqisānī's thought, but it still needs to be reconstructed and edited from manuscript fragments.⁴⁹ His final major work was *Kitāb al-riyād wal-hadā'iq* (completed 938), a commentary on the non-legal parts of the Pentateuch.⁵⁰ Yefet ben 'Eli (born in Basra and active in Jerusalem during the second half of the tenth century) was not Sa'adya' Gaon's contemporary, but was very familiar with his writings (and criticized them often). Nevertheless,

46 The thought of these two authors is discussed by Haggai Ben-Shammai, *The Doctrines of Religious Thought of Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet Ben 'Eli* [Hebrew], Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977. A very brief summary is found in Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy," pp. 344-352. See also Georges Vajda, "Études sur Qirqisānī," REJ 107 (1946-47), pp. 52-98; 122 (1963), pp. 7-74.

47 Al-Qirqisānī is reported to have composed a *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, but no manuscripts of it have been identified.

48 *Kitāb al-Anwār* was published by Leon Nemoy, ed., *Kitāb al-Anwar wal-Maraqib (Code of Karaite Law)*, 5 vols., New York, 1939-1943. Nemoy's edition was a major achievement, but his text has a number of lacunae that can now be filled due to new manuscript discoveries. Some of these additions are found in Bruno Chiesa, "Some Missing Chapters of al-Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār* Book II," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 2 (2014), pp. 37-49. An English translation of Book I was published in Bruno Chiesa and Wilfrid Lockwood, *Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity*, Frankfurt am Main, 1984. (A partial English translation of Book I was previously published by L. Nemoy, "Al-Qirqisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," HUCA 7 (1930), pp. 317-397, and again in L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, New Haven, 1952, pp. 45-53.)

49 A description of the book is found in David Sklare, "Science and Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth Century: Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī's *Tafsīr Bereshit*" [Hebrew], *Ginzei Qedem* 14 (appearing 2018). The introduction to *Tafsīr Bereshit* has a discussion of thirty-seven principles of biblical exegesis. The first twenty-four of these were published by Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Qirqisani Studies*, London, 1918. Some of this text was translated into English in L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 53-68. In one of the book's chapters, he critiques the position of the Aristotelian *falsafa* that the celestial spheres are living beings, using a work by al-Kindi as his main source.

50 Very little of the book has been published. Some passages were edited by Haggai Ben-Shammai, *Religious Doctrines*.

according to the nature of his theological conceptions, he belongs to the first period of Jewish Mu'tazili thought.

Yefet was perhaps the most important biblical exegete of the Karaite Golden Age, producing commentaries on all twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible. In addition to reflecting Yefet's own thought, his commentaries are an important source of exegetical traditions and doctrines (usually cited anonymously), many of which are not found elsewhere.

In their philosophical doctrines, al-Qirqisânî and Yefet generally follow the path set by Sa'adya Gaon. Their epistemology is similar to that of Sa'adya, although they differ from him on the content of the "authentically-transmitted tradition" (*khavar mutawâtir*). Sa'adya (and all Rabbanites) include Rabbinic traditions in this type of tradition, while al-Qirqisânî and Yefet (and all Karaites) limit it to the text of the Hebrew Bible. They were aware of the four proofs for the creation of the world formulated by Sa'adya. Nonetheless, while they maintain that the created world is made up of substance and accidents (rejecting the Aristotelian matter and form), they do appear to accept some form of atomism.⁵¹ The occurrence of biblical anthropomorphisms provided both authors the opportunity to discuss the distinction between God's essential attributes (existent, omniscient, etc.) and His attributes of action. As was common in Mu'tazili thinking, they understood that the question of divine attributes is not an ontological issue, but due to the limitations of human language, it is an exegetical/linguistic matter. Both made use of the distinction between rational and revealed laws introduced into Jewish thought by Sa'adya Gaon.

"Classical" Period – Second Half of the Tenth Century and the Eleventh Century

In this period, almost all Jewish authors of kalâm works adopted a specific Mu'tazilî doctrine, that of the school of Basra. The influence on Jewish authors by central figures of this school, such as Abû 'Alî ibn Khallâd or 'Abd al-Jabbâr al-Hamadhânî, is clear and explicit.

Samuel ben Hofni Gaon (d. 1013), who served as the head of the Academy of Sura, was the scion of an aristocratic family that provided leaders for the gaonic Academies during the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵² As opposed to

51 See Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Studies in Karaite Atomism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985), pp. 245-254.

52 Samuel ben Hofni's biography, his literary output, his cultural world and major elements of his thought are presented in David Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and his Cultural World: Texts and Studies*, Leiden, 1996. Details of the books mentioned below can be found there on pp. 26-30.

Sa'adya Gaon, Samuel ben Hofni was educated and trained as a member of the gaonic establishment. His full and enthusiastic adoption of Mu'tazilî thought is therefore very significant and demonstrates how it had penetrated into the culturally conservative world of the Academies. Samuel ben Hofni was a very prolific author, producing approximately sixty-five titles. He composed commentaries on certain parts of the Pentateuch in which Mu'tazilî ideas find expression (basically filling in those parts not commented upon by Sa'adya Gaon), commentaries on some Talmudic tractates, a monumental work on Talmudic methodology (*al-Madkhal ilâ 'ilm al-Mishna wal-Talmûd*), about forty-five monographs on various legal topics, and a number of books dealing with various topics in kalâm and legal theory. As for his education in kalâm, his younger Karaite contemporary, Yûsuf al-Basir, reports that Samuel ben Hofni studied ibn Khallâd's *Kitâb al-Usûl* with a teacher named ibn Tihân. He was also familiar with Abû 'Abdallâh al-Basri's polemical work *Kitâb al-idâh* and probably many other books by central figures of the Basran Mu'tazila.⁵³

Samuel ben Hofni Gaon composed at least two books that seem to have treated kalâm topics in a more-or-less comprehensive fashion: *Kitâb al-hidâya*⁵⁴ and *Kitâb usûl al-dîn wa-furû'uhu*.⁵⁵ *Kitâb al-hidâya* consists of one hundred relatively short chapters. We see from the surviving fragmentary table of contents that the book begins with a discussion of the imposition of obligation by God (*taklîf*) and goes on to treat all of the usual topics found in standard Mu'tazilî works. He also wrote books on specific theological topics: *Kitâb al-asmâ' wal-sifât*;⁵⁶ *al-Risâla al-shukriyya*;⁵⁷ *Kitâb fî al-thawâb wal-*

53 See Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni*, p. 53. Ibn Khallâd's *Kitâb al-Usûl* has not come down to us directly, but large parts of it were embedded in the *Kitâb Ziyadât Sharh al-Usûl* by the Zaydi Imam al-Nâtiq bil-haqq al-Buthânî (d. 1033), published in *Basran Mu'tazilite Theology: Abû 'Alî Muhammad b. Khallâd's Kitâb Al-Usûl and its Reception*, Camilla Adang, Wilferd Madelung, and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., Leiden, 2010. The terminology, style, argumentation and subject matter of this text is very similar to that found in parallel discussions in Samuel ben Hofni's writings, thus corroborating his close familiarity with ibn Khallâd.

54 A number of manuscript fragments that have been tentatively identified as belong to this book were published in David Sklare, *The Religious and Legal Thought of Samuel ben Hofni Gaon: Texts and Studies in Cultural History*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1992, Vol. 2, appendix 2. I hope to publish all identified fragments in the future. A genizah booklist also records a *Kitâb al-Irshâd* by Samuel ben Hofni. This may be a different name for the *Kitâb al-Hidâya*.

55 No manuscripts of this book have identified.

56 Almost all of this work was published by I. Goldziher, "Ein anonymer Traktat zur Attributenlehre," in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A. Harkavy*, St. Petersburg, 1908, pp. 95-114. The author was identified by Shraga Abramson, "A Newly Discovered Book by Rav Samuel ben Hophni: On the Names of God and His Attributes" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 52 (1977), pp. 381-382.

57 A few fragments of this book have been identified, including part of the table of contents. It has ten chapters.

'*iqāb*;⁵⁸ and *Kitāb naskh al-shar'*.⁵⁹ In addition, Samuel ben Hofni composed two books that treat topics of legal theory in a Mu'tazilī mode: *Kitāb fī al-sharā'i* and *'Ashar masā'il*.⁶⁰ In his *Kitāb fī al-sharā'i*, he sought to provide Jewish intellectuals who had come into contact with rationalizing modes of thought like kalām or philosophy with a framework for understanding observance of the commandments (particularly the revealed commandments) as part of a meaningful religious system. In the first part of the book he presents the theoretical basis for such a framework, dealing with *taklīf*, the nature and textual form of command and prohibition, the role of intention and motivation in performing the commandments and the use of syllogism (*qiyās*) with the revealed commandments. In the second part, he provides a number of categorizations of the commandments, evidently based on the Mu'tazilī idea that the commandments are a benefit (*luṭf*) which varies according to group or circumstances.⁶¹ *'Ashar masā'il* is composed of ten essays on a variety of topics. The first discusses the idea of consensus (*ijmā'*) as a basis of law; the second and third deal with the question of the universal obligation of the Torah;⁶² the fourth essay is on *taklīf*; the fifth deals with the plain meaning of words (*haqīqa*) and figurative language (*majāz*), a major exegetical issue; the ninth essay discusses supererogatory acts. Other essays treat issues in dispute between the Rabbanites and Karaites, such as the calendar.

The contemporary heads of the Academy of Pumbedita (Samuel ben Hofni's competitors) were not known as theologians, but we find that they also had absorbed some elements of Mu'tazilī teachings. For example, Sherira ben Hananiah Gaon (c. 906-1006), who served as head of Pumbedita for thirty years, wrote a responsum to a question sent from Qayrawān in 992 concerning a Talmudic *aggadah* (non-legal story). The story involves seeming undeserved cruelty towards animals and Sherira makes use of the Mu'tazilī

58 This book is discussed briefly in Haggai Ben-Shammai, "New Findings in a Forgotten Manuscript: Samuel ben Hofni's Commentary on *Ha'azinu* and Sa'adya's Commentary on the Ten Songs" [Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer* 61 (1986), p. 318 and n. 12. Ben-Shammai suggests that some fragments of this book were mistakenly published as belonging to Samuel ben Hofni's commentary to Deuteronomy.

59 A significant part of this book can be reconstructed. It is discussed in David Sklare, "Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish *Mutakallimūn* in the Tenth Century," in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh, S. H. Griffith, eds., *The Majlis: Religious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Wiesbaden, 2000, pp. 137-161. I plan to publish it, together with other Jewish polemical works, in the near future.

60 The extensive surviving fragments of both of these were published, translated, annotated and provided with extensive introductions in David Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and his Cultural World*.

61 See Sklare, *Samuel ben Hofni Gaon and his Cultural World*, pp. 150-152, 186-188 and the sources mentioned there.

62 This topic was widely discussed among Jewish *mutakallimūn* in this period. See David Sklare, "Are the Gentiles Obligated to Observe the Torah? The Discussion Concerning the Universality of the Torah in the East in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries."

idea of the divine compensation (*ta'wîd*) given to animals and infants for undeserved suffering in order to interpret the *aggadah*.⁶³ Sherira's son, Hayya (939-1038), seems to have been more exposed to Arabic culture than his father. A number of his responsa have theological content. The most well-known of these responds to a question concerning man's appointed life span (*ajal*).⁶⁴ Hayya wrote a number of legal monographs that have theological introductions. In the introduction to his work on sale and purchases, *Kitâb al-bay' wal-ashriya*, he raises the question of why there is need for human commercial activity and acquisition if God provides man with the various benefits (*masâlih*) they require. His response to the questions mirrors the Mu'tazilite discussion of the interaction between human freewill and initiative and divine knowledge and capability.⁶⁵

Before turning to the Karaite authors of this period, I would like to touch on another Rabbanite figure from the other end of the Islamicate world, Qayrawân, who had Mu'tazili leanings.⁶⁶ Nissim ben Jacob (c. 990 – 1057) was the head of the Talmudic academy in Qayrawân who maintained contact with Jewish religious leaders in Iraq and al-Andalus.⁶⁷ He composed a number of works, mostly on Talmudic topics. One of his works was *Megillat Setarim*, a sort of published private notebook written in both Arabic and Hebrew, containing a variety of materials.⁶⁸ In one section, Nissim ben Jacob critiques Samuel ben Hofni's position in *Kitâb al-Hidâya* that God can only be known through rational proof (*istidlâl*) and not through direct, intuitive experience (*darûrî*). Nissim gave the revelation at Mount Sinai as an example of what the Book of Exodus seems to present as an overwhelming, sensual, direct experience of divinity. Only fragments of Nissim ben Jacob's works have survived, however, so we cannot get a full sense of his theological positions.

Samuel ben Hofni Gaon's affinity for the Basran school of the Mu'tazila was also clearly evinced by his Karaite contemporaries. The first known

63 On this responsum, see David Sklare, "The Reception of Mu'tazilism among Jews who were not Professional Theologians," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 2 (2014), pp. 25-28.

64 Weill, G., "The Responsum of Rav Hai Gaon Concerning the Allotted Lifespan" [Hebrew], in M.D. Cassuto, J. Klausner, and J. Guttmann, eds., *Sefer Assaf: Qovetz Ma'marey Mehqar*, Jerusalem, 1953, pp. 261-279.

65 See Sklare, "The Reception of Mu'tazilism," pp. 28-30.

66 On the Mu'tazilite atmosphere in the Qayrawân *midrash* (academy), see Sklare, "The Reception of Mu'tazilism," pp. 30-31. Note that the responsum of Sherira Gaon mentioned above was sent from Qayrawân. Samuel ben Hofni's book on the divine attributes was dedicated to Abraham ibn 'Atâ, the leader of the Qayrawân Jewish community, indicating that Mu'tazilite teachings were appreciated there.

67 Nissim ben Jacob's Mu'tazilism was noted already by I. Goldziher. See his "R. Nissim b. Jacob Moutazilite," *REJ* 47 (1903), pp. 179-186.

68 This book is treated by Shraga Abramson, *Rav Nissim Gaon: Five Books* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1965, pp. 181-360, including publication of many fragments.

Karaite compendium of Mu'tazilī thought was composed by Levi ben Yefet (active during the final decades of the tenth century and first decades of the eleventh), the son of Yefet ben 'Eli. Levi ben Yefet named his book *Kitāb al-ni'ma* because, as he writes, "it is the first of God's blessings (*ni'am*) to me," indicating that it was his first literary effort.⁶⁹ The book is divided into rather short chapters (similar to Samuel ben Hofni's *Kitāb al-hidāya*) and the presentation of the material is straightforward without the usual convoluted kalāmīc dialectical argumentation. Indeed, Levi stresses that he intended to write a very short summary of kalām topics. These qualities of the book indicate that it was aimed at a general, if educated, readership. The frequent use of biblical quotations gives the book a clear Jewish character. Levi's *Kitāb al-ni'ma* represents a shift in the Jerusalem Karaites attitudes towards non-Jewish learning. Earlier Karaites, such as Levi's father, Yefet, had opposed the study of "outside" non-Jewish books. Levi, however, had quite clearly imbibed deeply from the Basran Mu'tazilī literature. His book could almost be seen as a précis of the voluminous tomes of his contemporary, Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī. It is unlikely, however, that the young Levi actually read them.

Levi's younger contemporary, Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm ha-Kohen al-Basīr,⁷⁰ however, was well read in 'Abd al-Jabbār and the books of his students. Al-Basīr (died c. 1040) was born in Basra and settled in the Karaite center in Jerusalem where he studied with Yūsuf ibn Nūh. At some point (perhaps on his way to Jerusalem), he met with Samuel ben Hofni (most likely in Baghdad) and discussed kalām topics with him. Like his older Rabbanite contemporary, al-Basīr was also a prolific author, writing works of theology, law, legal theory and polemics.⁷¹ He achieved a central position of religious and intellectual

69 Levi ben Yefet also wrote a number of extensive legal works, commentaries on specific biblical passages (*nukat*), and also abridged a work on Hebrew lexicography. Detailed information about Levi and his *Kitāb al-Ni'ma*, including extensive selections from it, is found in David Sklare, "Levi ben Yefet and his *Kitāb al-Ni'ma*," in C. Adang, S. Schmidtke, and D. Sklare, eds., *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, Würzburg, 2007, pp. 157-216. See also, Wilferd Madelung, "Mu'tazili Theology in Levi ben Yefet's *Kitāb al-Ni'ma*," *Intellectual History of the Islamic World 2* (2014), pp. 9-17.

70 He evidently was given the cognomen "al-Basīr" (the seer) because he was blind. His blindness may also be indicated by the fact that all of his books were dictated, an unusual practice among Jewish authors.

71 Descriptions and information concerning al-Basīr's *oeuvre* may be found in David Sklare, "Yūsuf al-Basīr: Theological Aspects of his Halakhic Works," in Daniel Frank, ed., *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity*, Leiden, 1995, pp. 249-270. (In some cases, the information needs to be up-dated in light of recent research.) Very few of al-Basīr's books have been published. Most manuscripts of his works are found in the Firkovitch collections, although a few are also in the British Library, the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and the Kaufmann collection. See David Sklare (in cooperation with Haggai Ben-Shammai), *Judaeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collections: The Works of Yusuf al-Basir* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1997.

leadership, illustrated by the fact that he was one of few Karaites who wrote responsa, both theological and legal. His theological thought became the “official” Karaite teaching for many centuries and a number of his books were translated into Hebrew for use of Karaites in Byzantium and elsewhere.

Al-Basir composed two theological compendia: the relatively concise *Kitāb al-tamyīz*⁷² and the later, much larger, *Kitāb al-muhtawī*.⁷³ He shows himself in these books to be a close disciple of ‘Abd al-Jabbār and his school, with explicit references to him. He also kept up-to-date with the school’s most recent literature. In *Kitāb al-muhtawī*, al-Basir mentions the commentary he wrote to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd al-Labbād’s *Kitāb al-usūl*. Al-Labbād was ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s disciple and successor in teaching. In both of his compendia, he closely follows the structure of his Muslim models. As opposed to Levi ben Yefet’s *Kitāb al-ni‘ma*, the Jewish character of al-Basir’s theological works is minimal and he includes chapters that would be mostly of interest to Muslim theologians.⁷⁴

Al-Basir’s continuing involvement with the Bahshamiyya school led by ‘Abd al-Jabbār found further expression in his refutations of the doctrines of Abu l-Husayn Muhammad b. ‘Alī al-Basrī. Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī was a student of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s in Rayy, having previously studied medicine in Baghdad which exposed him to the Aristotelian tradition. At Rayy, he criticized some of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s views which some of his fellow students saw as weakening the Mu‘tazilī proof for God’s existence, even though he saw his critiques as strengthening the kalām method. He wrote two books: *Tasāfuh al-adilla* in which he presents his critique of Bahshamiyya doctrines

72 This book was also known as al-Mansūrī, evidently named for the person who had requested its composition, perhaps Abū Mansūr Judah ben Daniel for whom al-Basir had written response to his questions.

A partial edition of the book was published by Wolfgang von Abel, *Das Buch der Unterscheidung*, Freiburg, 2005. The entire book is found in manuscript. Von Abel compares the text of *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* with the Hebrew translation, *Sefer Mahkimat Peti*, in “Zum textlichen Verhältnis zwischen *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* von Yūsuf al-Basir und der hebräischen Übersetzung *Sefer Mahkimat Peti* am Beispiel der Schlusskapitel der Ersten Hauptteils,” in C. Adang, S. Schmidtke, and D. Sklare, eds., *A Common Rationality: Mu‘tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, Würzburg, 2007, pp. 217-227.

73 A preliminary edition of the Judeo-Arabic text was prepared by David Blumenthal and is found in Georges Vajda, *Al-Kitāb al-Muhtawī de Yūsuf al-Basir: Texte, Traduction et Commentaire*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 634-780. Most of this volume is devoted to a highly annotated translation and explication of the text by Vajda, including extensive references and quotes from the works of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. See the review articles of this volume by Haggai Ben-Shammai in *Kiryat Sefer* 62 (1988-89), pp. 407-426 [Hebrew] and by Bruno Chiesa in *Henoch* 10 (1988), pp. 355-376. A chapter of the book missing in the manuscript used by Vajda and Blumenthal is provided by Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Lost Chapters of Yūsuf al-Basir’s *Kitāb al-Muhtawī* (tentative edition),” in David Sklare (in cooperation with Haggai Ben-Shammai), *Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collections: The Works of Yūsuf al-Basir* [Hebrew], Jerusalem, 1997, pp. 113-126.

74 See Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Major Trends,” pp. 355-356.

and *Ghurar al-adilla* containing what he saw to be the best proofs.⁷⁵ These two books became the basis for the last school of the Mu'tazila. Yūsuf al-Basīr wrote two refutations of the critiques and doctrines that Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī expounds in his books, defending the theological tradition to which he adhered.⁷⁶

In addition to his theological compendia, al-Basīr also composed a number of short treatises or essays. Some of these were written originally as responsa. He mentions in his *Kitāb al-muhtawī* three treatises of his which may have been part of the controversy around the teachings of Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī: *Ahwāl al-fā'il*; *Ahkām al-mu'aththirāt*; and *Kitāb al-istidlāl bi'l-shāhid 'alā 'l-ghā'ib*. No manuscripts of these works have been identified. Other known short essays, mostly on *usūl al-fiqh* topics,⁷⁷ are: *Maqālat al-qiyās* (on the use of analogical reasoning in law); *Kitāb al-hidāya* (on transmitted traditions, particularly rabbinic ones); *Kitāb al-shukūk* (on whether a legal decision must be based on certain knowledge ('ilm) or whether probable opinion (*zann*) is sufficient; and *Mas'ala fi'l-nubūwa*. A number of his responses have been preserved, including a collection named *masā'il 'aqliyya* and another called *masā'il al-istiqtāl* (concerning the justification of the death penalty and the value of repentance performed by someone condemned to death).

As we have seen above in relation to Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī, al-Basīr was quite a polemicist and produced a number of polemical works, many of which evince Mu'tazili tendencies. These include: *Naqd shemuel rās al-mathība* (a critique of the anti-Karaite sections in Samuel ben Hofni's 'Ashar masā'il); *Kitāb*

75 Some fragments of the *Tassaḥūh al-adilla* have been recently identified in the Firkovitch Collections and published by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, *Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī's Tassaḥūh al-adilla*, Wiesbaden, 2006. For a description of al-Basrī's doctrines and the formation of his school, see the introduction to this volume and the two publications mentioned in the following footnote.

The Karaites in Jerusalem and Cairo copied many Muslim Mu'tazilite works, sometimes transcribing them in Hebrew characters. Some of these manuscripts found their way to the library of the Karaite synagogue in Cairo and from there to the Firkovitch Collections in St. Petersburg and the British Library. In this way, a number of Mu'tazilite books, such as *Tassaḥūh al-adilla* (or at least fragments of them), not known from other sources were preserved. For another example, see Gregor Schwarb, "Découverte d'un Nouveau Fragment du Kitāb al-Mughnī fi 'Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa-l-'Adl du Qādi 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī dans une Collection Karaïte de la British Library," MIDEO 27 (2008), pp. 119-129.

76 Fragments of these two refutations are published in Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, "Yūsuf al-Basrī's First Refutation (*Naqd*) of Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī's Theology," in C. Adang, S. Schmidtke, and D. Sklare, eds., *A Common Rationality: Mu'tazilism in Islam and Judaism*, Würzburg, 2007, pp.229-296; and Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, *Rational Theology in Interfaith Communication: Abu l-Husayn al-Basrī's Mu'tazili Theology among the Karaites in the Fātimid Age*, Leiden, 2006, Chapter 1.

77 *Usūl al-fiqh* in this period was essentially part of Mu'tazilite Kalām, based on its epistemology. On Jewish *usūl al-fiqh*, see Gregor Schwarb, "Usūl al-fiqh im jüdischen kalām des 10. Und 11. Jahrhunderts: Ein Überblick," in *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes LX* (2007) [Orient als Grenzberreich: Rabbinisches und ausserrabbinisches Judentum, Annelies Kuyt and Gerold Necker, eds.], pp. 77-104.

al-radd ‘alâ ‘l-qâ‘ilîn bi’l-i‘tidâl (a response to those who use the equinox in calculating the calendar); *Al-kalâm ‘alâ al-samâra*;⁷⁸ *Kitâb al-isti‘âna*, also called *Al-naqd ‘alâ Abî Ja‘far al-Tabarî* (A response to criticism of biblical traditions concerning the miracles performed by Moses and a discussion of the epistemological quality of traditions); a critique of the idea of *i‘jaz al-qur‘ân* written for participants in inter-religious *majâlis*;⁷⁹ and *Risâla fî ma‘nâ ijâzat al-naskh*.⁸⁰

Kitâb al-istibsâr is al-Basîr’s major work of religious law, divided into nine or ten *maqâlât* that were evidently written at various times and organized as one work towards the end of his life. He saw his various books of theology and religious law as being parts of one whole, as he explains in *Kitâb al-muhtawî*:

Even though this book is entitled *al-muhtawî* because it encompasses the fundamentals of religion – and (this would certainly include) the sources of religious law and the detailed exposition of the commandments – I have limited myself to instruction relating to the (fundamentals of religion) as a whole out of fear of being verbose and straying far afield. I have already dictated (some books) concerning the commandments that I hope will complete and complement (what I have written here). (Those works provide) a detailed treatment of what I mention here (only) in a general fashion.⁸¹

Kitâb al-istibsâr and *Kitâb al-muhtawî* were thus written to complement each other. Indeed, al-Basîr’s theological concerns are very present in his discussions of the details of religious law. For example, in the first *maqâla*, devoted to the laws of circumcision, he interweaves discussions of the nature of obligation, the relationship between the revealed and rational laws, mental development and divine compensation for pain (*‘iwad*). This section ends with a series of ten short essays, most of which are concerned with the relationship between knowledge (of God, of the nature of the commandments), intention and the performance of the commandments.⁸²

78 Al-Basîr evidently wrote this book after a polemical encounter with the Samaritan scholar Abû l-Hasan al-Ďurî. See Gregor Schwarb, “Mu‘tazilism in the Age of Averroes,” in Peter Adamson, ed., *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 16), London, 2011, p. 280, n. 139. A follower or student of al-Basîr also wrote a polemic against the Samaritans.

79 This work is described in detail in David Sklare, “Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish *Mutakallimun* in the Tenth Century,” in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh, S. H. Griffith, eds., *The Majlis: Religious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Wiesbaden, 2000, pp 137-161

80 This book was one of al-Basîr’s last works and was also probably intended as an aid for those debating in *majâlis*. It is described in Gregor Schwarb, “Theological Semantics in Yûsuf al-Basîr’s *Risâla fî ma‘nâ ijâzat al-naskh*,” in *The Semitic Languages of Jewish Intellectual Production. Memorial Volume for Dr. Friedrich Niessen*, Maria Angeles Gallego and Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, eds., Leiden (forthcoming).

81 G. Vajda, *Al-Kitâb al-Muhtawî de Yûsuf al-Basîr: Texte, Traduction et Commentaire*, p. 756.

82 The interweaving of law and theology in *Kitâb al-istibsâr* are discussed in David Sklare, “Yûsuf al-Basîr: Theological Aspects of his Halakhic Works.”

Many Muslim Mu'tazilis were active as jurists, the most notable example being 'Abd al-Jabbâr. Many had an interest in *usûl al-fiqh*. Yûsuf al-Basîr's *Kitâb al-istibsâr* offers us an unusual opportunity to gain some sense of how an early Mu'tazilî discussion of *fiqh* would look; how the theological abstractions and highly developed epistemology interacted with the nitty-gritty of positive law.

Yeshu'ah ben Judah (Abû l-Faraj Furqân ibn Asad) (active second half of the 11th cent.) was al-Basîr's disciple and also studied with Levi ben Yefet. After al-Basîr's death, Yeshu'ah assumed a central teaching and leadership role in the Jerusalem Karaite community and maintained extensive relationships with the Karaite community in Egypt and with the Rabbanites. His writings reveal a wide and deep erudition in general and Jewish knowledge. Like his teachers, Yeshu'ah was theologically Mu'tazilî. Even though he did not compose any specifically theological works, his Mu'tazilî tendencies most certainly find expression in his various compositions.⁸³

Most of Yeshu'ah's works are concerned with religious law and biblical exegesis. His major works of religious law are the "long" commentary on the book of Leviticus (*al-Tafsîr al-mabsût fî Sefer Vayiqra*) and the commentary on the Ten Commandments (*Tafsîr 'Aseret ha-Devarim*). These are a very large works, the extent of which is still not clear due to the state of the manuscripts. In them, Yeshu'ah treats a wide variety of legal and exegetical topics in an exhaustive and comprehensive manner and he quotes his Karaite predecessors and Rabbinic literature extensively. Some of his discussions actually are small independent works imbedded within the commentary. Upon seeing the then uncompleted commentary on Leviticus, Abû l-Hasan Dâwûd ibn 'Imrân ibn Levi, a wealthy Egyptian Karaite, requested that Yeshu'ah write a shorter commentary on the entire Pentateuch for his son's education. Yeshu'ah agreed and in 1054 began to compose his "short" commentary, also quite a lengthy work, which includes a translation of the Pentateuch and commentary on grammatical, theological, ethical and legal matters.

He also wrote a number of smaller works of religious law including *Kitâb al-nudûr wal-aymân*; *Maqâlat al-sabt*; *al-Kalâm fî l-bi'ur*; and *Jawâbât al-masâ'il al-mushkîla fî l-'arayat*. The latter work on degrees of forbidden marriage has a lengthy introduction in which Yeshu'ah presents the fundamental issues in Mu'tazilî *usûl al-fiqh*.⁸⁴ In his large works, he mentions a few times

83 Very little has been written about Yeshu'ah ben Judah. One secondary source is Haggai Ben-Shammai, "A Unique Lamentation on Jerusalem by the Karaite author Yeshu'a ben Judah" [Hebrew], in E. Fleischer et al, eds., *Mas'at Moshe: Studies in Jewish and Islamic Culture Presented to Moshe Gil*, Jerusalem, 1998, p. 93-102.

84 This book was translated into Hebrew by Yeshu'ah's student Jacob ben Simeon. The translation was published by I. Markon, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, St. Petersburg, 1908.

a *Mas'alat al-ijtihād* which unfortunately has not yet been identified. He also wrote a lengthy anti-Rabbanite polemic entitled *Tafsīr Torah Tzivvah Lanu*.

Yeshu'ah's only work which touches more directly on kalām topics is his *Kitāb al-tawriya*. In this large book, he treats a number of important issues related to epistemology, revelation and hermeneutics. In addition, he elaborates on legal theory and polemical topics such as the eternal nature of the Torah and the impossibility of its abrogation.⁸⁵

For centuries, a work in Byzantine Karaite Hebrew entitled *Bereshit Rabbah* has been attributed to Yeshu'ah ben Judah.⁸⁶ This is a Mu'tazilī commentary on Genesis in the form of questions and answers. The Judeo-Arabic original of this text has now been identified and it appears that this was actually part of a larger commentary on the Pentateuch, probably written in the latter part of the eleventh century by a disciple of Yeshu'ah ben Judah.⁸⁷

Yeshu'ah evidently had a number of students who did not come from the Middle East. Tobias ben Moses and Jacob ben Simeon were from Byzantium (most likely from Constantinople). They (and perhaps others not known to us) returned to Byzantium and transmitted the intellectual attainments of the Jerusalem Karaites to the Byzantine Karaite community by means of Hebrew translations and independent works in Hebrew. Tobias translated Yūsuf al-Basīr's *Kitāb al-muhtawī* as *Sefer ha-Ne'imot* and his *Kitāb al-tamyiz* as *Sefer Mahkimat Peti*. A number of epitomes of Mu'tazilī thought were also produced, such as *Meshivat Nefesh*, *Marpe la-'Etzem*, and *Tzidduq ha-Din*.⁸⁸ They thus created the basis for a flourishing Karaite culture in Byzantium in which Mu'tazilism had an important place up through the fourteenth century.⁸⁹ Judah Hadassi (active in the middle of the twelfth century in Constan-

85 Gregor Schwarb has prepared an edition and annotated translation of *Kitāb al-tawriya*. It is to be hoped that it will be published in the near future.

86 The attribution is found at the beginning of one of the two surviving manuscripts. This text was described and analyzed at length, including extensive citations with German translations, by M. Schreiner, "Der Kalām in der jüdischen Literatur," *Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 13 (1895), pp. 1-67; and M. Schreiner, "Studien über Jeschua b. Judah," *Bericht über die Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 20 (1902), pp. 26-68. These were the first studies of Jewish Mu'tazilism.

87 The text and its Arabic original are discussed briefly in David Sklare, "Scriptural Questions: Early Texts in Judaeo-Arabic" [Hebrew], in Meir Bar-Asher, Simon Hopkins, Sarah Stroumsa, and Bruno Chiesa, eds., *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, Jerusalem, 2007, pp. 216-217.

88 See Georges Vajda, "Two epitomes of Karaite theology: *Sefer Meshivat Nefesh* and *Pereq Zidduq Haddin*," *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D.H. Baneth Dedicata*, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 103-110.

89 On Byzantine Karaite philosophy from the twelfth century onwards, see Daniel Lasker, "Byzantine Karaite Thought," in Meira Polliack, ed., *Karaite Judaism: a Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, Leiden, 2003, pp. 505-528. A fuller discussion is in Daniel Lasker, *From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy*, Leiden, 2008.

tinople) included extensive Mu'tazili discussions of theology in his encyclopedia of Karaite teachings, *Eshkol ha-Kofer*. We can see in *Eshkol ha-Kofer*, however, the beginnings of the influence of Aristotelian thought that Hadassi interweaves with his kalâm in a somewhat primitive manner.⁹⁰ The absorption of Maimonidean Aristotelianism by Karaite thought continued through the thirteenth century. Aaron ben Elijah (d. 1369) in his theological *summa* *Etz Hayyim* sought to salvage elements of the classical Karaite theology by integrating it with Aristotelian thought.⁹¹

The last major Karaite Mu'tazili author of this period known to us was Sahl b. al-Fadl b. Sahl (Yashar b. Hesed b. Yashar) al-Tustari, who was active in Jerusalem in the last third of the eleventh century.⁹² Al-Tustari was a member of an eminent family of Karaite communal leaders, merchants and financiers, some of whom served as high officials in the Fatimid court.⁹³ He was evidently the leading Jewish religious and intellectual figure in Jerusalem in the years just before the Crusader conquest as he was the Jewish representative in a public disputation held in Jerusalem, as reported by Abû Bakr Muhammad ibn al-'Arabi.⁹⁴

Sahl al-Tustari's creativity in his writings demonstrate the continuing intellectual vitality of the Jerusalem Karaite community. While Yûsuf al-Basîr saw the ideas of Abu l-Husayn al-Basrî as presenting a danger to the Bahshamiyya Mu'tazila, Sahl al-Tustari was attracted to them. Al-Basrî's doctrines are reflected in at least three of al-Tustari's writings: his *Maqdisiyyât* (responses to theological questions of 'Alî b. Sulaymân al-Muqaddasi);⁹⁵ *Kitâb al-talwîh ilâ*

90 Hadassi may have studied Aristotelian philosophy at the secular university that existed in Constantinople at his time. He quotes in Greek from what was evidently a philosophical primer text. The theological sections of *Eshkol ha-Kofer* with English translation and discussion of his use of Greek will be published in the near future in Daniel Lasker, Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, and David Sklare (in association with Sandra Gørgen and Saskia Dönitz), *Editing Theology at a Crossroad: A Preliminary Edition of Judah Hadassi's Eshkol ha-kofer, First Commandment, and Studies of the Book's Judaeo-Arabic and Byzantine Contexts*, Leiden.

91 On Aaron ben Elijah, see Daniel Frank, *The Religious Philosophy of the Karaite Aaron ben Elijah: The Problem of Divine Attributes*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1991.

92 He was quite possibly killed during the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1096 when the Jerusalem Jewish community was devastated.

93 The most comprehensive article to date on al-Tustari is Gregor Schwarb, "Sahl b. al-Fadl al-Tustari's Kitâb al-îmâ'," *Ginzei Qedem* 2 (2006), pp. 61*-105*. Schwarb gives references to research on the Tustari family in note 2.

94 See Schwarb, op. cit., pp. 67*-71*.

95 'Alî b. Sulaymân al-Muqaddasî was a contemporary of and student of al-Tustari. He was originally from Jerusalem, but had moved to Egypt, hence his cognomen. While he wrote few works of his own (among them a short work on *tahrîf*), 'Alî b. Sulaymân evidently took upon himself on the role of preserving the intellectual heritage of the Jerusalem Karaites. He produced a number of condensations of important works of religious law and Hebrew philology as well as condensations and anthologies of biblical commentaries. He was an energetic copyist and many of his autograph manuscripts have been preserved in the Firkovitch collections and other libraries. He was an avid student of Mu'tazilite kalâm and his copies of

l-tawhîd wal-'adl (a summary of his theology); *Kitâb al-tahrîr li-kitâb Aristû fîmâ ba'd al-tabî'a* (a critical commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*).⁹⁶

In addition to these theological works, al-Tustarî composed a commentary on the Pentateuch, legal responsa, and a work on forbidden marriages (*Maqâla fî al-'arayot*) in which he criticizes a legal opinion of Yesu'ah ben Judah. Perhaps his major work was his *Kitâb al-Îmâ' ilâ jawâmi' al-taklîf 'il-m^{an} wa-'amal^{an}*.⁹⁷ The book was written at the request of 'Alî b. Sulaymân who asked him to prepare a book similar to al-Sharîf al-Murtadâ's *Kitâb Jumal al-'ilm wal-'amal*. Al-Tustarî divided his book into three main parts: a concise digest of Mu'tazilî *usûl al-dîn*; second, an exposition of *usûl al-fiqh*; and third, a systematic presentation of the foundations of the specific ordinances in the Torah and the evidence for them. Al-Tustarî included a summary of Aristotelian syllogistics in his discussion of *usûl al-fiqh*, evidently the first Jewish writer to do so in a systematic fashion.⁹⁸

The final work to be mentioned here, even though it may belong to the final period of Jewish Mu'tazilism, is entitled *Kitâb al-usûl al-muhadhdhabyya*, authored (as stated on the title page) by Yashar (Sahl) ben Hased al-Tustarî. The dating of the book is problematic, but it is possible that the author was the grandson of the Sahl al-Tustarî discussed above. As told by the author, the book was composed on the instructions of a certain al-Qâdî al-Ra'îs al-Muhadhdhab Saniyy al-Dawla.⁹⁹ From what we can see in the ten surviving folios, the book is a précis of Mu'tazilî kalâm couched in universal terms with no Jewish characteristics, which would be appropriate to the circumstances of its composition.

Late Period: Twelfth Century and Onwards

The geographical focus of this period moves to Egypt. This is a period in which there was little theological creativity. There was, however, still a felt

Abu l-Husayn al-Basrî's *Tasaffuh al-adilla* and al-Sharîf al-Murtadâ's *Kitâb al-Dhakhirat al-'âlim wa-basirat al-muta'allim* (see Schwarb, op. cit., n. 69) have been preserved. A full study of him is a desideratum. In the meantime it is possible to consult A. Borisov, "The Time and Place of the Life of the Karaite Author 'Alî b. Sulaymân" [Russian], *Palestinskiy Sbornik* 64-5 (2) (1956), pp. 109-114.

96 Extracts with translations from these books are found in Madelung and Schmidtke, *Rational Theology in Interfaith Communication: Abu l-Husayn al-Basrî's Mu'tazilî Theology among the Karaites in the Fâtimid Age*, Leiden, 2006, chaps. 2-4.

97 A detailed description of the book is found in Schwarb, op. cit.

98 His use of Aristotelian logic in relation to legal hermeneutics was preceded by al-Qirqisânî. See Schwarb, op. cit., pp. 92*-98*.

99 On the book, see Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics," pp. 358-359. Ben-Shammai suggests tentatively that this al-Qâdî al-Muhadhdhab may be identified with a person of this name active in the Fatimid court who died in 1161.

need for establishing a rational foundation for religious belief in order to give depth and meaning to daily religious practice. This period is therefore mostly one of summaries, epitomes and catechisms. The Karaite literature of this period in general, including kalâm, has barely been investigated. Some works, though, have been identified.

In the middle of the twelfth century, a father and son both composed similar summaries of Mu'tazilî kalâm teachings. David ben Hisdai Rosh ha-Golah (indicating that he was a descendant of eighth-century sectarian, Anan ben David) wrote a *Kitâb al-tawhîd* and his son, Solmon ben David Nasi, wrote a work entitled *Kitâb usûl al-dîn alladhîn mina lâ yasa'u kull mukallaḥ tarkahû wa-ihmâlahû*. Both works are organized in question and answer form. The contents are presented in a straightforward fashion without any dialectical argumentation or proofs.

Karaite law requires a slaughterer to know and understand the rational basis for proving God's existence, His unity and His justice. The issue is the animal's undeserved suffering. The slaughterer must thus understand the concept of *'iwad*, that God will recompense the slaughtered animal for its pain, and the theological underpinnings of the idea. Otherwise, he will be committing an evil act when he kills the animal. As a result, manuals of laws of slaughtering often had theological introductions. Solomon ben David Nasi also composed a large work on slaughtering and some of its manuscripts place his précis of kalâm teachings before the laws of slaughtering. (There is also considerable theological discussion in the body of the book.) This may have been the reason why he felt the need to compose his summary, even though his father's book was available. Similarly, in the fourteenth century, Israel ben Samuel ha-Dayyan ha-Ma'aravi wrote a short theological catechism, *Tartîb al-'aqâ'id al-sitta*, which he placed before his *Shurût al-dhabâha*. In this case as well, the theological work also took on an independent life.

The last such theological epitome, entitled *Kitâb usûl al-dîn*, was written towards the end of the fifteenth century by Elijah ben Aaron ibn 'Abd al-Walî. This book was part of a large volume containing also a summary of the work on the Karaite liturgy by Melamed Fadl and a summary of Samuel ben Moses ha-Ma'aravi's legal compendium, *Kitâb al-Murshid*. Together, all of these books formed a vademecum containing all the information that the average Karaite would need.¹⁰⁰

100 Gregor Schwarb also mentions a book by al-Fadl ibn al-Mufarraj, *Kitâb ladhḥat al-dhât fi ithbât al-wahda wal-sifât* as belonging to this period. See his "Mu'tazilism in the Age of Averroes," in Peter Adamson, ed., *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 16), London, 2011, p. 279, n. 136.

The last time we hear of kalâm teachings among the Egyptian Karaites is in the middle of the seventeenth century. There was at this time a controversy centering on a slaughterer who had come from Istanbul to Cairo to be certified. His education in Cairo also entailed learning the fundamentals of Mu'tazili thought, including the idea of *'iwad*. His co-religionists in Istanbul, however, grounded their religious belief in Maimonidean Aristotelianism and considered the idea of *'iwad* to be an abomination. When our slaughterer returned home, the Istanbul Karaite community refused to recognize his certification. The Arabic-speaking communities in Damascus and Cairo were enraged by the rejection of what they took to be a fundamental article of faith and for many years, the two sides refused to eat the meat of the other. Until this time, the two communities had evidently not been aware of their theological differences.¹⁰¹

As a final note to this section, I would point out that the Firkovitch collections show that Karaite libraries in Cairo contained a significant amount of rather diverse Sufi literature, both Muslim and Jewish, some being pure Sufi works and some being Sufi-oriented works of ethics, etc. There are no indications that in the Karaite community there were any felt tension between the commonly held rational Mu'tazilism and Sufi mysticism. I would like to suggest as food for thought and future research that those with a Sufi bent may have found kalâm epistemology and theology a comfortable intellectual ground for the Sufi religious experience. An indication of this may be found in Bahya ibn Paqûda's Sufi-colored *Kitâb al-Hidayâ ilâ Farâ'id al-Qulûb*, written in the Spain in the latter part of the eleventh century. In his introduction, Bahya recommends the theological works of al-Muqammas, Sa'adya Gaon, and Samuel ben Hofni as the books that deal with the "spiritual" aspect of the study of the commandments.¹⁰² In addition, we may note Nissim ben Jacob's suggestion that God may be known through direct, intuitive experience and not only through rational proof, even though he was clearly a Mu'tazili (see p. ** above).¹⁰³

Al-Andalus

Muslim Mu'tazilism had a very small presence of in al-Andalus. There were some few Mu'tazila-oriented individuals who may have been exposed to

101 On this controversy, see Daniel Frank, "A Karaite *Shehitah* Controversy in the Seventeenth Century," in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay Harris, Cambridge, Mass., 2005, pp. 69-97.

102 See note 28 above.

103 In this connection, it is relevant to point out that the earliest generations of the Mu'tazila were connected to ascetic piety and some were called *suffiyyat al-mu'tazila*. See Sarah Stroumsa, "The Beginnings of the Mu'tazila Reconsidered," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), pp. 265-293.

speculative theology during study trips to the East, but there was certainly no Mu'tazila school or literary activity.¹⁰⁴ While there were also no Jewish Mu'tazili authors in al-Andalus, Jewish theologians and philosophers were certainly aware of Jewish Mu'tazili literature and teachings. See, for example, Bahya ibn Paqûda's comment noted above. In addition to Bahya's recommended Rabbanite Mu'tazili works, Karaite Mu'tazili compositions also found their way to al-Andalus. Yeshu'ah ben Judah had a student from Spain, ibn al-Tarâs, who on his return home evidently brought with him books by his teacher and perhaps other Karaite works.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps as a result of this activity, the Jewish philosopher, Joseph ibn Zaddiq (d. 1149), seems to have known kalâm teachings mostly from Karaite sources. In his *Microcosmos*, he mentions Yûsuf al-Basîr's *Kitâb al-mansûrî* (*Kitâb al-tamyîz*) three times; twice when discussing divine attributes and once, at length, on the idea of 'iwad.¹⁰⁶ Judah Halevi (d. 1141) describes kalâm teachings in some detail in his *Kitâb al-Khazarî*, particularly in chapter five.¹⁰⁷ The Karaite community in al-Andalus was evidently not large, but must have been significant enough to draw the attention of Rabbanite authors.¹⁰⁸ Sarah Stroumsa also suggests that in addition to studies in the East, it was through contacts with local Jews and particularly with Karaites that Muslim thinkers in al-Andalus became aware of Mu'tazili doctrines.¹⁰⁹

104 Information concerning indications of the Mu'tazila in al-Andalus were collected by Sarah Stroumsa, "The Mu'tazila in al-Andalus: The Footprints of a Phantom," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2 (2014), pp. 80-100.

105 As reported by the twelfth-century Andalusi Abraham ibn Daud. See his *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, G.D. Cohen, ed., Philadelphia, 1967, pp. xlvi-xlix.

106 See Joseph ibn Zaddiq, *Sefer Ha-'Olam Ha-Qatan* (*Der Mikrokosmos des Josef Ibn Daddik*), ed. Saul Horovitz, *Jahresbericht des jûdisch-theologischen Seminars zu Breslau*, 1903, pp. 44, 47, 72-73. The Arabic original of the book has been lost and we have only a Hebrew translation.

107 Also note that Harry Wolfson discusses Jewish Spanish sources at length in his *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979). Besides the authors already mentioned here, he makes use of Maimonides, Judah ben Barzillai, Abraham ibn Daud, and Abraham ibn Ezra.

108 See Daniel Lasker, "Karaism in Twelfth Century Spain," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 1.2 (1992), pp. 179-95. In his *Kitâb al-fisal fî l-milal wal-ahwâ' wal-nihal* (ed. M. I. Nasr and A. 'Umayra, Beirut, 1416/1996, vol. 1, p. 178.7f.) Ibn Hazm mentions that Karaites lived in Talavera and Toledo. (Mentioned by Gregor Schwarb, "Mu'tazilism in the Age of Averroes," in Peter Adamson, ed., *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 16), London, 2011, p. 282, n. 153.)

109 Stroumsa, op. cit. Gregor Schwarb questions this possibility (Schwarb, op. cit. p. 282).

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