ISAAC BEN SOLOMON ON THE KARAITE CREED

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ABSTRACT

Isaac ben Solomon (1755–1826) was hakham (rabbi) of the ancient Karaite community of Chufut-Kale in the Crimea. In addition to acting as pastor of his flock, he served also as physician, taking care of the sick not only among the Karaite inhabitants but also among their Muslim neighbors, the Crimean Tatars, without charging any fee for it.

As a theologian, he issued a number of decisions in matters of Karaite religious law showing a tendency to soften somewhat the rigor of Karaite jurisprudence, and often enough meeting with severe disapproval from his more conservative colleagues in Russia and abroad.

Two of his works were published only after his death: a treatise on the calendar, with astronomical diagrams and tables, and a smaller work on the Karaite Creed as formulated (in ten articles) by the learned and universally revered Constantinopolitan hakham Elijah Bashyatchi (died 1490). The high prestige of Bashyatchi did not deter Isaac from disagreeing with him in the interpretation of some of the major articles of the Creed. But Isaac limited his criticism to a brief general statement in the foreword to his own work, and left it to the reader to compare his own work with Bashyatchi’s in individual details.

The present article offers a brief summary of Isaac’s work on the Creed, followed by a comparison of his views with those of Bashyatchi, and preceded by a sketch of Isaac’s life and activity.

Isaac Ben Solomon was born in the year 1754/55 (טבת ה’ ה’לפ”ו) in Chufut-Kale, in the Crimea. His father, Solomon, of the family of Yeldor (יולדר), later shortened to Yel, was a merchant and presumably belonged to the Karaite upper class in his native town. Isaac was taught by the learned hakham (the Karaite word for rabbi) Isaac Qalfa (יוסף), author of a work (entitled סיס

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1 Tatar for “Fortress of the Jews,” now a suburb of the town of Bāghchisarāy, the seat of an old and substantial Karaite community. The following biographical information is based on Babovitch’s sketch in יד ha-levanah.
nezer ha-qodesh) on the laws of slaughtering and on the ten articles of the Karaite Creed. At the tender age of seventeen Isaac became a secretary (נער מרח) to the influential Benjamin Āghā, who served as treasurer (דואר)3 to Shāhān Girai, the last Tatar khan of the Crimea. After the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 1783 young Isaac accompanied Benjamin Āghā on a journey to St. Petersburg (today Leningrad) to collect some monies owed to Benjamin by the Crimean royal treasury. Upon his return to the Crimea, the royal Crimean treasury having been abolished, Isaac left his patron’s service and became a traveling merchant, but unfortunately not only failed to prosper in this occupation but even quickly lost his capital. He then returned to Chufut-Kale, whereupon Benjamin Āghā appointed him4 teacher at the local Karaite school. One year later the local Karaite community elected him țiakham,5 and Benjamin Āghā agreed to his marrying the daughter of Benjamin’s older brother Jacob Āghā (then apparently deceased). Isaac had ten children by her, three sons and seven daughters, four of whom (three girls and one boy) predeceased him—a rather favorable proportion for the time, when infant mortality was high in the primitive hygienic conditions prevailing in a Tatar province of the Russian Empire.

In the year 1794/95 (ה'תקע) a delegation of three Crimean Karaite notables—Benjamin Āghā, Solomon Babovitch, and Isaac ben Solomon—was dispatched to St. Petersburg to petition Empress Catherine II the Great for exemption of the Russian Karaites from the double taxation imposed on all Jews resident and engaged in trade and commerce in the Russian Empire.6 In

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3 Mann (Texts, 2:318–319) styles him master of the mint. His father Samuel, who was the first to be granted the honorary title Āghā, died in 1769, the victim of a murderous assault while going from Bāghchisarāy to Chufut-Kale. Benjamin Āghā died in 1824. Abraham Firkovitch spoke of him in highly laudatory terms.

4 We are told that he was then twenty years old, which makes the date 1775, eight years before the annexation of the Crimea. Perhaps an error for “thirty years old.”

5 We are told that he was then twenty-one years old—again possibly an error for thirty-one. On the other hand, the date of birth תקע (1764/65), in which case Isaac would indeed have been seventeen years old when he entered Benjamin Āghā’s service, and twenty-one when he was elected țiakham of Chufut-Kale.

6 Jews opposed to this double burden were to be permitted to leave Russia upon advance payment of three years’ double taxes. The reason given was that the
St. Petersburg the delegation (no doubt lubricating its way with substantial bribes) presented a petition to the governor of the Crimea, Count Platon Zubov, adding to their request a plea for relief also from the head-tax of two and one-half rubles per annum on all Jewish males, as well as from the obligation to house and feed one to three Russian soldiers per household during the winter season. Count Zubov spoke kindly to the delegation and forwarded the petition to the empress, who reacted favorably to it. The Karaites were exempted from all discriminatory taxation, and the quartering of soldiers in their homes was prohibited, “except in dire emergency.” Indeed the empress, on her own initiative, added one more important favor: the Karaites were confirmed in their permanent possession of their own fields and vineyards, thus relieving them of the well founded worry that the rapacious local Russian officialdom might find ways, legal or quasi legal, to seize their landed properties and perhaps even turn the owners into serfs, on a par with the enslaved peasants in the native Russian provinces.

In the meantime Isaac took advantage of his extended (“about six months”) stay in St. Petersburg to study astronomy under competent Russian teachers, in preparation for his future work in reforming the Karaite calendar.

double tax paid for both the privilege of residence in the Russian Empire and the license to engage in trade and commerce.

7 One of the empress’s long line of favorites.

8 In lieu of compulsory service in the Russian armed forces. This head-tax was not imposed on the Crimean Tatars, although they too were exempted from military service.

9 Called רעיה (Russian postoi, “residence, lodging”); winter in the Crimean Peninsula is rather mild.

10 Babovitch explains: “In those days possession of land (in Russia) was permitted only to government officials (שרים) and to noblemen (נעורים, presumably meaning the hereditary gentry [dvoryane] who owned land and serfs), and not to merchants and commoners (젬ראים).”

11 The Russian serfs were not emancipated until 1861. Isaac wrote a report of all these proceedings, and a marble tablet with a long versified account of them was erected in the courtyard of the Karaite synagogue at Gozlow (Eupatoria) in the Crimea.

12 For a detailed discussion of his reform and the text of a number of relevant documents pro and con relating to it see Mann, Texts, 2:468–550. These documents testify to the bitterness engendered and fed by this controversy, which extended over many years. One such exchange between Isaac and one of his
Upon his return to Chufut-Kale Isaac resumed his activity as spiritual leader of the local Karaite community. In addition to performing his pastoral duties he represented his flock before the Russian courts, and he also served as physician to the sick, both Karaite and Gentile (i.e., Tatar), refusing to accept any fee for it. His fame as a learned theologian spread beyond the Crimea, to the Karaite communities in Turkey and Poland, but this was a mixed blessing, for those who disagreed with his legal rulings did not hesitate to attack him, sometimes in painfully hostile terms. This was particularly true in the case of his opponents, Benjamin Duwan, is cited by Babovitch: Benjamin boasted that in matters of the calendar he was a greater authority than Isaac, seeing that he knew how to use the quadrant, whereas Isaac did not. To this Isaac replied that “I know everything that he knows. Moreover, I know many fields of learning which he does not know, for the simple reason that I pioneered in them (and no other person has preceded me with them). Even the Crimean Tatars learn them from me, for they follow their Risalah (‘Epistle,’ presumably by al-Battani) whose system is identical with mine.” Isaac goes on to tell us that he also composed a work in Russian on the same subject at the request of Count (Nicholas) Novosiltsev (1761–1836), “the eminent director of the Russian houses of learning.” On the Count and his role in the history of the Jews in Russia see the English Enc. Jud., 12:1240 (in greater detail, Russian Jewish Enc. [Evr. Ents.], 11:765–766).

Presumably a self-taught one—there may have been no certified Russian doctor in or near Chufut-Kale at that time. Babovitch describes Isaac as a “medical expert.”

He felt deeply distressed by this. Babovitch quotes from one of his letters to the leaders of the Gozlow community: “What am I to do, helpless that I am? All the (Karaite) wise men of my generation are divided into cliques (חיתות) based on no evidence or proof (for their views). All of them quarrel with me: this one bites (מציא לי), that one pulls (ורשה) me, this one accuses me falsely (כלשך), that one utters false charges (מולך) against me. Each one is trying to enforce his own decree (לך המוגזרות) without any evidence, proof, or example (איני יודע להם רופאים).” For equally unrestrained criticism of Isaac from the pen of Benjamin Duwan see Mann, Texts, 2:475ff. Another letter written by Isaac, and likewise addressed to the Karaite leaders in Gozlow, complains bitterly of the attitude of Simhah ben Solomon (a relative of Isaac on his sister’s side), a native of Gozlow and a resident of Chufut-Kale, who upon the annexation of the Crimea by Russia removed to Istanbul (hence he is referred to as הקדישים) and became a leader of the local, once very productive and influential, Karaite community (cf. Mann, Texts, 2:316ff.): “He wrote reproaches (against me, false charges in the manner of talebearers (K) against me. Yet since the day when I was appointed [hakham] I did not transgress the Lord’s commandments nor did I forget them. I have followed them strictly, without any alleviation (), I walked the straight line and did not stray into detours ().” This is followed
reform of the Karaite calendar. The Karaites' ancient rejection of the Rabbanite mathematical calendar and their insistence on fixing the dates of holy days solely by visual observation of the phases of the moon resulted in the highly embarrassing spectacle of various Karaite communities observing the same holy day on different days of the week, depending on the varying local visibility of the new moon. Isaac's introduction of some astronomical calculation into the Karaite calendar brought upon his head a storm of condemnation from conservative Karaites in the Crimea and elsewhere, and in the long run was completely accepted only in his native Crimea. He met serious opposition also in some of his other legal decisions, for example in his ruling that when a husband maliciously refuses to grant a divorce to his wife, the Karaite court, upon finding that her request for dissolution of her marriage is well justified, may declare her divorced over her husband's protest. Another cause for attack was his revision of the official Karaite prayer book in the edition of it printed at Chufut-Kale in 1805, which again brought upon his head the wrath of Karaite conservatives. In all these confrontations he firmly stood his ground and would not compromise his convictions.

After serving for fifty\textsuperscript{15} years as ūḥakham Isaac died at the age of seventy-one in the year 1826 (תשי Crab אמשי), the date engraved on the headstone over his grave.\textsuperscript{16}

Two of his works ("Or ha-levanah, on the calendar, and Pinnat yiqrat, on the ten articles of the Karaite Creed) were published by

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\textsuperscript{15} Rather forty? See above, note 4.

\textsuperscript{16} The death date "after 1811" given in the English Enc. Jud. 9:33 should be corrected accordingly.
Naḥmu Babovitch in 1872, with a prefatory poem by the famous Abraham Firkovitch (then 86 years old) and a biography of Isaac by Babovitch. The preliminary matter occupies eleven unnumbered pages, followed by six numbered pages of a list of subscribers. This is followed by Or ha-levanah (pp. 1–94, 96–114), Pinnat yiqrat (pp. 115–143), and Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils’s Shesh kenafayim (with a separate title page, 7 pages, 1–6, 5–20 numbered leaves, 4 unnumbered leaves). The text of Or ha-levanah includes a number of astronomical diagrams. The book was printed at the press of the Rabbanite printer Isaac Moses Bakst in Zhitomir (in the Ukraine). Both title-pages are dated 1872, and so is the Russian censor’s permit on the verso of the first title-page. The first two stanzas of Firkovitch’s poem state that... whereas whereas... If I am correct in my understanding of this statement, Firkovitch means to say that both works were unknown to readers during Isaac’s lifetime, that Or ha-levanah became available in 1834, while Pinnat yiqrat was discovered—presumably among Isaac’s manuscript Nachlass—“twenty-eight years ago.” But 1834 plus 28 makes 1862, not 1872. It does not seem to me likely that Firkovitch would have been requested to contribute a prefatory poem ten years before the publication of the rather small and inexpensive volume. It would therefore seem more probable that the number 28 is simply a mere slip of the pen for 38 on the part of Firkovitch, who in 1872 was nearing the age of 71.

17 Son of Solomon Babovitch. He was appointed by the Russian government as chief ḥakham over the Karaite communities in the Russian Empire (נביאו רוסיה, so specified in the imprint of Shesh kenafayim) printer Isaac Moses Bakst in Zhitomir (in the Ukraine). Both title-pages are dated 1872, and so is the Russian censor’s permit on the verso of the first title-page. The first two stanzas of Firkovitch’s poem state that... whereas whereas... If I am correct in my understanding of this statement, Firkovitch means to say that both works were unknown to readers during Isaac’s lifetime, that Or ha-levanah became available in 1834, while Pinnat yiqrat was discovered—presumably among Isaac’s manuscript Nachlass—“twenty-eight years ago.” But 1834 plus 28 makes 1862, not 1872. It does not seem to me likely that Firkovitch would have been requested to contribute a prefatory poem ten years before the publication of the rather small and inexpensive volume. It would therefore seem more probable that the number 28 is simply a mere slip of the pen for 38 on the part of Firkovitch, who in 1872 was nearing the age of

18 Which is the source of the present sketch of Isaac’s life. The title-page of the book reads as follows:... Whereas whereas... Pinnat yiqrat was first published in Gozlow (Eupatoria) in 1840 (Mann, Texts, 2:354, n. 62).
90 (he was born in 1785) and had only two more years to live (he died in 1874).

In any case, Isaac ben Solomon has every right to be considered a major Karaite scholar of the early modern period, and in a way an important representative of the “liberal” element (if one may apply this adjective to Karaism) among Karaite thinkers, especially in the Crimea. While the Ṭar Or ha-levanah is undoubtedly important for the history of Karaite calendation, it deals after all with a very technical subject which requires considerable expertise in mathematics and astronomy. On the other hand, his tract on the ten articles of the Karaite Creed as formulated by the last great codifier of Karaite law, Elijah Bashyatchi (died in 1490)—whose Ṭar Aderet ṬEliyahu is as authoritative to the modern Karaite as Joseph Karo’s Ṭar Shuḥan Ṭarukh is to the modern Rabbanite—is of far greater interest to the student of the history of Karaite literature and Karaite theological and philosophical thought.

Exposition of the Creed

(Following is a summary of Isaac’s tract; the few direct quotations are given within quotations marks.)

The genesis of the Pinnat yiqrat (“costly cornerstone,” Isa 28:16), Isaac tells us, lay in his early experience as teacher of Karaite children, when the ancient custom was, prior to teaching them the order of prayer, to acquaint them with the ten articles of the Karaite Creed as formulated by Bashyatchi. This method he came to regard as quite faulty. First, how can youthful minds comprehend a subject as abstruse as the theologico-philosophical principles of faith? This can only confuse them. Secondly, and even more importantly, “every intelligent person knows that Bashyatchi’s formulation is in part very far from both the Torah and sound reason, especially in the matters of the incipiency of the world (והוֹדוֹרָה), divine providence (והשעון), resurrection of the dead (והָשְׁאָר), and redemption (והָאָלֶל).” This realization inspired

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19 A technical subject outside of my competence, as is also Rabbanite calendation.

20 For an English translation of the bare Creed of Bashyatchi see L. Nemoy, Karaite Anthology (New Haven, 1952), p. 250. It is a pity that Isaac himself did not go into details as to what precise objections he had to Bashyatchi’s formulation of each article of the Creed. See below, pp. 69ff.
him to compose the present work, in order to explain these articles in a way easily comprehensible even by beginners.

FIRST ARTICLE. Every material thing (המצאות והשמד), i.e., the heavenly spheres (הנהליים) and all that is in them, was created ex nihilo by the one and only Creator, according to his will and in the best form possible for each kind of creature. The philosophers' theory is that while God is indeed the Creator of the world, the world was nevertheless coexistent with him, just as light was always coexistent with the sun, even though the sun is the source—i.e., creator—of the light. But this theory is based on things created out of other created things—like light created out of the sun—and cannot apply to creation ex nihilo. Besides, there are other logical evidences of the incipiency of all forms of creation, based on their nature and behavior. God alone is ever-existent, neither preceded by, nor coexistent with, anyone or anything else.

SECOND ARTICLE. The Creator created everything but did not create himself. Since all creation is incipient, it must have had a Creator who brought it from nonexistence to existence, for nonexistence by itself cannot produce existence—it cannot produce anything. Both theologians and philosophers agree on this basic point. By the same token, the preexistent Creator could not have produced himself.

THIRD ARTICLE. God has no likeness (דומים)—he is unlike anything in the world. He does not consist of matter (들도), and he is one in every respect (-awesome). The latter—third—definition means that he is unique, with no one in the world being like him; that he is all spirit, not subject to composition (הרכבה), relative attributes (התאנות), or accident (מקרא). All these propositions are provable by logical reasoning. True, Scripture occasionally describes God as possessing human organs—hands, eyes, ears—but its purpose is merely to facilitate men's comprehension of him, since men cannot conceive of sight without eyes, hearing without ears, etc. 21

FOURTH ARTICLE. God commissioned Moses to be a prophet. This article requires first of all logical proof of the

21 These are brief summaries of Isaac's exposition of the first three articles of the Creed. I have omitted the involved philosophical arguments which are not much different from Bashyatchi's.
existence of prophecy, which is as follows: God made man more perfect than any other living creature, so that he may achieve utmost felicity (Presence and greatness) by comprehending God’s existence and greatness as witnessed by his wonderful works of creation. Therefore God provided man not only with his animal needs but also with his higher need, for without prophecy man would have been incapable of achieving most intelligibles (by way of reasoned investigation), and thus would have failed to attain his own highest purpose (highest purpose). Hence an exceptional man had to be inspired with prophecy so that he might guide the entire nation (of Israel) toward the attainment of perfection. Failure would have made the creation of man meaningless.

All men are not equal in their intellectual capacity. Some can learn knowledge from human teachers, others cannot. Some—very few—need no teachers at all and achieve (metaphysical) knowledge by way of their own intellects under divine inspiration.

There are two types of prophets. The higher type is the prophet who is from birth of even temperament and unblemished nature, especially in heart and brain, since the heart is the seat of the intellect and the brain is the seat of the imaginative faculty. He exercises his gift of prophecy in the following manner: whenever he desires to have the prophetic spirit descend upon him, he goes into retirement, withdraws from all worldly interests, and directs his thoughts exclusively to matters intellectual and divine, until his spiritual intellect prevails over all his material bodily powers. His physical senses are consequently weakened to the point of complete insensitivity, and his body sinks into a swoon, so that his eyes, though open, cannot see, and his ears, though unstopped, cannot hear. It is at this point that divine inspiration comes to rest upon him by way of the Active Intellect. He then sinks into deep sleep, but since his intellect and his imaginative faculty remain unimpaired and are indeed sharpened, they perceive future events and wise directions in which to guide the people of his generation.

22 The main distinction between man and beast lies in man’s ability to deduce by reasoning the existence and omnipotence of God. Lower creatures, which are guided by instinct and are unable to reason, cannot do so.
An inferior kind of prophet is one who is inspired only while asleep. His imaginative faculty being limited to material objects, he perceives the angelic source of his inspiration as a material person in human form who announces future events by way of a parable or a riddle, which is then solved for him or is left unsolved.

Moses’ prophetic mode was above both these kinds of prophecy, for he received his divine inspiration not through the Active Intellect but directly from Almighty God, without the mediation of his imaginative faculty. He therefore had no need to go through the preliminary stages of withdrawal, insensibility, etc. That is why the Torah was revealed through him and not through any other prophet.23

FIFTH ARTICLE. God revealed his perfect Torah through Moses. Mankind’s need for such a divine manual of conduct can be demonstrated by logical proofs, for without it man, who is a social (מזרחי) creature, would be unable to endure in a social collective (קברד). No human king could possibly compose such a perfect guiding code, and moreover it would have had to be only temporary, for his successor would be certain to abolish it and introduce a code of his own, equally imperfect and not everlasting. This applies also to the Oral Torah—i.e., the talmudic tradition—for two reasons: first, the Written Torah, stemming from the Deity, is perfect (חומש) and has no need for any additions and extensions; second, the Oral Torah frequently adds to the Written Torah, or detracts from it, or modifies it—therefore it is our duty to repudiate it (ל라razione). The same applies to the Christian and Muslim Scriptures (תורות אדום ושמעאל), for they are creations of the minds of human leaders. Had Almighty God wished to replace the Written Torah with a new Torah, he would have announced it himself from heaven, as he had done with the original Torah, by declaring, “I hereby repeal the original Torah, and I am replacing it with a new dispensation (דד).” Moreover, God’s law, being perfect, is immutable, and therefore cannot be replaced. Had God wished to take the Written Torah away from us and hand it over to the Christians or to the

23 Bashyatchi’s exposition of the fourth article is entirely philosophical.
Muslims, he would have handed over the same Torah, for there cannot be any replacement or revision for it.24

SIXTH ARTICLE. The believer must understand the original language of the Torah. This implies two skills: to learn the language and to understand the meaning of the Torah. When a child reaches the age of five or six years, his father must commence teaching him the holy tongue, or if he is not qualified to act as teacher, he must hand the child over to a competent teacher.25 The instruction should begin with the Hebrew alphabet and vowel marks and go on to grammar and vocabulary, then proceed to the Hebrew text of the Bible, using the local colloquial tongue—Greek or Ishmaelite26—as the language of instruction and explanation. From this one should proceed to the meaning of the scriptural text, taking care to make the child understand that the anthropomorphic references to the Deity must not be taken literally. From this course the pupil should advance successively to a course in Karaite law, using as textbook the Aderet Eliyahu of Elijah Bashyatchi (15th century) or the Gan eden of Aaron the Younger ben Elijah (14th century); a course in biblical interpretation, using the Sefer ha-mivhar of Aaron the Elder ben Joseph (13th–14th centuries); and a course in theology and philosophy, using the Ḥayyim of Aaron the Younger or the Moreh nevukhim of Maimonides (12th century). The latter work, however, should be used with great caution, for it contains many

24 Bashyatchi limits the discussion of this article to a brief paragraph of fourteen short lines, to the effect that this article “is known to us by way of pure intellectual perception (יִדְחֵנִי).” For an English translation of Bashyatchi’s commentary on the following (sixth) article of the Creed see L. Nemoy, Karaite Anthology, pp. 250–256.

25 Isaac notes here that “the Torah of the Gentile nations . . . the believers in their religions (דְרָשָׁה) exert themselves in teaching it with great diligence and fierce determination.” I suppose he was referring to Crimean Tatar schools where children had to be taught the Qur’an in the original Arabic and not in Tatar translation (in orthodox Muslim belief the Koran, being literally the word of Allah, is untranslatable into other human languages).

26 לָשׁוֹן הַשּׁוֹכָלִית, here presumably meaning the spoken Karaite-Tatar dialect, rather than Arabic, which was taught to Muslim children in the Crimea and in other Muslim provinces of the Russian Empire, to enable them to read and understand the Qur’an. Greek refers to the spoken language of the Turkish (formerly Byzantine) Karaites.
prolegomena (חכמיות) of the philosophers which are contrary to true faith and belief.

This program of education should suffice in present circumstances, for in our time all the members of our generation are bent on amassing money, few of them being desirous of attaining the ultimate goal (חכמה האחראית), which is wisdom. If, however, the student has been blessed by God with an exceptionally quick mind,27 he should proceed to a course in logic, using Maimonides’ Millot ha-higayon as textbook, in the edition with a new commentary published in 1766 (התקב"ז).28 This should be followed by courses in the four liberal arts (חכמיה הלמידים): arithmetic (חכמה המסרבים), geometry (חכמה התורה), (theoretical) music, and astronomy (חכמה הנחונים).29 These in turn should be followed by the natural sciences (חכמת הטבע), and from this the student should embark upon the final stage of his education, the science of divinity (חכמה האלוהית), which deals with the soul, the Deity, and the angels. This latter science is the apogee (חקלא) of all wisdom, all the preceding sciences serving as ancillary to it. The full course of advanced education thus forms a septivium: logic, the four liberal arts, natural sciences, and divinity.

SEVENTH ARTICLE. God inspired all the rest of the true prophets after Moses. Since Moses was the greatest of all prophets, past and future, and was therefore in charge of the revelation of the Torah, one might think that no further prophets were needed. Not so. For the later prophets were necessary to exhort Israel to observe the Torah, to serve as a conduit (שם) between God and Israel, to urge Israel to avoid punishment for evil behavior, to perform miracles as instructive examples of God’s omnipotence, and to help Israel achieve a higher moral standard than that of their Gentile neighbors. Today, in the Diaspora, we have no prophets, but our wise men act in their stead and should be honored and obeyed accordingly.

EIGHTH ARTICLE. God will resurrect all men on the Day of Judgment. This principle is likewise amenable to logical proof, as follows: God, having created man, keeps his conduct under his

27 שאל רא פדה, like the Arabic gharib, means originally “strange.”
28 Published in Berlin. The commentary is by מיכאל (Moses Mendelssohn).
29 That is to say, the medieval quadrivium, leading from the baccalaureate to the master’s degree.
supervision (حسب) in order to repay him according to his deeds; yet we see in this world righteous men suffering while evildoers prosper. If there is to be no eventual resurrection of the dead and no final judgment, it would follow that God’s oversight is not only wasted but indeed results in rank injustice, all of which is unthinkable. To assume that man will be judged only after he has passed into the spiritual world, his soul having been disconnected from his perishable body, is just as unthinkable, for his good or evil deeds have been committed jointly by his soul and his body, and to single out the soul for reward or punishment would be palpably unjust. Hence it is only when the immortal soul and the resurrected mortal body have been reunited on the Day of Resurrection that judgment can be pronounced rightfully by the heavenly tribunal, seeing that the lifeless body, separated from the soul, can experience neither reward nor punishment.

Should one ask how can a dead body, which has decomposed into its primary, or secondary, or even tertiary basic elements (apistovit), be reconstituted into an exact duplicate of its original self, the answer is that at the time of resurrection God will reconstruct the body in a form equal as far as its basic quantity and quality are concerned to its original, neither more nor less; it need not, indeed cannot, be an absolute duplicate of the original mortal body, for the latter itself does not during its earthly life remain constant, but rather continuously changes during its owner’s earthly lifespan.

The great importance of the principle of final resurrection is evidenced by the fact that Scripture offers direct examples of it in its narratives of the lives of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Some people of little faith (קטנית אמן) assert that the two persons resurrected by Elijah and Elisha were not really dead but were only seized with paralysis (שחר), and that the two prophets merely cured them instantaneously of it by administering a medicament known to them alone. This explanation, however, is palpably false, for paralysis lends itself not to instant cure but only to gradual recovery (רהוב).

NINTH ARTICLE. God will make repayment to each person according to his behavior and the consequences of his deeds. This

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30 Elijah resurrected the dead son of the Zarephathite widow (1 Kings 17:17ff.); Elisha resurrected the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18ff.).
principle involves two propositions: (a) God’s awareness of men’s deeds as they take place, and (b) the way in which God’s providence deals with them. Both propositions are the cause of disagreement among scholars, some of whom argue that God’s awareness of men’s incipient deeds introduces an element of incipiency into his own awareness of all things. The answer to this is that God’s knowledge is not analogous to men’s knowledge, which has a point of incipiency marking the dividing line between previous ignorance and subsequent awareness. God’s knowledge of all things, celestial and terrestrial, has no beginning and extends infinitely into both the past and the future.

The same applies to God’s providence, for if his knowledge is incipient, so must be his providence, otherwise how could his providence act upon a person’s deed that has not yet been performed? The answer here is the same: as God’s awareness and knowledge are eternal, so is his providence.

Another important aspect is the matter of man’s free will. The Muslim scholastic theologians and the astrologers thought that man is under compulsion in his actions, that is to say, his behavior is determined by the planet or star which rules over him, and he has no control over, or free choice in, choosing between good deeds and evil deeds. This, however, is an erroneous view, for the human soul is hewn from the throne of glory that is situated in the midst of the heavenly angels, and is therefore above being controlled by the (worldly) spheres. Our physical structure is not of our choice, but our actions are so, and are always entirely subject to our will and our choice. Moreover, man’s nature drives him to labor diligently to prevent damage and to obtain success. Had man had no free will and choice, all this endeavor would have been utterly useless, and man would have soon enough realized that fate is unalterable and that all endeavor on his part to resist it is doomed to failure. Yet man, since his very creation, has never accepted this doctrine of hopelessness. Indeed, had man no free will, there would have

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31 a literal translation of the Arabic term al-mutakallimūn.

32 those who foretell the future by observing the planets and the stars (bShab 156a).
been no sense in revealing to him the Torah, with its provision of reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience.

True, we observe the righteous suffering and the wicked prospering in this world. For this there may be valid reasons. The righteous man may be punished for minor trespasses in order to make his future reward complete and perfect, while the wicked man may be rewarded for his minor merits in order to secure his complete condemnation in the world to come. Or this may be a matter of warning to the righteous man to examine his deeds and refrain from further sins, however minor; or to the wicked man to remind him that his few good deeds will not wash away the dreadful punishment for his great and grievous sins. Or it may be a matter of one generation being rewarded or punished for the merits or sins of its fathers, just as the present generation is suffering in the Diaspora for the sins of our forefathers. Or God may be causing the wicked to prosper in order to make them his tool in punishing the righteous, as he had caused Nebuchadnezzar and Titus to prosper in order to punish through them the sins of Israel.

TENTH ARTICLE.33 God has not contemned (מְאָטָם) Israel forever in their Diaspora; they are merely suffering God's well deserved punishment for their sins, and must hope for eventual deliverance at the hand of the Messiah the son of David. The composition of man is wondrously different from that of all other earthly creatures. The latter are composed wholly of earthly elements, and upon death their components return to the lowly earth from which they were originally taken, while their souls rejoin the earthly atmosphere (אֱוֹר הַעָלָם) of which they were originally a part. Not so man, for while his body is of the earth, his soul has been hewn out of the holy mountains inhabited by the angels on high (מַהְרוֹרִי קָרָם מקבֵּית מלאך מרדֲו). The proof of this is the fact that if man's soul were made of lower world materials, it would have been unable to attain knowledge of upper world matters. Hence animals can go no farther than recognize only

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33 This chapter is the longest in the work, and Isaac prefaces it with the declaration that “it is my intention to expand a little on this subject (רָאוֹשׁ), as it is an important principle and a firm root (שָׁרַשׁ חֲזָק) for the people of the Diaspora, because without assurance (נַעֲמָן) of redemption our fellow-believers (נֶעָלִיל_red) would lapse into hopelessness.”
their human owners who pasture them and feed them, whereas the perfect (בשלם) man is able to reason from particulars to lower generalities, then to higher generalities, and finally to the Cause of all the causes, the Deity. However, most men do not bother with such metaphysical meditation, being too busy with worldly vanities. The patriarch Abraham, of blessed memory (בראשית,), was the first to pursue this sublime line of thought, revealed it to his contemporaries, and suffered their enmity on this account. In reward for this his progeny was chosen to have the Shekhinah dwell in their midst. Since the majority of the Hebrew nation—other than the elite—was not able to comprehend this holy mission by means of their own intellects, God brought them down into the iron crucible (כרב הברון) of Egypt, where he refined them as gold is refined to rid it of impurities, for Egypt was chock-full of heretical notions (זאת הכספות)—the Egyptian nation was the mother of the occult science of the Sabaeans (הכ—weeza) and was expert in magic, in sorcery, in natural techniques (המכרות מטורות), and in astrology (אסטרונומית). Yet all this vain knowledge did not enable the Egyptians to foreknow the plagues which were about to come upon them and to devise remedies against them, showing that these plagues were not of the natural variety but were God’s own handiwork wrought directly through his prophets. These miracles impressed upon Israel the principles of true faith and belief.

However, miracles alone are not a very effective tool to instill true faith, and consequently Israel did not adhere steadfastly to it. They violated the eternal covenant with God, and were consequently exiled for seventy years,34 whereupon some of them—not all—returned to the Holy Land. These, too, sinned once more, wherefore God exiled them again for an indeterminate period of time, until Israel return permanently to the true faith. This will take time, just as it took time on the part of astronomers to discover by means of far more efficient instruments many more heavenly bodies than were heretofore visible to the human eye by means of crude and primitive instruments. The same process of improvement is bound to occur in matters of religion and will affect Israel, who will be strengthened in the

34 The seventy years of the Babylonian captivity were punishment for Israel’s “failure to observe seventy Sabbatical and Jubilee years—an important commandment that draws attention (זאת הברון) to the Creator of the world.”
faith of their patriarchs and true prophets and in the performance of the divine commandments. It is then that the Messiah will reveal himself, and the entirety of Israel (יהוה) will be redeemed, the true principles of faith will be firmly fixed in their hearts, and will never be uprooted again. At that time God’s intention in creating the universe, namely for the sake of Israel, will reach perfection (ישתת). It is this that is the true reason (נודע), and the correct (נזרה) cause of, the long duration of Israel’s exile. Hence we need not wonder why the divine will has prolonged the fulfillment of our redemption without revealing the exact end of our exile, unlike what God had done in the case of the Egyptian and the Babylonian exiles. Nevertheless the sages were agreed that this end cannot possibly come later than the expiration of the sixth millennium (after the creation of the world, i.e., אמך 6000=2240 CE) or possibly some time prior to it. That is why the Book of Daniel mentions two durations of the exile, “Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings, then shall the Sanctuary be victorious” (Dan 8:14), and “Until a time, and times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25), and also “A time, times, and a half” (Dan 12:7). The two durations are not equal: the first, 2300 years, counts from the destruction of the First Temple, so that up to today, which is the year אמך 5560 (=1799/1800 CE), 2222 years have elapsed. The second duration counts from the destruction of the Second Temple, and we do not know exactly when it is to end. A certain Rabbanite scholar (הכף) was bold enough (לישב) to attempt to reconcile (לישב) this count with the first one in this wise: the (standard) duration of Israel’s exile is 400 years, based on the verse “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years” (Gen 15:13). Hence, “a time” equals 400 years, and “times” equals 800 years, totaling 1200 years, plus “half a time” (i.e., half of 1200 years), which makes 600 years. The grand total thus amounts to 1800 years after the destruction of the Second Temple. The

35 Further on the author states that 490 years have elapsed between the destruction of the First Temple and that of the Second Temple. He also appears to date the latter in 68 CE. Hence 490+1732 (1800–68)=2222 years. Accordingly, the redemption of Israel was to take place in the year 1800+78=1878.

36 Accordingly, the redemption of Israel was to take place in the year 68+1800=1868.
discrepancy between the two calculations is thus 10 years. These 10 years, according to the same Rabbanite scholar, stand for the length of the time that will be required for the building of the Third Temple. God alone knows the truth, and besides, it is forbidden to fix by human authority the date of the end (of exile)—how many Rabbanite sages have stumbled over this problem and become the object of ridicule on the part of both Jews and Gentiles! Even the greatest of their sages, R. Akiba, went so far as to become a squire to the pretended Messiah surnamed Bar Kokhba ("Son of the Star"), the falsity of whose claim was eventually revealed, whereupon his surname was changed to Bar Koziba ("Son of Falsehood"). Hence the only legitimate way to prove the certainty of Israel’s redemption is by the use of logical arguments alone, to wit:

a) The Torah, we believe, is true and may be neither added to nor detracted from. Yet much of its legislation cannot be fulfilled by us in exile outside the Holy Land. Since we cannot admit that these presently unfulfillable laws are to remain permanently in suspension—this would imply that part of the Torah is permanently effective and part of it is only temporarily effective—we must conclude that the time is yet to come when all of the Torah will be observed once more.

b) The Torah is the holy product of the holy Deity. How then is it possible that those in whose keeping God had entrusted it should be condemned to eternal exile, where they cannot possibly fulfill it completely?

c) Had God banished Israel from his presence forever, with no intention to take them back eventually and restore them as his chosen people, the Gentile nations would have been able to exterminate them long ago, since Israel rejects all Gentile doctrines and beliefs, and there is no hatred as deadly as hatred based on religious difference. Should one argue that some Greeks do in fact live now under Muslim rule, and vice versa, yet they do not exterminate each other notwithstanding their religious difference, the answer is that while this is true, both Christianity and Islam still have dominion over their own respective realms, and either fear or respect each other, and therefore do not extermi-

37 Leader of the second revolt against the Roman occupation of Palestine, died 135 CE.
nate each other. Moreover, the Egyptians (אמות פראת) no longer have their own realm and therefore had to accept the faith of their (Christian and Muslim) conquerors, since otherwise they would have been exterminated.\(^{38}\) Not so Israel—notwithstanding that they have no realm of their own and can offer no obstacle (הונפה דעל) to any Gentile nation that would wish to destroy them, still the Gentile nations are unable to annihilate them, in accordance with the Scriptural promise, “And yet, for all that, when they are in the hand of their enemies, I will not reject them . . . to destroy them utterly” (Lev 26:44). This is convincing proof that God has never completely ceased his supervision of Israel, who are like a ewe that stands alone—had the Faithful Shepherd not kept his eye upon us to rescue us, we would have been wiped off the face of the earth long ago.

Moreover, since his threats of punishment (וערזי החשך) have already materialized upon us, it necessarily follows that his beneficent promises should also come to pass. It cannot be argued that these beneficent promises have already come to pass during the period of the Second Temple. First, the restoration of Israel in that period was not complete, since only two of the Twelve Tribes were redeemed from the Babylonian exile,\(^{39}\) yet Israel had been promised that “if any of thine that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee” (Deut 30:4). Obviously, then, redemption is yet to come. Moreover, the holy ark, the cherubim, and other sacred appurtenances\(^{40}\) have not yet reappeared from their hidden repository, nor has prophecy been restored, nor have wars been replaced by peace as promised; nor has the exclusive divinity of God been acknowledged (התפרים) throughout the world, and idol-worship still persists on earth. Beasts of prey have not yet given up their ravening ways; no king of Davidic descent has yet arisen; the Temple in Jerusalem has not yet been reconstructed.

\(^{38}\) Otherwise the Egyptians would have been summarily massacred by their Muslim conquerors, since idolaters are not entitled to the tolerance (Arabic dhimmah) which is due to the “people of the (Sacred) Book,” Jews and Christians alone.

\(^{39}\) The tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The other Ten Tribes were exiled beyond the legendary river Sambatyon and have not been redeemed so far.

\(^{40}\) Which have been mysteriously secreted at the time of the destruction of the First Temple, and which have not been found ever since.
according to the plan delineated by the prophet Ezekiel; the wicked seed of Esau and Amalek has not been uprooted; and finally the redemption of Israel has not been made universal (וילם), as foretold in the verse "(The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion); he will no more carry thee away into captivity" (Lam 4:22). All these facts prove that the promised redemption has not yet come to pass and is yet to take place, and that the redeemer is yet to be of the seed of David, as it is said, "And David, my servant, shall be their prince forever" (Ezek 37:25).

The royal redeemer will have no need to prove the genuineness of his mission (ラמאת שליחו) by signs and wonders that change nature. His authenticity (אמונה) will be demonstrated by his valor, his humbling of the enemies of Israel and his victory over them, his ingathering of the Israelite exiles, his rebuilding of the Temple on its original foundation (מכונן), his teaching of the Torah according to its proper meaning and rules (נחלת), and his performance of all these functions in the right way to promote the human soul's welfare (נני). All these achievements will serve as signs and indications proving his mission, hence he will have no need to perform wonders and miracles as did the ancient prophets; besides, the reliability (אמונת) of signs is very weak (חלש).42

In fact the advent of the Messiah will be announced shortly before it by certain signs and hints. Great convulsions will erupt among the nations, and they will wage war against each other. The nation of Israel will be humbled and oppressed by the Gentile nations, who will impose heavier taxes in money and in kind (מסים ואיגרות) on it and will berate Israel by inquiring maliciously, "Where is your God, the Rock in whom you trusted?"43 Because of the multiplicity of wars the kingdom of Rome44 will

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41 As proof of genuine prophetic mission.
42 Particularly when natural phenomena are involved: if a would-be prophet predicts that a fierce windstorm or cloudburst will come up the next day, and it does indeed come up, is it a miracle or is it a natural phenomenon caused by a particular combination of atmospheric conditions?
43 A paraphrase of Deut 32:37, "Where are their gods, the rock in whom they trusted?"
44 Presumably meaning the European states—the Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist long before Isaac's time.
be overthrown, whereupon the prophet Elijah, of blessed memory, will forthwith reveal himself and will announce that the time has come for the end and that soon the Messiah will also reveal himself and will gather all the Israelite exiles into the newly rebuilt Holy City of Jerusalem. In response to this Gog and Magog, together with the Gentile nations attracted to them, will rouse themselves to go up to Jerusalem and wage war against it, but God from heaven will fight against them and annihilate them. Thereafter there will be left no painful thorn \( \text{וכ '\text{מ'א'ו'ס}} \) to prevent Israel from attaining perfection. Their redemption will be world-wide and eternal.

These are the ten articles of faith. Any Israelite who does not believe in even only one of them is to be regarded as having left the community of Israel. He may not be called “brother,” nor may meat slaughtered by him be eaten.

*Isaac’s Disagreement with Bashyatchi’s Exposition of the Karaite Creed*

Medieval Muslim and Jewish philosophy is a field of research in which I cannot claim anything faintly resembling expertise. What follows here is therefore more or less tentative, based on my reading of Bashyatchi’s exposition of the Creed (*Aderet ᾽Eliyahu*, fol. 78b–85a; cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 2:487, note 42). I am profoundly obligated to the editorial reader of this paper, obviously an expert in medieval Arabic and Jewish philosophy, who called my attention to a number of errors.

**Inciency of the World** (creation ex nihilo; first article of Bashyatchi’s Creed). Bashyatchi begins his discussion with the observation that creation applies essentially to the four primary elements (כָּסְפוּר: fire, air, water, and earth), since all other creation is composed of these elements. The philosophers, he goes on, say that these primary elements were not created but are eternal, from the beginning of time to its end (כָּסְפוּר תִּקְבֵּה), for it is impossible that something existent should have come into existence out of nonexistence (כָּסְפוּר שֶם נִמְצָא). This, however, is a weak argument, because in the case of many existent things, had we not seen them with our own eyes, we would have regarded them as utterly impossible, for example, the formation of a live chick inside the egg or of a living child
inside its mother’s womb, without being able to breathe life-giving air. Hence we must postulate something else, preceding in time, out of which things now present have been formed, this thing thus being the primordial matter (הווהמה והארחש). The reason why the philosophers adopted this theory of creation is their adherence to the reasoning from the posterior (מהאתדיס) to the anterior (הכדים): having observed that all the posterior things in the world are generated by anterior things, they concluded that it was always so, their minds being unable to rise above this line of thought. This, however, is a very weak line of reasoning. Had we not observed a chick being actually generated in the hermetically airtight egg, we would never have thought that such a thing was possible. Moreover, it is illogical to think that what applies to lowly earthly creatures applies also to the divine Creator—just as God’s substance is unlike man’s substance, so is God’s activity (הנדשה) unlike man’s. What happened in the dim past is not known to the philosopher’s mind, but only to the prophet’s mind, and even philosophers recognize that the prophet’s knowledge of what happened at the beginning of earthly nature (סימן) is known to the prophet not on the basis of evidentiary deductions (מהסימן הממוסיס) from the present to the dim past but by observation of his own soul, which acts like a polished mirror (מראת המרשה) that reflects to him the true form of actual things and processes. To sum up, all things in the world are contingent of existence (אפרי), whereas God is necessary of existence (הברע מהזיאור). Hence he is anterior to all things, which therefore are his creations.

So far Bashyatchi’s exposition of this article. It is obvious, it seems to me, that Bashyatchi subscribed fully to the principle of creation ex nihilo, just as firmly as did Isaac. The latter’s harsh verdict on Bashyatchi’s view of this principle might, I suppose, be based not so much on Bashyatchi’s exposition of it as on his detailed citation of the views of the philosophers. Isaac presumably argued that since Bashyatchi regarded the philosophers’ view of creation as erroneous, why did he need to cite it at all? It would only confuse his readers or even seduce them into heresy (cf. ילדי בהבול, p. 115). Isaac himself, however, cites and refutes the views of the philosophers on divine providence (see below), which makes me unsure of the correctness of my explanation of his motive in criticizing Bashyatchi here.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE (הגהות; ninth article of Bashyatchi’s Creed). Bashyatchi dismisses the philosophers’ view of divine
providence by referring the reader to Aaron the Younger’s *Ey hayyim* (chapters 82–89; ed. Franz Delitzsch [Leipzig, 1841], pp. 107–136).

Divine providence, Bashyatchi tells us, involves divine knowledge, and since God is all-perfect, his knowledge of everything must also be all-perfect. Hence everything that happens in this world is within his knowledge and is under his providence. If something that happens in the world seems unjust to us—for example, when we see the righteous suffering while the wicked prosper—the true answer is not that God is ignorant of it or permits injustice to prevail but rather that there are just and proper reasons for this seeming injustice, which are not known to us but are fully known to God. Unlike man, God does not learn anything new that he has not known before—he knows it beforehand, for all change which occurs in his creatures’ bodies and minds is foreknown to his knowledge. Any other assumption necessarily accepts that God, like man, learns new things which he had not known before, which is absurd.

Thus Bashyatchi on providence. As far as I can see, here too the only fault that Isaac found in Bashyatchi’s exposition is the latter’s copious citing of the philosophers as well as of Scripture (scriptural proofs alone are sufficient) in support of his formulation of this article of faith.

RESURRECTION (eighth article of Bashyatchi’s Creed). Bashyatchi begins his discussion with a detailed recital and criticism of the logical arguments produced by the philosophers (*תובלת*) for and against the final actual resurrection of the dead, and discusses the question whether this does or does not involve the resurrection of man’s mortal body as well as of his soul. He then concludes that perfect resurrection will affect only the souls (לא יקרה להחייה כי אס מפשחי), and only those of the righteous, not those of the sinners: to sum up, after death and before resurrection the innocent (*תובלת*) souls will ascend to heaven, and will rejoin (*תובלת*) the (heavenly) world of the souls—they will not need to return to their earthly bodies. On the other hand, the souls that are moribund and diseased (*תובלת יולות*) will be dissolved entirely (*חסכים לברית*), just like the souls of animals. It is, however, the two intermediate groups which will suffer most. One of these groups comprises the souls which are moribund but healthy (*תובלת בריאה*), for their moribund state will pull them downward (to Gehenna), while their healthy condition will pull
them upwards (to heaven). Their punishment will thus be great, for a disciple of the wise who has no good deeds to his credit (ל מועשים) will draw a heavier punishment upon himself than an ignoramus (האלא) who has never performed a good deed (out of sheer ignorance). The other group comprises the souls that are living but are diseased, for their diseased state will pull them downward while their living condition will prevent them from being pulled downward. The latter souls will therefore never rejoin (the world of the souls), yet they will not be banned from their (intermediate) residence.

The philosophers are of the opinion that belief in the resurrection of the dead is one of the (basic) articles of faith, even though we find some scriptural statements that seem to contradict this belief; for example, “Wilt thou work wonders for the dead? or shall the shades arise and give thee thanks?” (Ps 88:11), “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again” (2 Sam 14:14), (and others). It is a view based on rational evidence that no two men can ever be found who are completely identical in all respects; even more rational is the view that a man’s body cannot be reunited once more with his soul. Should we argue that such phenomena come under the category of miracles which are not subject to reason, the answer is: not so, for real miracles have been authenticated in the past, and this is a matter connected with the adoption of the Torah. In subsequent times, what need is there for them? Add to this the fact that this doctrine (of resurrection) is not expressly stated in the Torah.

Bashyatchi concludes with another quotation from the philosophers: “Ultimate felicity is a concept accessible only to a few chosen individuals.” To the majority of mankind material pleasures represent the acme of felicity. Therefore, in teaching them the principles of faith, one should present to them these (material) pleasures as the ones that were promised, so that the principles (לא שיתיו לעקרין) might be acceptable to them as such, and would not be rejected by them.
So far Bashyatchi on resurrection. Here Isaac disagrees radically with Bashyatchi. The human body must, according to Isaac, be subject to resurrection equally with the soul. Ultimate reward is earned by merit (רו"ח), punishment is incurred by transgression. Now some merits are earned not by the spiritual soul (which merely inspires them) but by the material body, as is the case with the performance of the active (מצות) commandments. Hence it is the material human body which should by right receive the (material) reward for its observance of such active commandments, and in order to receive this reward the body must perforce be resurrected along with the soul. The same argument applies also to the body’s punishment for its transgressions. Hence it follows that both soul and body must jointly receive their reward or punishment, because the body cannot receive them except jointly with the soul—the body alone, after death, being soulless, cannot receive any sensation whatsoever.

As for the objection that a decomposed dead body cannot be fully reconstituted in its original form, the obvious answer is that since God had first created the living body ex nihilo, it is clear that he is also able to retake its separate elements and reassemble them again in their original composite form, since resurrection is no greater miracle (חפץ) than the original creation ex nihilo; in other words, recreation is no greater miracle than creation—if God is capable of the latter, he is surely capable of the former. Should one argue that if body A has decomposed into its basic elements, and if these elements are then recomposed into body B, and if after B’s death it is recomposed again into body C, and so forth, the question arises, at the time of resurrection, into which one of these several bodies will A’s soul be then returned? The answer to this question is: we do not claim that A’s resurrected body will be an exact duplicate of A’s original body. We do claim that the resurrected body will be made up of exactly the same elements as was his original body, as far as their basic quality and quantity is concerned, neither less nor more, the mixture (מעז) being exactly the same. Should one reply that if so, the resurrected body is actually a new creation and not the recreated original body, the answer is: not so—the soul will be vouchsafed its reward for confinement47 within its original body (תובע 몰).

47 I assume that this is the sense of the pi’el form of לול, literally “its concealment”; cf. Ben-Yehudah, Dictionary (Jerusalem, 1930), 9:4508 and 4526.
Even while man is in his original span of life his body is altered from one moment to the other, because the component elements of it are constantly being melted away by both the body's natural warmth and the heat of the sun, and are being replenished by the food that is consumed. Nevertheless the individual remains the same, without any change, for the beneficiary and guardian is the soul and not the body. And inasmuch as the soul is unchangeable, it matters not that the body is subject to constant change.

Since resurrection is a major doctrine of the Mosaic faith and a mighty root for the article of ultimate reward and punishment, and since God wished it to be held faithfully and firmly by all of Israel, he actually demonstrated it to the Israelites before their own eyes, when Elijah resurrected the son of the Zarephathite woman and when Elisha resurrected the son of the Shunammite woman. Indeed the Rabbanites assert that Elisha, even after his own demise, resurrected a person named Shallum son of Tiqwah—we do not find any notice of him in any biblical account of any prophet.

He who watches and oversees all mankind, down to the last generation, was aware that evil men will arise to cast doubt on this basic article of faith, since there are persons of little faith who identify such cases (of apparent death) as due (not to actual death but) to paralysis, and say that Elijah and Elisha revived them by administering a medicament of which they both had knowledge. That is why God decreed that "as soon as the man (Shallum) touched the bones of Elisha, he was revived and stood upon his feet" (2 Kings 13:21), so that all the world would know that the ancients too were revived by way of miracle and not by medicaments, for the dead cannot be healed by medicine. Should the doubters insist that these ancients too

48 1 Kings 17:17ff.
49 2 Kings 4:18ff.
50 2 Kings 13:20f. The name means "Recompense, son of Hope"; both of these symbolic names were given also to other biblical individuals.
51 bHul 7b, bSan 47a. In Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer 33 we learn his name and are told that he was an outstanding man in his generation who performed many charitable deeds (דדנים) daily. We are also explicitly told that he was the same person as the anonymous dead man resurrected by mere contact with Elisha's corpse.
were stricken by mere paralysis which was thereupon healed spontaneously, the answer is that were it so, the patient would have been restored to health only gradually (בהדותה), and could not possibly have jumped up to his feet alive and sound within an instant. Hence Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrection of the dead bones\textsuperscript{52} cannot be regarded as a mere allegory,\textsuperscript{53} for one cannot build an allegory out of something which cannot exist—it must exist first, before one can cite it as similar to something else.

Question: Is resurrection applicable solely to one person and not to another? Answer: The true reply thereto is that our sages have differentiated four steps (מזרחה) of the soul: death, life, health, and sickness. Death is wickedness, life is righteousness, health is wisdom, illness is folly. Two of these cannot be combined with each other because they are mutually contradictory: a fool of a wise man, and a wicked righteous man. Hence only four combinations remains: a wise righteous man, a wicked righteous man, a fool of a righteous man, and a fool of a wicked man. Which of the four is entitled to resurrection? A wise righteous man has no need of resurrection, since he has reached perfect health, both of his wisdom and of his merit (ברוח); he therefore has no need to enter once more into a vile (physical) body, for his soul has already earned the merit of enduring for ever and ever, like the angels. Should one object that in that case his body is unjustly deprived of its reward for fulfilling the active (המשות) commandments which are performed by the body (and not by the soul), the answer is twofold:

(a) The body of such a perfect man is secondary (حوال) to his soul, which is the principal (העקר) part of him. Such a man has therefore no need for corporeal reward, which he considers as vanity and waste (הזהן); he has no desire for it, hence it is no act of injustice (웃ם) for him to be deprived of it. (b) True, it does happen that a righteous man is sorely tried (לישון), but this applies only to one whose merit and wisdom are not perfect, for one whose wisdom and righteousness are perfect, no evil will be permitted (לזרע; cf. Ps 91:10) to overtake him, and both his body and his soul will be rewarded freely. Not so one who though wise

\textsuperscript{52} Ezek 37:1ff.

\textsuperscript{53} But must rather be understood as a case of actual miraculous metamorphosis of dry bones into living human beings.
is evil—while he has acquired as much as he could of the knowledge of intelligibles \( (\text{כון המושכלות}) \), he is nevertheless fond of, and attracted to, bodily lust and the desires of imagination \( (\text{אוות הנטע והושקוף הדומייני}) \). On account of his intellectual capacity \( (\text{פואר}) \) he is completely immune from any dissolution \( (\text{מות}) \), but on account of his addiction to the desires of the material world his soul cannot possibly become one \( (\text{ל疝ראות}) \) with the separate intellects\(^{54}\)—his wisdom draws it upward to become one with these (intellects), yet his habitual inclination toward material things compels his soul to descend downward. This (contradictory attraction) causes his soul great pain and extreme trouble, which are designated by the metaphorical \( (\text{צלול} [\text{צל פאר}]) \) term Gehenna. This is a very grievous punishment, and the soul will suffer it until the time of resurrection, when it will return to its (resurrected) body and will endure punishment commensurate with its body’s sins. Thereupon the soul will be (once more) detached (from its body) and will be united with the separate intellects.

A foolish righteous man—meaning one who did observe strictly the commandments of the Torah but was not granted the merit of learning wisdom and leading his intelligence from ability into action—such a man’s soul will not suffer any loss after his death. Rather, the merit earned by his fulfillment (of the commandments) will buy preservation for his soul, and it will live on until the advent of resurrection. At that time his soul will be revived, its lack of intellectual capacity will be filled, and it will acquire wisdom and perfection. Thus after his (second) death he will (finally) join the separate intellects, and his soul will remain eternal and everlasting, down to the end of the world, assuming that the world will indeed come to an end, or if not, for a time not subject to termination \( (\text{תכלית}) \).

As for him who is wicked and foolish—that is to say, who is utterly devoid of both wisdom and merit—he has no reason to expect (post mortem) preservation and continuance which is

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\(^{54}\) Separated \( (\text{הנְבָאָלִים}) \) from their material bodies. The text here reads \( [\text{"נַא}] \). The text as it stands seems illogical to me—what does the throne of glory have to do in this context? I assume therefore that \( [\text{לכום המב으면}] \) is the result of a scribal misunderstanding: the scribe read the preceding word \( \text{ל ה} = (\text{למסו}) \) as an abbreviation of \( [\text{לכום הכנביה}] \).
earned by wisdom or by merit. It follows that his soul will not be preserved, but rather will be completely dissolved (ת gmail ניסי) like the souls of animals. More fortunate than he is the miscarried fetus who had not come into (living) existence. Should one ask how an existent soul can be dissolved into complete nonexistence, seeing that since the (age of) creation nothing can be rendered completely nonexistent, the sufficient answer is in the foregoing statement that such souls are dissolved like the souls of animals.

(Anyway), two species—the wise righteous man and the foolish wicked man—occur only rarely, since few men attain both wisdom and merit, and few turn out utterly devoid of both these qualities, unless indeed they are vengeful apostates (משומר הלכתי). The majority are either wicked but wise or righteous but foolish. Hence those who merit resurrection are many, while those who do not merit it are but few, and that is why Scripture says, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, (some to everlasting life, and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence”; Dan 12:2).

One must also inquire whether those who will be resurrected shall live on everlastingly or shall once more die. Manifold answers have been given to this question, but the only true answer runs as follows:

Since the human body is composed of opposite elements (הבר), it cannot but decompose (eventually), for any composite is bound to separate into its original components. Therefore those bodies that are resurrected will die once more when their (second) lifespan comes to an end, although this (second) lifespan will be exceedingly long, as Scripture says, “The sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed” (Isa 65:20). There is no way, however, to determine precisely how many years this (second) life may last—one can only conjecture that it might endure

55 Since matter, once created by God, is permanent and can only change its form, without being completely annihilated, unless indeed by God himself.

56 This is rather a reply that does not answer the question: if, from the time of creation down to the time of the end of the created world, nothing can be completely annihilated—it can only be decomposed into its primary components, down to original matter—then the souls of both animals and wicked and foolish humans can only be decomposed into their original material building blocks, and no further. Evidently Isaac had no more convincing answer to this problem but did not wish to admit this to the reader.
for as long as the span of Adam's life on earth. But God knows best.

One might also inquire how man would fare if he has both merits and transgressions to his account—will his merits count while his transgressions are disregarded, or will he be judged according to his transgressions while his merits are disregarded, or will both be taken into consideration for judgment? To say that both will come up for judgment and that he will be rewarded for his merits and punished for his transgressions, is absurd, for reward and punishment are opposites, which cannot be imposed on the same person at the same time. Nor can one say that he will be judged according to the one opposite in complete disregard of the other opposite, unless we add to this a further statement that on the Day of Judgment he will be weighed on the scales to determine which of the two opposites outweighs the other: if his merits outweigh his transgressions, he will be judged according to his merits, and his transgressions will be remembered no longer, as it is said, "If the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezek 18:21). If his transgressions outweigh his merits, he will be judged according to his transgressions, and his merits will be disregarded, as it is said, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity . . . shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered . . . (For his sin . . . shall he die"; Ezek 18:24). However, judgment will be rendered not according to the respective number of the merits and transgressions but according to their grade (מְרָדָה): obviously, if one has murdered one person but has given a farthing (in alms) to another—indigent—person, his puny act of charity will not outweigh his grievous act of murder; or if one has profaned the Sabbath and constructed a tabernacle for the Festival of Tabernacles, the latter (relatively minor) merit will not outweigh the (grievous) violation of one of the Ten Commandments. If his merits and his sins balance each other, it is the same as if he had neither merits nor sins and therefore deserves neither reward nor punishment. However, if he possesses wisdom, he will merit resurrection, so that he may then fulfill the commandments

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57 930 years (Gen 5:5).
58 Isaac adds here "for him (ך)," probably quoting Scripture from memory.
and thereby earn reward for it; if he is devoid of wisdom, he will be regarded the same as a miscarried fetus.\(^{59}\)

So far Isaac's criticism of Bashyatchi's views. Since Isaac devotes more space to this eighth article than to any of the preceding ones, it seems reasonable to conclude that this article was the pièce de résistance in his criticism of Bashyatchi's exposition of the "roots" of the Karaite faith, and that it worried him more than Bashyatchi's unsatisfactory (to Isaac) exposition of such articles as the incipience of the world, providence, and redemption. It must be remembered that Bashyatchi lived at a time when the Karaite and Rabbanite communities of Istanbul went through a short period of detente (if one may use this modern term in this context), with Karaite and Rabbanite scholars freely associating with each other on amicable terms in theological study and discussion. The result was a breath of liberalism (again, if one may use such a modern term), however tiny, on both sides. Bashyatchi's mildly tolerant tendency in his interpretation of some of the more burdensome Karaite ritual laws (for example, the sweeping prohibition of any heating fire or artificial light in Karaite homes and synagogues all through the Sabbath night and day)\(^{60}\) aroused opposition among some Turkish and later also Russo-Polish Karaites.\(^{61}\) The preserved documents reflecting such internal disputes among the Karaites are often enough couched in rather direct language, however high the social and scholarly standing of the object of such criticism may have been.

Still, before we condemn this tendency, we ought to remind ourselves of some historical facts. First, the Karaites were always a small minority among the Jewish people. Whatever hopes they may have entertained in the early brilliant period of their history to become the majority within Jewry were soon enough given the coup de grâce by Saadiah Gaon (first half of the tenth century).

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\(^{59}\) Who died before, or at, birth and was consequently unable to earn merits or demerits.

\(^{60}\) A wintry day spent in an unheated home in the latitude of Poland, Lithuania, and even European Turkey, is far less comfortable—in fact, is injurious to one's health—than the same day spent in the mild climate of Iraq, or even the Crimea (the latter is sheltered by mountain chains from the icy winter winds blowing from the north).

\(^{61}\) A large selection of such critical correspondence regarding Isaac himself is found in Mann, *Texts*, 2:468ff.; cf. also pp. 1162f.
The rigid conservatism of the Karaite teaching became practically the only tie that kept this minority together and alive through more than a thousand years, and any substantial change in response to changing times and ideas, both from without and from within, would have carried the risk of possible dissolution of the sect and reunion with the Rabbanite majority, not to speak of the psychological trauma of having to admit utter error in the past. Secondly, social and economic factors were probably also involved. Each Karaite community was headed and to a substantial extent governed by a very small elite, whose authority and power were based on wealth or learning, and like all elites, this one did not relish, and must have feared, any change in the status quo ante. Thirdly, the historical tendency of Karaism has been toward obscurity, toward withdrawal from the general turmoil of the world at large and into the peaceful quiet of the sidelines, away from the political and religious tumult of the world outside.

In Isaac's time, in Russia, the disinclination to make internal waves may have had also a very practical foundation. The early grant by the Czarist government of full citizenship rights to Karaites resident in the territories newly annexed by Russia after the partition of Poland and the conquest of the Crimean khanate removed the deadly serious danger of the Karaites being regarded by the government as ethnic Jews and consequently being subjected to the crushing restrictions and disabilities which made Jewish life in Russia exceedingly burdensome. It was the Crimean Karaite elite which took the initiative and financed the campaign which resulted in this enfranchisement. Their winning argument before Empress Catherine the Great and later before Emperor Nicholas I was that the Crimean and Polish Karaites, whose native tongue was, and still is, a dialect of the Tatar language, were of the Tatar (ancient Khazar) race and thus not racially akin to the Jews, and that they came to their present homelands long before the time of Jesus, and hence their forefathers had no part in his trial and condemnation.

I know of no published record of the preliminary deliberations by the Crimean delegations dispatched to St. Petersburg to obtain full civil rights for their people. I therefore know of no way of finding out how the idea of the Khazar origin of the Russian Karaites originated, who suggested it, and how it was brought into harmony with traditional Karaite theological and philosophi-
cal thought. It seems safe to assume that the delegations did not submit their plans to their people for a yea or nay vote. Nor did they seek advice in this matter from other major Karaite communities in Turkey (Istanbul) and Egypt (Cairo) — I know of no record or mention in non-Russian Karaite literature of such consultations, nor indeed of any mention of the Russian Karaite claim of non-Jewish ethnic origin. All other Karaite communities have always regarded themselves as ethnically Jewish, in fact as more pure ethnically, because more rigorously observant of the Torah's literal meaning, uncorrupted by rabbinic interpretation. One must also remember that in accordance with the famous aphorism ascribed to Anan, "Search diligently in the Torah, and rely not on my opinion," Karaite scholars and Karaite communities have always been autonomous — they maintained friendly communication with each other but kept their independent right to govern themselves in all matters, doctrinal as well as practical.

The renunciation of ethnic solidarity with the Jewish people, in which the Karaite communities outside of Russia never joined, no doubt increased the importance of isolation from Jewry among the Russian Karaite leadership, particularly in the nineteenth century. The religious ties with the Turkish and Egyptian Karaite

62 They might, I suppose, claim posthumous credit for saving the lives of their flock during World War II, when the Karaites in Western Europe and the U.S.S.R. were, with only a few exceptions, left unmolested by the German occupation authorities. In Poland and Russia some part of the credit is due to Rabbanite Jewish scholars (particularly the historian Professor Mayer Balaban), who assured the Germans that the local Karaites were not ethnically Jews. Testimony to the contrary would have of course resulted in immediate transport of all Karaites to the extermination camps. Cf. S. Spector, "The Karaites in Nazi-Occupied Europe," [Hebrew] Pe'amim 29 (1986): 90–108.

63 That the Turkish and Egyptian Karaite leadership knew of this policy seems to me indisputable. Communication by letter between the two groups — one fully enfranchised in the Russian Empire, the other merely tolerated in Turkey and Egypt — was always maintained, as were personal visits, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In recent times, according to Mourad El-Kodsi (The Karaite Jews — note the term "Karaite Jews"— of Egypt, 1882–1986 [Lyons/ New York, 1987], pp. 267–286), none of the Egyptian ḥakḥams during that period of over a century were Egyptian-born, and all but one were of Turkish or Russian origin, and were invited to Egypt to administer the affairs of their Egyptian coreligionists. The matter must have been the subject of some discussion among the Karaite laity, at least among the upper Karaite class in Turkey and Egypt. Yet I have never seen a single word about it in Karaite documents. The only logical
communities were still maintained, but the Crimean and Polish leadership firmly retained its own independence and its freedom to agree or disagree with the Istanbuli and Egyptian leadership. If concessions were eventually made, for example in the legislation of the heating of dwellings on the Sabbath during the northern winter, these concessions were granted grudgingly as matters of force majeure, not as matters of obedience to the authority of scholarly Istanbuli or Cairene hakhams.

Isaac probably found no pleasure in flatly contradicting the opinions of a revered scholar like Elijah Bashyatchi, whose profound learning he no doubt respected and admired. Probably he too salved his conscience with the time-tested remedy of "Search diligently in the Torah, and rely not on my opinion."

One more detail deserves perhaps to be considered: Isaac's membership in the delegation dispatched to St. Petersburg naturally raises the question, did he approve of, or sympathize with, the policy of renunciation of ethnic brotherhood with Rabbanite Jewry? It is easy to reply yes, since he was a member of the Crimean delegation dispatched to plead for full citizenship rights for the Karaites. But in all fairness we must go on further to ask whether there is any hard evidence that he approved of this disengagement policy, that he was aware of the grave results of such a policy, and that he eagerly, or at least willingly, accepted his appointment as member of the delegation.

There are no documents that I know of to answer these questions with any degree of certainty—one can only make logical deductions from related and known facts. First, Isaac belonged to the Crimean Karaite upper class. His father, a merchant, saw to it that Isaac received an education which later qualified him to act as secretary to a high government official, as school teacher, and finally as ḥakham; he also left a sufficient estate to enable Isaac to follow his father in the occupation as merchant, even though Isaac quickly proved a complete failure in it. Once he became ḥakham and proved himself eminently effective in this office, his explanation that I can think of is that there was a universal consensus among the ruling class, who impressed it persuasively upon the lower classes, that it was a matter of vital importance to keep this skeleton securely locked in the closet, and to prevent it from bursting out, to the great and painful embarrassment of all Karaites everywhere.
appointment as member of the delegation would have been more or less automatic, ex officio—the empress and her high officials were, at least formally, usually respectful and courteous to all clergy (even a Jewish one).

So far we are more or less on solid ground. As to whether Isaac approved in his own mind of the alienation of Karaism from Rabbanite Judaism as favored by the delegation for purely political and economic reasons, one can only guess. Perhaps Isaac agreed with his fellow members of the delegation in their claim that the Russian Karaites were descendants of Khazar converts to Karaism—what little we know of the Khazars does not enable us to decide with any certainty whether the Khazars were converted to Karaism or to Rabbanite Judaism. But I do not see how Isaac, a highly educated theologian, could have sincerely agreed in his own mind that Karaism remove its believers from the brotherhood of Jewry. He surely was aware that such a belief ran contrary to the teachings of all Karaite theologians since Anan, or even earlier. Isaac knew that Karaism has always claimed that it represented genuine Mosaic Judaism, cleansed of Rabbanite misinterpretation and innovation, and no Karaite scholar nor Karaite community has heretofore denied his or its membership in the Jewish nation, either by descent or by conversion; to put it bluntly, no Karaite had heretofore declared publicly, “I am not a Jew, and I want nothing to do with the Jews.”

What then was Isaac to do? Stand up and declare to his highly influential fellow-members of the delegation, “I cannot in good conscience accept membership in this delegation because you propose a break between ourselves and our Rabbanite brethren, which no other Karaite community has ever proposed”? The consequences for Isaac would most probably have been catastrophic. He would probably have been forced out of the hakhamate and he and his wife and children would have faced lifelong penury—what other occupation could he have been able to enter? So he decided that this was not the right time for ostentatious heroics—he kept his peace, and perhaps consoled himself with the thought that his personal heroism and consequent ruin would not have had any practical effect anyway—the delegation’s effectiveness would not have been seriously reduced without him. To the generally ignorant Russian officialdom the Tatar-speaking
Russian Karaites probably seemed far more Tatar than Jewish, even assuming that Empress Catherine and her officials were well enough informed to know that Karaism is a Jewish sect. They probably knew that Crimean Karaites and Tatars lived in peace with each other, and oppressing the Karaites would have made no contribution to the pacification of the recently annexed province. The Russian government had already enough trouble in the freshly annexed portions of the Kingdom of Poland, as well as elsewhere in the disaffected provinces of the empire, without stirring up new ones.

To sum up, whether Isaac’s motives in going along with the policy of the delegation were honorable or not, charity bids us to be tolerant, to remember the difficult position in which he was, and to acknowledge the fact that he was a learned scholar and a good and solicitous shepherd of his flock.

GLOSSARY

(Cf. in general: Jacob Klatzkin, תואר המונחים של מילון העברית, Thesaurus philosophicus linguae Hebraicae [Leipzig, 1928–33], 4 vols. A few terms listed here are not found in Klatzkin’s list, and some meanings also vary from those given by Klatzkin).

- בחרה — free will
- ואלול — redemption
- פנים — fate
- גבולה — heavenly spheres
- נשמת — matter
- אנושי — material (adjective)
- הדרגה — progress by degrees
- אמתות נפשיות — material pleasures
- מתמיד — nonexistence (opposite of נייחות)
- הפילים — opposite elements (in the composition of the human body)
- הנחתת התחזונות — ultimate felicity
- היקום — prolegomenon, principle
- הップור — obstacle
- הקסמים מוסיפים — evidentiary or demonstrative deductions or proofs
- דחייה — repudiate
- הרכבה — composition
- תורתו שלמה — intellectual perception
- השנה — divine providence
- תורתו — inspiration
- חורש — incipiency
— the quadrivium of medieval university courses (arithmetic, geometry, theoretical music, and astronomy)

— primordial matter

— reasoning investigation

— primary elements (fire, air, water, earth)

— imaginative faculty

— quadrant (instrument for measuring altitudes)

— social, political

— even temperament

— one under compulsion, whose will is not free

— rational evidence

— active or practical commandments (requiring action by the human body)

— existence (opposite of even temperament)

— accident (nonessential property or quality)

— intelligibles

— posterior (in time)

— separate (intellect)

— social collective, human society

— prior (in time)

— the two termini of time (beginning and end)

— spiritual intellect

— emanation, inspiration

— paralysis

— attribute

— resurrection (of the dead)

— apogee; termination

— ultimate goal (wisdom)

— desires of imagination