NISSI BEN NOAH'S QUASI-COMMENTARY ON
THE DECALOGUE

By Leon Nemoy, Dropsie College

EARLY* KARAITE LITERATURE—what little of it has so far been
resurrected from manuscripts and published—is full of authors
about whom we know little more than their names and a few
extracts from their works; even the exact historical period in
which they lived is often uncertain and subject to controversy.
One of these is Nissi ben Noah.

* Abbreviations:
JPS Version — the original English version of the Hebrew Bible published in
1917 by the Jewish Publication Society of America.
King James Version — the Authorized English Version of the Bible, first
published in 1611.
Klatzkin — Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae Hebraicae et Veteris et Recentioris.
Auctore Jac. Klatzkin (Leipzig, Berlin, 1928–33), 4 volumes. Hebrew title:
אוצר המונחים הלינגואיסים

I cannot help wishing that Klatzkin, who quotes a number of proof-
passages from Nissi's work, had cited many more of them and thus helped me
to understand some additional difficult passages, where Klatzkin's definition
of particular technical terms did not seem to fit. Perhaps the poor state of
Pinsker's text was a partial cause of this omission—one would be reluctant to
cite a proof-passage when the correctness of its text is uncertain.

Mann — Jacob Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature.
Pinsker — Simhah Pinsker, לקטיא קראיתא (Vienna, 1860).
Poznanski — Samuel Poznanski's unpublished last work, a bio-bibliographical
dictionary of Karaite scholars, composed in German and written on catalogue
cards. The original file (cursorily examined by me in Poznanski's study in
Warsaw, in 1922) is now in Jerusalem. When I joined the editorial staff of the
English Encyclopaedia Judaica as editor of Karaitha (1961 or thereabouts),
the central office in Jerusalem very generously sent me a xerox copy of a
Hebrew translation of this card file. So far as I can judge, the translation is
accurate, and one or two errors that I have noticed so far (e.g., נ for עֵינִי)
seem to be due to the typist who transcribed the translator's manuscript.
Needless to say, it is highly desirable that the work should be brought up to
date, preferably by a collegium of editors, each expert in a particular field, and
published, not only for its own great value but also as a well deserved
posthumous tribute to a master-scholar. Indeed, this project could well form
Pinsker identified Nissi’s father Noah with Abū Nissi, who heads the list of early Karaite worthies compiled by the 12th century Karaite apologist Elijah ben Abraham. But there the name is almost certainly a corruption of Abū ʿĪsā and should be joined with the following name in the list, Obadiah, to represent the pre-Ananite sectarian leader Abū ʿĪsā Obadiah (ʿAbd Allāh) of Ispahan (end of the 7th century). Moreover, Pinsker identified Nissi with Rab Aḥa (ץרא בראש), a reputed (did he actually exist?) disciple of Anan, and consequently felt compelled to place him in the second half of the 8th century, as one of the earliest known Ananite scholars. Nissi himself, in a passage cited by Pinsker, gives his name as אַנְנוּ קְנוּ תָה בָּאָשׁ רָא, which at first glance seems to support Pinsker’s identification with Rab Aḥa but on second thought raises some serious difficulties. First, while אַנְנוּ may possibly be an abbreviation or an hebraization of the Aramaic name אָנָנִי, it does not seem to be recorded in Rabbinic literature, where אָנָנִי and אָנָנָה are fairly common as given names. In fact in another passage (Pinsker, I, 40) Nissi gives his name as אַנְנוּ תָה הָמְנָה עָרוֹ אַנָּא, and Poznanski states that Ms. Geiger reads אָנָא in both places. Secondly, the pronunciation אַנְנוּ is rendered doubtful by the fact that the entire passage just cited is rhymed, hence אָנָא should presumably be here

the subject of several doctoral dissertations, and might also persuade at least some of the candidates to devote their future attention to Karaite studies, one of the most neglected sectors of jüdische Wissenschaft.

Those readers who are expert in medieval Jewish and Arabic philosophy should be warned that no student of early Karaite literature can avoid dealing from time to time with Karaite philosophical works and with philosophical chapters in Karaite theological and legal works, and he soon enough learns, as I did, that this limited experience leaves him far short of genuine expertise in philosophical theory and history. This applies fully to the philosophical portions of Nissi’s tract, and my understanding of them and of the technical terms occurring in them may here and there be in need of improvement or even radical correction. (My learned colleague, Dr. Jacob B. Agus, checked and corrected some of them.) To cite an old Arabic cliché, “I have done what I could—let him who comes after me do better.”

01 Pinsker, I, 37.
02 Pinsker, II, 106; HUCA, LI (1980), 79.
03 Pinsker, I, 37. Graetz (Geschichte der Juden, 3. verb. Aufl. [Leipzig, 1895], V, 199-201, 443-45) dates Nissi as “um 850.”
04 Poetic license, I suppose, for כָּאָשׁ. Poznanski emends this to קָאָשׁ.
pronounced יָאָל, and is probably to be connected with the Script-
tural hapax legomenon (Isa. 13:21, in the plural only, יָאָלוֹת),
which according to Gesenius-Brown (under the root מְעָל) signifie-
s jackals (with a parallel in Assyrian), and according to Ben-
Yehudah (I, 135) means martens. The JPS Version of the Hebrew
Bible renders מְעָל as ferrets, while Rashi (ad loc.), with his usual
modesty and sound sense, states simply אל דִּיוֹשִׁים מֵי חַיִּי הַמַּיְשֶׁר
What is important for us in this case is that in the particular
Biblical passage the term refers to one of several species of wild
animals known to frequent deserted places devoid of human
habitation, and not as a rule favorably regarded by mankind;
here their normal existence cannot be reasonably considered as
comfortable and free from human enmity. Now Nissi, in the same
passage just quoted, volubly complains of the vicissitudes of
unkind fate which embittered his life. “I am a poor man,” he tells
us, “destitute, despised, and helpless... hungry and thirsty,
devoid of hope for lack of silver and gold (网约 כל כָּתוּב בַּלַּא
כֹּכְךָ(וז)), having lost the inheritance of my father and mother
אֲבֹתֵי וְרַבְּתֵי מָפָרָב עָמִי רַוְחַלְתָּה(... I roved about in all
countries... I wrote down (my literary works) at the cost of my
weary hands, my languishing soul, and my failing eyesight. I
sought (help) from this person and that person in embarrassment
and shame and humiliation, the one granting my request while
the other swore that on no account would he grant it, (so that)
friends turned into enemies and severally sought my life in every
way, intending to harm me. Even the (sole) pupil that I had
stood up to act as accuser (קדמ לְשׁוֹן) against me, multiplying

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05 They are: צִיוּם, אָחִים, בָּנָה יָבֶה, עַשְׂרִים, אַיִם, חֲזִיקָה (the last two in verse 22).
The JPS Version’s renderings of these terms do not agree with those of the King
James Version. The derivation from the Scriptural יָאָל was suggested already by
Julius Fuerst (Geschichte des Karaeerthums, I, 67); however, he connects it not
with יָאָל = “jackal” but with the equally Scriptural exclamation יָאָל = “alas!”
(Ezek. 6:11, 21:20), and translates יָאָל בָּר as “Rabbi Leid.” Later on (Pinsker, I,
40) Nissi spells his alias אָלֶה, which Fuerst (I, 156) emends to וֹא.

06 יָאָלְתָּה. I am not clear whether this refers to fellow-scholars, from whom
Nissi sought instruction, or to patrons in Jerusalem, from whom he sought
subventions to sustain himself while he was studying there. I suppose the latter is
the more likely.

07 I suppose this figure of speech is borrowed from
Ps. 38:13, but the grammatical construction seems very
awkward here. Perhaps read יָאָלְתָּה, “on account of my request(s).”
upon me whispers of calumny and thus requiting me with evil for good... he, together with his adviser and patron (ר' ניסי).\textsuperscript{08}

Removing the flowery oratory, we are thus told that Nissi was born in a poor family, lost what little property was left to him by his parents, and traveled far and wide in search of instruction from authoritative scholars, as was the custom at that time, especially in the Muslim dominions in Asia and Africa. He was also evidently not sufficiently humble and respectful towards his instructors and patrons, some of whom consequently turned against him, cut off his support, and issued unfavorable reports about his character and behavior. Even his sole pupil whom he tutored joined his enemies, whether justifiably, because Nissi visited his own frustrations upon him, or unjustly, by the pupil’s selfishly siding with Nissi’s detractors, we are not told. No wonder then that Nissi came to regard the despised and hated ניסי as his spiritual fellow-sufferer from the malice of small-minded men. If this explanation is correct, and if Nissi really meant to dub himself “Sir Jackal,” then this is the first instance that I can recollect in Karaite literature of an author indulging in bitter irony at his own expense.

Assuming then that Nissi’s identification with the mythical Rab Aha is untenable, can we perhaps attain some other justifiable approximation of the time in which he lived? All we have to go by are his concise tract published by Pinsker under the title פירוש עשה הרבדים,\textsuperscript{09} and the extracts from his larger work, the code of law entitled בית המקסילם (“Palace of the Erudite [Karaïtes]”) or מספר [ב] דיור המצוות (“Balance-Beam [in] Explanation of the Ordinances”), likewise published by Pinsker.\textsuperscript{10} Let us examine the former work, which is available to us in toto.\textsuperscript{11}

Is Pinsker’s title of the tract the author’s own or was it supplied later by a copyist, a reader, or Pinsker himself? It is, in my judgment, certainly not the original author’s title, because it simply does not accurately describe the contents of the tract. The tract does indeed begin with a general classification of—not a

\textsuperscript{08} Pinsker, I, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{09} Pinsker, II, 2-13.
\textsuperscript{10} Pinsker, I, 37-41.
\textsuperscript{11} The references to Pinsker’s text of the treatise are by page and line. The reader is invited to number the lines in his copy of Pinsker’s book, so as to avoid the repeated counting of lines on each page.
commentary on—the Ten Commandments by their nature, scope, and content, followed by a brief listing of particular types of ordinances which come under the jurisdiction of each individual commandment. All this occupies less than four pages out of a total of eleven, or not more than one-third of the tract as a whole. What follows has nothing to do directly with the Decalogue: the concept of the Deity, creation, man, election, wisdom, controversy, classification of ordinances, classification of persons subject to ordinances, classification of teaching methods. Pinsker thought that the tract was meant as a general introduction to Nissi’s far larger work, the ייח. Perhaps Nissi did indeed intend it to serve as such. But the tract as it stands seems to be a complete entity in itself, with its own proem and explicit, brief though both are, framing the body of the tract, and nowhere does it refer to the larger work which it is to introduce. Perhaps the

012 I reserve the term “commandment” for the Ten Commandments (דברי תורה) alone. Particular secondary ordinances (משורות) are referred to as “ordinances.” The classification and exposition of all such ordinances in ten groups under the Ten individual Commandments is, of course, an ancient and favorite Karaite device, best known from Hadassi’s encyclopedic אסכול המפר (composed in the year 1148).

013 Pinsker, I, 37: לפָּרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, רשויות... בְּרֵיהֶם וְמִשְׂפָּלָם. Poznanski thought so too.

014 However, I cannot help doubting this assumption, since the discussion in the first of the ordinances flowing from the first three commandments would have had to repeat much of what Nissi had discussed in the tract. What Pinsker offers (I, 37–41) are evidently extracts from the tract’s own introduction, with the initial proem omitted, since the first word, וְרֶאֶה, seems to imply that some text—the customary pious invocation, perhaps followed by a dedication to a patron—had preceded it. Note that the tract is not at all polemical or apologetic—only once (below, p. 328, and note 27) does Nissi refer to “the scribes” (meaning the Rabbanite scholars), but the term is part of a Scriptural quotation, and the connection with Rabbanism is at most merely hinted at. The condemnation of the use by Jews of the Aramaic language in scholarly works applies to Anan as well as to the Rabbanites (cf. below, p. 315, and note 022). The term “Rabbanite” does not occur in the tract at all, nor indeed does Nissi dispute with other Karaite scholars, at least not in detail. Pinsker (II, 1–2) characterizes Nissi as a Karaite propagandist and discerns a missionary note in his condemnation of him “who performs . . . the ordinances of the Torah . . . out of his own knowledge, or because his forefathers had done so and had so taught him” (below, p. 329). But this seems to me to be a rather forced bit of exegesis; besides, it would apply just as well to some of Nissi’s fellow-Karaites and indeed to his unfriendly fellow-scholars.
Firkovitch manuscript used by Pinsker did originally contain both works, or perhaps he, or an earlier copyist or reader, was misled by the caption heading the classification of the Decalogue, אלוהים פותחות עשרת ההוראות (II, 2, line 17), which follows the proem. Were this caption the author's own, it would normally have been placed before the proem, not after, had Nissi meant it, however inaccurately, to be the title of the whole tract.

If, then, the tract is not really a commentary on the Decalogue, what is it? The first impression one gets from it is that of an "omnium gatherum." Now such a précis of everything under the sun could have been made either for the general public or for the scholarly elite, undergraduate or postgraduate. The tract is clearly not meant to provide popular reading—the subjects treated, certainly a good half of them, would have been of no interest to the layman, indeed would have been more or less incomprehensible to him, for they are recondite in themselves and are discussed in a way that is not easy for the nonscholar to understand and follow. Perhaps the best proof of it is the poor state of Pinsker's text, which appears to have suffered considerably from misreadings and omissions by copyists, who must have found it difficult in a number of places to make head or tail of what they were copying.

We are thus, it seems to me, driven to the conclusion that the tract was meant for either undergraduate or postgraduate scholars. Which, then, of the two? Not, I think, for graduate scholars, who already knew the subjects discussed and would have been interested only or mostly in the יסודות, particularly in the legal points in which Nissi agreed or disagreed with their own interpretation of Scriptural ordinances. Hence one is left with the only remaining alternative that the tract was meant for undergraduate students, advanced enough in their studies to enter an institution of higher academic training in theology, philosophy, dialectics, and methodology of teaching. From this we are led to the further conclusion that what we have before us is a syllabus of the several academic courses which such freshmen collegians were expected to take and successfully complete in order to graduate as certified doctors of divinity.

Now the only Karaite academy known to us in the early period that can qualify for such "university" standing is the one in Jerusalem presided over by Joseph ben Noah (in Arabic Yusuf ibn Nûh) and said to have consisted of seventy (presumably
meaning teaching) scholars. Among Joseph’s star pupils were the philosopher Joseph ha-Ro’eh (in Arabic Yūsuf al-@register, euphemistically for “the Blind”) and the grammarian and exegete Aaron ben Jeshuah (in Arabic Abū al-Faraj Hārūn ibn al-Faraj). Joseph ha-Ro’eh’s pupil was the encyclopedic savant and reformer of the Karaite law of incest Jeshuah ben Judah (in Arabic Abū al-Faraj Furqan ibn Asad).015 The academy continued its activity after Joseph ben Noah’s death, although we have, so far as I can recollect, no specific data as to who his successors in the presidency were. In any case, it indubitably closed its doors at the end of the 11th century, when the first Crusade put an end to all Jewish scholarly activity in Palestine.

If all these deductions are reasonable—the French adjective vraisemblable would be far more appropriate—and I cannot urge the reader too strongly to keep in mind that they are all conjectural, then we have a fairly definite date for Nissi’s lifespan, somewhere between the end of the 10th century and the last decade of the 11th.016 It is certainly a vastly more likely date than the legendary Rab Aha’s end of the 8th century, when Karaite scholarship (except, of course, that of Anan) could hardly have been up to producing anything as advanced as Nissi’s academic vade mecum, which fits much more naturally in the concluding century of the golden age of Karaite scholarly literature.

The biographical data supplied by the aforesaid account of Nissi’s unfortunate conflicts with his patrons, his colleagues, and even his lone pupil, can be augmented by a few further details supplied by himself. “I wearied myself and wore myself out,” he tells us, “since my youth, having made Torah and sound thought my shield (ורשהיה הרוחא והותיה מתיר). I spent time with scholars (among other) nations and peoples across deserts and high seas (ורשהיה על החכמים לא lié 일본ים מעממי הברורה וإيمיס).017 I roved about in all countries, and I learned (several) languages in my

016 Poznanski notes that Nissi’s use of Hebrew philosophical technical terms suggests that he was acquainted with the Hebrew translations of Karaite Arabic classics prepared in the 11th century by the Byzantine Karaite translators.
017 The text here is hardly immaculate; perhaps read הורשהיה [אתי מ '-', על] של החכמים/ne היכ] לא lié 일본ים נרי.
quest for explanations (of Scriptural problems, spending) my days and my nights, the years (of) my life and the extent of my lifespan. I learned from all (kinds of) men, proud and exalted as well as lowly and scorned . . . But the Lord of hosts aided me, and wrought great and awesome works for me, for I was but an orphaned lad left all alone in the city, my parents having deceased while I was a mere youngster, whereupon my grandmother reared me with the last of her strength (םפתוחי קנותי הכלת חות) and with the tears of her eyes. I meditated over the fiery law (of Torah: תודיעי ארש) untiringly, reverently, and joyfully (רתרעה), rising early to study (even) on rainy days . . . weary and tired though I was for lack of sustenance. I searched for understanding (with an eye as keen) as the eye of a hawk (אוחקרי יונה עיני איה; cf. Job 28:7), in order to request of my patron (שמארין) (that he provide me with) enough for my (bare) needs. He did provide me\(^\text{018}\) with my daily bread and my clothing for my (bare) skin, and after he had thus dealt bountifully with me, I betook myself to the city known for its open spaces (= Jerusalem).\(^\text{019}\) There I found (in the course of my studies) that things were so broken down (נפיצים) as to be well-nigh incurable, but after intense labor I found a little out of much, by searching and meditating in all (sorts of) books and commentaries (בהל כל ספר ותפורה). Greek, Edomite, Hebrew,\(^\text{020}\) and Aramaic. I thereupon realized that I was performing the ordinances and laws not according as they

\(^{018}\) both the JPS Version and the King James Version render Prov. 30:8 (טראפין לא תות) as feed me, but Gesenius-Brown prefers the literal meaning “let me devour.” In post-Biblical Hebrew this meaning of the hif’il seems not to have been retained, and the noun נחל in the sense of “food” was kept only as a Biblical term (cf. Jastrow, pp. 556–57).

\(^{019}\) רעי; cf. Zech. 2:8.

\(^{020}\) For Poznanski proposes to read עברי without explaining why. “Edomite” usually means Roman (= Latin), but I find it difficult to believe that an 11th century Karaite scholar, born and raised within the Muslim dominions, would have had an opportunity, or a desire, to study enough Latin to read Latin theological and philosophical works. To be sure, he moved to Jerusalem, where he could have met and conversed with Western Christian pilgrims, but what could the Latin literature of that age offer him? I am therefore led to wonder whether “Edomite” here means Arabic and is used here out of caution, since the usual term “Ishmaelite” might have been easily deciphered by a Muslim. Note, by the way, that Mann (pp. 3 ff.) does not include Nissi among the prominent early Karaite scholars who settled in Jerusalem.
were written in the Torah\textsuperscript{021} \ldots I have therefore now explained them in clear language and in the Hebrew tongue, not in the Assyro-Aramaic one\textsuperscript{022} which latter is a shameful language for the men of the Dispersion, since it led the Hebrews to forget their (native) speech and caused them to express their wisdom and thought in a stammering tongue, to err in (reading) Scripture, to melt away (נמרעס) in their interpretation\textsuperscript{023} (thereof), to stray from the literal meaning (ד"ר), and to take Satan's side (רשענין) in maintaining their own words \ldots\textsuperscript{024} They neither know nor understand, and dwell in darkness. \textit{O Lord, be gracious unto us: we have waited for Thee} (Isa. 33:2).\textsuperscript{025}

Stripping off the stylistic embellishments, we thus learn that Nissi, having lost both his parents at an early age, was brought up by his grandmother, of whom he speaks with what seems to be genuine, and not merely literary, affection. A diligent and bright student, he evidently impressed his local teacher, and having completed his preparatory studies he found a patron who provided him with sufficient means to travel to Jerusalem. On the way there he apparently visited eminent scholars in the several regions through which he had to pass. The scholarly atmosphere in Jerusalem, however, did not please him, and he proceeded to supplement his collegiate courses—presumably at the Karaite academy in the Holy City—by perusing theological and secular

\textsuperscript{021} To the best of my constitutionally far from perfect memory, this is a most unusual confession from a Karaite scholar. Perhaps שארא מקנים is a copyist's misreading of שארא מקנים, "that we (Karaites) were performing." It would have been in character for Nissi to suggest to his contemporaries that his 현 is meant to teach them for the first time how to perform the ordinances of the Torah properly, and not improperly as they had done heretofore. To be sure, every Karaite codificator (for example, al-Qirquisâni) who disagreed with his predecessors and contemporaries in more than a few points of law, silently implied that they were wrong and that he was now, for the first time, setting his readers aright, but I do not recollect anyone confessing that he had been led astray by his scholarly elders until the time when he saw the light of truth.

\textsuperscript{022} That is to say, the language of the Gemara, and also that of Anan's סדר מוהר. Is this an indirect slap at Anan, or did Nissi never get to see Anan's code?

\textsuperscript{023} For read נוהג. In the next line for read ד"ת. In the immediately following does it mean "those who do like them will be (as sinful) as they" (the suffix in referring to the preceding?)

\textsuperscript{024} Pinsker, I, 38.
works written not only in Hebrew but also in Greek and "Edomite." He also consulted books written in Aramaic, meaning, I suppose, Rabbinic texts written in that language, all this no doubt as a foundation for his magnum opus, the רביות. Since he wrote also the academic syllabus which is the main subject of discussion here, we may reasonably conjecture that his academic marks were as eminently satisfactory as his marks at his boyhood school, and that his instructors (at least those of them whom he did not antagonize) recommended him for appointment to the faculty, notwithstanding his sharp tongue and rather difficult disposition.

With this testimonial to Nissi's scholarship the modern reader of the syllabus cannot fail to agree. The syllabus is the work of a mature and competent scholar, at home in Biblical studies, in theoretical theology, in the philosophical literature of his time, and in the practical arts of academic teaching and disputative discussion. His command of the scientific (theological and philosophical) terminology is best demonstrated by the number of proof-passages from the syllabus cited in Klatzkin's *Thesaurus Philosophicus*. And finally—again with the cautionary remark "if the aforeproposed hypothesis is correct"—he provides us with a comprehensive summary of the curriculum of perhaps the earliest Karaite academy that was fashioned, at least in part, after the great Rabbanite academies in Babylonia (Iraq) and Palestine. Surely that academy must have produced, or influenced the production of, many more works of advanced Karaite scholarship than have been discovered and published heretofore. A search for more of such highly important material in the great repositories of Karaite manuscripts in the Soviet Union and elsewhere is long overdue. Unless and until we have more such original and early texts to work with and to examine carefully, our knowledge of early Karaism will remain fragmentary and uncertain.

Let us now proceed to a detailed examination of Nissi's syllabus:

\footnote{See above, note *.}
2.1–16 (The Decalogue)

“In Thy name, O Gracious Pacifier, I seek help. Who is as the wise man (חכם), and who knoweth the interpretation of a word?\(^1\) etc. (Eccl. 8:1). Hence he who knows how to interpret rightly (ברור) the Ten Words (=Commandments) is obviously and undoubtly a wise man in the interpretation of the (Holy) Books, like unto the righteous Moses and those like him, who have explained and interpreted each uttered word (דיבור רבר) (of Torah) according to its proper and clear meaning ( смысл רבר), as it is said, Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, took Moses upon him to expound this Torah (Deut. 1:5). Note that Ecclesiastes says a word, not ‘words’—is it possible to say that if a man is able to interpret (any) one word he may be called wise? (Not so). Rather, we learn from this verse that he who knows the (true) interpretation of even one Word\(^2\) out of the Ten is surely wise, and should be designated as such (חכם ל׳ברור). To whom does this refer? To him who knows how to interpret the meaning\(^3\) of the (prophetic) vision (讧ות) and of the Torah, who is not like a (mere) rhetorician (expert in the use) of vocabulary and eloquence (camel עָשׂה וְרָפָה). A rhetorician cannot be called wise, for every wise man is a rhetorician,\(^4\) whereas not every rhetorician is a wise man...”

2.17–3.13

When the living God spoke to the early righteous fathers He did so in a quiet and even tone, but when He addressed Moses and the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai He spoke to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, fierce fire, and stormy clouds, in order to impress upon them that they must not turn

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1 רבר: JPS Version and King James Version, thing.
2 That is to say, what Ecclesiastes meant was not “word” in the general sense but “Word” in the sense of one of the Ten Words or Commandments.
3 שמע, used in the sense of the Arabic ma‘nə.
4 Meaning, I suppose, that “wise men” are usually expert in expressing their ideas in clear terms and in fluent style, whereas “rhetoricians,” though skilled in the correct use of words and phraseology, are not always men of high intelligence and thorough learning in Torah.
aside from His ways. Even so, a flesh-and-blood king speaks softly to his own obedient servants, but when he receives foreign envoys he displays all the armed might of his attendants and all the pomp and circumstance of his majesty, in order to discourage the foreigners from any thought of aggression or rebellion against him. Hence Scripture says, *The Ten Words which the Lord spoke . . . out of the midst of the fire* (Deut. 10:4)—why out of the midst of fire and not out of something less dreadful? Because Scripture likens Israel to gold and silver which must be refined with fire. “Those who observe and practice the Torah, she shall refine and test them, as gold and silver are refined . . . Moreover, the divine laws (הרעות) are called fiery, and Almighty God’s words are likened to fire, as it is said, *At His right hand was a fiery law* (אש דא שדה) *unto them* (Deut. 33:2), and *Is not My word like as fire, saith the Lord?* (Jer. 23:29).”

The Ten Words apply and are addressed to every single individual, and therefore employ throughout the singular objective pronoun, instead of the plural pronoun, as for example in the very First Word, *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2), not “your God”—everyone is meant, rich or poor, great or small, as if he had been personally spoken to, and was charged with the observance thereof.

3.14–18

The first (האשונבות, הקדומים) five Words mention both names of the Deity, “Lord” and “thy God,” in order to honor Him and to set forth the reward for him who honors them, and the punishment of him who violates them. The last five Words make no reference at all to the Deity, because they deal entirely with common transgressions to which all flesh is apt to succumb, “hence the name of Him who dwells in the plains (or, amidst the poplars) has not been included in them.”

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5 Cf. Ben-Yehudah, XII, 5766.
6 For רערת as a metaphor for heaven see Ben-Yehudah, IX, 4706. God spoke to Moses in the plains (יערוהה; so King James and JPS Versions; perhaps rather, amidst the poplars or willows) of Moab (Num. 33:50, 35:1, 36:13).
3.19-27

The Ten Words apply throughout the world, in all places, at all times, to everyone. They were pronounced by God Himself, "not with the palate, nor with the throat, nor with the mouth, nor with the tongue, nor with (any other) bodily member, nor by way of (direct) sensation (אֶלֶל), but rather according to the capacity of the person addressed (לְפִי אֶלֶל אֶלֶל)... so that the Describers (אֵלֶל אֶלֶל) might not (attempt to) describe Him, nor the Speakers outline and define him (אֵלֶל אֵלֶל וּנְבָלָאֵל וּנְבָלָאֵל)."

3.28-38

"The Ten Words are the root and source (שָׁרוֹשׁ רְשָׁעִים) for all . . . ordinances, whether obligatory or nonobligatory (=elective), whether owed to God or to one's fellow-men . . . They depend on three things and their opposites: truth, good, and life, opposed respectively by untruth, evil, and death . . . All true faith (אמנָה) and righteous conduct depend on truth, good, and life."

"The root and source (אֶלֶל אֶלֶל) of all good includes truth . . . All trouble and toil (אָכֵל אָכֵל) depend on untruth, evil, and death. The root of all perversions (מִשְׁרָקִים) is untruth, for out of untruth on the part of the serpent there came evil upon the world, as it is said, And the serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die' (Gen. 3:4), (whereby he implied) that no good issues from truth and no evil from untruth."

3.39-51

All Ten Words are of equal weight, and none is more or less weighty than the other. For example, the Tenth Word may seem far less weighty than the Sixth, the Seventh, and the Eighth, yet in fact covetousness is the root out of which grow the branches of murder, adultery, and theft, as witness Ahab's assassination of

7 "Describers" are those who describe God in terms of His attributes (מִשְׁרָקִים, Arabic sifār; hence the adherents of this theory were called sifātīyah). "Speakers" is the literal translation of the Arabic mutakallimūn, the Muslim scholastic theologians. Cf. Klatzkin, II, 145; IV, 172. Klatzkin does not list the term מִשְׁרָקִים.

8 Used in Isa. 42:16 in the sense of crooked things (so King James Version; JPS Version, rugged places).
Naboth, Absalom’s assassination of Amnon, and Achan’s theft of devoted property. The First and the Tenth Words thus form a framework for the whole Decalogue, since he who transgresses these two Words is the same as if he had transgressed all ten.

4,1–30

The Ten Words may be divided into two groups:

I. Duties to believe or to perform at all times and in all places: First, Fourth, and Fifth;

II. Duties not to believe or not to perform at all times and in all places: Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth.

Or alternately:

I. Duty to know and realize something: First;

II. Commands to know and to perform something, forming two subgroups: (a) positive (Fourth and Fifth); (b) negative (Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth).

Scriptural commands (in general, תְּרוּמָתִי) may be divided into two classes:

I. Commands directed at the soul and involving no action by the body, such as acknowledgement of God’s oneness and realization of our sins and trespasses;

II. Commands directed at the soul and involving also action by the body according to its strength, forming two groups: (a) duties involving the whole body, as for example, ablation to remove total uncleanness; (b) duties involving only one or two bodily members, such as washing one’s hands and feet before prayer and performing circumcision.

9 See 1 Kings 21, 2 Sam. 13, and Josh. 7, respectively.

10 Literally “wall and hedge” (כְּתֹלֶת וּמִשָּׁם).

11 In other words, three Words are positive and seven are negative.

12 Cf. al-Qırqıçı, Kitāb al-anwār, VI, 20,18 (ed. Nemoy, III, 634); English translation, Studies in Jewish Bibliography ... in Honor of I. Edward Kiev (New York, 1971), pp. 325–26. Still required by Elijah Bashyatchi (Adderet Eliyyāhū, Odessa, 1870, fol. 104aa) on the basis of Exod. 30:19, where, to be sure, the duty involves only the priesthood. Bashyatchi adds, however, that “the duty to wash the hands is more grave (חרשא) than the one to wash the feet, as it is said, I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord (Ps. 26:6).” Rabbinic law requires the washing of the hands only.
Or alternately:

I. Positive commands, forming two groups: (a) those that must be performed in all lands, at all times, and by all persons, adult and minor, which are in turn subdivided into two sub-groups: (aa) First, Fourth, and Fifth Words; (ab) commands to love one's fellow-man, to perform circumcision, wear fringes, and their like; (b) those that must be performed at a certain time (while the Temple in Jerusalem is standing) and not at any other time, in this (Holy) Land and not in any other land, such as sacrifices, burnt offerings, Passover lamb sacrifice, and sprinkling of the sacrificial blood.

II. Negative commands, forming two groups: (a) those forbidding an action in all lands, at all times, by adults or minors, subdivided into two subgroups: (aa) Second, Third, and Sixth through Tenth words; (ab) such commands as Thou shalt not take vengeance nor bear any grudge (Lev. 19:18), Thou shalt not oppress ... nor rob (Lev. 19:13), and their like; (b) those forbidding an action today but not tomorrow, in this month but not in another month, as for example, (Thou shalt not approach unto) a woman ... as long as she is impure by her uncleanness (Lev. 18:19), meaning at the present time, since after she has rid herself of her uncleanness she is permitted to be approached, or Thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife (Lev. 18:20), since once widowed she may be taken to wife.

4.31–6.18 (Comments on each Word)

4.31–41 (First Word)

“All truth, peace, straightforwardness (יידי), uprightness (כשר), righteousness, faith, life, goodness, loving-kindness, and mercy are dependent upon the recognition of the one and only God, there being none other than He, who cannot be measured, defined, or given form and likeness.” Him we must implore and worship, and Him we must serve with the prescribed offerings, obedience to His several commands, and confession of our failures in these respects. All such Scriptural commands are in essence implied in this Word.
5,1–9 (Second Word)

This Word interdicts not only all idolatry but also all immoral and abominable practices and superstitions whatsoever connected with it, however slightly, as well as all bodily uncleanness.

5,10–15 (Third Word)

This Word condemns all false oaths and vows, as well as promises uttered with fraud aforethought, and obligates man to abide by the solemn utterance of his lips.

5,16–23 (Fourth Word)

This Word covers all the observances connected with Sabbaths and holy days, including Sabbatical and Jubilee years, tithes, and kindred contributions, as well as circumcision, dietary laws, etc.

5,24–27 (Fifth Word)

This Word prescribes the honoring not only of parents but also of elders, judges, and ruling princes, and covers the laws of inheritance as well.

5,28–37 (Sixth Word)

This Word covers “all kinds of homicide committed by man, deliberate or accidental, by way of (overt) oppression or (covert) deceit, (direct) ambush or (indirect) cunning, speech or talk, (open) denunciation or (roundabout) slander, by sword or poisons, using (plain) food or delicacies.” It applies also to unpremeditated death or injury resulting from negligence or violent blow, as well as mayhem, but not to legitimate execution for capital crimes, killing of enemies in the course of war, etc.

5,38–45 (Seventh Word)

This Word outlaws all kinds of adultery, whether committed by way of rape, consent, or seduction, in one’s heart only or by

13 הָבָה (cf. Ps. 10:7).
14 דִּבְרֵי מוֹמָלָל, presumably meaning direct accusation or indirect insinuation.
actual cohabitation, even with consenting virgins or widows. It covers also divorce, homosexuality, persons unfit by reason of injury to their private parts, levirate marriage, etc.

5.46–6.9 (Eighth Word)

This Word covers “all kinds of theft committed by men, in one’s heart or with one’s hand, deliberately or inadvertently, in the house or in the field, in the dark of the night or in the light of the day, furtively or openly,” as well as all sorts of fraudulent and extortionate practices, such as kidnapping, usury, dishonest weights and measures, etc.

6.10–14 (Ninth Word)

This Word condemns all false testimony in any kind of case, capital, criminal, or civil, and acceptance of bribes to pervert justice, as well as false prophecy.

6.15–18 (Tenth Word)

This Word prohibits all coveting of another person’s wife, male and female servants, livestock, house, fields, vineyards, etc.

6.19–34 (The concept of God)

“God is one, and there is none like Him . . . He was the first, prior to all generations, and He will be the last, after all creatures have vanished . . . and after all finality has come to pass (הנהו כל תחילת . . . He is fully cognizant of every thing in heaven and on earth) . . . He is God of truth and King of the world.”

15 נ ReturnValue
16 The followingReturnValue, which Pinsker rightly traces to Jer. 23:30 (حسب ועלש), disrupts the sentence and is, I suppose, a reader’s gloss.
17 Literally “all things above and on high are full of Him, and so are all things below (that are) His footstools.” For the plural הראים see Ben-Yehudah, II, 1043–44.
6.35–41

“No (human) eye can see Him,” notwithstanding the several passages in Scripture stating that mortal men have indeed seen Him. 18 “For such ‘seeing’ is a matter of ratiocination and cognition (חכמה ודעת), as it is said, Now Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt (Gen. 42:1)—is it possible to say that Jacob, who was (at the time) in the land of Canaan, (actually) saw corn being bought (and sold) in Egypt? (Obviously not). Hence you learn that there is ‘seeing’ which means obtaining knowledge by way of reasoning. The same applies to And Israel beheld Joseph’s sons (Gen. 48:8)—is it possible to say that he actually saw them? Is it not (explicitly) said (shortly) thereafter that Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see (Gen. 48:10)? Hence you learn that such ‘seeing’ signifies cognition in one’s heart, as it is said, My heart had seen 19 much wisdom and knowledge (Eccl. 1:16).”

6.41–48

“But does not 20 the prophet testify that I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and . . . used similitudes (Hos. 12:11)? Hence you learn that God shows to each prophet only such a likeness (רֵעֵי) (of Himself) as he (alone) is able to perceive, and which is not perceivable to lesser persons. Moreover, even angels and prophets do not know God’s place (מקדש), as witness the prophet Elijah, who expected God to appear successively in a strong wind, in an earthquake, and in a fire, but finally found Him in a still small voice, 21 and as witness the angels’ benediction, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place (Ezek. 3:12)—note that Scripture says from His place, not “in His place,” meaning wherever that place may be, unbestowest even to the angels.

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18 E.g., And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone (Exod. 24:10).
19 King James and JPS Versions, had great experience of.
20 Kamel used as a place.
21 1 Kings 19:11-12.
6.48–7.18 (Creation)

All creation was formed by God’s spoken word, is constantly under His scrutiny from one end of the world to the other, and is singing His praise. The heavens are His throne, and the earth is His footstool. He inflicts death and bestows life, smites and heals. He searches the reins and tries the heart. Deep things are revealed to Him, and hidden things are known to Him. He casts light upon, and makes clear secrets. "He knows the human embryo before it is (planted) in the (mother’s) belly, and He consecrates it before it leaves the (mother’s womb), as it is said, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee (Jer. 1:5)."

7.18–25

God made us, and we belong to Him. We are His people, and the flock of His pasturing. He created all things in the six days of creation, and there is nothing more in the world that is incipient (מהתרש), as it is said, That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done, and there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9); only dispositions and actions (הכירות והפשולים) are incipient.

7.25–37

On the first day of creation God created seven things: heaven, earth, darkness, light, water, abyss (חרום), and wind (רוח). Four things are involved in the process of creation: command (צו), skillful performance (מאכל), naturalization (מלאכה), and narration (סיפור). Thus, And God said, ‘Let there be light’ (Gen.

22 מְבַיִין is evidently used here in the sense of the Arabic mubayyin, not in its usual Hebrew meaning of "he who understands." See also below, note 41.
24 From the proof-verses cited here in support of this tradition it is clear that both atmospheric wind and vital spirit of live creatures are meant. For the Rabbinic tradition of ten (corresponding to the Ten Words) things brought into being on the first day see Louis Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, I, 3 ff., and notes thereto, V, 1 ff.
1:3)—this is a command; and there was light (Gen. 1:3)—this is skillful performance; and God divided the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4)—this is (establishment of) nature (תכלת); and God saw the light, that it was good (Gen. 1:4)—this is narration (of God’s attribute).

7.37–39

On the second day God created only the firmament of heaven, to divide the lower waters from the upper waters.

7.39–42

On the third day God gathered the waters into separate places called seas, causing dry land to appear and to sprout vegetation (צמחים)—this is a collective term (צמח לכלל) encompassing all kinds of plants, including grass and trees, which are a lower category (צמח שנהב).

7.42–43

On the fourth day God created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (and made the sun rule in the daytime and the moon rule the night).

7.43–45

On the fifth day God created aquatic swarming creatures, sea-monsters, and fowls.

7.45–48

On the sixth day God created wild and domestic beasts, terrestrial swarming creatures, and man, having created him in His own image.

7.48–8.6 (Man)

Man is composed of two elements: his body, created out of the dust of the earth, which is coarse (אבק), unclean, and heavy; and his soul, derived from a lofty and clean place, which is heaven; as
it is said, And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). Note that Scripture uses the same term formed when speaking of the creation of both man and beast, yet spells it with a single letter yōd (יוד) for the latter and with a double letter yōd (יוד) for the former. The additional yōd, whose numerical value is 10, indicates that “man is favored over beast and fowl with ten attributes, five pertaining to his body and five to his soul: in his body, sight for eyes, hearing for ears, smell for nose, savoring of food (לעש אכילה) for mouth and tongue, and sense of touch for hands and feet and the rest of his body; in his soul, wisdom (בינה), intelligence (בינה), understanding (חכמה), thought (חכמה), and resourcefulness (חכמה). Should one argue that beasts, too, have these five bodily attributes, the answer is that beasts do indeed have them, but only as a matter of natural instinct (בכナン), devoid of understanding and resourcefulness, without the participation of the heart in distinguishing between good and bad. Man, on the other hand, examines things and makes a choice between good and bad; he seeks, desires, looks and listens for, and savors, or else closes his eyes, stuffs his ears, and shuts his mouth, by way of choice, thought, and understanding.”

8,7–9

Moreover, the spirits of lower creatures were created out of the earth, as it is said, And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the spirit of beast’ (Gen. 1:24), and again, Who knoweth the spirit of man, which goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goeth downward to the earth (Eccl. 3:21).

8,9–11

Having completed His work of creation, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day as a day of rest for all creatures.

25 הִיוֹד, usually (King James and JPS Versions) translated living creature.
26 So apparently understood by the author, and so translated by the King James Version; JPS Version: whether it goeth upward . . . whether it goeth downward, which seems to be grammatically more accurate.
8.11–32 (Election)

God chose man out of all creatures, taught him knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom, endowed him with honor and majesty, and made him ruler over lower creatures. Of all men He chose Abraham, established His covenant with Isaac, settled His presence upon Jacob, and because of His love for the three patriarchs chose their seed, the Children of Israel, out of all the nations and made them His special possession (秥לחת), as it is said, For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His own treasure (Ps. 135:4). He spoke to them from heaven at Mount Sinai, and gave them right judgments and true instructions (תורה), which He commanded them to observe.

8.32–42 (Wisdom)

It is our duty to study the Torah and to adhere to its obvious meaning, and not to follow our own understanding, as it is said, Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding (Prov. 3:5). We must not be guided by the false wisdom of scribes, as it is said, How do ye say, 'We are wise, and the Torah of the Lord is with us'? Lo, certainly in vain hath wrought the vain pen of the scribes (Jer. 8:8). We must not make ourselves wise with evil wisdom (יאל ותהנה המנה אשר), nor fear God with our mouths and lips while we “remove our hearts and reins away from Him,” since forsaking God and His ordinances and following a commandment of men learned by rote (Isa. 29:13) avails nothing—God causes those who do so to perish together with their evil wisdom.

27 Evidently to be understood here as implying that the “scribes” (= Rabbanite scholars) regard their own interpretation of the Torah as the only one that is correct.

28 Pinsker adds here a footnote by ש"ך (i.e., Abraham Firkovitch) to the effect that “evil wisdom” apparently signifies here separatist (= heretical) wisdom (המכמה הותרונית), which “he who became wise” (המקים), cf. Ben-Yehudah, III, 1546; i.e., Solomon) called strange, as he said, For the lips of the strange one drop honey . . . but her end is bitter (Prov. 5:3–4). The common interpretation of the strange one (הדר) is an alluring and promiscuous woman. Firkovitch goes on to explain that the reference is to metaphysics (תובמה שלמה טרונית), “and not, God forbid, to the conventional sciences (תובמאות הלומדיות).” For the meaning of תובמה (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and musical theory) see below, note 37, and Klatzkin, II, 121.
8.42-9.5

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—and why so?—because a good understanding have all they that do them²⁹ (Ps. 111:10). Note that Scripture says them, not “it,” showing that God bestows good understanding upon him who fears Him with wisdom. Wisdom tempered with fear of God is enduring, adorns its practitioners, and gives them strength and good cheer.

9.6-13

Wisdom is revealed in two ways. First, wisdom and sound thought (תורת网站建设)³⁰ are revealed in their created products, the result of thought, as wise men exercise³¹ their intellect. For example, we deduce the existence of God the Creator from the process of creation as attested by the testimony of the Torah and of the prophets. Secondly, wisdom and understanding are revealed in the Torah and in the divine vision (תורת网站建设), products of inspired prophecy justified by both Torah and wisdom. Any wisdom that does not come under these two rational categories³² is evil wisdom. He who does something relying solely on his own wisdom, and neither on the intelligence of those who exercise their understanding nor on the Torah, will only be caught in transgression.

9.13-18

He who performs one of the ordinances of the Torah, or more, out of his own knowledge, or because his forefathers had done so and had so taught him,³³ and says that this is the right and good

²⁹ ידמ ומד: JPS Version, do thereafter; King James Version (more clearly), do His commandments. As the author proceeds to explain, the plural suffix covers both fear and wisdom, hence one must fear Him wisely.

³⁰ For the various meanings of this word see Klatzkin, IV, 188-89. For חכמה והחכמה as a term for the “sound thinking” Karaite scholars as contrasted with non-Karaite philosophers, see Aaron the Younger ben Elijah, עץ חים, ed. Delitzsch (Leipzig, 1841), p. 31, and Steinschneider’s note, p. 251.

³¹ העש; so interpreted by Ben-Yehudah (XIII, 6267: העש). The Scriptural hapax legomenon תורת网站建设 (Zeph. 2:1) has been variously interpreted and emended, without much success. Cf. תורת网站建设 below, line 12, and 10, 23.

³² תורת网站建设 הדוריה התשובה: one would have expected חכמה, as above, line 6, corresponding to the Arabic wajh. For the term מבנה, see Klatzkin, I, 130–31.

³³ Literally “had put in his hand.”
way because he prefers it, notwithstanding that the Torah says the opposite—such a one is guilty, for it is his duty to forsake what his forefathers had done and taught him and what he prefers, even if he believes it to be right (ישראל), and do instead as the Torah commands, as it is said, Ye shall not do after all that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes (Deut. 12:8). Hence the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and its glory.

9,19–26

Such true wisdom may be divided into the following categories: (I) Science (מדע), sub divided into (a) higher (metaphysical, עליונית) science acquired by the intellect (שכל), as for example, cognition of God, angels, souls, and spirits; (b) conventional science (דעה המוסר), sub divided into (ba) science of plane measurement (המדרש והמדות), (bb) science of number and count, (bc) science of conjunction and planets (הlexer והמדות), and (bd) science of flutes and voices (מקצבי והמקצלות); (c) the province of the lower (physical, חפץ) intellect, such as the science of the four temperaments (מאכלת), sub divided into (ca) management of human society (הヂון), such as royal governance of kingdoms and empires (לできません אלארצות), (cb) management of family, such as the king’s governance of his near and distant relatives, and (cc) man’s management primarily (ביいろ) of himself, such as his direction of his soul and body.

9,26–36

Knowing, therefore, that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and that the root thereof is zeal in observing (הЈאשת)

35 Cf. Klatzkin, II, 163, item 2 (quoting this very passage).
37 In other words, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy (including astrology), and theoretical music. See above, note 28.
38 Cf. Klatzkin, II, 189 (citing this very passage).
39 Here the classification of the sciences stops abruptly at what is ostensibly the end of the first major category. The text is obviously defective. For Wolfson’s attempt to reconstruct the original text see Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume (Cincinnati, 1925), pp. 273–74.
His ordinances, as it is said, *The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God and keep His commandments* (Eccl. 12:13), it is our duty to fear Him and to worship Him gladly, to follow Him, love Him, and cling to Him. We must keep in mind that He searches the hearts and knows the imaginations of thoughts. Should one say, "I am but a foolish man (חכם), unable to study and to distinguish," he should be told, "God Almighty comprehends thee (わかる) and knows thee intimately, for He weigheth the hearts (Prov. 21:2)."

9.36–45 (*Torah study*)

One is consequently obligated to study the Torah and the (prophetic) vision(s) and to teach them to his son, for the Torah, like bread and water, sustains both body and soul. When on the verge of death, the father must charge his sons to keep God’s charge (משמרת אל שרי) and His Torah.

9.45–10.3

The recognition (มากมาย) of God and the observance of His laws and ordinances may be achieved through perception by man’s intellect and by thought, by way of search in the Torah and scrutiny (תנין) of Scripture (מקרא), even as one prospects for silver among the boulders of the mountains. The wisdom of Almighty God and His sagacity (.InvariantCulture) are given (נוחים) only into the hearts of those who are wise and understanding; only dullards and fools read the Torah without understanding the true meaning thereof. Indeed such persons are no better than perfect heathens (נומרים), and thereby invoke a curse upon themselves, as it is said, *Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this Law, to do them* (Deut. 27:26).

10.3–22

Should one object that (full) wisdom cannot be found nor full understanding made known, since man cannot find the ultimate end (TabIndex) of wisdom from beginning to end, for *the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea* (Job

40 Truth from falsehood, right from wrong, etc.
the answer is this: Wisdom is found in the hearts of the wise, and understanding in the hearts of the intelligent. Wisdom has no tangible sale value. It is hid from the eyes of all living (Job 28:21), showing that it was hidden until Almighty God clarified it, established it, and searched it out for the use of mankind. Scripture then concludes, And unto man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding' (Job 28:28).

10,22–33 (Controversy)

Precious as wisdom is, mankind is apt to be divided and of controversial mind about it, for wisdom, though it is the intellectual basis of the sagacity of those who are armed with it, suffers from controversy among its devotees. When a little out of much becomes known, what is still unknown remains greater than what is known, and even what is known is beset by discords and quarrels. And even the wisdom which flows out of the Torah of the living God is being read simultaneously by Hebrews (הבריא) both near and far, both sinful and righteous. They cannot but disagree on its interpretation, on the meaning of its teachings (דרות), and on the exact particulars (פעולות) of its ordinances, for this wisdom is difficult (קשה), not easy to understand (חכמה), and profound ( עמוק), as Solomon, the wisest of all mankind, has said, All this have I tried by wisdom; I said, 'I will get wisdom,' but it was far from me (Eccl. 7:23). Yet hearkening to the words of the Torah and diligent meditation (חכם הגדלות) in Scripture are neither concealed (מכות), nor beyond human comprehension, nor distant, as it is said, It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deut. 30:12–14).

41 Cf. above, note 22. Here, too, the author seems to use the Hebrew הניכנ (Job 28:23) in the sense of the Arabic bayyana, "explained, made clear," even though the Biblical word is usually (JPS and King James Versions) translated understandeth.

42 מָשְׁכַּל חוֹדוֹר הַמַּחְאָרוֹשׁ; the translation is tentative. The last word is meant to rhyme with the following.

43 Literally "appears" (כasString).
Scriptural teachings (הדות) and ordinances are of three kinds:

(I) Positive ordinances, divided into two groups: (a) ordinances that are incumbent upon us at all times—every day, every part of the day (יום), every hour—in all places, and in all countries, and upon every person, whether native Israelite (אזרחי) or proselyte, freeman or manservant, adult or child, young or old, male or female, mistress or maidservant; e.g., belief in God’s oneness, observance of Sabbaths and holy days, honoring of one’s father and mother, and their like; (b) ordinances that are incumbent upon us in one place but not in other places, and those which apply to one tribe in Israel chosen by God [but not to the other tribes, to one country chosen by God] but not to any other country, to the Temple in Jerusalem but not to synagogues—such as the offering of the various sacrifices.

(II) Negative ordinances, divided likewise into two groups: (a) prohibitions applicable at all times—every day, every part of the day, every hour—such as the interdict of murder, adultery, theft, and all other prohibitive injunctions in the Torah; (b) ordinances covering actions prohibited at present but obligatory at some other time, such as Passover sacrifices and burnt offerings, which may not be offered in foreign lands, but will become obligatory on the altars and in the Temple in the Holy Land.

(III) Permissive ordinances (ראשון): if we perform them, so much the better for us; if we do not, we are not held liable or responsible (יחסים ואผลกระทบ); such are the ordinances relating to Naziriteship, mourning, or vows and freewill offerings (נביא), where prior to vowing or promising we are under no obligation to fulfill them.

Having defined wisdom, stated to whom it is granted, and classified the Scriptural ordinances, we must now proceed to classify the persons who perform them. They may be divided into four classes:45

44 After the promised restoration of the people of Israel in Palestine.
45 The text here seems to be in serious disorder. As it stands, it implies that נביא (10, 47) are divided into four classes, of which the first
(I) The wise man (חכם), to whom God has granted cognition (ודע), insight ( ************************** ), which eyes He has enlightened with intelligent reading of Scripture ( ***************************************** ), and has led him aright to the perception of what conforms to righteousness and true faith, so that he finds the ordinances as enlightening as the sun—he does not go astray nor does he lead others astray, he does not sin nor does he cause others to sin.

(II) The upright man (רש), one to whom God has granted neither intellect (nesday), nor (practical) sagacity (твор), nor mental discipline (מנון), nor decisive judgment ( ****************** ), but who puts his faith in them that possess righteousness, cognition, and truth, and performs the Torah exactly as they do—he is free of sin, but blessed (ראשה), delivered, and saved.

(III) The base man (בר), to whom God has granted neither cognition, nor understanding, nor intellect, nor discernment ( ****************** ), and whose soul has not called him to perfect himself ( ****************** ) by following closely after men of righteousness, and to place his faith in men of truth and intellect who practice deep searching and investigation; he transgresses the limits of both sagacity and Torah, and is consequently covered with the shame of transgression, his cognition and thought grow short, his intellect grows sour, he grows insolent (ודידי), ceases to do right, goes astray and misleads others, and sins and causes others to sin as well.

(IV) The wicked man (רש), to whom Almighty God has given the ability to know and to understand, yet he rejects righteousness; he strays, and does not follow cognition but rather follows

(presumably) is an enumeration (10, 48), and is in turn subdivided into four groups. But this implication is difficult to accept: in the first place, one would have expected to read ראה, the enumeration of the four supposedly class 1 groups ends on 11, 8, and the supposed classes 2–4 are completely absent. The only conclusion I can draw is that ראה is a reader’s gloss, that the original text in 10,47–49 had read ראה and that in incorporating the gloss into the text the scribe added the tautological ראה and that in incorporating the gloss into the text the scribe added the tautological.

46 ידילק: I suppose the author had in mind the Arabic khâlis, “free of inferior mixture or blame, pure.”

47 ערכא: I suppose one could read ערכא and translate “with the shame imposed by the Torah’s anger.”
wickedness, going in the ways of those who stray and cause others to stray, placing his faith in them and learning ordinances from them, until his disaster (סזר) comes upon him, and he is caught in his ruin (מער).  

11.8–21

Having classified those who perform the Scriptural ordinances, we shall now cite examples of them from the Torah, from (prophetic) Vision(s) (= the Prophets), and from Wisdom (= the Writings):

(I) The wise man, to whom Almighty God has granted wisdom and discernment: Bezaleel and Solomon; to whom He has granted knowledge of Torah: Ezra.

(II) The upright man, to whom God has granted neither intellect nor (practical) sagacity in matters of Torah, but who adheres to those who perform the Torah and does as they do: Jethro and Hiram.

(III) The base man, to whom God has granted neither cognition nor understanding, and whose soul has not called him to perfect himself and to adhere to those who have faith: the inhabitants of the condemned city48 and Nabal.49

(IV) The wicked man: Pharaoh and Haman.

11.21–34 (Open and concealed ordinances)

Knowledge of the Torah and performance of its ordinances may be divided into two categories:

(I) Ordinances stated in the Torah clearly and openly (ברורו וברורים), such as the observance of the Sabbath and the honoring of one’s father and mother.

(II) Ordinances hidden and concealed (استفנה וסתרנה), subdivided into two groups: (a) ordinances referring to a specific situation50 but silently obligating us to apply them by analogy to similar situations, for example, Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an

48 Who have fallen away into idolatry, Deut. 13:13 ff.
49 1 Sam. 25:2 ff.
50 Literally “mentioning and stating only a little out of much” (שבירה האמר ושמירת המותרת).
ass together (Deut. 22:10), which applies by analogy to a fatling and a mule, and implies the general prohibition of working a clean beast and an unclean beast together; (b) ordinances which are formulated in words neither clear nor open, are not interpreted or explained in the Torah, are not subject to clarification by analogy to similar but clear ordinances, and whose meaning is known to us only by tradition (המנדיה) from father to son, which obligates us to follow the tradents (הגהות), even when two of them disagree with each other, and each one believes in his own version and considers it right.\(^{52}\)

11.34–12.2 (Teachers)

Having set forth and classified the knowledge of the ordinances and their performance, and put aright each and every matter, we must now mention and classify those who act as instructors in the teachings (of the Torah) and as teachers of the ordinances, who may be divided into two categories:

[(I) The good instructor, subdivided into two groups]: (a) the instructor and teacher who is a watchman (עוזה) and a prophet and acts as Almighty God’s envoy and messenger, whose duty is to instruct and to explain anything that is concealed, and to teach and interpret to all mankind, near and far, infant and suckling,\(^{53}\) Gentile and Israelite, him who is silent and him who asks; he must be a prophet who had a dream-vision in which God said to

\(^{51}\) קרא, which is obviously not meant to do any work.

\(^{52}\) Pinsker adds here another footnote by Abraham Firkovitch: “That is to say, all Israel, Rabbanites as well as Karaites, are unanimously (דה אทอด) agreed, without any disagreement.” Firkovitch seems to have understood השלי המריכים (lines 33–34) to mean “when the two rival sects (i.e., Rabbanites and Karaites) believe in this traditional interpretation and regard it as the correct one.” I do not see how the context can justify such an explanation, since it is precisely this group of ordinances which underlies much of the disagreement between Rabbanism and Karaism. Perhaps the text (line 33) should be emended to read להמת את המנדיות [ף ופלゃו ריכו] המיניים [ששי], המריכים בלחו רכ, המריכים הבחה יבר. As is well known, the controversies among the Talmudic Sages provided Karaite apologists with one of their major arguments against the authenticity of the Rabbinic tradition (the Oral Torah).

\(^{53}\) The idiom is Scriptural (1 Sam. 15:3, המשלי ויתנ ותנו, but the context seems to require גאול ויעך, “adult and suckling.”
him, *Son of man, I have appointed thee a watchman unto the house of Israel* (Ezek. 3:17), and whose duty is to turn back (לשוב) and to instruct him who has turned away (שובב); (b) the teacher who is wise but can do no more than invent out of his own heart the explanation of any concealed matter; he is neither a watchman, nor a prophet, nor a shepherd, nor a military leader (מעביד); his duty is to set aright those Gentiles who go astray and mislead others, and to teach and instruct those Israelites who observe the ordinances and are anxious and awe-inspired to do so; as for an Israelite who does not believe in God's Torah, if he asks to be taught and does learn, which is all the better for him, he may be taught; if not, the teacher is free of blame.54

(II) The bad teacher, likewise subdivided into two groups: (a) the instructor and teacher who speaks falsely of Him who weighs men's actions55 and teaches all sorts of error and evil, saying, "I am a (true) prophet," yet he is surely a false prophet; (b) the teacher who teaches his disciples56 the books of those who have erred and have caused others to err, one who has been attracted to base misleaders (בניخيلםימורים); God Almighty will erase the names of those from the land of life.

12,2–7

A true prophet must satisfy three qualifications: (a) he must be of Israelite descent, (b) he must have with him a sign (אות) or a portent (מימד), (c) he must preach the Torah of Moses (עברית ממשה). The lack of any one of these qualifications brands the prophet as indubitably false.

12,7–13

Shepherds (הערים), too, may be divided into three groups: (a) the Everlastingly Living Shepherd, Almighty God, who pastures His flock with just judgment; (b) the shepherd who does not

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54 If I understand this paragraph correctly, a teacher of this category is allowed to teach clearly stated ordinances, but not concealed or implied ones, since he lacks divine inspiration.

55 התנודף: cf. 1 Sam. 2:3.

56 I assume that the plural suffix supposes a preceding הלאם, even though none such is actually there. Of course the final mem could be a dittography of the first letter of the following word יספר.
mislead (מרוח) his flock nor scatter it, but pastures it with knowledge and skill; (c) the shepherd who misleads his flock and scatters it, out of brutishness, foolishness, and stupidity.

12.13–18

When a teacher is asked to teach a person who is qualified (כשר), is eager to learn, and is anxious to perform, he should [do so]. And just as teachers are obligated to teach, so are students obligated to study. The student must seek to learn from any person, poor or rich, youth or old man. He must not talk back to his teacher (שלא נדבר לפניו ורבו) but must have faith in him and not argue with him (לAppState), as it is said, Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom (Job 33:33).

12.19–23

When addressing his teacher or speaking of him before those who know him, the student should refer to him as my guide57 and my familiar friend (Ps. 55:14). He should serve him as would a manservant. A student who does not practice humility, who regards himself as superior to his teacher (המתאה על רבו), and who makes no effort to understand what he is taught (ואינו מבין י德拉מי) deserves no compassion, as it is said, For it is a people of no understanding, therefore He that made them will not have compassion upon them (Isa. 27:11). On the other hand, if he is humble, lowly of spirit, and intelligent, the teacher must listen to his query, discuss it exhaustively (ולשוכב ולנברית), inform him (of the implications of his query) according to his capacity (ולדריוות כל וכח), and give him an (exhaustive) answer.

12.23–48 (Classification of Queries)

Queries fall into five categories, and (the teacher) who is questioned must determine the particular category to which the student’s query belongs, to wit: (a) query posed by the teacher to the student in order to teach him; (b) query posed by the student to the teacher in order to learn from the latter; (c) reproachful

57 So King James Version; JPS Version, companion.
query (שָאָלוּ מִרְבעֵה), like Moses’ question addressed to Aaron, *What did this people unto thee, (that thou hast brought a great sin upon them)?* (Exod. 32:21); (d) query meant to silence a complainant (שָאָלוּ מַכְשֶׁם לָיָן כָּמָה נוּן), like Pharaoh’s question addressed to Moses, *Who is the Lord that I should hearken unto His voice?* (Exod. 5:2); (e) query meant to test and examine (שָאָלוּ בָּהֲזֹת וְזוֹקָר), like the question addressed by the Lord to Adam, *Where art thou?* (Gen. 3:9).  

When the teacher poses a query in order to instruct the student, he must listen to the student’s answer (לַשׁמַע מַמְנוּ), help him to formulate it (לְלָכֵר בֵּעָדוּ), and add to it or subtract from it wherever necessary, before telling him, “The matter is as you have said”—in short, the teacher must make sure that the student has understood both the question and the true meaning (of the correct reply) (ʳלָכֵר מֵשָׁלֶת מַלְפְּצִיִּים).

When the student poses a query in order to learn, the teacher must reply to it, discuss exhaustively what puzzles him (לְלָכֵר בֵּעָדוּ), and make it clear to him until he understands it.  

[When the query is reproachful, one should reply to it]  
with soft and pleasant words, in such a way as to make the questioner understand, both in his thought and in his intelligence (בִּמְחָבֵה), and not in such a way as one would defend himself  
against quarrelsome antagonists (הצִיוֹן וַהֲרִירִים) but in the way one would guardedly reply (לְזָצָר בְּרִיוֹ) to dutiful sons or respectful (הָצְרוּעִים) students.

When the query is meant to silence a complainant, one should reply to it not in the manner of a (categorical) judicial decision (השָׁמַע אֶת פְּלִיל) but in the manner of a person of superior knowledge (השָׁמַע מְחֵנְבּ עַלְיִ, by making it evident in a scholarly manner that the matter is as stated (המִסְפְּרִי הַחָסִים שָׁרַר כְּמוּ) and that the questioner is an ignoramus who has gone astray in his ignorance (כְּסַל שָׁנַח בַּאֲוָלָתו).  

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58 On the commentators’ treatment of the theological problem involved in this question (surely the omniscient Lord knew where Adam was hiding) see Sh. Kasher, *מששָׁל מָכָא אַס*, 1, 149–50.
59 See below, Appendix I, to 12, 35.
60 לָכֵר מֵשָׁלֶת; see Ben-Yehudah, VIII, 3778 (quoting this very passage).
61 Meaning, I suppose, that the respondent should not merely contradict the arrogant questioner but should, by clear, incisive, and well-reasoned arguments, demonstrate the questioner’s utter ignorance of the facts.
When the query is meant to test and examine the respondent’s mind and intelligence, the scholarly respondent must be sure of himself and of his learning (לדע את נפש אדת המצות), so as to make evident his understanding and intelligence to the questioner. He should pour out his learning unsparingly (כל נפש אדת המצות) to the questioner who is fit to receive it (למי שכרת הל), but only sparingly to one who is unfit. Obviously, then, the respondent must know the subject before he replies to the questioner.

12.48–13.5 (Qualities of the scholar)

One who undertakes the interpretation of (holy) books (ספרות) must be possessed of the following qualities: (a) he must have learning and understanding, and must not be contentious and complaining ( الزمن רומאתי); (b) he must not be a sluggard during his scholarly training, nor an ignoramus gone astray in his foolishness (to begin with); (c) he must be skilled in vocabulary, eloquence, and tongues (말ים וחקלאו אִלִשָּׁן), and must not waste time in slumber and sleep (instead of studying); (d) he must (diligently) read the Torah, and keep on studying it; (e) he must be fluent in all tongues, and must seek to learn all interpretations; (f) his tongue must be as keen as a sword, and his words must be sparing and restrained (הלפרד בוטה); (g) he must understand all points of controversy (מהሉuka) and be aware of the difference between discussion and debate (rióס ביכ המבררת הלמהלהת); (h) he must be skilled in deducing, by way of analogy, from things evident those behind them which are hidden (שיהיה מקוש בהנהלת מה ש转型发展 מַן המסרת); (i) his questions must be pertinent (כןין), his replies must be in accord with the rules (הלכה), and he must speak softly to everyone; (k) he must say what he has to say according to its proper mode (ושדרו), and he must not harden his heart nor assume

62 לעת מהtolua (the word is not recorded in Ben-Yehudah), presumably formed on the analogy of the Arabic talmadhah.

63 לעת מהlopedia (rhyming with the preceding לעת מהlopedia), presumably meaning that a scholar must be able to read the Aramaic (Talmudic) and Arabic (contemporary) interpretations of Scriptural passages.

64 Meaning, I suppose, that he must speak to the subject of the discussion or question, and not digress or stoop to personalities.
an insolent face; (1) he must consider diligently (ש商报ון) the Scriptural ordinances, judgments, and laws and be eager to do and fulfill them; (m) he must be well-versed (邴ק) in Mishnah, in Talmud, and in the Rabbinic enactments (אבלכת), as well as in the supplementary rules (תוספות) and the Aggadic tales (דבורה).  

APPENDIX I 
NOTES TO PINSKER’S TEXT**

(P = Pinsker’s own corrections, II, 222)

2,8 בבריו יבכליים — P corrects to بينו, to agree with the preceding כמי; this is, I suppose, stylistically preferable, but does not seem really necessary

10 ותרנים ימרורים — read ימרורים  
13 וערל — read נצרת (P)

24 ומרד צ𣲗י — read נזיש  
27 ועררמ — read ורצים  
3,16 ושכרי יהודים — read ושכרי יהודים

26 יאורים — read יהודים

34 משך — read משך

65 According to Poznanski (JQR, [XI /1920/ 21], 251), לתלנה refers to “the Hebrew version of the Halakót Pesiqót.” In the parallel passage in the Mishna (Pinsker, I, 41) Nissi speaks of “greater and lesser supplementary rules (תוספות הדבורה),” which Poznanski (ibid., p. 250, note 18) supposed might signify the Tosefta and the Baraita.

66 The word is followed by a bracketed תוספות הדבורה; it is not clear to me whether the latter is a variant reading or Pinsker’s own emendation.

67 These 12 required qualities of the exegetic scholar are condensed into 10 in Hadassi’s lists. Who then borrowed them from whom? P. Frankl thought that Nissi borrowed them from Hadassi, and therefore must have lived in the 12th century. Poznanski, however, argues (ibid., pp. 249–50) that logic suggests the opposite, and I am inclined to agree with him. Hadassi omits Nissi’s 10th quality, which is in a way contained in the 6th quality, and combines Nissi’s 11th and 12th qualities into one (Hadassi’s 10th). The logical conclusion would seem to be that Hadassi condensed Nissi’s list in order to conform to the decimal classification of all the ordinances and in order to fit it under the Decalogue; or in other words, Hadassi corrected what he regarded as a methodological error on Nissi’s part, since Nissi himself, in his vade mecum, employed the same classification of all law.

** Some misprints in Pinsker’s text are probably due to damaged type or insufficient inking. Where this is obvious, I have not noted it here.
36 read read
41 read read
43 read read
43 read read as in the preceding sentence, lines 42–43
4,1 read read
8 read read
33 read read [симו], as in the comments on the following Words
5,22 read read
40 read read (P, wrongly listed under line 42)
47 read textus receptus read
6,24 read read
32 read read (Jer. 23:24; P)
6,33 read read
40 read read (Gen. 48:10)
7,13 read read
14 completion, obviously does not make sense here. Presumably read מחלה, a Scriptural hapax legomenon (Ps. 58:9) usually interpreted as signifying a snail, and later used also in the sense of a larva (see al-Fāṣi, Jāmiʿ al-alfāz, ed. Skoss, II, 645; Ben-Yehudah, XIV, 6848). In this case the word is clearly used for a human embryo, usually called קְבֵט or מַנָּח, in Judeo-Arabic jārṣīs (al-Qirqiṣānī, Kitāb al-anwār, ed. Nemoy, V, 1181, 1219 ff.). קְבֵט is presumably the Arabic qabbāt, “small locust,” (Hava, p. 585a; evidently not used in Arabic for a human fetus)
15 is difficult. It is obviously meant to parallel the immediately following (Jer. 1:5), yet את is the direct opposite of טוֹרֶם, and רֶחְמִים, which is probably meant to rhyme with the preceding בֶּךֶם (line 14), is a peculiar form of the dual or plural of רֶחְמִים (the dual is Scriptural, Jud. 5:30)
51 seems difficult to me; presumably read either [כָּפָלָה] or [שִׁיטָן יִרְדֵּנִי], “since a double yōd amounts to twice ten when spelled out in words”; or else transpose שִׁיטָן בַּקָּמָה תַּשְׁנָה,
“since the second yod amounts to another ten when,” etc.

8.5— read מ ו ח חס (P)
39— read י לפ獬 ה (P)
44— read תרה (P)
8–9 תכסה רבכ הניא תורודה תורתו תחת — presumably read, in accordance with line 6, above, תכסה רבכ הניא תורודה תורתו תחת ירה (P)
10— read רוביחו
14— read חותמי, as below, line 16
15—or המ שמה — probably read המ שמה
10,1 read הסבך
7— read מצת (Prov. 10:8)
16— read ססנה
24— read מודע
25— read מתבכר
26— read מструктор
33— read על שלשה חלקי (החלקה הארוש מחצהprises, cf. below, lines 39–40. The scribe’s eye has evidently wandered from one line to the same word in the next line.
35— read מימיים
37–38— read בחת מ ו מיסמע [אשר בחרי, ולא בשר ומשמע באחת מ ו ארצות] אשר יברע, ולא בשר וארצות, another case of the scribe’s eye having wandered from one line to the same words in the next line
41— read דכלל (P)
52— read הנהוים (P)
11,6— read להורה (line 23) through Hàngוים (line 27) seems to be a reader’s gloss (זך = זך) א (ה”), read [הנהוים] שניא נבר ע (P)
23–27 the entire sentence from תור moda and seems to be a reader’s gloss, since it obviously intrudes between the end of the first category of ordinances and the beginning of the second category. The meaning of the gloss is not quite clear to me, and the text of it seems to be corrupt (e.g., ליהוים in line 26 appears to be a misreading of the following which the copyist forgot to cross out). The glossator apparently draws a parallel between the four corners
of the garment to which the *šišīt* is to be attached and the four legs of the table of shewbread, in order to prove that the *šišīt* must “cover (לכסות)” the corners. He thus seems to introduce an intermediate category of Scriptural ordinances, partly open and partly concealed. The law of *šišīt* caused much disagreement among Karaite scholars; cf. al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-anwār*, XII, 42 (ed. Nemoy, V, 1259–60), where the matter is characterized as “very doubtful” (*mushtabīh jiddan*); Aaron the Younger ben Elijah (Eupatokia, 1866), fol. 80ab–81ab; Elijah Bashyatchi, *Aaron Alilī* (Odessa, 1870), fol. 106ab–bb (who states that “scholars were perplexed [נפוך] in this matter”)

11,32 אֲלֵי — read אֲלֵי (P)

37 The text seems to be defective; presumably read על стри הַלְּקִים [אתו מֶלֶדֶמְּלַמְדֶי טַעַר מִהָוֹ מַתַחְלָק עַל שְׁנֵי הלָּמְדֶים cf. below, line 45

11,38 הלָּמְדֶה — read הלָּמְדֶה

44 presumably read מַוסְּבֶה [חַיִּיב לָלְמָדוּ] וּמָא לָא רְכָזֶר

12,13 The interpolated [חַיִּיב] should probably be crossed out here and [חַיִּיב לָלְמָדוּ] should be inserted in the next line after ulaşוה

23 בְּדַרְבּוֹי — read בְּדַרְבּוֹי (P)

23 שלשַׁאואל, “he who is questioned”

26 את — read את (P)

29 בְּמַחְאָטָן — read בְּמַחְאָטָן

and 41

35 a lacuna seems to be indicated here; presumably read [אָמָם יִשְׁאָל וְאֶשְׁאָל שָׁאָלָה מִרְבָּה חִיָּב לְעַנְוָתוֹ] לְדָרְבִּי וְלֹּרְבִּים רִכִּים כְּרָי

42 פְּלֵילִי — read פְּלֵילִי

44 פְּלֵילִי קַשּׁוֹט בַּאֲלָלָת might, I suppose, be understood as meaning “repeated(ly wallowing) in his foolishness”; but a better sense is achieved by emending שְׁוֹנָה, “who has gone astray in his foolishness”
APPENDIX II
NISSI'S

It is a great pity that Pinsker was forced, in order to economize on printing costs, to limit himself to only a few extracts from the introduction to the חוכמ. But even these few show that the work must be a monumental and highly valuable document. In addition to the autobiographical data cited above, Nissi provides us with a list of the several items which should be covered by the introduction to a scholarly work, and proceeds immediately with his own introduction fully consonant with that list (Pinsker, I, 38–41) and highly interesting on that account. He exhorts the reader to consult only works by known and qualified authors, and to ignore “works by erring persons masquerading under the names of (famous) righteous and pious men” (shallа י ByVal וע תקיעא)

הכּומ ח' דפוס ... שלוה היה אישר ל' הלשכה סופי והוגה ודוד הוהמה (Pinsker, I, 38). If I understand Pinsker’s prefatory remarks correctly, he regarded the following extracts (I, 37–41) as the concluding part of the quasi-Commentary on the Decalogue, presumably because in Firkovitch’s transcript of the “ancient” (הכּומ בישן) manuscript (which Pinsker used in his work [cf. II, I]; the original consisted of 25 quarto leaves) these extracts followed immediately after the text of the quasi-Commentary. Now this assumption of Pinsker’s seems to me to be palpably wrong. The text of the quasi-Commentary clearly and logically ends on II, 13. The extracts occupying I, 37–41 form, just as clearly and logically, part of an introduction to a comprehensive code of Karaita law, on the order of al-Qirgis's' Kitāb al-anwār or Hadassi's Decalogue. Indeed on p. 40 Nissi tells us expressly that the title of the work introduced here is the כר' (ויהי כיש להמה כרכר) שלוהデザイン מלכיה הממה כרכרי ממלכת ינוי (I, 37). . . . . This leads me to the conjecture that Firkovitch’s manuscript is really a fragment of a much larger codex which included the entire text of the חוכמ. Whoever detached the first 25 leaves of this codex presumably fell into the same error as did Pinsker and detached also the introduction to the חוכמ, under the impression that it was a continuation of the quasi-Commentary on the Decalogue. Perhaps a leaf was missing at the beginning of the introduction, containing on the recto the title of the חוכמ I, 37 and on the verso the customary initial formulae (corresponding to the Arabic baṣmalah) giving praise to God and invoking His help in composing the חוכמ. Hence the second, fortunately preserved, leaf of the text begins abruptly with the אריה ההמשכיל (I, 37). Consequently Pinsker’s further statement (I, 37) that the title הבן is known to us only by title, its text having been completely lost, is likewise erroneous. Graetz (V, 443) seems to have regarded all the extracts published by Pinsker as parts of the חוכמ. As remarked before, this view is hardly tenable.
and "not to pass judgment upon my words until he has understood the words of those also who dispute me and contend against me" (מקראות). He hopes that the breaking up of those who contend and murmur (against me) is justified by the fact that in preparing it I have consulted exegetical books in all languages, and have made (this my book) clear of all untruth and error, so that it might open (the reader's) blind eyes—in other words, the words is the result of balancing the entire contingent of earlier works on the subject on the scales of his superior learning and judgment.

That he is indeed the original author of the work, he goes on, should be evident from the following: (a) the style (מקראות), of the parts (מקראות), of the organization displayed in it, hitherto unmatched (לא היה כה מחוואר); (d) the exclusively Scriptural foundation, clear of borrowings from (Rabbanite) rules and the (works of the) authors of the Mishnah (שהיא את הראות לכל ספר שבאר ענייל המדורים), possibly another thrust at Anan, who was accused by some later scholars of excessive leanings towards Rabbanite law; (e) its being the dernier cri in the legal literature (שהוא את הראות לכל ספר שבאר ענייל המדורים).

"The highway (פלטיל) of the book, its design (ערשворот), and its aim (שלמה)," continues Nissi, is to reveal to the reader the true contents of Almighty God's ways, and to eradicate (ʃלמה) ignorance thereof. Its design is purely "Hebrew, Judean, Israelite, written—both revealed law and comment thereon (חון וברא) as if upon the (Sinaitic) Tablets . . . Its purpose (שלמה) is (to show) that all men must know (the law) . . . must meditate in the Torah and study therein from beginning to end (שלמה), fear God, and observe His ordinances."

In order to prepare himself for such study the reader must learn the vocalization and cantillation of the Scriptural text (נקרות והשרה בתוספת שמעים), and the scriptio defectiva et plena

69 Referring to eponymous Rabbanite Halakhic and Midrashic compilations? Or were there also similar early Karaite works?

70 Pinsker explains this as opposed to the aforementioned diatribes against Nissi's Karaite enemies in Jerusalem it seems to me more likely that these are meant here.
(תורה ווירוחין), as established by the Babylonian Masoretes (לנושט ישנה). He must also understand (הלבין) the Mishnah, the Talmud, the *Halakot*, and the Greater and Lesser Tosafot. He must also read books of (lay) wisdom (= philosophy) and the writings of those who exercise their understanding (הומכששים) on the basis of reason, judgment, (syllogistic) premises, and analogies (חשל ומפיל יתון הרמונות הדלישם). Only after such a preparation should the reader “meditate in this book and study it, for in doing so it will teach him understanding and be useful to him. For should he read this book before perusing these other books and commentaries, he will neither understand nor know the meaning (معنى) of prophecy and divine revelations (היחירות), and will be like a person who undertakes to read the holy books (היחירות והיחירות) before learning first (how to read) the writing and the letters (of the alphabet).”

“To which meadow of wisdom,” asks Nissi, “does the nature of this book assign it (ליא ר ממאח דכהמה כשורר הסופר הוה)? To that of books of understanding, reason, and knowledge, fit to discuss and converse about at all times, as well as to practice (accordingly) ... The subject matter is as I have interpreted it ... This book is a fortress against ignorance and perverted knowledge (הרעה והרעה).”

By this time the patient reader will have realized that Nissi did not suffer from an overdeveloped sense of modesty and humility. He had no doubt of the high quality of his scholarship and of his skill as a writer. He also never had any doubt about who was right in any disagreement between himself and his scholarly colleagues. His character was apparently fully formed by the time he reached Jerusalem, and his conflicts with his patrons, fellow-scholars, and even pupils only confirmed him in his unshakable

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71 See above, note 65.

72 The text adds here וה novità, “and logic,” which seems to me to be a mistaken reader’s gloss. Unless indeed the word is to be understood here in its alternate and far less common meaning of “pronunciation” (Ben-Yehudah, II, 1037, under item 4).

73 Cf. Amos 1:2, Ps. 23:2, etc.

74 The explicit of this paragraph (... סלך של שלח של הסופר וחבר (בירית סיג בך ת ה) must be a mistaken addition by a scribe or reader who thought that the preceding was all part of Nissi’s quasi-Commentary on the Decalogue.
self-confidence. Until the תּוֹרֶת is published in its entirety we will probably have no way of judging his views on the details of Karaite law and his standing as a jurist. But even the bits and pieces by him and about him that we do know at this time stamp him as an able all-around scholar and a highly interesting personality, in a way evidently a rebel against the contemporary Karaite establishment, a very uncommon species in Karaite literature. He deserves much more attention and study than he has received heretofore.