



TEOLOGIA BÍBLICA DO ANTIGO E DO NOVO TESTAMENTO





THE KARAITE INTERPRETATION OF THE PLURAL FORMS IN GENESIS 1.26, 3.5 AND 3.22 COMPARED TO THEIR CLASSICAL RABBINIC EXPOSITION¹

*A interpretação karaíta das formas plurais em Gênesis 1.26, 3.5 e 3.22,
comparada com suas exposições rabínicas clássicas*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the history of the Karaite interpretation of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 pertinent to the Divine, situating it against the Rabbinic tradition. Furthermore, the present essay analyses how Karaite exegetes substantiated their views without recognising the authority of the Rabbinic texts such as Targumim, Midrashim or the Babylonian Talmud which elucidated such phenomena in the Tanakh. The study of the Karaite exegesis relies on the complete commentaries on the Pentateuch penned by Aaron ben Joseph and by Aaron ben Elijah.

Keywords: Genesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22. Karaite Judaism. Karaite Exegesis. Karaite Hermeneutics. Aaron ben Joseph. Aaron ben Elijah.

RESUMO

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O presente artigo examina a história da interpretação caráita das formas plurais em Gênesis 1.26, 3.5 e 3.22 pertinentes ao Divino, situando-a contra a tradição rabínica. Além disso, o presente ensaio analisa como os exegetas de caráita substanciaram seus pontos de vista sem reconhecer a autoridade dos textos rabínicos, como Targumim, Midrashim ou o Talmude Babilônico, que elucidaram tais fenômenos no Tanakh. O estudo da exegese caráita baseia-se nos comentários completos sobre o Pentateuco, escritos por Aarão ben José e por Arão ben Elias.

Palavras-chave: *Gênesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22. Judaísmo caráita. Exegese de caráita. Hermenêutica caráita. Aaron ben Joseph. Aaron ben Elias.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The history of the interpretation of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26 (כדמותנו and בצלמנו, נעשה), 3.5 (ידעי) and 3.22 (כאחד ממנו) pertinent to the Divine was complex within the limits of the Jewish tradition and this topic was also a part of the hermeneutical controversy between Judaism and Christianity. The present paper is focused not on the claims made by Christian expositors in antiquity and in the Middle Ages but rather on the Karaite interpretation of these plural forms though Karaite exegetes were cognisant of these claims³.

The ancient and mediaeval Jewish tradition offered different, yet complementary, perspectives on the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22. These perspectives were recorded in the Targumim and in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature. Historically speaking, the Jewish interpretation of the plural forms was embodied in the documents which belonged to the Rabbinic tradition and which, for that reason, were not embraced by Karaite Judaism (יהדות קראית). This branch of Judaism invented and adopted the sola Scriptura principle (Tanakh as the sole source of religious knowledge) which was enshrined in the Karaite fundamentals, in the article no. 6, to be precise⁴, and which was laid down in the Karaite hermeneutical rules. These rules were formulated by Jeshua ben Judah

³ As exemplified by: AARON BEN ELIJAH. ספר בראשית. In: FIRKOVICH, Abraham (Ed.). ספר כתר תורה ספר בראשית. Eupatoria: Firkovich, 1866, p. 18r [Genesis 1.26].

⁴ The Karaite essentials (עשרה עקרים) were cited and expounded by Elijah Bashyazi (אליהו) in his monumental presentation of Karaite Judaism. עשרה עקרים. In: ELIJAH BASHYAZI. אדרת אליהו. Eupatoria: פינקלמן, 1835, p. 49r [VI].

(ישועה בן יהודה) in his ספר עריות⁵. Aaron ben Elijah (אהרן בן אליהו)⁶ recapitulated them in the preface to his commentary on the Book of Genesis.

The literature on Karaite Judaism is gradually emerging⁷, though this

⁵ The manuscript described as: ספר עריות. In: STEINSCHNEIDER, Moritz (Ed.). **Catalogus codicum Hebraeorum Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae**. Leiden: Brill, 1858, p. 103 [Warnerus, no. 25/1]. Ibidem, p. 190-197 [Warnerus, no. 41/16]. This manuscript was edited and published by Isaak Markon in 1908 but Markon's edition could not be accessed by the author of the present paper: JESHUA BEN JUDAH. **Das Buch von den verbotenen Verwandtschaftsgraden**, Ed. Isaak MARKON. Petersburg: [s. n.], 1908.

⁶ AARON BEN ELIJAH. הקדמה. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 3v-4r.

⁷ As exemplified by: ANKORI, Zvi. **Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years 970-1100**. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. ASTREN, Fred. **Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding**. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004. BIRNBAUM, Philip (Ed.). **Karaite Studies**. New York: Hermon Press, 1971. FRANK, Daniel. **Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East**. Leiden: Brill, 2004. FÜRST, Julius. **Geschichte des Karäertums: Eine kurze Darstellung seiner Entwicklung, Lehre und Literatur**, Vol. 1-2. Leipzig: Nies and Leiner, 1862-1865. DE HARKAVY, Abraham and Kaufmann KOHLER. Karaites and Karaism. In: SINGER, Isidore (Ed.). **The Jewish Encyclopedia**, Vol. 7. New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1904, p. 438-447. HIRSCHFELD, Hartwig. **Qirgisani Studies**. London: Hall, 1918. KHAN, Geoffrey (Ed. and Trans.). **Early Karaite Grammatical Texts**. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000. KHAN, Geoffrey (Ed.). **Exegesis and Grammar in Medieval Karaite Texts**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. KUYT, Annelies and Gerold NECKER (Ed.). **Orient als Grenzbereich? Rabbinisches und ausserrabbinisches Judentum**. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007. LASKER, Daniel J. **From Judah Hadassi to Elijah Bashyatchi: Studies in Late Medieval Karaite Philosophy**. Leiden: Brill, 2008. POLLIACK, Meira (Ed.). **Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources**. Leiden: Brill, 2003. POLLIACK, Meira. **The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation: A Linguistic and Exegetical Study of Karaite Translations of the Pentateuch from the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries C. E.** Leiden: Brill, 1997. POZNANSKI, Samuel. **The Karaite Literary Opponents of Saadia Gaon**. London: Luzac, 1908. RULE, William Harris. **History of the Karaite Jews**. London: Longmans, 1870. Rule's work was written from the viewpoint of Christian apologetics and therefore its value is limited. SCHUPART, Johann Gottfried. **Secta Karraeorum: Dissertationibus aliquot historico-philologicis**. Jena: Bielckius, 1701. SCHUR, Nathan. **History of the Karaites**. Frankfurt am Main and New York: Lang, 1992. TRIGLAND, Jacobus. Diatribe de secta Karaeorum. In: UGOLINO, Blaisio (Ed.). **Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrarum**, Vol. 22. Venice: Herthz and Coletti, 1759, p. 299-486. UGOLINO, Blaisio (Trans.). Institutio Karaeorum. In: UGOLINO, Blaisio (Ed.). **Thesaurus antiquitatum sacrarum**, Vol. 22, p. 513-552. YESHAYA, Joachim and Elisabeth HOLLENDER (Ed.). **Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts**. Leiden: Brill, 2017. See the literature cited in the footnotes no. 11 and no. 108 in the present paper.

field is still considered to be underresearched. The present paper examines whether the Karaite reading of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22 continued with the classical Rabbinic exposition of these phenomena or not. Furthermore, the present essay investigates how Karaite exegetes substantiated their views without recognising the authority of the Rabbinic texts such as Targumim, Midrashim or the Babylonian Talmud. The study of the Karaite exegesis is based on the complete commentaries on the Pentateuch which were authored by distinguished mediaeval Karaite exegetes writing in Hebrew⁸, videlicet, by Aaron ben Joseph (אהרן בן יוסף)⁹ and by Aaron ben Elijah¹⁰ because their works represented the mainstream of the Karaite exegesis¹¹. Actually, within the boundaries of mediaeval Karaite Judaism, these expositions could be viewed as flagship commentaries on the Pentateuch in terms of their completeness and in terms of their impact upon the subsequent Karaite tradition.

2 ANCIENT JEWISH TRANSLATIONS

The Hebrew text of Genesis 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 was uniform in the

⁸ The early Karaite exegesis flourishing in Hebrew was not taken into consideration in the present paper.

⁹ AARON BEN JOSEPH. ספר המבחר. In: יוסף שלמה בן משה לוצקי (Ed.). ספר המבחר וטוב. Eupatoria: פינקלמן, 1835, p. 19v-21r [No. 207-225 (Genesis 1.26-27)]. Ibidem, p. 26r [No. 373-379 (Genesis 3.5)]. Ibidem, p. 27r [No. 417-429 (Genesis 3.22)]. The editor's name was acronymised as הישר.

¹⁰ AARON BEN ELIJAH. ספר בראשית. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 18r-19r [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 25r-25v [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 27r-28r [Genesis 3.22].

¹¹ KOHLER. Aaron ben Joseph, the Karaite. In: SINGER (Ed.). **The Jewish Encyclopedia**, Vol. 1. New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901, p. 14-15. Idem, Aaron ben Elijah, the Younger. In: SINGER (Ed.). **The Jewish Encyclopedia**, Vol. 1, p. 9-10. DELITZSCH, Franz. Prolegomena. In: AARON BEN ELIJAH. עץ חיים, Ed. DELITZSCH. Leipzig: Barth, 1841, p. i-xvi. DELITZSCH. Exkurs über das Verhältnis des Ez Chajim zum More Nebuchim. In: AARON BEN ELIJAH, 1841, p. 329-348. BACHER, Wilhelm. Bible Exegesis (Karaite Exegesis). In: SINGER (Ed.). **The Jewish Encyclopedia**, Vol. 3. New York: KTAV, [s. a.], p. 165-166. FRANK, Daniel. Karaite Exegesis. In: SÆBØ, Magne (Ed.). **Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation**, Vol. 1/2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2000, p. 110-128. KOSEGARTEN, Johann Gottfried Ludwig. De Aharone ben Elihu, ejusque commentario in Legem. In: AARON BEN ELIJAH. **Libri Coronae Legis: Id est commentarii in Pentateuchum Karaitici**, Ed. KOSEGARTEN. Jena: Schmid, 1824, p. 1-10.

Masoretic version as far as the plural forms are concerned. From a literary perspective, in Genesis 1.26-27 singular and plural forms both of verbs (נעשה versus בצלמו and ברא and ויברא) and of pronominal suffixes (בצלמנו and כדמותנו versus בצלם אלהים) were used interchangeably. In view of parallelism, בצלמנו from Genesis 1.26 should be explicated in the light of בצלם אלהים from Genesis 1.27. Thus, “our image”, in which human beings were created, was that of אלהים.

The Targum Onkelos¹² upheld the plural form of the verb in Genesis 1.26a, rendering Hebrew נעשה by means of Aramaic נעביד. Actually, in Hebrew verbs עשה and עבד could be synonyms. Furthermore, in the Targum Onkelos to Genesis 1.26 the plural pronominal suffixes on צלם and דמות were retained, while the Aramaic equivalents of both nouns were used with the same prepositions (ב and כ, respectively). The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan¹³ followed the interpretation found in the Targum Onkelos, yet it elucidated Genesis 1.26 in theological terms by adding that God said “let us make [...]” to the angels that were created by him and that were ministering in front of him. Moreover, the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan used the Aramaic noun (דיוקנא) of Greek origin (ὄτο + εἰκόνα)¹⁴ in place of דמות which could function both in Hebrew and in Aramaic and which was employed by the Targum Onkelos. Besides, the Targum to Psalm 39.7a translated צלם as דיוקנא¹⁵.

Although no Jerusalem Targum to Genesis 1.26 is extant, the Jerusalem Targum to Genesis 1.27 casts light upon the preceding verse¹⁶. Accordingly, the act of creating human beings was attributed to the Word of the LORD (מִמְרָא דִּי), while human beings were created in the likeness (דְּמוּת) of the Word of the LORD, namely, in the “likeness from before the LORD”. Such an interpretation articulated that the LORD used his Word as the instrument mediating between the intangible and the tangible, while creating the world and while acting in the created realm.

¹² BERLINER, Abraham (Ed.). **Targum Onkelos**, Vol. 1. Berlin: Kauffmann, 1884, p. 2 [Genesis 1.26].

¹³ Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan. In: WALTON, Brian (Ed.). **Biblia sacra polyglotta**, Vol. 4. London: Roycroft, 1657, p. 3 [Genesis 1.26].

¹⁴ JEHIEL, Nathan. **Rabbinisch-aramäisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zur Kenntnis des Talmuds, der Targumim und Midraschim**, Vol. 2, Ed. Moses Israel LANDAU. Prague: Scholl, 1819, p. 461-462 [s. v. דיוקן]. LEVY, Jacob. **Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Teil des rabbinischen Schrifttums**, Vol. 1. Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1867, p. 170 [s. v. דיוקנא].

¹⁵ Targum. In: WALTON (Ed.). **Biblia sacra polyglotta**, Vol. 3. London: Roycroft, 1656, p. 144 [Psalm 39.7].

¹⁶ Targum Hierosolymitanum. In: WALTON (Ed.), 1657, Vol. 4, p. 3 [Genesis 1.27].

This approach coincided with the Philonic concept of λόγος and it could be traced back to the biblical literature (e. g. Jeremiah 10.12; Psalm 33.6; Proverbs 3.19, chapter 8 or Job 28) which recorded the idea of God's Wisdom (חכמה, σοφία) or God's Word prominent in Hellenistic Judaism. The Jerusalem Targum¹⁷ to Genesis 1.1 and the tractate Sanhedrin¹⁸ maintained that God created the universe through (ב) the Wisdom (חכמה), whereas the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis¹⁹ (מביט בתורה) announced that while looking at the Torah, God created the universe because ראשית, by means of which (ב) God was said to create the world, was identified with the Torah. Similarly, the Pirke attributed to Rabbi Eliezer²⁰ asserted that God said "let us make [...]", conversing with the Torah about his anticipated act of creating human beings. Consequently, the divine Wisdom (identical with the Torah) was construed as the LORD's instrument (כלי אומנותו) (של דקב"ה), as the agency which emanated from God and which represented God, yet without being independent of God in ontological terms. The Yalkut Shimoni²¹ suggested that God might say "let us make [...]" either to the Torah or to the angels serving in front of him.

The ancient Greek versions of Genesis 1.26 preserved all plural features of the Hebrew original.²² The Septuagint translated both prepositions (i. e. ב and כ) as κατά. It is notable that a parallelism found in the Book of Sirach, which was a part of the Septuagint, illustrated how the image, in which human beings were created, was understood in that Hellenistic Jewish text. In the light of the Book of Sirach (17.3)²³ the statement, that God created (ἐποίησεν) human beings according

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 2 [Genesis 1.1]. See the reference to Proverbs 3.19: בראשית. In: ספר מדרש: תנחומא. Petrikau: צעדערבוים, 1913, p. 1 [Genesis 1.1].

¹⁸ סנהדרין. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 13. Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1862, p. 38r [No. 38a].

¹⁹ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה. Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1890, p. 1r [I, 2 (Genesis 1.1)].

²⁰ ספר פרקי רבי אליעזר. Vilnius: Romm, 1838, p. 15 [XI, 6].

²¹ ילקוט בראשית. In: ספר ילקוט שמעוני. Vilnius: Romm, 1863, p. 6r-6v [No. 12-14 (Genesis 1.26)].

²² SWETE, Henry Barclay (Ed.). **The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint**, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887, p. 2 [Genesis 1.26]. FIELD, Frederick (Ed.). **Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: Sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta**, Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 1875, p. 10 [Genesis 1.26 (Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion)].

²³ HOLMES, Robert and James PARSONS (Ed.). **Vetus Testamentum Graecum cum variis lectionibus**, Vol. 5. Oxford: Clarendon, 1827, [s. p.] [Sirach 17.3]. "καθ' ἑαυτὸν" is the only reasonable reading.

to his image (κατ' εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ), meant that God clothed (ἐνέδυσεν), namely, endowed human beings with power (ἰσχὺν) according to himself (καθ' ἑαυτὸν). Thus, the creation in accordance with God's image was the creation on the pattern of God himself, while this pattern conveyed a sense of divine power.

In the narrative Genesis 3.5 and Genesis 3.22 were interrelated because in the former passage the serpent enticed Eve to eat the fruit by saying that in consequence she and Adam would be like (כ) אֱלֹהִים knowing (יָדַע) good and evil, whereas in the latter passage God (יְיָ אֱלֹהִים) concluded that a human being became “like (כ) one (אֶחָד) of us (מִמֶּנּוּ)”. In both verses there were plural forms (יָדַע) or phrases (כֹּאחֵד מִמֶּנּוּ) potentially pertinent to the Divine.

The Targum Onkelos²⁴ and the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan²⁵ reworked Genesis 3.5 in order to streamline the narrative from the theological point of view. The explicit statement, that “God knows [...]” (יָדַע אֱלֹהִים), which in the original was attributed to the serpent, was rephrased to ensure the serpent's distance from God. The Targumim read that the serpent said to Eve: “it was evident in front of the LORD that [...]”, so the serpent did not announce what God knew but rather stated what was evident in front of God. Thus, the readers of the Targumim did not have the impression that the serpent decreed what God was supposed to know or that the serpent penetrated God's thoughts.

Moreover, according to the Targum Onkelos, the serpent encouraged Eve to eat the fruit so that she and Adam would be like (כ) “the mighty” (רַב־רִבִּין) who knew the difference between (בֵּין) good and evil. The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan coincided with the Targum Onkelos, yet specified that “the mighty” (רַב־רִבִּין) were the mighty angels (מַלְאֲכִין) because the appellation רַב־רִבִּין was so generic that it might refer to any kind of human or angelic beings vested with authority and power. Additionally, both Targumim stated that “the mighty / angels” knew the difference between (בֵּין) good and evil instead of saying that they simply knew good and evil because the direct knowledge of good and evil was reserved for God.

The Septuagint²⁶ translated Genesis 3.5 literally, asserting that by eating the fruit, Adam and Eve were supposed to be “like gods” (ὡς θεοί) who knew (γινώσκοντες) good and evil. Consequently, it appears that the plural form

²⁴ BERLINER (Ed.). **Targum**, Vol. 1, p. 3 [Genesis 3.5].

²⁵ Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan, p. 5 [Genesis 3.5].

²⁶ SWETE (Ed.), 1887, Vol. 1, p. 4 [Genesis 3.5].

of the participle (ידעי) in the Hebrew original of Genesis 3.5b impelled the LXX translators to parse אלהים in that verse as plural.

The Masoretic text of Genesis 3.22 and the Septuagint²⁷ dovetailed together. The LXX imitated literally both the plural phrasing (ὡς εἶξ ἐξ ἡμῶν) [כאחד ממנו] and the purpose clause (τοῦ γινώσκειν) [לדעת]. To the contrary, the LXX revision by Symmachus²⁸, the Targum Onkelos,²⁹ the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan³⁰ and the Jerusalem Targum³¹ proposed complex interpretations which could be visualised as follows:

Symmachus	Onkelos	Pseudo-Jonathan	Jerusalem
-	ואמר יי אלהים	ואמר יי אלהים	ואמר מימרא דיי אלהים
and God said	and the LORD God said	and the LORD God said	and the Word of the LORD-God said
-	-	למלאכיא די משמשין קדמוי	-
-	-	to the angels ministering in front of him	-
Ἴδε ὁ Ἀδὰμ γέγονεν	הא אדם הוה	הא אדם הוה	הא אדם דברית יתיה
Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam whom I created
ὁμοῦ ἑαυτοῦ	יחידי בעלמא מיניה	יחידי בארעא היכמא	יחידי בגו עלמי היך מה
just by himself	unique in the world by himself / on his own	unique on earth as	unique in my world just as
-	-	דאנא יחידי בשמי מרומא	דאנא יחידי בשמי מרומא
-	-	I am unique in the heaven above	I am unique in the heaven above
-	-	ועתידין	ועתידין
-	-	and in the future	and in the future
-	-	למיקום מניה	אומין סגיאין למקם מניה
-	-	arise from him	arise from him the numerous people
-	-	-	מניה תקום אומה
-	-	-	from him arise the people
γινώσκειν καλόν	למידע טוב	ידיעין למפרשא בין טוב	דידעה למפרשא בין טוב
to know good	to know good	those who know how to discern between good	who know how to discern between good

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 5 [Genesis 3.22].

²⁸ FIELD (Ed.), 1875, Vol. 1, p. 17 [Genesis 3.22 (Symmachus)].

²⁹ BERLINER (Ed.). **Targum**, Vol. 1, p. 4 [Genesis 3.22].

³⁰ Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan, p. 7 [Genesis 3.22]. Targum of Palestine. In: ETHERIDGE, John Wesley (Trans.). **The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum: Genesis and Exodus**. London: Longman, 1862, p. 168 [Genesis 3.22].

³¹ Targum Hierosolymitanum, p. 7 [Genesis 3.22]. Jerusalem. In: ETHERIDGE (Trans.), 1862, p. 169 [Genesis 3.22].

καὶ πονηρόν and evil	וריש	לביש	לביש
-	-	and evil “Had he kept the commandments which I appointed to him, he would have lived and subsisted as the tree of life forever [...].”	and evil “And now it is good that we keep [דנטרוד] him from the garden of Eden [...].”

In principle, the interpretations cited above were seamless from a theological perspective because God did not say that Adam became כאחד ממנו but rather depicted Adam as unique (יחיד) in the world due to his ability to discern between good and evil. From Genesis 3.5 it appears that Adam acquired this ability by eating the fruit. Consequently, the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum compared this unique position of Adam in the world to God's unique position in the heaven.

It seems that all the Targumim relied on the same grammatical presuppositions concerning the original text of Genesis 3.22, which might be reconstructed as follows. Firstly, אחד was construed as the absolute state and it was said to denote “unique”. Secondly, אחד was linked to the infinitive (לדעת). Thus, Adam either individually (as Adam) or collectively (as Adam's posterity³²) became like the one who was to know good and evil. Thirdly, the preposition with the pronominal suffix (ממנו) was parsed as singular (“from him”, “on his own”, “by himself”)³³ and it modified either the infinitive (לדעת) or the verb (היה). Consequently, Adam became like the one who was to know good and evil, and either in this condition (היה) or in this knowledge (לדעת) Adam was self-reliant (ממנו) in the world. In other words, either Adam became by himself like the one who was to know good and evil, or Adam became like the one who was to know by himself good and evil. It should be noted that in Symmachus' revision (ἄφ' ἐαυτοῦ) ממנו was interpreted in the same way as in the Targumim, while Greek ὁμοῦ might imply that Symmachus' revision took כאחד for the adverbial phrase. Indeed, כאחד vocalised כְּאַחַד, not כָּאַחַד (the received Masoretic vocalisation in Genesis 3.22), acted as the adverbial phrase denoting “together, totally or at once” in the Tanakh (2 Chronicles 5.13; Ezra 2.64, 3.9, 6.20; Nehemiah 7.66; Ecclesiastes 11.6; Isaiah 65.25).

³² This position additionally explicated ממנו in terms of the source (“from / out of Adam”).

³³ Grammatically speaking, ממנו could be parsed either as singular (“from him”) or as plural (“from us”), depending on the context.

Furthermore, the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum mentioned that Adam as a prototype of humankind would originate countless future generations of human beings who could discern between good and evil. To emphasise, that the direct knowledge of good and evil was reserved for God, both Targumim preferred to speak of “knowing how to discern between good and evil” which indicated that human beings could discern between these two but not necessarily penetrate into them. Although the Jerusalem Targum facilitated the exposition of Genesis 3.22, it also attributed a new plural form (בטרוד) to God who referred to his own action in the plural (“we keep / let us keep”). Given that this new plural form was not attested in the Hebrew original, it might be an imitation of נעשה from Genesis 1.26. Thus, in the act of creation God said “let us make human [...]”, while in response to Adam’s action, God said “let us keep human away from the garden [...]”.

3 RABBINIC EXPOSITION REFLECTED IN THE MIDRASHIC AND TALMUDIC LITERATURE

Expounding Genesis 1.1, the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis³⁴ safeguarded the unity of God and pointed out that אלהים, which could be parsed either as singular or as plural and which might denote either true / false God(s) or human / angelic agent(s) of power, depending on the context, referred to the one and only God in Genesis 1.1 because אלהים acted as the subject of the singular verb (ברא), not the plural one (בראו). Likewise, the grand Midrash³⁵ recalled that Genesis 1.27 read that God created (ויברא אלהים), not that gods created (ויבראו), humankind. Thus, there was only one divine authority / power (רשות), not many (רשויות), creating the universe. This hermeneutical presupposition determined the Midrashic interpretation of the plural forms, which in Genesis 1-3 might refer to the Divine.

Commenting upon Genesis 1.26, the grand Midrash³⁶ contended that the plural form “let us make [...]” signalled that God consulted (נמלך) someone or something, while creating the human race. Several answers to the question,

³⁴ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 2v [I, 10 (Genesis 1.1)].

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 16r [VIII, 8 (Genesis 1.26)].

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 15r-16r [VIII, 3-7 (Genesis 1.26)]. Ibidem, p. 29v [XIV, 3 (Genesis 2.7)].

whom God consulted, were recorded in the grand Midrash. According to the first interpretation, God consulted (נמלך) the works of heaven and earth, namely, the intangible³⁷ and tangible³⁸ creatures which were created prior to the creation of humankind. The grand Midrash mentioned that God either could consult all pre-human creatures at once or could consult creatures made on every single day prior to the creation of human beings. This process of consultation was compared to a political situation in which a king would not act without seeking advice from his counsellors.

According to the second interpretation, God consulted his own heart, namely, consulted himself while creating humankind because when human conduct disappointed God, in Genesis 6.6 God did not blame any proxy or contractor engaged in the work of creation but rather the LORD himself regretted creating human beings and the LORD himself held his own heart (אל לבו) accountable for the act of creation. According to the third interpretation, which was tinged with Platonising colour, God consulted pre-existing souls of the righteous.

According to the fourth interpretation, God consulted the angels ministering in front of him, while creating human beings. Furthermore, the grand Midrash³⁹ considered how to explicate God's consultation with angels in the light of the LORD's sovereignty because God was said to seek advice from beings (angels, to be precise) that were created by him and that were inferior and subordinate to him, albeit it would not be customary for superiors to seek advice from their inferiors. Therefore, the grand Midrash viewed God's consultation with angels as a token of the LORD's benevolence and humility, and clarified that while consulting angels, God did not ask for their permission to create humankind but rather requested their opinion without compromising his own authority and power to do whatever would please him.

As regards the creation of human beings in God's image, the grand Midrash⁴⁰ registered that the human race was created as a bridge between "upper" beings and "lower" beings, namely, between spiritual beings (i. e. God along with his angels⁴¹) and animals. Consequently, humankind would embrace both

³⁷ Thus, angels were included.

³⁸ Animate and inanimate.

³⁹ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 15v-16r [VIII, 7 (Genesis 1.26)].

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 16r-16v [VIII, 11 (Genesis 1.27)]. Ibidem, p. 30r [XIV, 3 (Genesis 2.7)].

⁴¹ Therefore, the ancient Jewish tradition occasionally spoke of humankind as created in

intellectual and physical attributes, and would be torn between immortality characteristic of the spiritual sphere and mortality intrinsic to the physical sphere. Thus, human beings were created, on the one hand, in the image and likeness coming from the upper realm (מן העליונים), on the other hand, in the image and likeness arising from the lower realm (מן התחתונים). In short, they were created as both intangible and tangible beings. The upper sphere, which might be called spiritual, intellectual or celestial, knew neither reproduction nor death, while the lower sphere, which could be denominated as physical, animal or earthly, harboured both of these phenomena⁴².

Therefore, it could be argued that according to the grand Midrash, the image, which God imprinted on human beings, consisted in both intangible and tangible features by virtue of which humankind could act as a bridge between heaven and earth. Thus, the image referred to in Genesis 1.26-27 was God's in the sense that God was the One who imprinted the image, namely, the intangible and tangible features, on human beings. In other words, the image, in which human beings were created, was that of God because God intentionally designed human identity to bridge both dimensions. This idea was adopted by the subsequent Jewish literature⁴³.

Moreover, the grand Midrash made other references to God's image / likeness. Explaining Genesis 2.18, the Midrash⁴⁴ stated that without female the likeness (הדמות) would be reduced which implies that the likeness referred to in Genesis 1.26-27 posited that a human was created as male and female. Consequently, the full likeness could be predicated only of humankind defined as both male and female⁴⁵. Besides, it transpires that in the Midrash the terms "image" (צלם) and "likeness" (דמות) were employed as synonyms.

the image of angels but this was a mental shortcut. In: ספר מדרש רבה ספר שמות. Leipzig: Wienbrack, 1864, p. 251 [XXX (Exodus 22.1)]. BRÜLL, Adolf (Ed.). *Das samaritanische Targum zum Pentateuch*. Frankfurt am Main: Erras, 1875, p. 10 [Genesis 9.6].

⁴² Philo of Alexandria also noted that the human body, which belonged to the material, visible world, was mortal, while the incorporeal dimension of human beings (called rational soul or mind), which reflected the ideal, invisible world, was immortal. PHILO ALEXANDRINUS. *De opificio mundi*. In: COHN, Leopold and Paul WENDLAND (Ed.). *Opera quae supersunt*, Vol. 1. Berlin: Reimer, 1896, p. 46-47 [46, 134-135].

⁴³ ילקוט בראשית, p. 6r-6v [No. 12-14 (Genesis 1.26)].

⁴⁴ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 35r [XVII, 2 (Genesis 2.18)].

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 16r [VIII, 8 (Genesis 1.26)]. Ibidem, p. 46r [XXII, 4 (Genesis 4.1)].

Commenting upon Genesis 9.6, the grand Midrash⁴⁶ presented the idea which was also reflected in the Babylonian Talmud⁴⁷. The image (identical with the likeness) was understood as God's collective representation in the world assigned to humankind. Thus, God created the human race to serve as his image in the world, namely, to represent him in the world. Therefore, by taking human life or by refusing to procreate, the image would decrease. Consequently, actions, which expand or facilitate life, enhance the image, whereas actions, which terminate or suppress life, diminish the image. Clearly, the early Rabbinic tradition affirmed the human body as a part of God's design and recognised it as belonging to the image of God⁴⁸. In the early Rabbinic tradition this image denoted, on the one hand, the tangible and intangible features which God imprinted on human beings, on the other hand, the status and function of humankind that in its material (body) and immaterial (soul / spirit) aspects represented God in the world, namely, acted as the image of God in the world.

The approach to the image as to the intangible and tangible imprint left by God on humankind in its entirety corresponded to the Talmudic assertion⁴⁹ that the value of individual life ought to be the same as that of the community or even the same as that of whole humankind. Discussing this issue, the Babylonian Talmud⁵⁰ noticed that although the same image, which was imprinted by God on Adam, was also imprinted upon all subsequent generations of human beings, every single human being was unique and should be treated this way. Thus, both the unity and the diversity of the human race were duly acknowledged as a part of God's perfect design.

The ancient Jewish tradition treated Genesis 1.26 with caution and ventured to bring together two propositions which otherwise might be set against one another. On the one hand, God created the world through his Wisdom identical with his Word / Torah and God could consult his heavenly court, more specifically, his angels, while creating humankind, and he might engage them as his proxies and

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 70r-70v [XXXIV, 20 (Genesis 9.6)].

⁴⁷ יבמות. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 7. Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860, p. 63v [No. 63b].

⁴⁸ מדרש רבה ויקרא. In: ספר מדרש רבות על התורה, p. 354 [XXXIV (Leviticus 25.39)]. GOTTSTEIN, Alon Goshen. The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature. *Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 2, 1994, p. 171-195.

⁴⁹ סנהדרין, p. 37r [No. 37a].

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 37r [No. 37a]. Ibidem, p. 38r [No. 38a].

agents, while creating human beings. On the other hand, God was the sole Creator of the universe so that the act of creation was his work, not angels'. Therefore, any independent non-divine activity in or contribution to the act of creation was denied. God was to be affirmed as the only Maker of the world with no partner (שותף) in the work of creation⁵¹. Actually, the idea of more than one divine power or authority (רשות) involved in the act of creation was condemned in the ancient Jewish literature⁵² and it was characteristic of the Gnostic tendencies percolating through to Judaism and Christianity in that period⁵³.

Balancing these two propositions was not an easy task. For instance, the grand Midrash⁵⁴ reported that in Genesis 1.26 God might consult pre-existing souls of the righteous and the possibility of such a consultation was illustrated with 1 Chronicles 4.23 which treated of workers (היוצרים) staying with a king and working for him. These workers acted as king's agents and assistants. Moreover, the Midrash juxtaposed Hebrew היוצרים, which was derived from the root יצר, with the statement, that God made (ויוצר) [the same root יצר] human beings, from Genesis 2.7. Since such an illustration, in which God was compared to an earthly king, while God's counsellors were compared to king's workers, might imply that souls of the righteous were not only God's counsellors but also "makers" (היוצרים) of humankind, the Midrash clarified that God (הקב"ה) only consulted them (נמלך) and that he himself created the world (וברא את העולם). Thus, theological limitations were placed on the comparison, which was employed in the Midrash, in order to

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 38r [No. 38a]. ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 1v [I, 4 (Genesis 1.1)]. Ibidem, p. 7r [III, 11 (Genesis 1.5)].

⁵² חגיגה. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 6. Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860, p. 15r [No. 15a].

⁵³ EDWARDS, Robert G. T. Clement of Alexandria's Anti-Valentinian Interpretation of Gen 1:26-27. *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 18, no. 3, 2014, p. 365-389. FRIEDLÄNDER, Moriz. *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnostizismus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1898. GRAETZ, Heinrich. *Gnostizismus und Judentum*. Krotoschin: Monasch, 1846. HERFORD, Robert Travers. *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1903, p. 261-266 [I, B, ii]. Ibidem, p. 291-303 [I, B, iii]. HURTADO, Larry W. First-Century Jewish Monotheism. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71, 1998, p. 3-26. SCHREMER, Adiel. Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited. *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 39, 2008, p. 230-254. SEGAL, Alan F. *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*. Leiden: Brill, 1977. STROUMSA, Gedaliahu G. Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ. *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 3, 1983, p. 269-288.

⁵⁴ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 15v [VIII, 6 (Genesis 1.26)].

uphold both propositions simultaneously.

The grand Midrash⁵⁵ interpreted the plural form (ידעי) in Genesis 3.5 in the light of the singular form (ידע), of which אלהים was the subject in the same verse, in order to rule out any interpretation undermining God's absolute unity. The Pirke attributed to Rabbi Eliezer⁵⁶ offered an interesting exposition of the phrase כאלהים ידעי טוב ורע in Genesis 3.5. Accordingly, אלהים in that phrase denoted true God, while the knowledge of good and evil was construed as the ability to do good and evil. Thus, the Pirke argued that the serpent tried to convince Eve that by eating the fruit, she could "be like God", namely, could acquire God's power to create and to destroy, to bring to life and to terminate life.

As regards Genesis 3.22 (כאחד ממנו), the grand Midrash⁵⁷ listed three possible interpretations of that phrase. Firstly, אחד ממנו could refer to God cum his holy retinue. Secondly, in defiance of the received (Masoretic) vocalisation (כֶּאֱחָד), אחד was parsed as the absolute state, while ממנו was parsed as singular (literally: "from him", figuratively: "by himself, on his own"). Consequently, אחד was harnessed to the infinitive (לדעת) which was said to be modified by ממנו. All of this was supposed to produce the following meaning: "Adam became like the one who would know, namely, choose between good and evil by himself". Although the final rendition made sense in the context of the narrative, this reasoning was untenable in grammatical terms because אחד ממנו must be viewed as the partitive phrase ("one of us") and the syntax of Genesis 3.22 would not allow the preposition with the pronominal suffix (ממנו) to modify the infinitive (לדעת) instead of אחד. Thirdly, the grand Midrash epitomised the interpretation recorded in the Targum Onkelos and in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. According to this reading, owing to his knowledge of good and evil, Adam became unique in the world in the same way as God was unique in heaven. In other words, by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, Adam became God-like because he ultimately possessed the knowledge which was previously reserved for God. In addition, the Yalkut Shimoni⁵⁸ maintained that according to Genesis 3.22, Adam became like one of the angels ministering in front of God and endowed with the knowledge of good and evil.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 39r [XIX, 5 (Genesis 3.5)].

⁵⁶ ספר פרקי רבי אליעזר, p. 19 [XIII, 12].

⁵⁷ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 44r-44v [XXI, 1-5 (Genesis 3.22)].

⁵⁸ ילקוט בראשית, p. 15r [No. 34 (Genesis 3.22)].

The plural forms attested in Genesis 1.26; 3.5 and 3.22 were examined in the Babylonian Talmud. In the case of Genesis 1.26, the tractate Sanhedrin⁵⁹ suggested that God said “let us make [...]” to his heavenly court, and it highlighted God’s unity based on the fact that in Genesis 1.27 אלהים was the subject of the singular form of the verb (ויברא). Thus, in Genesis 1.26 God contemplated and announced his intention of creating humankind in the presence of his angels, whereas Genesis 1.27 reported that God’s action was accomplished. Since God said “let us make [...]” to the angels, “our image”, in which humankind was created according to Genesis 1.26, was interpreted as the image both of God and of his angels. Consequently, the image denoted the features which were shared both by God and by the angels.

The tractate Megillah⁶⁰ and the minor tractate of the Babylonian Talmud called Sofrim⁶¹ implied that in Genesis 1.26 נעשה (let us make) should be interpreted as if God was the sole Maker (אעשה) [I will make]. In the case of Genesis 3.5, Sofrim⁶² stated that the first (ידע אלהים) occurrence of אלהים was divine, namely, denoted true God, whereas the second one (כאלהים ידעי) was non-divine, yet no further specification was provided.

It is remarkable that the statement, that humankind was created in the image of God (Genesis 1.26, 9.6), played a prominent part in the moral discourse in the tractate Avot which espoused the ideal of active life propelled by the study of God’s teaching (the Torah)⁶³. This tractate viewed life engaged in the service of the community as the service to the LORD and it castigated any attempt at retreating from the community or from its institutions⁶⁴. For a human being, to serve God meant to hold his or her neighbour in the same high esteem as himself or herself because the human service to God indicated his or her service to the neighbour.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the tractate explicated the relationship between God and humankind in the light of the creation of human beings in the image of their

⁵⁹ סנהדרין, p. 38v [No. 38b].

⁶⁰ מגילה. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 5. Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860, p. 9r [No. 9a].

⁶¹ סופרים. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 13, p. 48v [I, VIII, 5].

⁶² Ibidem, p. 50v [IV, 3].

⁶³ אבות. In: תלמוד בבלי, Vol. 13, p. 19v-20v [II].

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 19v-20v [II].

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 19v-20v [II]. Ibidem, p. 20v-21r [III]. Ibidem, p. 21r [IV].

Creator⁶⁶. Accordingly, humankind was beloved by God because it was created in his image and the truth about the divine parentage of humankind was revealed to human beings to assure them of God's benevolence and favour towards the world and thus to console God's creatures living in the world.

The Midrashic and Talmudic exposition of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 laid the foundations for the Jewish interpretation of these phenomena in the Middle Ages⁶⁷. The explanations offered in the Targumim and in the Midrashic and Talmudic literature could be traced back, at least, to the 2nd century because Justin⁶⁸, one of the early Christian thinkers, recapitulated and disapproved of several interpretations of these plural forms contained therein.

4 MAINSTREAM KARAITE INTERPRETATION: AARON BEN JOSEPH

Commenting upon Genesis 1.26, Aaron ben Joseph⁶⁹ wrote that God said "let us make [...]" to two groups which corresponded to two dimensions of

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 20v-21r [III].

⁶⁷ SAADIA GAON. בראשית. In: פירוש על התורה ועל נ"ך. London: Gad, 1959-1960, p. 10 [Genesis 3.5, 3.22]. Idem. ספר האמונות והדעות, Trans. JUDAH IBN TIBBON [יהודה אבן תיבון]. Jozefow: זעצר, 1885, p. 93-94 [II, 6]. Ibidem, p. 96 [II, 9]. Ibidem, p. 147 [V, 8]. BERLINER (Ed.). **Raschi**: Der Kommentar des Salomo b. Isak über den Pentateuch. Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1905, p. 4 [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 7 [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 9 [Genesis 3.22]. SAMUEL BEN MEIR. בראשית. In: ROSIN, David (Ed.). פירוש התורה. Breslau: שאטלענדער, 1881-1882, p. 8 [Genesis 1.26-27]. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA. ספר בראשית. In: מקראות גדולות ספר בראשית. New York: פריעדמאן, 1970-1971, p. 26-30 [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 50 [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 61 [Genesis 3.22]. MAIMONIDES. **More Nebuchim**, Vol. 2, Trans. JUDAH IBN TIBBON. Vienna: Schmid, 1828, p. 12v-14r [II, 6]. Idem, **More Nebuchim**, Vol. 1, Trans. JUDAH IBN TIBBON. Vienna: Schmid, 1828, p. 10r [I, 1]. KIMHI, David. **Kommentar zur Genesis**, Ed. Abraham GINZBURG. Pressburg [Bratislava]: Schmid, 1842, p. 16r-18v [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 31v-32v [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 38v-39r [Genesis 3.22]. NAHMANIDES. ספר בראשית. In: מקראות גדולות ספר בראשית, p. 25-28 [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 38-39 [Genesis 2.7]. JACOB BEN ASHER. בראשית. In: פירוש הטור. על התורה. Warsaw: זיסבערג, 1880, p. 4r [Genesis 1.26]. HEZEKIAH BEN MANOAH. ספר בראשית. In: ספר חזקוני על חמשה חומשי תורה. Lemberg [Lviv]: Schrenzel, 1859, p. 4v [Genesis 1.26].

⁶⁸ JUSTINUS. Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo. In: MIGNE, J.-P. (Ed.). **Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca**, Vol. 6. Paris: Migne, 1857, p. 617-620 [§ 62].

⁶⁹ AARON BEN JOSEPH, 1835, p. 19v-21r [No. 207-225 (Genesis 1.26-27)].

humankind that was about to be created. On the one hand, God was presumed to address the angels that, like God, were invisible (immaterial) beings, though God was their Creator, while they were his creatures. On the other hand, God was said to refer to four basic material elements which could be identified with the tangible objects created prior to the creation of humankind and which represented the underpinnings of the material world. These two groups were portrayed as the upper sphere and the lower sphere, respectively. The former was the invisible, immaterial and spiritual domain of God and his angels, while the latter was the visible, material and physical domain of animate and inanimate objects except for human beings that were designed to unite both spheres and to act as a bridge between both domains.

According to Aaron ben Joseph, God said “let us make [...]” to two groups in view of two kinds of features which were to be intrinsic to humanity. In his opinion, human spirit (נשמה or רוח) was created by God in the image of the upper sphere and it originated from the upper sphere, whereas the human body was created by God in the image of the lower sphere and it was produced by God out of the basic material elements underlying the lower sphere. Thus, both dimensions of humanity (i. e. spiritual and physical) dovetailed with both groups which God engaged at the same time.

Consequently, God referred to the angels because the intangible dimension of human beings reflected the spiritual features of God and the angels, and God referred to the basic material elements because the tangible dimension of human beings was anchored to the visible features of the material world. To put it simply, in order to effect both dimensions of humanity, God addressed both the angels and the basic material elements. Thus, God could unite the invisible features (common to himself and the angels) and the visible features (proper to the material world) in human beings. Therefore, the image, in which God created humankind, was identified by Aaron ben Joseph, on the one hand, with the invisible features, on the other hand, with the visible features. As Aaron ben Joseph noticed, the different origins of human spirit and human body determined their different destinations. Accordingly, the human body would dissolve and “return to the ground” (Genesis 3.19; Ecclesiastes 12.7) because it was formed by God from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2.7), while human spirit would take part in the immaterial world and “return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12.7, cf. Genesis 2.7).

Although Aaron ben Joseph did not reveal the source of the above

interpretation, it was presented in the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis⁷⁰ and epitomised by Justin⁷¹ who rejected the proposition that God could say “let us make [...]” to the angels or to the classical elements (στοιχεῖα), such as earth, out of which human body was created. Aaron ben Joseph admitted that the plural forms in Genesis 1.26 (“let us make [...]”, “in our image / likeness”) could be explained as the plural of majesty. Actually, such an interpretation was not prevailing in the Rabbinic exegesis and it was advocated by Saadia Gaon (ספרי גאון) in his ספר שמעיה גאון⁷². Later, Abraham ibn Ezra (אברהם אבן עזרא)⁷³ recapitulated Saadia’s disquisition on Genesis 1.26. It is not clear whether Aaron ben Joseph became acquainted with Saadia’s masterpiece or with Abraham ibn Ezra’s summary of Saadia’s views.

According to Saadia, the plural forms in Genesis 1.26 implied no plurality on the Creator’s side but rather emphasised the Creator’s majesty. In his view, the plural of majesty was customary for earthly rulers and it could be used in the Tanakh to narrate God’s actions. For Saadia, such an use of the plural number was typical of the Hebrew language. He also clarified that the plural number in such expressions as “let us make” (נעשה) or “let us work” (נפעל) did not have to render the subject plural. To illustrate his point, Saadia referred to Numbers 22.6⁷⁴, Judges 13.15⁷⁵ and Daniel 2.36⁷⁶ where in the direct speech the singular subject applied plural forms to itself very naturally.

Furthermore, Aaron ben Joseph mentioned that in the Tanakh the plural number was at times used with reference to singular phenomena as exemplified

⁷⁰ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 15r-16r [VIII, 3-7 (Genesis 1.26)]. Ibidem, p. 29v [XIV, 3 (Genesis 2.7)].

⁷¹ JUSTINUS, 1857, p. 617-620 [§ 62].

⁷² SAADIA GAON, 1885, p. 93-94 [II, 6]. Ibidem, p. 96 [II, 9]. Ibidem, p. 147 [V, 8].

⁷³ ABRAHAM IBN EZRA. ספר בראשית, p. 26-30 [Genesis 1.26-27].

⁷⁴ “Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them [נכה], and that I may drive them out of the land [...]” (JPS).

⁷⁵ “And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD: >I pray thee, let us detain [נעצרה] thee, that we may make ready [ינעשה] a kid [goat] for thee<” (JPS).

⁷⁶ “[Daniel answered before the king, and said (Daniel 2.27)]: This is the dream; and we will tell [נאמר] the interpretation thereof before the king” (JPS).

by Job 18.2-3⁷⁷ or by Song of Songs 1.4⁷⁸. In both instances, the singular subject referred to itself in the plural. His reference to Job 18.2-3 and to Song of Songs 1.4 appears to be original and it was not attested in the major Rabbinic commentaries on Genesis 1.26-27. Subsequently, Aaron ben Joseph admitted that there were alternative interpretations of “our image / likeness” which, in his view, should also be brought up for discussion.

Firstly, the statement, that human beings were created in the image of God, could be explicated in terms of their divine origin and design. When someone, e. g. Reuven, draws a picture on the wall, everyone can recognise that this is his drawing. It can be called “Reuven’s picture” (צורת ראוּבֵן) because he is an author thereof. Moreover, this picture can be distinguished from other pictures by virtue of its author. In other words, Reuven’s picture functions as his signature but it is not identical with Reuven⁷⁹. It seems that Aaron ben Joseph’s illustration was inspired by Saadia who remarked that God created humankind in his image in the sense that God recognised and authenticated the dignity and significance of human beings as his creatures and declared them to be his most treasured possession. In Saadia’s opinion, by creating humankind in his image, God owned up to his perfect and beloved design. Saadia equated the image (referred to in Genesis 1.26-27) with the form or shape (צורה) and pointed out that although there were many different shapes in the world, God encompassed all of them. Therefore, when God acclaimed one of the shapes as his own, he acknowledged the unique and unprecedented status of this shape in his eyes. According to Saadia, humankind was the shape favoured by God as his image.

Secondly, the statement, that human beings were created in the image of God, might denote that every creature, namely, every animate or inanimate object received a form or shape from God in the act of creation. Thirdly, the phrase “in our image and in our likeness” (Genesis 1.26) could be uttered by Moses who described the act of creation from his own, human perspective (“in

⁷⁷ “[Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said (Job 18.1)]: How long will ye lay snares for words? Consider, and afterwards we will speak [נִדְבָר]. Wherefore are we counted [נִחְשָׁבִים] as beasts, and reputed dull [נִטְמָנִים] in your sight?” (JPS).

⁷⁸ “Draw me, we will run [נִרְצֶה] after thee [אַחֲרַיִךְ]; the king hath brought me into his chambers [...]” (JPS).

⁷⁹ Aaron ben Joseph perceived צֶלֶם as the instrument for conveying the impression or the message. Therefore, he cited the use of צֶלֶם in Psalm 73.20 (צֶלֶמֶם) and in Daniel 3.19 (וְצֶלֶם אֲנִפְהָה).

our image, scilicet, in the image of us, human beings, like me, Moses and all of my contemporaries”). Actually, the above interpretations (second and third, to be exact) were recapitulated and rebutted by Abraham ibn Ezra. The second and third explanations were pieces of the wider strategy of interpretation which detached God from the image in which humankind was created. This strategy of interpretation was described and analysed in Abraham ibn Ezra’s commentary.

According to the strategy mentioned above, the pronominal suffix (ו) on צלם in Genesis 1.27a (בצלמו) referred to a human being (“God made a human being in the image of a human being”) which posited that there was the image of a human being, the idea of humankind, philosophically speaking, before human beings were created by God. The proposition, that human beings were created by God in line with the eternal abstract idea of humankind, was unpalatable to Abraham ibn Ezra who claimed that in the context of Genesis 1.27 the pronominal suffix (ו) could not stand for אדם and that such an interpretation would not allow to explain the plural suffixes in Genesis 1.26 (בצלמנו and בדמותנו, to be precise) in the same way. Furthermore, the interpretation of the pronominal suffix (ו) on צלם in Genesis 1.27a as self-referential was related to the alternative parsing of בצלם אלהים in Genesis 1.27b, 9.6b and of בדמות אלהים in Genesis 5.1 because if the suffix (ו) on צלם in Genesis 1.27a did not refer to God, it was also necessary to disconnect צלם / דמות from אלהים in Genesis 1.27b, 5.1, 9.6b⁸⁰. Abraham ibn Ezra did not espouse this reasoning either. According to the alternative parsing, בצלם אלהים in Genesis 1.27b, 9.6b and בדמות אלהים in Genesis 5.1 should not be construed as the construct chain but rather צלם / דמות ought to be viewed as the absolute state (“in / as the image / likeness God created a human being [...]”) provided that in the case of segolate nouns (such as צֶלֶם) and in the case of דמות, the absolute state and the construct state were identical. Nonetheless, such a reading would not comply with the Masoretic accentuation of Genesis 1.27b in which the accents מִרְכָּה (ו) and טַפְחָה (ו) bracketed בצלם אלהים together. The same is true of the Masoretic accentuation of בדמות אלהים in Genesis 5.1. Undoubtedly, this fact lent credence to the interpretation of בצלם אלהים and בדמות אלהים as the construct chain.

Consequently, Abraham ibn Ezra disregarded the interpretation of צלם in Genesis 1.27b, 9.6b and of דמות in Genesis 5.1 as the absolute state for three reasons. Firstly, such a reading would break the parallelism between Genesis

⁸⁰ The Jewish exegesis worked on the assumption that צלם and דמות were synonyms.

1.27a and Genesis 1.27b by virtue of which בצלמו (27a) should correspond to בצלם (27b) because the unspecified בצלם could not be parallel to the specified בצלמו. Secondly, the statement, that “God created a human being in / as the image / likeness”, did not disclose which or whose image / likeness was referred to and thus would be unintelligible. Thirdly, such an interpretation would undo the moral argumentation in Genesis 9.6a which was based on (כי) Genesis 9.6b because if צלם in Genesis 9.6b was in the absolute state, this passage only communicated that God created a human being as / in a certain shape or form. For Abraham ibn Ezra, it was obvious that every creature had its own image (shape, form) which, however, incurred no moral obligations. In other words, the moral admonition articulated in Genesis 9.6a could not be caused by the fact, that humankind had some shape (form) in the same way as every object would have some shape (form), but rather must arise from the unique and privileged status of human beings in God’s eyes.

Finally, the aforementioned strategy of interpretation separated the image from God in Genesis 1.26, claiming that the phrase “in our image / likeness” was the utterance of Moses who referred to the image of himself and of his contemporaries as to “our [i. e. human] image / likeness”. Therefore, in grammatical terms, this strategy related the pronominal suffixes (בצלמנו and כדמותנו) in Genesis 1.26 to Moses and to his contemporaries which made the phrase “in our image / likeness” the direct speech of Moses. Furthermore, it related the pronominal suffix (בצלמו) in Genesis 1.27a (“in his own image, namely, in the image of a human being”) to a human being mentioned earlier in the same verse (האדם) and it parsed צלם in Genesis 1.27, 9.6b and דמות in Genesis 5.1 as the absolute state which made אלהים in these verses the subject of the verbs (ברא and עשה, respectively), not the implied subject.

Generally speaking, Aaron ben Joseph sided with Abraham ibn Ezra who criticised the interpretations which completely dissociated the image, in which humankind was created, from God. However, Aaron ben Joseph observed that the Scripture, which was regarded by him as God’s Word, contained not only God’s utterances recalled by biblical authors and their account of God’s mighty deeds but also some statements which were made explicitly by them. For instance, the song in Deuteronomy 32 was indeed Moses’ (Deuteronomy 32.3)⁸¹, yet the LORD was the one who commanded Moses to write it down (Deuteronomy 31.19). For Aaron

⁸¹ “For I [i. e. Moses] will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (JPS).

ben Joseph, the words of Moses' song were the words of God because Moses uttered them on God's behalf.

Aaron ben Joseph scrutinised the use of prepositions ב and כ with צלם and דמות in Genesis 1.26-27, 5.1, 5.3, 9.6. He concluded that in the Tanakh צלם and דמות were, for the most part, used as synonyms and he realised that the prepositional phrases ב+צלם and כ+דמות communicated the same. To illustrate his point, Aaron ben Joseph cited Genesis 5.1 (בדמות), where the preposition ב, not כ, occurred with דמות. From the context it was evident that ב+דמות was identical with כ+דמות. In addition, Aaron ben Joseph appealed to Psalm 32.4 (בחרבני) and to Isaiah 48.10 (בכסף) in which the preposition ב was equivalent of כ.⁸²

Furthermore, Aaron ben Joseph contended that since human spirit was created in the image of the upper sphere, human beings were empowered by God to rule over the lower sphere. In other words, given that human spirit reflected the divine wisdom, humankind was privileged to lead the world on God's behalf. Thus, by virtue of their intelligence, human beings could manage the world which God entrusted to their care. The identification of the image, in which human spirit was created, with the intellectual and spiritual abilities (called wisdom, intelligence, mind or rational soul) could be traced back to Book of Sirach (17.3) and to Philo of Alexandria.⁸³ Aaron ben Joseph followed in the footsteps of the Jewish tradition which linked the intelligence, which God bestowed upon humankind by means of the image and likeness (Genesis 1.26a), to the authority which God granted to human beings, saying "let them rule over [...]" (Genesis 1.26b). Consequently, the creation of humankind in the image and likeness was the reason why God

⁸² In the case of Psalm 32.4 such an interpretation was corroborated by the Targum (היך שרבא). Targum. In: WALTON (Ed.), 1656, Vol. 3, p. 130 [Psalm 32.4]. As regards Isaiah 48.10, the LXX (ἐνεκεν ἀρχαίου) lent credence to such a reading. SWETE (Ed.). **The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint**, Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894, p. 191 [Isaiah 48.10].

⁸³ PHILO. De opificio mundi, p. 23 [23, 69]. Ibidem, p. 48 [47, 137]. Idem, Legum allegoriarum liber I. In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera**, Vol. 1, p. 71 [13, 42]. Idem, De plantatione. In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera quae supersunt**, Vol. 2. Berlin: Reimer, 1897, p. 137-138 [5, 18-22]. Idem, Quis rerum divinarum heres sit. In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera quae supersunt**, Vol. 3. Berlin: Reimer, 1898, p. 52 [48, 231]. Idem, De mutatione nominum. In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera**, Vol. 3, p. 195 [39, 223]. Idem, De sominiis liber II. In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera**, Vol. 3, p. 294 [33, 223]. Idem, De specialibus legibus (III). In: COHN and WENDLAND (Ed.). **Opera quae supersunt**, Vol. 5. Berlin: Reimer, 1906, p. 207 [36, 207].

authorised human beings to rule over other animate and inanimate objects. For Aaron ben Joseph, humankind united the upper sphere and the lower sphere, and acted as a bridge between both spheres. Accordingly, God imparted a spark of divine wisdom to human beings so that they could take the lead in the world which was created for their benefit.

Aaron ben Joseph argued that since human beings were meant to fuse the visible and the invisible, the creation of humankind differed from the creation of other beings. Thus, God created non-human beings either by saying “let it be [...]” or by calling the basic material elements, for instance, the land (Genesis 1.11; 1.24) or the water (Genesis 1.20), to produce life out of themselves. In the case of humankind, God resolved to engage both the angels and the basic material elements in order to create human beings that were designed to unite the tangible and the intangible.

Working on Genesis 3.5, Aaron ben Joseph⁸⁴ explicated the phrase “like (כ) אלהים knowing (ידעי) good and evil” in emphatic terms. In his opinion, the serpent tried to lure Eve into eating the fruit by exaggerating the benefits of the consummation of the fruit. Needless to say that in his view serpent’s promises were idle because the serpent was not in a position to promise anything to human beings. Actually, Aaron ben Joseph’s approach to Genesis 3.5 resembled that found in the Pirke attributed to Rabbi Eliezer⁸⁵.

In his commentary on Genesis 3.22 Aaron ben Joseph⁸⁶ was preoccupied with the moral interpretation of that verse which was one of the interpretations attested in the grand Midrash⁸⁷. According to this reading, אָדָם was in the absolute state and it was related to the infinitive (לדעת), while מִמֶּנּוּ was parsed as singular and it was said to modify the same infinitive (לדעת). In fact, Aaron ben Joseph did not recapitulate the complex exegetical discussion on Genesis 3.22 which is found in Abraham ibn Ezra’s commentary⁸⁸.

Abraham ibn Ezra scrutinised מִמֶּנּוּ and כְּאֱלֹהִים in Genesis 3.22 because he was critical of the Targumim which rendered these phrases in a peculiar way. Abraham ibn Ezra ascertained that in the Hebrew Scriptures כְּאֱלֹהִים played

⁸⁴ AARON BEN JOSEPH, 1835, p. 26r [No. 373-379 (Genesis 3.5)].

⁸⁵ ספר פרקי רבי אליעזר, p. 19 [XIII, 12].

⁸⁶ AARON BEN JOSEPH, 1835, p. 27r [No. 417-429 (Genesis 3.22)].

⁸⁷ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 44r-44v [XXI, 1-5 (Genesis 3.22)].

⁸⁸ ABRAHAM IBN EZRA. ספר בראשית, p. 61 [Genesis 3.22].

two different syntactical roles which effected two different vocalisations. On the one hand, **כְּאַחַד**, in which **אחד** was in the construct state (as demonstrated by the vocalisation), functioned as the partitive phrase (“as / like one of [...]”) which was bound to another noun or pronoun either directly or indirectly, that is, by means of preposition (e. g. **מִן**)⁸⁹. Therefore, the construct chain was a must. On the other hand, **בְּאַחַד**, in which **אחד** was in the absolute state (as evidenced by the vocalisation), acted as the adverbial phrase denoting “together, totally or at once” and it was not a part of any construct chain⁹⁰. Actually, the Septuagint⁹¹ and the Targum⁹² always translated **בְּאַחַד** adverbially.

As regards **מִמֶּנּוּ**, Abraham ibn Ezra observed that this form could be parsed either as singular or as plural, depending on the context. In Genesis 3.22 the partitive phrase **בְּאַחַד** required a group, to which **אחד** could belong, and therefore, it entailed the plural parsing of **מִמֶּנּוּ**. Actually, in the Book of Genesis the singular⁹³ or plural⁹⁴ parsing of **מִמֶּנּוּ** was evident from the context and identified unanimously by the Septuagint⁹⁵ and by the Targum Onkelos⁹⁶. Moreover, Abraham ibn Ezra disagreed with the suggestion that the prepositional phrase **מִמֶּנּוּ** (interpreted as singular [“on his own, by himself”]) could modify the infinitive **לדעת** instead of

⁸⁹ See Genesis 3.22, 49.16; Judges 16.7, 16.11, 17.11; 1 Samuel 17.36; 2 Samuel 2.18, 9.11, 13.13; 2 Chronicles 18.12; Ezekiel 48.8; Obadiah 1.11.

⁹⁰ See 2 Chronicles 5.13; Ezra 2.64, 3.9, 6.20; Nehemiah 7.66; Ecclesiastes 11.6; Isaiah 65.25.

⁹¹ SWETE (Ed.). **The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint**, Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907, p. 67 [2 Chronicles 5.13]. Ibidem, p. 165 [Ezra 2.64]. Ibidem, p. 166 [Ezra 3.9]. Ibidem, p. 172 [Ezra 6.20]. Ibidem, p. 196 [Nehemiah 7.66]. Ibidem, p. 503 [Ecclesiastes 11.6]. SWETE (Ed.), 1894, Vol. 3, p. 220 [Isaiah 65.25].

⁹² תרגום. In: מקראות גדולות ספר דברי הימים. Lublin: שניידמעסער, [s. a.], p. 213 [2 Chronicles 5.13]. Targum. In: WALTON (Ed.), 1656, Vol. 3, p. 424 [Ecclesiastes 11.6]. DE LAGARDE, Paul (Ed.). **Prophetæ chaldaice**. Leipzig: Teubner, 1872, p. 290 [Isaiah 65.25].

⁹³ See Genesis 2.17, 3.3, 3.5, 3.11, 3.17, 48.19.

⁹⁴ See Genesis 23.6, 26.16.

⁹⁵ SWETE (Ed.), 1887, Vol. 1, p. 4 [Genesis 2.17]. Ibidem, p. 4 [Genesis 3.3]. Ibidem, p. 4 [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 5 [Genesis 3.11]. Ibidem, p. 5 [Genesis 3.17]. Ibidem, p. 36 [Genesis 23.6]. Ibidem, p. 45 [Genesis 26.16]. Ibidem, p. 98 [Genesis 48.19].

⁹⁶ BERLINER (Ed.). **Targum**, Vol. 1, p. 2 [Genesis 2.17]. Ibidem, p. 3 [Genesis 3.3]. Ibidem, p. 3 [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 3 [Genesis 3.11]. Ibidem, p. 3 [Genesis 3.17]. Ibidem, p. 22 [Genesis 23.6]. Ibidem, p. 27 [Genesis 26.16]. Ibidem, p. 56 [Genesis 48.19].

כֹּאחַד (taken for the absolute state). Since Abraham ibn Ezra did not follow the Targumic interpretation of Genesis 3.5, 3.22, he assumed that כֹּאֱלֹהִים יַדְעִי in יְדַעְתִּי כֹּאֱלֹהִים (Genesis 3.5) and כֹּאחַד מִמֶּנּוּ in מִמֶּנּוּ כֹּאחַד (Genesis 3.22) denoted God along with his angels.

5 MAINSTREAM KARAITE INTERPRETATION: AARON BEN ELIJAH

The explanation of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, which was offered by Aaron ben Elijah⁹⁷ in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, relied on the earlier Karaite commentary written by Aaron ben Joseph⁹⁸. In fact, Aaron ben Elijah not only adopted the exegesis of Aaron ben Joseph but also expanded it and enriched with some new ideas. In the present section only these new ideas are examined.

Aaron ben Elijah noticed that some expositors⁹⁹ recognised נַעֲשֶׂה in Genesis 1.26 as the niph'al participle akin to נַעֲשֶׂה from Nehemiah 5.18¹⁰⁰ because the same vocalised form (נַעֲשֶׂה) could be parsed either as the qal imperfect ("let us make [human]") or as the niph'al participle ("let [human] be made"). The parsing of נַעֲשֶׂה in Genesis 1.26 as the niph'al participle was recalled and dismissed by Abraham ibn Ezra¹⁰¹.

Contemplating the plural forms in Genesis 1.26a, Aaron ben Elijah attended to the plural form of the verb וַיִּרְדּוּ in Genesis 1.26b. In the narrative of Genesis 1-3 there was a natural transition from the singular to the plural concerning אָדָם that could denote either the individual person distinct from Eve and called Adam or both male (זָכָר) and female (נִקְבָּה) as indicated by Genesis

⁹⁷ AARON BEN ELIJAH. סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 18r-19r [Genesis 1.26-27]. Ibidem, p. 25r-25v [Genesis 3.5]. Ibidem, p. 27r-28r [Genesis 3.22].

⁹⁸ AARON BEN JOSEPH, 1835, p. 19v-21r [No. 207-225 (Genesis 1.26-27)].

⁹⁹ It is debatable whether such a view was recorded in the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis. סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית. In: מִדְרָשׁ רַבָּה עַל הַתּוֹרָה, p. 15v [VIII, 5 (Genesis 1.26)]: "כָּבַר נַעֲשֶׂה" אָדָם [...].

¹⁰⁰ In Nehemiah 5.18 the context of the narrative and the Septuagint (ἐν γινόμενον) lent credence to the interpretation of נַעֲשֶׂה as niph'al. SWETE (Ed.), 1907, Vol. 2, p. 191 [Nehemiah 5.18].

¹⁰¹ ABRAHAM IBN EZRA. סֵפֶר בְּרֵאשִׁית, p. 26-30 [Genesis 1.26-27].

1.27. Therefore, in Genesis 1.26a God said “let us make אדם [...]” but in Genesis 1.26b God said with reference to אדם “let them rule (וירדו) [...]”.

Aaron ben Elijah asserted that the image, in which humankind was created, was God’s in the sense that there was a relationship between God and this image. In his opinion, God certified the image as genuine and recognised it as his own in the same way as a thing or a piece of land could be designated as belonging to God, as exemplified by Exodus 17.9 (ומטה האלהים) or by Ezekiel 36.20 (ומארצו). This argumentation comes from Abraham ibn Ezra’s summary¹⁰² of Saadia’s interpretation of Genesis 1.26-27¹⁰³. According to Abraham ibn Ezra’s recollection, Saadia construed the image as the wisdom (חכמה) and the ability to govern the world (ממשלה), which the Creator bestowed upon humankind, and he assumed that this image was rooted in God for the sake of splendour of human beings as God’s creatures¹⁰⁴. Consequently, through the concept of human beings as created in God’s image, the LORD could seal his possession of humankind. Similarly, although the whole earth belonged to the LORD (Psalm 24.1), the land of Israel was designated as his own (Ezekiel 36.20) in order to stress God’s unique ties with the land which he promised to his people.

It should be noted that both Karaite¹⁰⁵ and Rabbinic¹⁰⁶ fundamentals denied that there could be any image of God understood as a sort of copy external to the original or as a visible picture thereof. For that reason, Aaron ben Elijah spoke of the relationship between God and the image with caution and he suggested that this appellation (i. e. image) could also be treated as metaphor or anthropomorphism given that the Scripture abounded in metaphoric or anthropomorphic expressions such as the “mouth of the ground” (Numbers 16.30¹⁰⁷). This remark arose from the study of biblical anthropomorphisms¹⁰⁸ concerning both God and creatures which

¹⁰² Ibidem.

¹⁰³ SAADIA GAON, 1885, p. 93-94 [II, 6].

¹⁰⁴ The same idea was articulated by Maimonides. MAIMONIDES, 1828, Vol. 1, p. 9r-10r [I, 1].

¹⁰⁵ עשרה עקרים. In: ELIJAH BASHYAZI, 1835, p. 48r [III].

¹⁰⁶ שלשה עשר עקרים. In: BAER, Seligman (Ed.). סדר עבודת ישראל. Rödelheim: Lehrberger, 1901, p. 160 [III].

¹⁰⁷ “But if the LORD make a new thing, and the ground open her mouth [פיה], and swallow them up [...]” (JPS).

¹⁰⁸ See the treatment of anthropomorphism in the Rabbinic and Karaite exegeses: ZAWANOWSKA, Marzena. The Bible Read through the Prism of Theology: The

was contained in Saadia's masterpiece¹⁰⁹ and which was reworked by Abraham ibn Ezra in his commentary¹¹⁰. It was natural for Abraham ibn Ezra that human beings would describe and speak of any reality, inclusive of God, using human expressions because only such expressions were known and accessible to human beings. Therefore, as Abraham ibn Ezra noticed, the Hebrew Bible resorted to anthropomorphism not only with reference to God but also with reference to inanimate objects as exemplified by Numbers 13.29¹¹¹, 16.30 and by Proverbs 8.26¹¹².

Aaron ben Elijah studied the use of prepositions ב and כ in Genesis 1.26. He observed that the preposition ב might convey a sense of assistance (בית העזר), as typified by its use in Psalm 44.6 (בך), while the preposition כ might convey a sense of correspondence or resemblance (כף הדמיון). This observation was inspired by David Kimhi's exposition of Genesis 1.26¹¹³ where Radak (רד"ק) discussed the functions of the preposition ב (בית העזר and בית כלי) and the use of the preposition כ in the Hebrew Bible.

Furthermore, Aaron ben Elijah appealed to Genesis 5.1 (בדמות) and 5.3 (כצלמו and בדמותו) to point out that with צלם and דמות the prepositions ב and כ could be used interchangeably. In his opinion, Genesis 5.1, 5.3 indicated that צלם and דמות should be viewed as synonyms. Besides, in the light of Genesis 5.3, the proposition, that the pronominal suffix (ו) on צלם in Genesis 1.27a was self-referential, was highly debatable because Seth was made (begotten) not in his own image / likeness but rather in Adam's image / likeness. Genesis 5.3 also cast light on the relationship between אלהים and צלם which was established by בצלם אלהים (Genesis 1.27b) interpreted as the construct chain and by the pronominal suffix (ו) on צלם in בצלמו (Genesis 1.27a) if referred to אלהים. Accordingly, Seth was made

Medieval Karaite Tradition of Translating Explicit Anthropomorphisms into Arabic. **Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy** 24, 2016, p. 163-223. Idem, >Where the Plain Meaning Is Obscure or Unacceptable ...:< The Treatment of Implicit Anthropomorphisms in the Medieval Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation. **European Journal of Jewish Studies** 10, 2016, p. 1-49.

¹⁰⁹ SAADIA GAON, 1885, p. 96-98 [II, 10].

¹¹⁰ ABRAHAM IBN EZRA. ספר בראשית, p. 26-30 [Genesis 1.26-27].

¹¹¹ "[...] and along by the side [literally: hand (יד)] of the Jordan" (JPS).

¹¹² "While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the beginning [literally: head (ראש)] of the dust of the world" (JPS).

¹¹³ KIMHI, 1842, p. 16r-18v [Genesis 1.26-27].

in Adam's image / likeness but he was not Adam. Therefore, humankind, that was created in the image / likeness of God, was neither God nor a visible copy of God but rather a design made by God, a project of which God was the originator.

Finally, Aaron ben Elijah adduced Psalm 8.6/7 to emphasise that since in human beings the gulf between the upper sphere and the lower sphere was bridged, humankind was called by God to rule over all creatures belonging to the lower sphere. Thus, human beings were distinguished from other animals by the intelligence which God imparted to humankind in the act of creation.

Commenting upon Genesis 3.5, Aaron ben Elijah¹¹⁴ registered the possibility of the non-divine denotation of אלהים which was adopted in the Targumim. Accordingly, the Targum Onkelos translated אלהים as "the mighty" (רברבין), while the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan - as "the mighty angels". Aaron ben Elijah admitted that in the Tanakh אלהים could also denote leaders (שופטים) or judges (דינים) and that this meaning could make sense in the context of Genesis 3.5 because such agents of power were capable of discerning between good and evil. Moreover, Aaron ben Elijah recapitulated the explanation which was offered by Maimonides (רמב"ם)¹¹⁵ who clarified that since אלהים could signify not only true or false God(s) but also angelic or human agent(s) of power, "the mighty" (רברבין) as the non-divine general meaning of אלהים would be preferable in the context of Genesis 3.5.

In his commentary on Genesis 3.22 Aaron ben Elijah¹¹⁶ presented the moral interpretation which was recorded in the grand Midrash¹¹⁷ and he suggested that Genesis 3.22 might be interpreted as follows:

“האדם היה כאחד שהיה לדעת ממנו [מעצמו] טוב ורע”
(Adam became like the one who was to know by himself good and evil).

Thus, Adam would become like the one who was to know good and evil on his own, namely, like the one who was to make his own moral choices, scilicet, to discern between the path of justice and the path of injustice.

¹¹⁴ AARON BEN ELIJAH. ספר בראשית. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 25r-25v [Genesis 3.5].

¹¹⁵ MAIMONIDES, 1828, Vol. 1, p. 10r [I, 2].

¹¹⁶ AARON BEN ELIJAH. ספר בראשית. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 27r-28r [Genesis 3.22].

¹¹⁷ ספר בראשית. In: מדרש רבה על התורה, p. 44r-44v [XXI, 1-5 (Genesis 3.22)].

Aaron ben Elijah not only reported that מִמֶּנּוּ could be parsed either as singular or as plural, depending on the context, but also advanced the Rabbinic discourse on this topic because he discovered that there was a rare form of the preposition מִן with the pronominal suffix of the third person singular masculine (מִנֵּהוּ). Unlike מִמֶּנּוּ, which could be interpreted either as the third person singular masculine or as the first person plural, מִנֵּהוּ was exclusive to the third person singular masculine. This form occurred only in Psalm 68.24 and in Job 4.12.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, Aaron ben Elijah studied the vocalisation of אָחַד in the prepositional phrase כְּאֶחָד and cited the following passages: Genesis 26.10 (אֶחָד הָעַם), Deuteronomy 28.55 (לְאֶחָד מֵהֶם) and Zechariah 11.7 (לְאֶחָד occurring twice). In principle, אָחַד was vocalised in the absolute state as אָחַדְךָ, while in the construct state - as אֶחָד. In Genesis 26.10 and in Deuteronomy 28.55 the partitive phrases, אֶחָד הָעַם (“one of the people”) and אֶחָד מֵהֶם (“one of them”), entailed the construct state of אָחַד which was vocalised accordingly. These examples demonstrated that such partitive phrases induced the construct state of אָחַד regardless of whether the preposition מִן was used or not. In the case of Zechariah 11.7, the context implied the partitive phrase because there were two rods (שְׁנֵי מַקְלוֹת) and one of the two rods was called “favour”, while the other one - “union”. Thus, the partitive phrase was implied in that verse and לְאֶחָד, theoretically speaking, could be explicated as לְאֶחָד מִן שְׁנֵי מַקְלוֹת. Nonetheless, Aaron ben Elijah did not insist on parsing אָחַד in כְּאֶחָד (Genesis 3.22) as the construct state but rather preferred to keep the option of interpreting אָחַד as the absolute state open.

In addition, Aaron ben Elijah analysed the use of the preposition ל with the infinitive (לִּדְעַת) in Genesis 3.22. He asserted that in Genesis 3.22 ל functioned as the preposition highlighting the opportunity or occasion (תּוֹאנָה) expressed by the infinitive. To illustrate this function of the preposition ל occurring with the infinitive, Aaron ben Elijah cited the example of Ezekiel 8.6 (לִּרְחֹקָה)¹¹⁹. In his

¹¹⁸ The LXX interpreted מִנֵּהוּ both in Psalm 68.24 and in Job 4.12 as singular (παρ’ αὐτοῦ). The Targum viewed מִנֵּהוּ in Job 4.12 as singular (מִנֵּהוּ), while in Psalm 68.24 - as plural (מִנֵּהוּ). SWETE (Ed.), 1907, Vol. 2, p. 298 [Psalm 68.24 /LXX 67.24/]. Ibidem, p. 527 [Job 4.12]. Targum. In: WALTON (Ed.), 1656, Vol. 3, p. 10 [Job 4.12]. Ibidem, p. 188 [Psalm 68.24].

¹¹⁹ In Ezekiel 8.6, by employing the genitive articular infinitive (τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι), the LXX emphasised that the Hebrew infinitive (לִּרְחֹקָה) communicated the result. SWETE (Ed.), 1894, Vol. 3, p. 397 [Ezekiel 8.6]. The same construction (i. e. the genitive articular infinitive) was used by the LXX (τοῦ ἀναστῆναι) to translate לִדְעַת in Genesis 3.22. SWETE (Ed.), 1887, Vol. 1, p. 5 [Genesis 3.22].

opinion, Adam and Eve leapt at the opportunity to know good and evil, and they consumed the fruit with the result that they came to know good and evil.

6 CONCLUSION

The Karaite interpretation of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22 and its dependence on the Rabbinic tradition ought to be situated against the edifice of Karaite hermeneutics. In fact, Karaite Judaism produced advanced and comprehensive hermeneutical principles¹²⁰, which in many ways resembled hermeneutics propounded later by the 16th-century Reformation¹²¹. Karaite hermeneutics presumed that the grammatical, literary and historical setting of the Tanakh would help to discover its meaning, while the meaning of any text should be regarded as a natural phenomenon emerging in the interaction between the author's intent and the reader who was using his or her common sense to understand what the text communicated. Consequently, it was necessary to interpret the text as it sounded, namely, according to its literal meaning, as long as such an interpretation did not contradict the meaning of other passages treating of the same subject matter and as long as such an interpretation did not defy reason. Therefore, all the passages dealing with the same topic should be garnered and studied in order to elucidate one another. Although Karaite exegetes valued human reason, their exegesis should not be depicted as "rationalistic" in the Enlightenment sense because they did not try to validate religious theses in the light of human reason but rather preferred to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures in the most reasonable way.

The Karaite exegesis sought the meaning of the text, which ought to be determined by its context, which must be consistent with other passages pertaining thereto and which would not defy all logic. Such a meaning was recognised as the most natural, simple and evident. Karaite hermeneutists realised that at times there might be different interpretations which all would meet criteria mentioned above. Accordingly, the Karaite exegesis admitted that some passages might be

¹²⁰ AARON BEN ELIJAH. הקדמה. In: FIRKOVICH (Ed.), 1866, p. 3v-4r.

¹²¹ VAN DEN BERG, Johannes. Proto-Protestants? The Image of the Karaites as a Mirror of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy in the Seventeenth Century. In: VAN DEN BERG, Johannes and Ernestine G. E. VAN DER WALL (Ed.). **Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents**. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988, p. 33-49.

susceptible of various interpretations which would be legitimate and which should be permitted unless a consensus was reached. Karaite hermeneutics viewed the Scripture as the literary work and ventured to explore the literary structure thereof. For that reason, speaking of God's commandments, both positive and negative, the Karaite exegesis stipulated that it was advisable to ascertain, for whom a specific injunction was intended, and to study its purpose.

Karaite hermeneuts condemned those, who relied on human traditions, while expounding the Tanakh. From a Karaite perspective, such interpreters imposed their own, man-made assertions upon the Scripture instead of relying on the Scripture which was to be cherished as the divine tradition, namely, as the wisdom given by God to his people. Thus, the outcome of the biblical interpretation, which was governed not by the Scripture but rather by human traditions, was perceived as dubious or unfounded. Therefore, Karaite exegetes, on the one hand, were vigilant against projecting readers' own ideas (presuppositions) into the Tanakh, on the other hand, were confident that dedicated students of the Bible desired to know the divine truth, not a mere human invention. Furthermore, Karaite hermeneutics warned that those, who did not recognise the supremacy of the Scripture, were pursuing their own visions and were producing only such interpretations which would please them because prior to reading, they predetermined what the text was supposed to communicate.

From the Karaite point of view, the proper exegesis must refrain not only from the statements, which would contradict the Scripture, but also from the statements which could not be substantiated by the Scripture. Consequently, in the genuine exegesis, a proposition could be recognised as true (i. e. could be validated) only if it conformed to the Scripture and only if it could be argued from the biblical text. Thus, Karaite Judaism was opposed to elevating human traditions to the status of the Scripture which was believed to be self-authenticating, self-elucidating, perspicuous and sufficient as far as religious beliefs and observances were concerned.

In view of the hermeneutical principles outlined above the dependence of the Karaite interpretation of the plural forms in Genesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22 on the Rabbinic tradition is noteworthy. It could be argued that the Karaite exegesis of the plural forms independent of Targumic and Midrashic sources never existed although these sources were not accepted by Karaite Judaism. Actually, Karaite Judaism did not even acknowledge the authority of the Targumim, which in

Rabbinic Judaism was firmly established and which could not be neglected. Although Karaite exegetes translated the Tanakh into Arabic, these renditions were treated as mere translations¹²². Similarly, Rabbinic scholars such as Saadia¹²³ translated the Scripture into Arabic but in contradistinction to the Targumim, these Arabic Bible translations were never viewed as authoritative in Rabbinic Judaism. Rabbinic exegetes, for the most part, conformed to the strategy of interpretation, which was adopted in the Targumim, and they rarely departed from the Targumic reading.

Unlike Rabbinic literati, Karaite authors hesitated to specify the Rabbinic sources on which they drew in their commentaries because explicit references would betray the reliance of the Karaite exegesis on the Rabbinic tradition. Therefore, Karaite exegetes referred to mediaeval Rabbinic commentators not by name but rather by the generic appellation המפרשים which did not disclose the Rabbinic affiliation of the luminaries whose legacy was utilised in the flagship Karaite commentaries.

As a matter of fact, Karaite exegetes had reverence for the Rabbinic Midrashim because they not only made use of the interpretations found in the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis (בראשית רבה) but also named their own biblical commentaries after a series of מדרש רבות. For instance, Jeshua ben Judah produced his commentary on Genesis and called it בראשית רבה¹²⁴. In exegetical terms, the Karaite interpretation of the plural forms did not foster significantly the Jewish exposition of these phenomena which rested on the treasure trove of the Rabbinic tradition. Paradoxically, the Rabbinic exegesis, which was not driven by the sola Scriptura principle, was able to bring forth a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1.26, 3.5, 3.22 which were theologically relevant and which were tenable in the light of the context.

¹²² GOTTHEIL, Richard. Bible Translations (Karaite Versions). In: SINGER (Ed.). **The Jewish Encyclopedia**, Vol. 3, p. 190. See the literature cited in the footnote no. 108 in the present paper.

¹²³ SAADIA GAON. **Œuvres complètes**, Vol. 1-6, Ed. Joseph DERENBOURG. Paris: Leroux, 1893-1894.

¹²⁴ בראשית רבה. In: STEINSCHNEIDER (Ed.), 1858, p. 9 [Warnerus, no. 5/1]. Ibidem, p. 173-179 [Warnerus, no. 41/2].

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